

Life is separated into different phases; as you pass through the years, you are supposed to move on, to progress. One part of life is dedicated to education and exploration, inspired by the naivety and idealism of the inexperienced. Another is about application and comfort, framed by the maturity and pragmatism of the learned. Eventually you arrive at accomplishment and can reap the rewards of a fulfilled life. Only maybe temporarily upset by some (un)desired reskilling and the uncertainty that the future holds. At least that's how it should be. Or should it?

The progress you make seems often nothing more than a narrative structure imposed on loosely related events. That destabilizing thought sometimes flickers through the activities of everyday life. But forget that thought, because you have already invested your time and you want the results. Stubbornly we hold on to the story of achievement and merit. In the meantime we become attached to the perpetuation of this social reality because we don't want to lose everything.

What if we let go of the linear construct of time to mold our perspective on life? Not to not apply ourselves anymore or to live from impulse to impulse. But to avoid the rigidity of (supposed) wisdom, the certainty of the past and the arrogance of the entitled. Life goes in waves, or the circles of a spiral, or some other image that fits a fragmented whole. Of course this goes against the logic of society, and thus the guiding lines of many people around us. We are not traveling along the same paths; our lives are discordant. This is a radical difference that at times makes it hard even to communicate, to find common ground. Nonetheless we shouldn't banish the unforeseen and have the confidence to hold on to ourselves while we turn this world inside out.



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To Seize the Moment  
(Still)

Caught in the Web

$2+2=7$

Day-to-day Normality  
as Source of Depression

Murmurs and Cries from  
the Underground

A Barbaric Contribution

A compilation of texts, a contribution  
to a correspondence between those  
who desire  
anarchy  
and  
subversion



Winter 2019  
Issue 3



# To Seize the Moment

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More than one hundred thousand enraged persons who for almost 4 weeks now occupy roundabouts and toll booths, who try to block or slow down the operating of logistical hubs and supermarkets, oil depots or at times factories, who gather each Saturday in small towns as well as big cities to attack local state headquarters and city halls, or just to destroy and loot what surrounds them. Behold, the autumn gives birth out of the blue to yet another social movement. Enough to have those who have a nose for the smell of herds come running to attempt to steer it, or just to be there where it happens, following the smell of teargas. Like during the syndicalist movement against the Loi Travail in 2016 (March till September) and its follow-up against the regulatory implementations in 2017 (September till November), or against the reform of the railway company this year (April till June). But it didn't really go down like that this time.

For once a movement emerged in a self-organized manner outside of parties and syndicates, for once it has from the start set its own dates on a local as well as on a national level – mostly daily and not on a weekly or monthly rhythm of big days orchestrated by the leaders of the herd and from the start controlled by the police – setting out even its own places and trajectories of confrontation and of blockades, resolutely refusing to beg for a state authorisation in advance. [...]

[The following paragraphs are a harsh critique of an anti-authoritarian milieu that was disorientated by the eruption of this movement and was missing the usual framework of leftist slogans, demands and leaders. When the comfortable position of "most radical" of the left is not available, many seemingly choose to stay behind their screens and dismiss the events as not enough this or that to meet their stand-

ards for what constitutes a legitimate movement (apparently one spearheaded by an authoritarian left is preferable). The original text is quite specific to the French context and also in the meantime many seem to have been able to overcome their initial aversion (see the follow-up text). Thus this translation skips a few pages. – TLK]

[...] To drown with delight in the red herd or to jump with reluctance into the yellow herd; that is a good example of a fake dichotomy, because the terms itself of the question are flawed. In our view the question is never to take part or not take part in a movement, to be spectator or actor, but only to act to destroy the existent in all circumstances, with or without the context of a particular struggle, that others are motivated at the start by this or that more or less (un)interesting crumb, as long as we act with our own ideas, practices and perspectives. Inside, outside or next to a movement, in relation to it or far off it. Alone or with several. Daylight or night time.

As for the insurrectionary question; it is true that if we want to bring down the state and destroy all authority, it seems to be an essential prerequisite – which in any case will not be only an act of anarchists and revolutionaries (it's precisely for this reason that the authoritarian neo-Blanquists [Auguste Blanqui – revolutionary socialist and non-Marxist – in favour of conspirators seizing power through an insurrection and starting to implement a new society from above – France, 1805-1881] spend their time attempting to steer struggles and movements, to find a mass to direct, or that others persistently attempt to recruit followers in them). Revolts and insurrections emerge already without us, and when we neither have a desire to manage these movements nor a contempt towards slaves that revolt for their own reasons, the interesting question

becomes rather: what do we want to do? To act already without waiting, here and now, doesn't exclude the possibility to act all the more so when a chaotic mess of a situation emerges. Certainly when we have reflected a minimum on our own perspectives. When we are then capable in all autonomy to *seize the moment* that is presented to realise our own subversive projects.

As for revolution; we agree with what some Italian anarchists have written in a text about what has been happening in France (*Di che colore è la tua Mesa?*), from which we take up one of the threads. For those who still cherish this desire; how do we imagine a revolution could emerge? Do we really think it would be the work of a convergence of social movements, all endowed with a legitimate claim, motivated through decisions by unanimity in assemblies where the most radical idea will win the day? Thus in such a scenario a movement would be born with an impeccable cause, with at its helm the most enlightened militants that will guide it from battle to battle, winning inspiring victories, its ranks growing, its reputation increasing, its example spreading like a virus, other similar movements popping up, their forces meeting, enriching and multiplying each other, till arriving at the final confrontation during which the state is finally brought down... Such a nice tale! Who produced it, Netflix? Which episode are we at? If we don't want to ridicule, we can also stay serious. Better, we can even scientifically analyse. Like the visionary Bordigists [Bordiga – Marxist, anti-Stalinist and pro-dictatorship of the proletariat – the political party and programme are the unambiguous expression of the real movement of the proletariat towards communism – Italy, 1889-1970] who knew from August 1936 there was no revolution happening in Spain. The reason for it was evident, an obvious fact before everyone's eyes, it's even embarrassing having to recall it: without revolutionary theory no revolution, without revolutionary party no revolutionary theory. Was there a revolutionary party in Spain (theirs, of course)? No? Thus, what could we be talking about?

Because in the course of history the spark of riots, insurrections and revolutions has almost never come from profound reasons but from simple pretexts (for example: the moving of a gun battery triggered the Paris Commune [March till May 1871 – while the

French army retreats and the Prussian army surrounds Paris, its streets are transformed by an insurrection, eventually smothered in blood by the French army], a protest against the hotchpotch made by the German naval military ignited the November Revolution [in 1918 – inspired by the Spartakusbund, an anti-war and revolutionary socialist group – a second uprising in January 1919 against the anti-revolutionary and pro-war social-democrats ended with the murder of two Spartacus leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht], the suicide of a street vendor launched the Arab Spring, the cutting down of some trees brought about the Gezi Park revolt in Turkey). We find it really embarrassing that those faced with the yellow vests (or yesterday, the Catalan autonomy protests) only focus their gaze on it to find traces of the communist programme, or the anarchist idea, or radical theory, or anti-industrial critique, or... After which – following the disappointment of not having identified a sufficiently subversive content in the streets, of not having counted enough masses, of not having noticed enough proletarian roots, of not having recorded a sufficiently equal female presence, of not having heard a sufficiently correct language, and we could go on forever – there can only be disgust and the question of who could benefit from all this social agitation. *Cui prodest?* [Legal term: Whom does it profit? To whose benefit is the crime done?]

If some put the riots that shook the country in November 2005 down to a pre-electoral ploy of Sarkozy – who would have intentionally put oil on a small flame (one of many police atrocities) to ignite and then put out, to be afterwards rewarded as a competent firefighter – in the same vein, it would be easy today to see the hand of Le Pen in the popular demand for the resignation of Macron. At the moment when a strong wind in favour of the right blows through Europe, why wait until the next electoral deadline while it is possible to bring it closer with a slight nudge? This is a conspiracy theory that, also in its logical trait, is above all totally idiotic to formulate. But, of course, the lion tamer Sarkozy or the aspiring circus director Le Pen could secretly have opened the gates of the wild animals to spread panic and, when the emergency situation is over, could be called upon to replace the incompetent that wasn't capable of protecting society!

But let's imagine, even if it's absurd, that it would have happened like this... and so? Those wild animals are all of us, and it's exactly during moments of free movement that our possibilities increase to get rid of the cages of this world. As long as we are locked in, we stay mainly powerless, only capable of roaring and baring our teeth – always more decayed. But during these days of freedom, even if we are chased after, everything becomes possible again, including the impossible. Has it been decided that our freedom should only be temporary, a short-term arrangement for an investment in the middle or long term? Then it is up to us that it becomes permanent, screwing up the plans of those who were certain of being capable of controlling the demon of revolt after having summoned it. If someone leaves the cage open then it makes not a lot of sense to lose oneself in elaborate imaginings on their real intentions or to stay inside as not to serve some obscure plot. Better hurry out and attempt at all costs to not get caught again.

All said, for who still cherishes such a desire, how do we imagine the eruption of a revolution? Conscious that it probably only can spring from a heterogeneous situation, in the midst of opposed interests, expressed in a confused and contradictory way; should we however defend opposed interests, expressed in a confused and contradictory way? The fact that the pretext of riots, insurrections and revolutions is almost always trivial – does that mean that we should repeat the triviality?

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The trap for all militants – irrespective of being defeatist or enthusiast – is that in situations of social turmoil their brain is fine-tuned to pose only one question; which *direct* and *productive* links to create with the protest movements. They are obsessed with the quest for the revolutionary subject to place themselves at the service of, or just to praise. Thus one can hype the slightest confrontation in the outskirts with the cops or authorities without caring about the question of individual motivations (maybe linked with the trade in illegal substances, with a problem of hiring a local workforce, with a conflict over mob territory, with a religious drive, *or with still more things?*) while stubbornly refusing to consider the slightest confrontation of the yellow vests on the



squares and roundabouts with the cops or authorities because one suspects too much individual motivations (maybe linked with the trade in legal substances, with a problem of hiring workforce, with a discontent with taxes, with a nationalist drive, *or with still more things?*).

It's like reinventing the same wheel every time: no, the others in revolt are not anarchists, they join in for their own reasons, that we can find passionate or futile, that we can know clearly *or not*. But what is of interest to us, is that the revolt here opens up space there, in a diffuse possibility to go from the centre to the periphery, that it allows to experiment with forms of direct or indirect complicity, and that it breaks a normality that has been going on for too long. It's up to the anarchists to stir up their own perspectives by feeding the communicating vessels of idea and action, it's not up to others. During quiet moments as well as during storms. And so, maybe, our dreams and anger find an echo in other rebellious hearts.

Gladly though, not everyone is a *militant*, and so can be more interested in what any conflict or disturbance opens up, not so much for others, but for themselves as well. In the midst of this mess that slows down the intervention of repression and facilitates the "not seen, not caught", do possibilities exist that are otherwise too hard, or even impossible? Far away from this mess on which repression is concentrating, can we attain objectives otherwise untouchable? Upon closely examining the movement of the yellow vests, we can see that many have already begun answering these questions, al-

lowing us to set out some leads on the possibilities to seize the moment. These are only some examples, far from making a comprehensive list, banal leads maybe, more or less shareable, but all suggest something to nourish the imagination.

The 24<sup>th</sup> of November on the Champs-Élysée, when it wasn't clear yet that the upcoming Saturdays would take a riotous turn beyond the forces of police, unknowns had set out to free themselves of the horrors of wage labour by organising to loot the Dior store. Almost 500,000 euros of jewellery and other gadgets have changed hands in a few minutes side by side with ongoing confrontations. Beyond the expropriation of a wide range of common consumer products from sports shops and supermarkets, to mobile phones and laptops (Paris, Marseille, La Réunion, Toulouse, Saint-Étienne, Le Havre, Bordeaux, Charleville-Mézières, Saint-Avold, Le Mans, Bourg-en-Bresse), also some other jeweller's shops or upscale stores here and there have been stripped bare. Generally speaking, alone in the capital, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry counted 142 businesses looted or trashed (+95 with only a broken front window) during the riot of the 1<sup>st</sup> of December and 144 businesses looted or trashed (+102 with only a broken front window) on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December.

In the same vein, one could question what other possibilities the occupation of a roundabout and the complicity in action would offer, besides blocking or slowing down the circulation of products. To this end, the example of what happened in Belgium can be particularly telling. Not content with having burned a fuel tanker in Feluy (20<sup>th</sup> of November) and having heavily clashed with the cops during several days, five blocked lorries were relieved of their load the following days (21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of November). Next the movement of the yellow vests was joined by several hundreds when the conflict zone moved from the highway to the city of Charleroi, sidestepping the question of the social or geographical origins, the practice of looting continued. Besides the traditional supermarket, also a ATM of BNP was not only destroyed but first pulled off its base to be emptied (23<sup>rd</sup> of November).

In a similar way at the start of the movement, a truck loaded with 900 tires was fast immobilized in Le Havre on a roundabout occupied by yellow vests

(20<sup>th</sup> of November). Once the security system deactivated, some individuals set about emptying it and not less than 250 new tires vanished, in spite of the opposition of the more legalistic attendees. One hour later, emboldened by the new possibilities, a IT shop next to the roundabout was completely looted (as well as the restaurant of the commercial zone).

Looting of jeweller's stores, lorries, ATM's; how many more possibilities when a movement as this of the yellow vests opens up space for everybody and everyone, without leaders nor security stewards nor trajectory designed with the cops?

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December in Avignon while in lots of other cities the demonstrators were gathering in front of the city hall or prefecture to attempt to storm it (the one of Puy-en-Velay was partially burned on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December to the cries of "You will fry like chickens"), a small group decided to take care of the courthouse: almost 30 meters of thick windows were smashed. In Charleroi the tribunal also received Molotovs during the riots.

In Toulouse on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December during a destructive riot that lasted for hours, a group similarly decided to pay a visit to the control room of the CCTV of the city situated in the Saint-Cyprien neighbourhood. While the municipal stalkers were inside, its windows were being smashed and its own camera stoned. While the attack was very brief, the syndicates nonetheless demanded to move the HQ of CCTV, it became a bit too hot this time. In Blagnac on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December instead of simply blocking the Saint-Exupéry secondary school, the



pupils ignited the heap of trash wisely piled up in front of the entrance: the fire destroyed the reception room and hall, while the rooms for the teachers, the school library, the administrative premises and the science rooms were severely damaged (1 million euros in damages) and the school closed for a week. At the tollbooths of the highway Narbonne-Sud, blocked by yellow vests, during the night of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December a group didn't only trash it (as in Virsac, Perpignan, Bollène, La Ciotat, Sète, Mui, Carcassonne) but also burned the infrastructure of Vinci [this omnipresent company also operates toll roads] and of the police station. Aside from 800 m<sup>2</sup> of premises and its security HQ, Vinci also lost some 30 vehicles, while the servicemen lost two vans aside from their premises and material (computers, radio, uniforms).

Attacks on courthouses, CCTV headquarters, police stations or schools; how many more possibilities when a movement like the yellow vests opens up space for everybody and everyone, without leaders nor stewards nor trajectory designed with the cops?

Finally, further away from the crowds, either to take advantage of repressive forces overburdened elsewhere, or to nourish the conflict with their own objectives, night birds went for a walk in the moon light. Several tax and social welfare offices were attacked with different means (with burning tires as in Vénissieux the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, in Riom the 4<sup>th</sup> and in Semur-en-Auxois the 14<sup>th</sup>, with gas bottles and Molotovs in Saint-Andiol the 4<sup>th</sup> and in Saint-Avoid the 14<sup>th</sup>, with a burning rubbish container in Chalon-sur-Saône the 27<sup>th</sup> of November). While there's no reason during a period of blocking traffic to only focus on roads; a relay station for railway signals was burned in Castellans on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November. And four yellow vests that met on a roundabout in the Lorraine region, embarked on a nocturnal spree the 28<sup>th</sup> of November. They sabotaged 9 railway crossings between Saint-Dié and Nancy, opening with a crowbar the control boxes to force the barrier arms to close, thus blocking all road traffic. Elsewhere a campaign office of a deputy of the LREM [party of

Macron] lost its windows in Vernon (Eure) the 29<sup>th</sup> of November and likewise in Nantes on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December. Or some aimed directly at the homes of two others: in Vézac (Dordogne) on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December the car of a deputy and her husband was reduced to ashes and in Bourgtheroulde (Eure) on the 15<sup>th</sup>, yellow vests marked with 20 signs the road leading up to the house of a deputy who heard six shots of a hunting rifle in front of his door.

Destruction of institutional premises, sabotage of major railway routes, visits of offices and homes of deputies, how many more possibilities for those who want to make their own nocturnal contribution, *including one not based in a consensus*, through acts that go against the demands of the movement as well as against the interests of the state? When a cell tower of Orange is sabotaged on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November in Villeparisis, we don't think that it fits directly into a struggle stuck in the technological cages. So what? When three sites of Enedis [company that manages the electricity network distribution] are delivered to the flames as in Foix on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, we don't think that it fits directly into a struggle that demands more state and local public services. So what?

There are as many possibilities of nourishing social war as there are individuals. Inside, outside or besides a movement, in relation to it or far off it. Alone or with several. Daylight or night time. *As long as we do it with our own ideas, practices and perspectives*, far from politics, herd mentality or composition [a concept in fashion in the radical leftist milieus of France – attempting through political strategy and discourse to steer different sectors of a struggle or movement in a same direction, by fabricating (and enforcing) consensus on aims and means and suppressing contradictory or dissent voices]. With this movement of yellow vests as on a more general level, one of the knots of the question is certainly there: actually, what is our perspective? And which means do we give ourselves to reach it, in calm as well as hectic conditions? *Un peu d'imagination, que diable!*

# To Seize the Moment, Still

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*"There remains (for all those who do not maintain that 'people are complicit and resigned') the hypothesis of autonomous intervention in struggles – or in the fairly extensive acts of rebellion – that arise spontaneously. If we are looking for a clear expression of the kind of society the exploited are fighting for (as one subtle theoretician claimed in the face of a recent wave of strikes), we might as well stay at home. [...] But who said that when workers come out into the streets on strike, the economy cannot be criticised elsewhere? To say what the enemy does not expect and be where they are not waiting for us. That is the new poetry."*

- At Daggers Drawn with the Existent, its Defenders and its False Critics, 2001

While the militant entomologists continue in their dusty offices to dissect the composition of the heterogeneous movement of the yellow vests – not intersectional, proletarian, progressive or mute enough, depending on the taste – most of the anti-authoritarians ended up plunging into the battle, including those dragging their feet. Certainly while telling themselves and rightly so, that after all a social movement is nothing else than what each person makes of it. In the same way that before the Christmas holidays the school pupils entered the dance, or that demonstrations on Sundays started happening with women in yellow vests to put the spotlight on patriarchy, without mentioning the small troops of syndicalists who here or there try to reconquer ground by organising their own block. For a lot of people, in the end the question pertains to the classical mechanisms of politics, by adding rage to the anger, a tag to a slogan, in a contest of claims and presence tied to a quantitative vision of struggle. Inside such a framework it isn't surprising that the vultures prowl who smell the possibility of a bit of power after two months of movement and

veiled appeals from the state (by trying to organise steward teams and approved routes, by passing from the television studios to future electoral lists, by trying to monopolize the existing assemblies).

The fact remains that this movement is not just a sequence of riotous Saturdays or deliberative assemblies. And if many focus on these moments in terms of a contribution so as "not to leave the terrain open for reactionaries", it must be clear that from the beginning we are also witnessing a multiplication of direct actions on weekdays, from which the autonomous and diffuse character has the advantage to make them less controllable and to allow a continuity in case of a return to normality. They first started from the occupations of roundabouts, mostly blockades close to home and in small groups (toll booths, commercial or industrial zones), thereafter bit by bit through sabotage according to the imagination of each. Why limit oneself to a ritual day of confrontations when one can also on any night destroy everything that oppresses us? And who knows, why wouldn't these aimed attacks fuel each other by multiplying on one hand in good ideas and on the other in a subversive game of *to each its own*? Is a social movement of this type – open and unpredictable – not fertile grounds for such a game, everyone from their own bases? Just to, for example, contribute to identifying the enemy, to deepen the revolt, to undermine its recuperators, to enhance our projects, or simply to seize the moment to carry through what we normally have more difficulty in achieving?

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If we are interested in the effects of contagion then take for example the media, from which everyone can experience the role of mouthpiece of power.



The 26<sup>th</sup> of December during the evening in La Chevrolière, south of Nantes, the blockade of a printing centre of the Sipa group stopped the distribution of 180,000 copies of *Ouest-France* (editions of Vendée and Loire-Atlantique), of *Presse Océan* and of *Courrier de l'Ouest* (edition of Deux-Sèvres), all already printed. The night of the 11<sup>th</sup> of January in Anzin (Nord), the printing centre of *La Voix du Nord* is blocked, preventing the distribution of 20,000 newspapers in the Valenciennes region. The same night yellow vests in Auxerre surrounded the printing centre of the Centre France group, blocking the distribution of thousands of copies of *Journal du Centre* (Nevers) and *République du Centre* (Orléans), and delaying the distribution of *L'Yonne Républicaine* (Auxerre). The same happened, but with less success because the cops cleared the barricades of flaming pallets in time, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January in Houdemont (near to Nancy) at the printing centre of the Ebra group (*Est Républicain*, *Le Républicain Lorrain* and *Vosges Matin*) and the 10<sup>th</sup> of January in L'Isle d'Espagnac (near to Angoulême) attempting to block the distribution of the *Charente Libre* newspaper. And let it be clear, each time it took only some dozens of determined and well-informed persons to shut up the regional propaganda for a moment. This didn't stop the virtual distribution of newspapers, but we'll come back to that.

On another level; in the big cities that are since some weeks the theatre of regular clashes (Paris, Toulouse, Caen, Bordeaux, Montpellier, Nantes, Besançon, Rouen, Perpignan) or less regular (Dijon, Epinal, Nîmes, Saint-Nazaire, Lyon, Lille, Marseille,

Le Mans), besides the street furniture, the banks are typically a preferred target. Including where the store fronts weren't used to this sport: in Saint-Nazaire on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, besides an abundantly stoned police station and the burned entrance gate to the prefecture, the dozen of banks in the town centre were systematically trashed. In Epinal on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, besides barricades and an overturned police car, two big banks were devastated. In Nîmes on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, besides the second attempt at burning the tax centre and the destruction of six surveillance cameras, a dozen of banks in the city centre were consistently trashed. Even in Marseille, although not known for this kind of riotous confrontations, there is almost not a single bank left in the small city centre with its windows intact, while half of the businesses at La Canebière [central shopping street] were looted, trashed or had some kind of trouble at their shop window.

This target, certainly a usual suspect as a cog of capitalism, is also targeted with a certain imagination outside of the collective moments and far away from the metropolises, but always with the idea of sparing it the least possible. In Aulnoye-Aymeries (Nord) during the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, the ATMs of 3 banks are shattered with a hammer. In Lodève (Hérault) during the night of 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, those of five banks are sabotaged with silicone. In Morlaàs and Pau (Pyrénées) on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December, the toll goes up to 15 ATMs sabotaged with expanding foam. In Fougères (Ille-et-Vilaine) in the 8<sup>th</sup> of December, the ATMs of almost all banks were sabotaged with a mixture of silicone and glue.

Of course, there will always be those who without a formal letter of intent play along with police speculations. If these actions are isolated, or if they respond to each other without mediation. Outside of a movement, who knows if these anonymous acts of sabotage are not the acts of madmen, competitors or mafias? During a movement, who knows if they are not the acts of madmen, democrats or fascists? So what? As far as we are concerned, when the authors are unknown and don't specify their bad intentions, it is only the action that speaks, *with all the poetry* it can hold, the one that breaks with resignation and passivity. An anonymous action that speaks to everyone that shares it. To each one who recognize themselves directly.



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At a time when domination is embodied in an endless amount of peripheral structures that can be found at each corner of a street or field, it is about time to finish off the Leninist myth of the taking of the Winter Palace, of the taking or destruction of a centre or heart of the state and capital. Even the too visible neo-Blanquists finally got it by aiming for a destitution of power from below instead of a conquest from above, weaving a web that stretches now from a part of the cultural and syndicalist left to whichever sheep in search of leaders and an efficient strategy. On the contrary when we neither want to direct the rebels nor control the revolt, the act of defending and encouraging the scattered attacks (which doesn't stand in the way of coordination) corresponds not only with a territorial organisation of domination in the form of fluxes, hubs and small interdependent units, but also allows to limit the potential for harm by authoritarians who are always more at ease in the quantitative and representation.

Besides, if the costly structures like speed cameras (more than 6,000 sabotaged in 2018, of which 500 burned since the 17<sup>th</sup> of November) leaves someone indifferent, why not look then to the elected to express what one thinks of the daily humiliation that they impose? Don't the powerful have addresses just like the speed cameras? In Talmont-Saint-Hilaire (Vendée) on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January for example the home of a LREM representative was walled in with some fifty concrete bricks during his sleep. While in Varennes-Vauzelles (Nièvre) on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December the mayor received his Christmas present twice over with cobblestones against his car and a bottle with acid in front of the window of his living room. Without mentioning the very fragile windows of their arrogance on all sides (offices shattered from the PS in Nancy the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December and in Lorient the 10<sup>th</sup> of January, from the LREM in Nantes on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December and in Beauvais the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, of *Génération Identitaire* in Paris on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January).

Besides, if the relentless destruction of tollbooths on the highways leaves someone indifferent, why not look then to the railroads? Like those sabotaged railway crossings (9 between Saint-Dié and Nancy the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, 6 around Bagnols-sur-Cèze

the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, a fire in Dax the 9<sup>th</sup> of January), like those railway tracks barricaded (bars and tires in Saint-Louis in Alsace the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, burning pallets in Vestric-et-Candiac in Gard the 13<sup>th</sup> of January) or like those signaling and electricity boxes next to the tracks burned (Castellas the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, Carcassonne the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, Montdragon and Lapalud in three spots the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, St-Clair-les-Roches the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, Bollène the 28<sup>th</sup> of December).

Or more, if the burning of tax offices leaves someone indifferent, why not look then to the social cops? Like that social security office in Ajaccio that had its entrance glued shut on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January in the early hours by two yellow vests to block the workers from entering. Or like the facade of the dole office that was burned at the same time as three offices from its consultants in Montluçon on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December.

There is a whole world to destroy with passion to dance a ballet without end nor beginning, and all these actions that start to waltz from one target to another, following the hostilities of each one during the whole week, are actually speaking to any one who is ready to hear them. And if not one of them speaks to the heart or one's own perspectives, would it be so absurd to contribute something *proper*? Like for example those comrades who turned to ashes a vehicle of surveillance technology *after* a Saturday riot (Besançon the 5<sup>th</sup> of January), or those who *elsewhere* caused serious damages on the construction site of a mega commercial centre called Steel (Saint-Etienne, the 31<sup>st</sup> of December).

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*"Without wanting to revive the myth that the general strike is the unshackling of insurrection, it is clear enough that the interruption of all social activity is still decisive. Subversive action must tend towards the paralysis of normality, no matter what originally caused the clash. If students continue to study, workers – those who remain of them – and office employees to work, the unemployed to worry about employment, then no change will be possible."*

- At Daggers Drawn with the Existent, its Defenders and its False Critics, 2001

Finally, besides multiplying the objectives by being where we are not expected, another small suggestion starts to emerge here and there in the movement. One that could inspire those who want to take care of the pending social problem in a bit of a more radical manner. Even if blocked at the exit of the printing centres, the newspapers continue to spread the propaganda of power through the web, and similarly the banks are essentially not a window but a space fed by electricity where fluxes of digital data circulate through fibre optic cables. More generally, if certain structures of the state (from universities to police stations, from train yards to city halls and prefectures) and capital (from technological control labs to the military industry, from banks to commercial and industrial zones) are sometimes difficult to access, this isn't always true for the fluxes with which they are eagerly fed and that can be found in electricity transformers, connection boxes for fibre optic cables or cell towers. Thousands of dispersed structures, impossible to keep an eye on, and for which the functioning is necessary for the production and circulation of goods, but also for control and repression. It is thus maybe not surprising that a part of them have been damaged over the last two months of this movement.

In Montélimar shortly before Christmas, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, some fifty yellow vests got organised to loot the trucks leaving the logistical hub of Amazon, and they also took care of building four barricades of trolleys from the neighbouring supermarket and putting them on fire, of arming themselves with stones taken from the walls running



along the companies' premises, then they punctured the tires of the trucks and opened the trailers after tearing off the cables linking them with the cabins. But they also set fire to an electrical transformer in a nearby street, to interrupt the street lights and the supply of the commercial zone. Thus Orange [telecommunications company] had to replace almost 2 kilometres of underground fibre optic cables to restore the internet in the area, the fibre melted because of the combined effect of the burning of the barricades and electrical transformer.

In Bordeaux during a riot on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December that notably ravaged the tramway network of Keolis [public transport company], a big fire on the tracks of the tramway at the Cours d'Alsace et Lorraine [main street] melted one of the cables of the ground-level power supply, making necessary huge nightly works to restore the traffic as fast as possible (200,000 euros in damages). In Caen where the riot on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January took place along 2 kilometres of a construction site of the tramway, providing the rebels with materials, the one of the 12<sup>th</sup> of January followed a similar route and certain rebels had the brilliant idea of not only burning the pylons along the tracks, but also of setting fire to the interiors of the ground-level metal sheaths covering the electricity supply, causing considerable damages.

To understand the vital importance of the electricity networks in terms of the destruction of a structure of the enemy, we could mention the example of the tollbooths of Bandol, in Var, of which the burning in the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> of December has not been the most relayed by the press, but of which the consequences for Vinci have been the most serious. Four months later the eight lanes are still closed because of the amount of repair works to be done. Besides the burning of the cabins of the tollbooths, the unknown persons also set fire to an underground gallery of the electricity network. As a consequence "multiple kilometres of cables have burned [and have to be replaced], according to the workers", in the words of the local journalists to explain the durable effect of this sabotage.

Outside of the notorious Saturdays that don't seem to end despite the repression, merry nightbirds have also started to identify the vital fluxes as an assured way of blocking the economy. In Saint-Vulbas on the

20<sup>th</sup> of December they dislodged the cabin of a hub of fibre optic cables from the industrial zone of Plaine de l'Ain (Pipa). Next they opened it with a crowbar in the middle of the night, before placing a tire and some newspapers in front of it and then pouring over it an inflammable liquid. Almost fifty companies have been left without internet connection directly due to this fire and indirectly some dozens more since the nodes are connected to each other.

In a similar way in Nièvre during the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, "masked individuals moving in vehicles with their number plates concealed", according to local journalists, have burned technical telephone boxes in six different districts (Guérigny, Dougues-les-Eaux, Fourchambault, Varennes-Vauzelles, Saint-Aubin-les-Forges, Murlin) causing serious telecommunication network cuts. Numerous businesses and companies have thus been left without internet.

In the same vein, several cell towers have burned over the last month: in Saint-Julien-des-Landes

(Vendée) the 11<sup>th</sup> of December, in Bernis (Gard) the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December along the highway and in Casseuil (Gironde) the 24<sup>th</sup> of December. As said in the text published in this bulletin of the previous month concerning *non-consensual* contributions, "we don't think that it fits directly into a struggle stuck in the technological cages. So what?"

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To seize the moment is above all a matter of autonomous ideas and perspectives, that should at minimum have been developed before such a social movement emerges. But it is also a matter of an open eye and an analysis of what surrounds us. Because our actions are never totally separated from the ongoing social war. Thus, unless one thinks it's not worth it, are there no possibilities in the subversive game for *each to their own* so that the attacks can multiply by nourishing each other? Certainly in a period like this one. *Un peu d'imagination, que diable...*

# | Caught in the Web

**First appeared as** *Ins Netz gegangen in Dissonanz* (Anarchistische Zeitung, Zürich),  
**Issue 43, February 2017**

In a few decades the whole world has been covered in several new webs. Internet, mobile phone network & co... How fast this web expands, how ever more densely interwoven it gets... hardly anyone would have predicted. Optical fibre cables that like veins are extended under cities, signals that buzz with always higher frequencies through the air, antennas, modems, mobiles, wireless, home monitoring, the internet of things, smart city...

Today there is exponentially more talk about social networks, network integration, networking, the web, etc.... These concept enter into the vocabulary of businesses, of politics, of interest groups and circles of friends... really everywhere is this language. It is a total transformation of theories about

organisation while, which shouldn't be surprising, at the same time the whole of society is restructured on new bases.

But what is the purpose of a web? Undoubtedly, a spider weaves its web to catch insects which it can then devour alive. A fisher brings a net to catch fish. So, to what end is this brave new worldwide web, that is build by several businesses and state institutions and is continually expanded? Well, those who weave and finance this web have their eye on one thing: *capital*. Everything that is caught in this web becomes information in the form of zeros and ones, potentially usable information which means more capital for those *up-to-date*.

This web has been woven during several decades, and lots see still more development potential. What if we expand ever more the web over the urban architecture? Weave it into homes? Or even into humans? That would yield even more information. Detailed information, information that can reflect all of reality, meaning: still more capital. Capital in the form of security, of control, of speed, of forecasting and predictability...

With the present restructuring, that is developed to save capitalism, also the relations of domination change. This has been coming for a long time. Certain now outmoded things that caused lots of disgruntlement, are more and more relinquished – of course this can change again in the future. At least the direct and openly authoritarian behaviours in the family, the school, the workplace etc. can be increasingly toned down as the direct and unmediated human relations dwindle more and more anyhow. In their place comes the logic of networks, transparent networks that at best create a productive knot in the huge web. Domination is more im-

personal and it is unclear to whose algorithm we're dancing, how it is programmed, who controls the program... As flies we're stuck in a spider's web, but it seems that we've lost the instinct to try to wriggle out and attempt to fly away. Often we don't even know what it means – *to fly*.

As anarchists, I think, we shouldn't just adopt the language about networks etc. A web is something with which one is caught, in which one becomes tangled up and from which one barely emerges again. Rather should we base our struggle in an open organisation – that can be freely engaged in and that can always be dissolved by the participants when it makes sense – and on direct and unmediated relations – beyond social norms and hierarchies, beyond algorithms and programs.

And while it seems that people fall as flies in the web, lured with flickering images, convenience and gadgets to the point of nausea, should we better think about how we cut through the knots and sever the wires till the whole web tears up!

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# 2+2=7

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*"Don't ever forget that in every revolution there is three quarters of imagination and only one quarter of reality, or put differently – because I see you frowning while reading these lines – life, my friend, is always more expansive than doctrine; life will never fit into a doctrine, even if it is as universal as our anarchist doctrine."* – Mikhail Bakunin

Maybe this jab – life, my friend is always *more expansive than doctrine* – gains intensity when made clear that who pronounced it is no other than the bold insurgent and anarchist agitator from great

Russia. Today many vilify his writings without batting an eyelid; too old, too philosophical. Often referred because in his ripe years he called for the destruction of public order and the unleashing of the evil passions. But it's willingly ignored that in his early years he was above all a big fan of rationalism, having declared moreover – still clinging to Hegel – that "truth is not an abstraction nor the result of a personal whim, but only the most logical expression of the principles that live and act within the masses" or that "all that is natural is logic and all that is logic is realised or has to be realised in the real world; in

nature itself and in its subsequent development: the natural history of human society.” So yes, that disclosure slipped into a letter to a friend, has something potent and precious.

At the moment of the passing of power from religious obscurantism to the first conquests of so-called secular thought, the responsibility of all the wrongs of society was blamed on the faith in God and they were under the illusion that humankind could do without belief. That was irrespective of the warning of Stirner who would later show how God can very well pack up and move from heaven to earth. Faith in God became faith in Science, and thereby in Reason. This might have had considerable consequences – and partly positive – humans have nevertheless maintained their need to *believe* in something they consider capable of averting the uncertain, the undetermined. This belief that they are looking for in faith, or in reason (and the logic that flows from it), betrays in both cases the need for a certainty – one dethroning the other once it is proven unfounded. It didn’t take long before Christian messianism was replaced by Marxist messianism, spreading a new belief in the ranks of the exploited. A new hope is constructed, of the revolution of work. That path that theoretically would pass first through the organisation of the productive forces, then through the violent expropriation of the bosses, to end in the construction of a society relieved of class and exploitation.

Condensed to broad brush strokes we could say that also the anarchist movement has been – in large part and over a long period – certain that history had a direction, that society develops towards Progress and that the role of revolutionaries was to either support evolution or force the pace. A certain anarchism, the “reasoning” anarchism, developed as a reading grid of the world and society, pretending to understand and explain the whole of terrestrial phenomena and their multiple interactions. We could have a hunch from the importance that certain scientific men had over the anarchist movement in their time (for example Kropotkin or Élisée Reclus). It also allows some today to promote anarchism bragging about its *objectivity*, to debate it with complete peace of mind, to speak about it while making abstraction of its practical realisations and its viscosity. All in all totally disembodied ideas: a brain activity, without the emotional turmoil.

Going back to the past, operating a sort of mix between historical materialism and determinism (every cause has its effect and every effect is the product of a cause), certain comrades thought in all sincerity that anarchism –by means of elaboration – could be a key capable of rationally guiding their action and that the question of revolution was thus, partly, a case of logic.

Thus, it has been several centuries now that Science tries to assimilate the Universe. Today the research into terrains such as the alleged “artificial intelligence” seeks to reduce humans to a set of algorithms and lines of code. In the same process, the rationality of the machine – which became our daily fate – levels out bit by bit all that is absurd, unexpected, fantastic, passionate, irrational in each of us. A real conquest (with its share of battles) is carried out under our eyes and inside us, seeking to banish risk, the unforeseen, adventure. As our existences are augmented, optimised, assisted, ordered and enlisted in a space-time made up of geographical coordinates and chronometrical readings, saturated with prostheses, devices, norms, symbols, signs and codes; life, fundamentally exuberant and excessive, struggling to find a space-time to experiment that is its own, is absent.

Science and its armed wing, technology, if they might have acquired a power without precedent in the history of human societies, are nonetheless not able to give a sense to our life. On the contrary. The first has been for ages at the service of deadly projects, and its outcomes eliminate, reduce or degrade the conditions of the perpetuation of life itself; as for the second, after having undermined its sense, eroded, deformed, clouded, reduced, falsified, it is driving us, gradually but certainly, to a generalised loss of sense.

That’s why among other things we reject science and technology, and that we scorn them. And together with these, that condition and structure our existences, we reject the rules and presumptions that are at the root, till questioning logic (meaning the whole of rules that determine the work of reason) on which this world is based, and on which also a big majority of its (even fierce) adversaries are based.

This ambitious claim is nothing new. Remember that almost one century ago, one of the driving forces of

the surrealist movement – considered as one of the most subversive movements of the century – appealed to pass “the head, then an arm, through the bars thus breaking away from logic, that is, the most hated of prisons.” Think also about that occult poet, who during the same period, had this dialogue with the psychiatrist of the asylum where he was imprisoned:

– Yes, but look where it [automatic writing] got you. At a point of such unsociability that you cannot get along with your fellows and that you are the prisoner of your images, of your dreams.

– I prefer my spiritual, anguished, hopeless ways

over the logical and reasonable ways of intelligence.

– So you don’t want to heal, to become a normal, balanced man, master of your emotions and impressions?

– I loathe that kind of men. I desire to be possessed

– even if I am undermined by it in a terrible way – by my thought, my desire and my dream.”

Think finally of this other poet, Ramses Younane, who in 1940 saw that bourgeois society was confronted with a crisis more important than the question of consumption, of subsistence (the problem of bread), namely “a crisis of thirsty and starving hearts, of imagination gone mad; a crisis of poetry, of joy and folly; a crisis of movement, of expansion and opening. A crisis of life.” (An observation that an accursed poet wouldn’t have objected to, who almost a century before and in the middle of the industrial revolution, already warned that the universal ruin – or universal progress, *whatever the name* – would manifest itself in “the depreciation of the hearts.”) According to Younane, in the past the bourgeoisie laboured to replace blind faith with rational logic. The glorification of rationality has bit by bit shaped life in a technological mechanical system allowing neither the twists of imagination nor the pleasure of a free spirit. From then on, the instincts and profound feelings that naturally tend to seek pleasure, were exploited and deformed by the commercial battle, by the competitive struggle or by the military hymns. His conclusion was clear: “The values of bourgeois rationalism are incapable of curing us of the crisis of bourgeois civilisation. If we want to survive and save ourselves, we have to rebel against these values, against rationalism and go beyond – without going back to a humble and servile belief, but rather by confirming the right of the free and rebellious spirit to overcome the limits of reason and the chains of faith.”



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In an anarchist perspective, thus of total liberation, I think, as a lot of comrades do, that the destruction of the structures of domination should go hand in hand with the subversion of the existing social relations. Social relations that are at the same time the product and the necessary condition, and the other way around. But I’m as well firmly convinced that we should each, individually, fight against the absolutism of reason and the empire of logic that have been instilled, shaped by centuries of culture and civilisation. On the one hand, it’s a matter of stopping thinking that logic could, in an absolute way, establish the standards of rationality (not more than the rules of non-reason, meaning irrationality). On the other hand, it’s a matter of fighting against the dominant logic, that we have internalised without our knowledge and from which freeing ourselves is not an easy task. That logic that proves to be deeply useful for the perpetuation of power and the existing order that dominates us all and that we reproduce because it grants the majority of people who accept or at least put up with the conditions in which they live, the idea that they reason “well”. That logic that forces them into “reasonable” choices. It’s that logic that, in the course of years, wore down this life that as a child we imagined full of marvels, or at least full of possibilities, till imprisoning it in its image: an existence narrowed by routine, compromise, calculations and constraints.

What are the standards of that dominant logic, pillar of the existing order?

Accommodation and gradualism are the cornerstone

of this logic, personified as much by progressives and reformists as by conservatives. The result is they can only formulate *partial modifications* of reality, thus allowing this organisation of the world – based in domination and exploitation – to survive and carry on ruling in exchange for small progressive adjustments. From this perspective we can understand that the classical dichotomy progressive/conservative is a fake opposition: the first try to preserve the old order of things by attaching some devout ornaments, the second try to maintain the order of things through change. On top of that is the reasonable despotism of *one thing at a time*, that feeds and supports the source of voluntary servitude and assures, thanks to politics, the perpetuation of the existence of masters and slave, more sustainable than the use of force from which the world is nonetheless not spared. Facing this, fighting against the dominant logic means tending towards an “irrational” refusal, *to oppose to the partial and gradual modification the total transformation*, through a destruction that chooses to annihilate rather than going in search of a cure for the incurable.

It is undeniable that dominant logic is inseparable from the reproduction of the organisation of the world. Just as it is undeniable that this logic is based on *the acceptance of what is*, and that it can not at all be recuperated by an anarchist. Because all revolt draws its force and its vibrancy from the refusal of only the things that “are”, from the rejection of the only possibility of what “is”. It is from there that anarchists strive to trace and to travel paths that we can show and incite to take, to reach by trespassing upon what supposedly “is not” even upon what supposedly “cannot be”. And that should strengthen us, because it is both a challenge for ourselves and the first charge in our fight against the dominant logic.

We should thus go beyond the rules of the existent, beyond what is, beyond the rationality in force, to seek a sense for our lives. And this sense, can we seek it in a “counter-logic”, a freeing logic instead of the logic of submission, a “freer” logic? Or should we seek in the magma of suggestions that life offers us, these suggestions that we try to immediately ignore, suppress or repulse?

*“Logic may indeed be unshakeable, but it cannot withstand someone who is determined to live.” – Franz Kafka*

The sense we’re searching for our life cannot be given by our existence in this world based on the rules of the dominant logic. Because existence is based on reduction: reduction of life to the material needs of survival, reduction to the vital minimum of our desires, expectations, dreams, instincts, reduction of life to something measurable, quantifiable. Existence is made of reasoning and “common sense”, small and sparse calculations make us give up on the essential (the adventure, the passion, the dream) to be certain of the mediocre, comfort, order, security. Life – and I say this fully conscious of the lightness of this remark – is expansive, is movement, energy, attraction and drive, is diversity and creativity, and through this, is chaotic. Life is application, essentially, is a matter of self-determination, of discovery, of self-realisation, is an opening to joy. There is in it something upsetting, that consists the opposition to the “course of events” and to the established order, natural or social, familial or divine.

Existence is but a flattened event, without depth and deprived of sense, that finds its *raison d’être* in the preservation and the repeating of models. It is evaluated through duration and quantity, while the criteria of life are intensity and quality. Rather than giving importance to what life is made from only on the base of the dominant logic, conventions and values imposed by society, we should give it to life when it emerges at the surface of our being, consider and receive it as an occurrence, nervous because it is the one and only that we possess, but insanely excited because it can reveal itself as full of marvels. Careful thus, that it can express at best its potentials.

*“There has always been a basic flaw in my nature; a love of the fantastic, of extraordinary and unheard-of adventure, of undertakings with boundless horizons the outcome of which no one can predict. In an ordinary and calm existence, I suffocated, I felt out of place. Most men seek tranquillity and consider it the highest good; in me, however, it produces only despair. My spirit is in constant turmoil, demanding action, movement, and life.” – Mikhail Bakunin*

What is then this need for action, movement and life? Wouldn’t it be a sign of... vitality?! The anarchist revolution, such as I can conceive of, is as well as a



struggle for the annihilation of exploitation and domination and the subversion of the existing social relations, also the abundance and liberation of this vitality, today weighed down. This vitality, that can manifest itself in thousand and one ways, we can see it in all its magnificence and charged with its wild force in revolt, this balance of awareness and sensitivity, of head and arms. And it's also in this vitality that attack and destruction (that come so often back in, among others, the speech of anarchists) have their roots, not in logic. Our anarchist tension springs from our vitality, from this feeling that life that simmers in us has to emerge. And vice versa, we feel alive because we revolt and because we are able for a moment to leave the terrain of words, thought and reflection, of the rational explanation and the rational construction of our existences, to act. Of course, from the viewpoint of the dominant logic this is illogical, senseless, incomprehensible, even mad. That there are logical foundations for destruction, that it is possible to argue in its favour and to debate it only by reasoning, to reflect on its different aspects – that is still undeniable and necessary. But if we wait until we dispose of a logical faultless and detailed system to start acting, then we will stay prisoners for eternity and be paralysed by shortcomings and uncertainties – because such a system doesn't exist, it cannot exist. Our "personal logic" is not capable of responding in an adequate manner to the madness that is our destructive tension to liberty. Neither do we have complete, detailed and ready-to-use "logics" to propose to those who understand and suffer from the distance that separates their existence from their life, and thus decide to fight.

If we fight for a radically different world, we should also fight to form and circulate ways of *reasoning differently*. We're living in an age where the means subjugate the individuals, rather than the other way round that would consist in adopting the means in function of the ends. And it is the same reversal – where the instrument becomes master – that happened with reason. Moreover, this instrument with which we thought to be able to read, to understand the world and to emancipate ourselves, didn't keep its promises and never did what it pretended to do at the dawn of its first realisations. As a first step we should break away from that deceitful and harmful idea that it's only up to reason (and the logic it produces) to determine our choices and the orientations



we want to give to our life. To seize with both hands this idea that our life is a space crossed by countless forces in conflict and to consider of greatest importance the will, the conscience, the desire, the attraction, the intuition, the sense of daring, the dream, the curiosity, the sensitivity, the taste (not only for adventure or discovery, but more prosaic everything that gives pleasure to our senses), the joy in the effort. It shouldn't be something that controls us, keeps us in the boundaries of the reasonable, but something that allows us to orient ourselves beyond this cornered patch. It should also not be the leash on our most generous thoughts and impulses, but on the contrary guide us when we free ourselves from the yoke of realism and we achieve to *think dangerously*: meaning, amongst other things, to not systematically hold in suspicion the ends (and the necessary projects to achieve them) that are not in line, or that exceed, the immediate possibilities and the available means. The dichotomy between that what supposedly is a matter of the reasonable and what pertains to insanity is ready to be thrown out from the moment we become the adventurers of our Idea, determined to create and follow our own path.

*"Dreams! Always dreams! And the more ambitious and delicate is the soul, the more its dreams bear it away from possibility. Each man carries in himself his dose of natural opium, incessantly secreted and renewed, and, from birth to death, how many hours can we count that are filled by positive enjoyment, by successful and decisive action? Shall we ever live, shall we ever pass into this image which my soul has painted, this image which resembles you?" – Baudelaire*

# Day-to-day Normality as Source of Depression

First appeared as Die tägliche Normalität als Quelle der Depression in Fernweh (Anarchistische Strassenzeitung, München), Issue 30, December 2018

They say that depression is the disease of this century. Psychology books don't only list the symptoms, they also specify the experienced sensations: changes in sleep habits, moods, lasting sadness, anxiety, emptiness, despair, low self-esteem, a feeling of helplessness... Deep inside we feel a constant unrest and a sense of powerlessness to change it.

It is not surprising that depression is the disease of this century. If it's true that when the state and its institutions exist, the individual is subjugated to external forces; then, I think, it's also true that the progress of the existent entails an increasing impossibility – or a personal sense of impossibility – to refuse it. In addition to subordination, routine, work, to social hierarchies and human alienation, to the economy and morality – that from the start have undermined the individual – there is today also a technological and scientific machine that robs us from the last bits of courage to desire something else. The objective alienation of individuals from their relationships, their energy and time are combined with their alienation from their emotions and their capacity to act. We are stuck in deep shit and are unable to change that – if this is real or fiction has no significance because the passing of one day to the next doesn't correspond to a real and direct desire. "To live" has become barely more than the obligations and roles we fulfil and no matter why, we feel damned to reproduce them.

What psychologists call "learned helplessness" goes hand in hand with lasting depression or sometimes it precedes it: resignation and the feeling that nothing can be done to change something in a negative situ-

ation. The feeling of being unable to avert negative events or experiences gives rise to a wretched resignation which reproduces itself once it has settled in.

Two psychologists (Seligman and Maier) with little empathy for dogs have, in an experiment in the sixties, imprisoned them and given them electro shocks without giving them a possibility to escape from the cage or from the shocks. In the beginning the dogs would rampage before the unpleasant stimuli started, but once they became conscious of the impossibility to stop this experience they would fast curl up in a corner of the cage – adapted and suffering. They learned there is nothing they can do. Helpless. They faced the situation obstinately while enduring the pain. The fact that the researcher later on changed a condition – the possibility to leave the cage – doesn't change anything: the dogs stay in the corner where they are curled up when the shocks are given.

Daily life is a huge cage in which we are regularly administered shocks. They don't kill us, but we continue to die – above all emotionally. And at the height of suffering that is imposed on us, we still bear feelings of guilt – we were not capable of dealing with it, we didn't adapt. Those who have more expectations fall deeper, but every one starts to stumble at some point – it is very democratic. We sustain the lasting slump in a long, unpleasant sensory inducement in which the "cage" and the "shocks" are one and the same, not distinguishable; we learn and internalise that everyday reactions (we can hardly speak of actions) are and will be like this so that the conditions of living cannot be changed.

that it doesn't depend on us. In this way is my life not mine, and as much am I unable to stop the suffering I experience. Individual alienation and learned helplessness are two intertwined processes. The social order is a source for depression as well as a depressive factor.

Aside from our specific experiences that can lead us to sadness and helplessness, everyday life is more than sufficient grounds for such an immense spreading of depression.

As others have pointed out, this "moral anxiety" kills certainly more than any other poison. Whereas many psychological sessions argue that there are no grounds to be depressed, can we in this context on the contrary actually say that an analysis of reality shows us these grounds.

*When depression, in this perspective, is a normal consequence of the normal course of events, then its demise depends on a rupture in the normal course of events.*

Psychology attempts to bring peace to the restless minds through helping individuals to find their own way of dealing with suffering. At last the individual is capable of developing automatic strategies that fade out the suffering. But while adapting to a personal tragedy is a personal need, is it then valid to seek adjustment for a social – and thus externally imposed – tragedy? I think for example (concerning the first) of the death of a comrade, and (concerning the latter) of the obligation to work. Moreover, shall this adjustment even be possible? To continue with the same example, the loss of a loved one (because of death, flight, separation, estrangement) is a severe violence which can happen to you at a particular moment – and normally from that moment where we hit rock bottom, we start slowly to step by step get up again, which can take years – up until a satisfactory emotional stability. On the other hand, work is for example subtly violent which according to its scientific application and dosage can become excessive, and is daily – routinely and inevitably – applied for decades without end. We hit rock bottom without ever leaving it behind – that is the martyrdom to which we are condemned and from which we never even know how to adapt to it since there is no way to detract from it.

We curl up into a corner; there remains nothing but the cause of the problem and it shows itself ostentatiously so that we cannot forget it as much as we would want to.

I don't want to fall into the rhetoric that psychology only serves to have "the individual adapt to society" – even if it often does that. You ascertain your own individuality – which is already an achievement nowadays – and attempt to find ways in which you can minimize the suffering that you can't handle any more. But from the perspective of "social anxiety" of which I was speaking – when the social order is the cause of emotional suffering – is psychology only an anaesthetic. The anxiety we feel as well as the problems of our personal relationships are further maintained because the social structures require it. Happiness is difficult when we are forced into an activity which drags on for hours each day. Happiness is difficult when rigidity stands in the way of laughter, movement and joy. It is difficult when what we are is forced into a social role, when communication is not upfront, when integrity is punished...

To get rid of the sadness which is an outcome of the normal course of things, it is necessary to bring this course to a halt. And to end this course of things, a social response is needed, one clearly based in the individual but which goes beyond personal problems to understand it as a social consequence. In this case only revolt is therapeutic – to revolt as an immediate subversion of the social order and relations because they are the cage as well as the shocks within our lives.



# A Barbaric Contribution

First appeared as Contributo barbaro as a contribution to the international anarchist encounter in Zürich, November 2012

When we try to read the reality that surrounds us we realize that we are assisting to profound transformations when we look at the management of economic and political power. Such changes are also reflected on a social level. It is necessary to confront ourselves with the current transformations and to take them into consideration in relation to our analysis and perspective of attack.

Capital is not in crisis, but the financial choices of the states 'simply' have created some difficulties in the traditional management of the market and have produced, in general, a worsening of conditions in the life of consumer-citizens. The contradictions that capital has developed have contributed to possible moments of conflict in some zones, more or less brutal and of longer or shorter time span, between the structures and guardians of power and those pockets of population that have had enough with being excluded from the comforts promised by the fake well-being of the society of consumption.

Looking at this situation it is natural to ask ourselves what to do. Being "here and now" is in fact at the basis of our desire of violent rupture with all systems of values, with capital and its many variations.

Within such reflections and within the definition of perspectives that can guide us through uncertain and unexplored paths of revolt we believe it necessary to avoid looking at reality through easy enthusiasms that risk leading us to see insurrections at every street corner, accomplices in every protester, revolutionary subjects in all exploited. At the same time we believe it is equally dangerous to remain anchored in a kind of realist pessimism that risks paralysing us faced with the current time, of trans-

forming us into permanently awaiting, trapped in a deterministic logic.

What we believe to be fundamental is to place ourselves in a perspective of lucid observation that could allow us to grasp the current transformations, identifying the aspects which are vulnerable to our enemy, to better aim towards how and what to attack.

In the mental and material condition that is dominated by the urgency of being there (and not of being), as a definition of our own role within a diffused conflictuality, we risk losing sight of the central point: the necessity of starting from ourselves, from our own anarchist ideas and perspectives. Then, during a moment of a spontaneous revolt, the problem of anarchists is not that of seeking a role among other roles, of finding a way to be accepted by the others, to be agreeable or to hide our own real desires, to just make alliances. It would be a lot more useful to choose conditions of attack that hinder a return to normality; experimenting in the actions that belong to us, finding targets that spontaneity alone is not able to find. Any insurrectionary hypothesis is unpredictable and independent from us, but as anarchists, in a perspective of permanent conflictuality and of defining insurrectionary projects we can certainly give a fundamental contribution to what is going on.

The problems that we should confront ourselves with are not so much how to relate to the possibilities of revolt in the streets, of territorial and/or specific struggles that could become radical and widespread, but more how to continue to act and attack, in both a practical and theoretical dimension, in the light of the current transformations within society and the mechanisms of domination.

Analysing the practices and the paths of struggle in relation to the objective is the fundamental step of a discussion aimed towards individuating the limits and the perspectives of the theory and the practice of social subversion. To be able to better touch on the different questions and proposals that we intend to put forward on this occasion, we would like to bring certain points to the attention of comrades.

We believe it is urgent to confront the question of the ways of communication among comrades. The problem can be faced distinguishing two aspects: that of the ways with which we decide to communicate and that of the value that we give to the tools that each time we choose to use. Specifically, we are referring to the use of the internet and the way we relate to it. Our own use of these tools – even within limits – is a fact, however this is certainly not a factor from which we can consider them useful in the case of an insurrection or a fundamental tool in the definition of our perspective, or more, something which we can dispose of as we please.

The systems of virtual communication have caused enormous developments within the society we live in over the last twenty years and permeate every day more the reality and the relations between people. We cannot ignore that such systems have slowly entered our lives, inevitably conditioning also our way of relating with others, with what surrounds us and with the mediums of communication themselves. All of this happened in spite of our awareness that virtual irreality is functional to power and is one of its forces.

Over the last decade the traditional methods through which our ideas circulated, such as newspapers, brochures, flyers, poster and books have been severely reduced and the spreading of ideas has been almost entirely delegated to the virtual universe. More than ever it is indispensable to return and dust off the old forms of encounter and communication between comrades and experiment with new ones, ones that are only ours and not of the enemy. Meeting each other and taking the time to do so. Something that is more and more difficult given the daily rhythm imposed by modern life, rhythms that more or less consciously we have made our own.

It often happens to hear someone referring to the possibility of using computerized tools in certain situations. However finding ourselves in practice face to face with the daily use of the internet – particularly through the exchange of information and ideas – has shown us how much virtual reality has been able to condition in a negative way the current way of building relations. The idea of a good use of the virtual reality in a revolutionary perspective does not convince us. In fact we think that taking into consideration such a possibility would entail choosing paths that give no guarantee, given that they are functional to capital and the management of power. On the contrary, computerization and technological development have to become potential targets of attack.

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The machine of capital is fed by structures of power (bureaucracies and institutions), by mechanisms of repression and control (prisons, courthouses, military and police forces, surveillance systems), by work, by consensus, by production. Radical critique and the perspective of attack have to therefore develop on many levels, both through theory and through practice. Specifically the system of production and consumption is what binds and chains individuals to capital and all its variations. The creation of false needs determines submission, more or less conscious, to the exploitation of work, to the logics of economic colonialism. The production of energy, industrial complexes and more or less displaced factories, the distribution of merchandise are at the basis of the functioning of this world.

And it is precisely in this direction that we need to act without waiting for this wall of commodification, which is seeping into every pore of our existences, to collapse on top of us, while we are busy scratching away on the surface and not at its foundation, burying any future possibility of attack. Acquiring, exchanging and spreading information, practical and theoretical, in regards to the place and the use of tools and knowledge is one of the aspects that we believe is indispensable to discuss and develop.

We can ask ourselves questions about how to act and how to attack, but it is equally important to ask ourselves against what to act and which targets to

take into consideration, aiming towards taking the initiative rather than locking ourselves up in a logic of retaliation. What surrounds us is swarming with places through which capital proliferates. Places that were born or were transformed over the last decades. We can, briefly, give an example, with which it is easy to highlight some changes we are referring to. Let's consider the difference there is between paper archives and databases. In the past, burning the documentation of a registry office, of a workplace, of a large industrial complex could be considered a concrete destructive action. Today not. Information and archives are preserved in databases, in minuscule electronic devices, and run along thousands of kilometres of cables and wires. Is it not perhaps necessary to take this into account? Is it not perhaps obvious that the changes of the enemy have been radical and cannot be ignored, and therefore it is necessary to get to know them better and deeper?

On this occasion we do not want to make a list of what could possibly be considered targets of attack, we prefer leaving these matters to the imagination of the research and the creativity of one's own definition of perspectives of revolt.

Another point that we are interested in briefly discussing is the international dimension that we believe an insurrectionary perspective should assume or return to. Occasions such as this one allow us to meet, discuss, confront ourselves with other comrades from different places, and need to constitute a starting point to the deepening of future relationships. However the possibility to make these bonds on an individual basis or among realities from different places should not be the end, but a starting point and an aspect within the internationalist dimension that we aspire to. Having relations with comrades who live elsewhere is not enough, it is necessary that each one of us knows how to project ourselves in a perspective of observation and action that goes beyond territorial boundaries.

To explain ourselves better, let's take as an example what happened in Greece over the last years. The insurrection of December, the thousands of attacks spread over its entire territory, the repeating conflicts with the police forces as well as various symbols and structures of power, the looting of

supermarkets and many other actions that have warmed our hearts and fired our souls. Fires, though, that rarely spilled over our souls to assume a concrete dimension.

Reasons can be different one from another. Lack of contacts? A reality too far removed from our own? Internal conditions hard to decipher? Sporadic news that often is exclusively linked to sources of the regime? Of course these are reasons that probably weighed in. But first among all, the most determining one, was that we were not and are not prepared and therefore incapable of seizing the moment. Being able to take beyond the Greek borders a permanent conflictuality and targeted attacks, being able to understand the contradictions that capital is developing a bit everywhere, being able to counter-attack having at our disposal tools developed beforehand, could have made the difference. It is also through reflecting on this missed occasion, of which we could mention many more, that we can understand how much it is necessary to have the capacity to see beyond the few things that are in our short range of view and to be ready, to be prepared.

In the urgency of wanting to be there, in the excitement of participation in the possibility of spreading opposition we run the risk of losing ourselves between the provocations of capital and the trajectory of paths that don't belong to us. We don't have a world to save, nor consciences to conquest, nor a message to spread. Even though creativity as part of the unpredictable is quite fundamental, the perspectives and the objectives should not be pulled out of a magic hat. We cannot debase ourselves in an obsessive search for roles, numbers and head-counts. It is nonetheless important to explore new paths of attack, explore new means, tools and techniques in relation not only to objectives, but also tacking into consideration contexts and available forces.

Infinite possibilities of intervention exist in a critical and destructive path against the reality that surrounds us, and in such a path we find it important to extend and diversify the practices of conflict attempting to make them, time after time, reproducible.

*Palermo, 31 October.*

# Entanglement

## *On anarchism & individualism*

It doesn't often happen that anarchists take the time to question some of the basic concepts framing the perspectives of contemporaneous anarchist projects and lives. As such the effort of the authors of "Entanglement" is very welcome. The level to which individualistic notions have become commonplace between anarchists is without doubt open for contention (depending on your own leanings; not enough or too much). But it has for the authors to such an extent that it has become necessary to confront them directly. This is thus a collection of several texts problematizing individualist tendencies (including nihilist and egoist influences) in anarchist circles.

The two longer texts respectively take aim at the primary sources for these thoughts among anarchists in the European and North- American territories: Nietzsche and Stirner. This immediately triggers two counter-arguments. Firstly that most anarchists are probably more influenced by anarchist readings than by the original thinkers themselves (thus already incorporating some anti-authoritarian critiques, although mostly unarticulated). Secondly that it is contrary to their own suggestion to not treat another as an idol, to want to discuss their body of thought as something to be celebrated (or rejected) in its totality. This is connected with the question of continuity and coherence in the ideas of one individual. If philosophy is autobiographical, as Nietzsche once said, and thus always partial and dynamic, than the reading of it as complete and hermetic is a vain effort. That said, it is also almost impossible to examine these ideas thoroughly when one has to start from scattered texts and informal discussions (anarchists aren't in the habit any more to write philosophical books, and maybe for the best). And treating ideas as a supermarket where the consumers leave with what appeals to their tastes while ignoring the rest, also has its limits and often leads to uncritically reproducing authoritarian concepts (even if practices coming from these are, due to anarchist sensibilities, not that straightforwardly authoritarian). Surely the authors of "Entanglement" are aware of these arguments and also engage with them.

Certainly for what concerns Nietzsche, but also to a lesser extent for Stirner, the critiques advanced here have been defended and rebuked before (in both cases mainly by non-anarchists). A definitive conclusion on how exactly anarchists should treat these two "dead-white-male-philosophers" seems a bit illusory. I for one am not very passionate about either of them, but very attentive to the confrontation of anarchist ideas with theirs. I also understand that this can easily be perceived as an easy way out of the debate here. Maybe not totally untrue...

The three other texts are in a sense engaging with the debate on a less philosophical and more (inter)personal way, which makes them also more layered. Throughout them there are certain words used that feel uncomfortable nowadays in anarchist debates (duty, morality, sacrifice etc.), maybe for good reasons, but at times also without enough critical reflection on these reasons and on the clichés that have come to replace them (as camouflaged stand-ins or as superficial opposites). At the least these texts cause reflections on the words anarchists have become habituated to and the implicit assumptions that come with them (and are generally not shared by a lot of other people).

"We have been having the conversations that lead to the pieces in this collection, in various forms and configurations, for a long time. We talked about our changing relationships to insurrectionary anarchism. We talked about how certain critiques of activism or of anarchist organizations, critiques that in most cases we shared to some extent, seem to have been taken on as principles in themselves. We talked about desire, about informality, about strategy, and about revolution. We talked about negativity, whether we're actually *against everything* (we're not), and whether we still want to orient ourselves towards the future (we do). We talked about whether anarchism can be about *trying to change things* (it has to be). We hope the writings in this project will help us to keep having these conversations with a wider circle of people." (Excerpt from the introduction)

# Murmurs and Cries

## from the Underground

First appeared untitled in *Blatte (Sussurri e grida dal sottosuolo)*, Issue 1, June 2015

I have to get away from my home  
thoughts have saturated the room leaving no space for oxygen  
have you ever tried to walk hand in hand with restlessness?  
and if this began to shadow your every step, what would you do?  
the worst is to sense the answer without being able to scrape up the courage to act.

I am speaking of work, understand?  
that part of the day taken for granted  
or rather to be served as a punishment.

Why condemn yourself to a time suspended  
spent with your eyes on the clock waiting to die  
so as to be reborn a few breaths later?  
existence as hourglasses to live to the utmost  
but only in the moments granted by the hand that turns them over.  
have you ever wept thinking about all the sand that you've let fall, oh so slowly?  
haven't you shaken with rage at having allowed gravity to be in control?

Anxious for freedom, spasms and tremors, blurred vision, tinnitus, salivating like a dog,  
I am hungry, and they throw me crumbs in the mud  
not smiling with your dirty face, not saying all is well  
that's how it should go!

I get no consolation in knowing that the shift will end, that the weekend will come  
that there will be days off, rest days and holidays,  
that I will have the right to sick days  
I AM SICK NOW!

I get sick every time that an alarm forces me to get up  
that I don't get to choose when I leave my house and when I return  
every time that I pass over the same miles, that I obey a boss  
that I put on a mask to face imposed human interactions  
every time that I take that envelope wondering if it was worth the pain.

I wear a ball-and-chain, have a yoke on my neck, blinders like a horse,  
a repertoire of overused metaphors, not one original expression  
I have stability to maintain, taxes to pay, vices and pleasures that aren't free  
a repertoire of pitiful excuses  
not one plausible argument  
I have shelves of illuminating books, a reality that speaks clearly to me,  
and a youthfulness with a short fuse,  
but an arsenal of doubts and fears that keep me motionless.

What else shall I write then?  
nothing more for now  
*I have to go to work.*