

the economy is suffering



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Introduction

If you listen to the various mouthpieces of the system, we live in the best of all possible worlds. We are after all surrounded by a vast accumulation of commodities. Wealth is everywhere. Yet behind this façade hides another reality - this accumulation of things and their prices is but a storehouse of our own toil, a monument to our lives wasted working and submitting to Capital. Terms like “economy” and “society” are just gilded buzz-words for the machinery of empire that imprisons the planet. Real life, lived for and by ourselves, together and with the earth, is nowhere to be found - except of course in our own revolts. If we really want to be free, we are going to have to turn on the apparent world of plenty that surrounds us. This entire way of life with all its banalities and horrors must be pulled apart, and new ways of being weaved together out of the ruins. Such a momentous task would be a snowballing process of disobedience and defiance, as we start to work together and spread our mutiny throughout the corpse of the system. Revolution is too large and bursting with life to be summed up by any “great thinker” or lead by any leader, yet critical theory remains a useful tool to understand our present condition and our way out of this condition. We hope that whoever picks up this pamphlet is helped by these essays in fighting back against their exploitation, and that they add to the growing acts of refusal percolating through and against civilisation. For those interested in such things, these essays are normally associated with insurrectionary and/or green anarchism- they are not, however, an attempt to create a dogma or ideology. Enjoy!

Hurray, the old world is behind you!

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destruction or turn in the direction of joyful upheaval, passionate and feral embrace of wildness and life that aims at dancing on the ruins of clocks, computers and that failure of imagination and will called work. Can we justify our lives by anything less than such a politics of rage and dreams?

Feral

Fer-al *adj.* wild, or existing in a state of nature, as freely occurring animals or plants; having reverted to the wild state from domestication.

We exist in a landscape of absence wherein real life is steadily being drained out by debased work, the hollow cycle of consumerism and the mediated emptiness of high-tech dependency. Today it is not only the stereotypical yuppie workaholic who tries to cheat despair via activity, preferring not to contemplate a fate no less sterile than that of the planet and (domesticated) subjectivity in general. We are confronted, nonetheless, by the ruins of nature and the ruin of our own nature, the sheer enormity of the meaninglessness and the inauthentic amounting to a weight of lies. It's still drudgery and toxicity for the vast majority, while a poverty more absolute than financial renders more vacant the universal Dead Zone of civilization. "Empowered" by computerization? Infantilized, more like. An Information Age characterized by increased communication? No, that would presuppose experience worth communicating. A time of unprecedented respect for the individual? Translation: wage-slavery needs the strategy of worker self-management at the point of production to stave off the continuing productivity crisis, and market research must target each "life-style" in the interest of a maximized consumer culture.

In the upside-down society the solution to massive alienation-induced drug use is a media barrage, with results as embarrassing as the hundreds of millions futilely spent against declining voter turnout. Meanwhile, TV, voice and soul of the modern world, dreams vainly of arresting the growth of illiteracy and what is left of emotional health by means of propaganda spots of thirty seconds or less. In the industrialized culture of irreversible depression, isolation, and cynicism, the spirit will die first, the death of the planet an afterthought. That is, unless we erase this rotting order, all of its categories and dynamics.

Meanwhile, the parade of partial (and for that reason false) oppositions proceeds on its usual routes. There are the Greens and their like who try to extend the life of the racket of electoralism, based on the lie that there is validity in any person representing another; these types would perpetuate just one more home for protest, in lieu of the real thing. The peace "movement" exhibits, in its every (uniformly pathetic) gesture, that it is the best friend of authority, property and passivity. One illustration will suffice: in May 1989, on the 20th anniversary of Berkeley's People's Park battle, a thousand people rose up admirably, looting 28 businesses and injuring 15 cops; declared peace-creep spokesperson Julia Talley, "These riots have no place in the peace movement." Which brings to mind the fatally misguided students in Tiananmen Square, after the June 3 massacre had begun, trying to prevent workers from fighting the government troops. And the general truth that the university is the number one source of that slow strangulation known as reform, the refusal of a qualitative break with degradation. Earth First! recognizes that domestication is the fundamental issue (e.g. that agriculture itself is malignant) but many of its partisans cannot see that our species could become wild.

Radical environmentalists appreciate that the turning of national forests into tree farms is merely a part of the overall project that also seeks their own suppression. But they will have to seek the wild everywhere rather than merely in wilderness as a separate preserve.

Freud saw that there is no civilization without the forcible renunciation of instincts, without monumental coercion. But, because the masses are basically "lazy and unintelligent," civilization is justified, he reasoned. This model or prescription was based on the idea that pre-civilized life was brutal and deprived - a notion that has been, amazingly, reversed in the past 20 years. Prior to agriculture, in other words, humanity existed in a state of grace, ease and communion with nature that we can barely comprehend today. The vista of authenticity emerges as no less than a wholesale dissolution of civilization's edifice of repression, which Freud, by the way, described as "something which was imposed on a resisting majority by a minority which understood how to obtain possession of the means to power and coercion." We can either passively continue on the road to utter domestication and

Civilization is like a Jetliner

Civilization is like a jetliner, noisy, burning up enormous amounts of fuel. Every imaginable and unimaginable crime and pollution had to be committed in order to make it go. Whole species were rendered extinct, whole populations dispersed. Its shadow on the waters resembles an oil slick. Birds are sucked into its jets and vaporized. Every part, as Gus Grissom once nervously remarked about space capsules before he was burned up in one, has been made by the lowest bidder.

Civilization is like a 747, the filtered air, the muzak oozing over the earphones, a phoney sense of security, the chemical food, the plastic trays, all the passengers sitting passively in the orderly row of padded seats staring at Death on the movie screen. Civilization is like a jetliner, an idiot savant in the cockpit, manipulating computerized controls built by sullen wage-workers, and dependent for his directions on sleepy technicians high on amphetamines with their minds wandering to sports and sex.

Civilization is like a 747, filled beyond capacity with coerced volunteers-some in love with the velocity, most wavering at the abyss of terror and nausea, yet still seduced by advertising and propaganda. It is like a DC-10, so incredibly enclosed that you want to break through the tin can walls and escape, make your own way through the clouds, and leave this rattling, screaming fiend approaching its breaking point. The smallest error or technical failure leads to catastrophe, scattering your sad entrails like belated omens all over the runway, knocks you out of your shoes, breaks all your bones like egg shells.

(Of course civilization is like many other things besides jets- always things-a chemical drainage ditch, a woodland knocked down to lengthen an airstrip or to build a slick new shopping mall where people can buy salad bowls made out of exotic tropical trees which will be extinct next week, or perhaps a graveyard for cars, or a suspension bridge which collapses because a single metal pin has shaken loose. Civilization is a hydra. There is a multitude of styles, colours, and sizes of Death to choose from.)

Civilization is like a Boeing jumbo jet because it transports people who have never experienced their humanity where they were to places where they shouldn't go. In fact it mainly transports businessmen in suits with briefcases filled with charts, contracts, more mischief-businessmen who are identical everywhere and hence have no reason at all to be ferried about. And it goes faster and faster, turning more and more places into airports, the (un)natural habitat of businessmen.

It is an utter mystery how it gets off the ground. It rolls down the runway, the blinking lights along the ground like electronic scar tissue on the flesh of the earth, picks up speed and somehow grunts raping the air, working its way up along the shimmering waves of heat and the trash blowing about like refugees fleeing the bombing of a city. Yes, it is exciting, a mystery, when life has been evacuated and the very stones have been murdered.

But civilization, like the jetliner, this freak phoenix incapable of rising from its ashes, also collapses across the earth like a million bursting wasps, flames spreading across the runway in tentacles of gasoline, Samsonite, and charred flesh. And always the absurd rubbish, Death's confetti, the fragments left to mock us lying along the weary trajectory of the dying bird - the doll's head, the shoes eyeglasses, a beltbuckle.

Jetliners fall, civilizations fall, this civilization will fall. The gauges will be read wrong on some snowy day (perhaps they will fail). The wings, supposedly defrosted, will be too frozen to beat against the wind and the bird will sink like a millstone, first gratuitously skimming a bridge (because civilization is also like a bridge, from Paradise to Nowhere), a bridge laden, say, with commuters on their way to or from work, which is to say, to or from an airport, packed in their cars (wingless jetliners) like additional votive offerings to a ravenous Medusa.

Then it will dive into the icy waters of a river, the Potomac perhaps, or the River Jordan, or Lethé. And we will be inside, each one of us at our specially assigned porthole, going down for the last time, like dolls' heads encased in plexiglass.

Thoughts on the City

Progress never destroys as thoroughly as when it builds

The necessity for space is eminently political. The places in which we live condition the ways in which we live, and, inversely, our relationships and activities modify the spaces of our lives. It's a question of daily experience, and yet we seem incapable of drawing the tiniest result from it. One only needs to take a walk through any city to understand the nature of the poverty of our way of life. Almost all urban space responds to two needs: profit and social control. They are places of consumption organized according to the increasingly strict rules of a market in continuous expansion: the security market. The model is that of the commercial center, a collective privatized space, watched by the people and instruments provided by the appropriate agencies. In the commercial centers, an increasingly "personalized" sociality is built around the consumer and his family; now, one can eat, play with children, read, etc. in these neon places. But if one enters without any money, one discovers that it is a terrifying illusion of life.

The same thing happens, more or less, in the metropolises. Where can one meet for discussion, where can one sit without the obligation to consume, where can one drink, where can one sleep, if one has no money? For an immigrant, for a poor person, for a woman, a night in the city can be long. The moderates, comfortable in their houses, don't know the nocturnal world of the street, the dark side of the neon, when the police wake you up on the benches, when everything seems foreign and hostile to you. When the middle classes are enclosed in their bunkers, cities reveal their true faces as inhuman monsters.

Cities increasingly come to resemble fortresses, and houses, security cells. Social war, the war between the rich and the poor, the governors and the governed is institutionalized in urban space. The poor are deported to the outskirts in order to leave the centers to the offices and banks (or to the tourists). The entrances of the cities and a great many "sensitive" areas are watched by apparatuses that get more sophisticated every day. The lack of access to determined levels of consumption – levels defined and controlled by a fixed computer network in which the data of banking, insurance, medical scholastic and police systems are woven together – determines, in the negative, the new dangerous classes, who are confined in very precise urban zones. The characteristics of the new world order are reflected in metropolitan control. The borders between countries and continents correspond to the boundaries between neighbourhoods or to the magnetic cards for access to specific private buildings or, as in the United States, to certain residential areas. International police operations recall the war against crime or, more recently, the politics of "zero tolerance" through which all forms of deviance are criminalized. While throughout the world the poor are arrested by the millions, the cities assume the form of immense prisons. Don't the yellow lines that consumers have to follow in certain London commercial centers remind you of those on which some French prisoners have to walk? Isn't it possible to catch a glimpse of the checkpoints in the Palestinian territories in the militarization of Genoa during the G8 summit? Proposals for a nightly curfew for adolescents have been approved in cities just two steps away from ours (in France for example). The houses of correction reopen, a kind of penal colony for youth; assembling in the inner courtyards of the popular condominiums (the only space for collective life in many sleeping quarters) is banned. Already, in most European cities, the homeless are forbidden access to the city center, and beggars are fined, like in the Middle Ages. One may propose (like the Nazis of yesterday and the mayor of Milan today) the creation of suitable centers for the unemployed and their families, modelled after the lagers for undocumented immigrants. Metallic grids are built between rich (and white) neighbourhoods and poor (and... non-white) neighbourhoods. Social apartheid is advancing, from the United States to Europe, from the south to the north of the world. When one in

explored in greater depth by writers such as Adorno and Debord, but accurate and timely all the same. And in just four years (*New York Times*, 8/4/02), Gabler says, this situation has become qualitatively much worse. We now get only short-hand, truncated versions of escape that he terms the illusion of entertainment. Ersatz or otherwise, entertainment is now quite possibly the primary value of modern life, precisely because reality has become unbearable.

But of course it is only "chemical imbalances" that are said to account for this massive immiseration. This reactionary and desperate claim responds to phenomena such as the fact that 2.8 million kids had what is euphemistically called a "runaway experience" in 1999, by diagnosing most of them with a pseudo-medical condition called "conduct disorder."

A mid-2002 survey conducted by the National Sleep Foundation showed that 69% of Americans experienced some insomnia after September 11. (Glaxo Wellcome, by the way, spent \$16.5 million promoting Paxil in October 2001.) Even more noteworthy is their finding that 51% of the population were already insomniac during the previous year! What will new polls on sleeplessness, anxiety, depression, etc. reveal in light of more systemic bad news: revelations that corporations, science, the Red Cross, et al. are routinely fraudulent, that 90% of students cheat, that male athletes begin steroid use in adolescence, and so on and on.

David Barlow's *Anxiety and its Disorders* (2002) discusses the high prevalence and chronicity of a range of such conditions, like panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and various phobias. He concludes that the aggregate toll on social life "dwarfs even the most pessimistic estimates." Many have charted a steady rise of more serious mental illnesses that began with and correspond to the industrialization of society, as documented for example in *The Invisible Plague: the Rise of Mental Illness from 1750 to the Present*, by Torrey and Miller (2001). The answer to this scourge is obviously deindustrialization, the undoing of the root cause of all this and other crises in physical and mental health.

Society is a racket, and its everyday practices are no longer hidden from us. Nonetheless, as everyday life becomes steadily more impoverished, cheapened, surveilled, standardized, and otherwise debased, the official version (in many more aspects than mentioned in this article) prevails, with its stark omissions and lies. As Derrick Jensen has it, it is truly a "culture of make believe."

Marx inaccurately predicted that growing material poverty would bring revolution. A more plausible forecast today is that growing psychic or emotional suffering may inform a widespread refusal of this no-future reality.

What Ails Us

On the level of personal affliction or dis-ease, matters are steadily worsening. This situation corresponds to the deepening crisis at every level. At the same time, according to Michelle Mary Helvica, “we live in a society that seems increasingly numb to the causes and effects of human suffering.” In this sphere as with every other, the promises/protections of technological civilization are failing on a grand scale.

Tuberculosis and malaria have grown resistant to modern antibiotics and other standard medicines. E-coli and West Nile virus outbreaks are now common in the U.S. Infectious diseases of all kinds, once declared conquered, are on the rise. They accompany the major degenerative illnesses that are a staple of civilized life. Rift Valley fever, mad cow disease, hanta virus, Ebola, cholera, etc. “At least 20 major maladies have re-emerged in novel, more deadly, or drug-resistant forms in the past 25 years,” pronounced the February 2002 *National Geographic*’s “War on Disease” survey.

It is hardly surprising that industrialized medicine is unable to remedy the toll that is inherent in industrialized, standardized, estranged daily life. In fact, updating a point made by Ivan Illich decades ago, Michael J. Berens’ investigations have revealed the extremely high levels of life-threatening infections produced by hospital environments and other aspects of the health care industry (3-part *Chicago Tribune* series, July 2002). Recent studies have shown that artificial light causes breast cancer, by superseding the natural light cycle. Food now contains only a small fraction of its former nutritional content, as packaging and appearance considerations dictate that nutrients be bred out of fruits and vegetables. Nonetheless, health-threatening obesity, epidemic in the U.S., has become a global problem because of the increase in junk food and processed food.

More than 20 million Americans — mostly women — suffer from often devastating auto-immune disorders, such as lupus, Crohn’s disease, multiple sclerosis, and rheumatoid arthritis. Many afflictions attack women almost exclusively, notably anorexia and bulimia. Hilde Bruch finds that anorexia is typically about a young woman’s “struggle for control, for a sense of identity, competence and effectiveness.” A struggle within a patriarchal, male-defined culture that actively excludes her from all of those fundamental human dimensions. Michelle Mary Helvica’s *Starving for Salvation* (1999) focuses on eating disorders as a yearning for meaning and wholeness in the context of how very much is missing, especially for women. J.A. Sours’ *Starving to Death in a Sea of Objects* testifies, from its title onward, to the underlying deprivation or emptiness at the base of these life-threatening conditions.

Margaret Talbot observed that physical incapacitation has been one of the few ways in which women could effectively absent themselves from their assigned duties and roles. Fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome are among the illnesses, suffered by millions, that must be seen in light of women’s basically unimproved condition in society.

Countless forms of suffering, from AIDS to cancer to depression, are experienced within the increasingly unhealthy regime of technology and capital. There can be no “cure” so long as we all must strive to endure the bludgeoning conditions of daily life. Rural America now resembles a constellation of meth labs and Oxycontin supply networks, while epidemic drug use varies only in terms of which narcotic is most popular in a given season. What kind of society is it in which the teen suicide rate has been climbing for decades and self-mutilation is commonplace? Male sexual function will become dependent on pharmaceuticals like Viagra, a development far less grotesque than the growing number of toddlers on anti-depressants. The techno-world serves up increasingly bizarre “solutions” to the problems it continues to create, not forgetting the rising levels of both climatic temperatures and environmental toxins. Pharmaceutical corporation Pfizer proclaims, “Life is our life’s work,” as if anyone needed a reminder of the genetic engineering and human cloning in our future to which cyber-leftists like Donna Haraway have no objections.

An increasingly overworked populace labours in a more and more anxiety-prone, destabilized consumer void. The need to be diverted from a glaringly impoverished present and future is addressed in books like Neal Gabler’s *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquers Reality* (1998), a point

three blacks between the ages of 20 and 35 get locked up in cells (as occurs in the United States, where two million people have been imprisoned in twenty years), the proposal for closing the city centers to immigrants here can pass almost unobserved by us. And many may even applaud the glorious marine military when it sinks the boats of the undocumented foreigners. In an interweaving of classist exclusion and racial segregation, the society in which we live increasingly looks like a gigantic accumulation of ghettos.

Once again the link between the forms of life and the places of life is close. The increasing precariousness of broad layers of society proceeds at the same pace as the isolation of individuals, with the disappearance of meeting spaces (and therefore of struggle) and, at the bottom, the reserves in which most of the poor are left to rot. From this social condition, two typically totalitarian phenomena are born: the war between the exploited, which reproduces without filters the ruthless competition and social climbing upon which capitalist relationships are built, and the demand for order and security, produced and sponsored by a propaganda that is perpetually hammered home. With the end of the “cold war”, the Enemy has been moved, both politically and through the media, into the interior of the “free world” itself. The collapse of the Berlin Wall corresponds to the construction of the barriers between Mexico and the United States or to the development of electronic barriers for the protection of the citadels inhabited by the ruling classes. The criminalization of the poor is openly described as a “war of low intensity”, where the enemy, “the exotic terrorist”, here becomes the illegal foreigner, the drug addict, the prostitute. The isolated citizen, tossed about between work and consumption through those anonymous spaces that are the ways and means of transport, swallows terrifying images of treacherous young people, slackers, cut-throats — and an imprecise and unconscious feeling of fear takes possession of individual and collective life.

Our apparently peaceful cities increasingly show us the marks of this planetary tendency to government through fear, if we learn how to look for them.

If politics is defined as the art of command, as a specialized activity that is the monopoly of bureaucrats and functionaries, then the cities in which we live are the political organization of space. If, on the other hand, it is defined as a common sphere for discussion and decisions regarding common problems, then one could say that the urban structure is projected intentionally toward depoliticizing individuals in order to keep them in isolation and lost in the mass at the same time. In the second case, therefore, the political activity par excellence is revolt against urban planning as police science and practice; it is the uprising that creates new spaces for encounter and communication. In either sense, the question of space is an eminently political question.

A full life is a life that is able to skilfully mix the pleasure of solitude and the pleasure of encounter. A wise intermingling of villages and countryside, of plazas and free expanses could render the art of building and dwelling magnificent. If, with a utopian leap, we project ourselves outside of industrialism and forced urbanization, in short outside of the long history of removal on which the current technological society is built, we can imagine small communities based on face-to-face relationships that are linked together, without hierarchies between human beings or domination over nature. The journey would cease to be a standardized transport between weariness and boredom and would become an adventure free of clocks. Fountains and sheltered places would welcome passers-by. Wild nature could once again become a place of discovery and stillness, of tremors and escape from humanity. Villages could be born from forests without violence in order to then return to being countryside and forest. We can’t even imagine how animals and plants would change when they no longer feel threatened by human beings.

Only an alienated humanity could conceive of accumulation, profit and power as the basis for life on Earth. While the world of commodities is in liquidation, threatened by the implosion of all human contact and by ecological catastrophe, while young people slaughter each other and adults muddle through on psycho-pharmaceuticals, exactly what is at stake becomes clearer: subverting social relationships means creating new spaces for life and vice versa. In this sense, a “vast operation of urgent demolition” awaits us.

Mass industrial society destroys solitude and the pleasure of meeting at the same time. We are increasingly constrained to be together, due to forced displacements, standardized time, mass-produced desires. And yet we are increasingly isolated, unable to communicate, devoured by anxiety and fear, unable, above all, to struggle together. Any real communication, any truly egalitarian dialogue can only take place through the rupture of normality and habit, only in revolt.

In various parts of the world, the exploited refuse every illusion about the best possible world, turning their feeling of total spoliation against power. Rising up against the exploiters and their guard dogs, against their property and their values, the exploited discover new and old ways of being together, discussing, deciding and making merry.

From the Palestinian territories to the aarch (village assemblies) of the Algerian insurgents, uprisings free spaces for social self-organization. Often the rediscovered assembly forms are like applications of old traditions of face-to-face relationships hostile to all representation, forged in the pride of other struggles, to the current agenda. If violent rupture is the basis of uprisings, their capacity to experiment with other ways of living, in hope that the exploited elsewhere will stoke their flames, is what renders them lasting, since even the most beautiful utopian practices die in isolation.

The places of power, even those that are not directly repressive, are destroyed in the course of riots not only because of their symbolic weight, but also because in power's realms, there is no life.

Behind the problem of homes and collective spaces, there stand an entire society. It is because so many work year after year to pay off a loan simply in order to keep a roof over their head that they aren't able to find either the will or the space to talk with each other about the absurdity of such a life. On the other hand, the more that collective spaces are enclosed, privatized or brought under state control, the more houses themselves become small, grey, uniform and unhealthy fortresses. Without resistance, everything is degraded at a startling speed. Where peasants lived and cultivated the land for the rich as recently as fifty years ago, now the people of rank live. The current residential neighbourhoods are the most unliveable of the common houses of thirty years ago. Luxury hotels seem like barracks. The logical consequences of this totalitarianism in urban planning are those sorts of tombs in which Japanese employees reload their batteries. The classes that exploit the poor are, in their turn, mistreated by the system that they have always zealously defended.

Practicing direct action in order to snatch the spaces for life from power and profit, occupying houses and experimenting with subversive relationships is a very different thing from any sort of more or less fashionable alternative juvenilism. It is a matter that concerns all the exploited, the left-out, the voiceless. It's a question of discussing and organizing without mediators, of placing the self-determination of our relationships and spaces against the constituted order, of attacking the urban cages. In fact, we do not think that it is possible to cut ourselves out any space within this society that is truly self-organized where we can live our own way, like Indians on reservations. Our desires are far too excessive. We want to create breaches, go out into the streets, speak in the plazas, in search of accomplice for making the assault on the old world. Life in society is to be reinvented. This is everything.

Community

Com-mu-ni-ty *n.* 1. a body of people having the same interests. 2. [Ecol.] an aggregate of organisms with mutual relations. 3. a concept invoked to establish solidarity, often when the basis for such affiliation is absent or when the actual content of that affiliation contradicts the stated political goal of solidarity.

Community, by which one obviously means more than, say, neighbourhood, is a very elusive term but a continuing touchstone of radical value. In fact, all manner of folks resort to it, from the pacifist encampments near nuclear test sites to "serve the people" leftists with their sacrifice-plus-manipulation approach, to the proto-fascist Afrikaner settlers. It is invoked for a variety of purposes or goals, but as a liberatory notion it is a fiction. Everyone feels the absence of community, because human fellowship must struggle, to even remotely exist, against what "community" is in reality. The nuclear family, religion, nationality, work, school, property, the specialism of roles - some combination of these seems to comprise every surviving community since the imposition of civilization. So we are dealing with an illusion, and to argue that some qualitatively higher form of community is allowed to exist within civilization is to affirm civilization. Positivity furthers the lie that the authentically social can co-exist with domestication. In this regard, what really accompanies domination, as community, is at best middle-class, respect-the-system protest.

Fifth Estate, for example, undercuts its (partial) critique of civilization by upholding community and ties to it in its every other sentence. At times it seems that the occasional Hollywood film (e.g. *Emerald Forest*, *Dances With Wolves*) outdoes our anti-authoritarian journals in showing that a liberatory solidarity springs from non-civilization and its combat with the "community" of industrial modernity.

Jacques Camatte discussed capital's movement from the stage of formal domination to that of real domination. But there appear to be significant grounds from which to project the continuing erosion of support for existing community and a desire for genuine solidarity and freedom. As Fredy Perlman put it, near the end of his exceptional *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* "What is known is that Leviathan, the great artifice, single and world-embracing for the first time, in His-story, is decomposing... It is a good time for people to let go of its sanity, its masks and armours, and go mad, for they are already being ejected from its pretty polis."

The refusal of community might be termed a self defeating isolation but it appears preferable, healthier, than declaring our allegiance to the daily fabric of an increasingly self-destructive world. Magnified alienation is not a condition chosen by those who insist on the truly social over the falsely communal. It is present in any case, due to the content of community. Opposition to the estrangement of civilized, pacified existence should at least amount to naming that estrangement instead of celebrating it by calling it community.

The defence of community is a conservative gesture that faces away from the radical break required. Why defend that to which we are held hostage? In truth, there is no community. And only by abandoning what is passed off in its name can we move on to redeem a vision of communion and vibrant connectedness in a world that bears no resemblance to this one. Only a negative "community," based explicitly on contempt for the categories of existent community, is legitimate and appropriate to our aims.