

“For the Greeks the word ‘barbarian’ did not only refer to the stranger, but also to the ‘stammerer’, he who did not speak the language of the polis correctly. Language and territory are inseparable. The law fixes the borders enforced by the order of Names. Every power structure has its barbarians, every democratic discourse its stammerers. The society of commodities wants to banish their obstinate presence—with expulsion and silence—as though they were nothing. It is on this nothing that rebellion has founded its cause. No ideology of dialogue and participation will ever be able to mask exclusion and internal colonies completely. When the daily violence of the State and the economy causes the evil part to explode, there is no point in being surprised if someone puts their feet on the table and refuses to accept discussion. Only then will passions get rid of a world of death.”

**THE BARBARIAN**

# The Barbarian 4

*"We were healthy young barbarians,  
and that was all."*

-Oscar Wilde-

The Barbarian Review is a collection of thoughts written down by various foreign people in Athens: a few persons passing through a brief period of time, in a very special city.

We come from different cultural, political and philosophical backgrounds and all opinions expressed here are the views of the specific writer, not the collective as a whole. This is the nature of our random constellation and though it may sometimes create a contradictory narrative we also think that it offers strength through a multitude of perspectives.

It is no surprise that we have chosen to write in English, to better communicate the experience we have of being in, but not of, the Greek radical milieu, and it is to be hoped that this will be as rewarding for the Greek and non-Greek to read, as it has been for us to collect and write down our ideas.



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Contact: [magazine@riseup.net](mailto:magazine@riseup.net)

<http://thebarbarianreview.wordpress.com>

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## FOREWORD

As this issue of *The Barbarian* was finishing, the events surrounding the hunger strike of Nikos Romanos began to take place: marches, occupations, riots. The crisis was said to be over, now it's back in full swing. Nothing much was happening, and then all of a sudden the streets were ablaze. We witnessed with surprise the power of the unpredictable: within a month normality was turned upside down. How quickly things change in today's world!

The hunger strike of Romanos was an important struggle during this time, all the more because it reminds us to avoid a facile *thanatophilia*, a love of death and martyrdom. However, what are we aiming at? Revolutions concern not death, but *life* and improving it. In this particular struggle, the government was forced to concede to the demands of an anarchist prisoner of armed struggle and his supporters on the streets, but it did so in a way as to take all that it could, enforcing electronic monitoring and altering conditions for prisoners who wish to study. After all, we're in a war, and this was a battle. It also showed

that classical distinctions of war are certainly useless for evaluating what went on. As the anecdote tells us, a US Army general met a Vietnamese one some years after their war. "You never won a battle", the American general resentfully claimed. "That may be true, but it is also irrelevant", replied the general from Vietnam. In moments of revolt the typical view of victory or defeat presents a false analysis.

Despite the name ('Romanos') in which the demonstrations occurred, revolt itself is not about a cause. Rather, it grows out of an event which ignites something –imagination, anger, hope – that is bigger and may even be difficult to define. No one can own an event, it just seems to take off, without anyone predicting why or how this particular cause provokes so much popular activity. When the people take to the streets, rather than fitting into an organized project, perhaps what is worth celebrating is not the success of a one worldview, program, idea, but the random and spontaneous rupture which catches us all unawares. So, this specific event never belonged to anyone, it

wasn't unified but polymorphic, and this was how it was spoken of at the time. Actually, it would be better to say that it was another occasion to find yourself in unusual places; like the Trade Union Offices (GSEE) – a luxurious place, by the way – invaded by black hooded people, watching out for an eventual police presence down in Alexandras avenue from a beautiful terrace, or participating in 300 person assemblies, or visiting the deserted Karagiozis museum and participating in a much smaller assembly, writing texts, translating, constantly reflecting about Romano's fight but also about what was happening, and feeling that whatever it was it was within our grasp. And then there were all those red stars upon the Greek map which indicated the places and spaces that had been occupied, more and more, from day to day. Demonstrations and their riots ended in Exarchia. Finally, it was also an opportunity to take back some squats, like *Parartima* in Patra. The fight inside the prison was becoming a general fight, and an incontestably good way to meet with others, discuss and act upon a variety of interconnected themes.

This series of events was a great political lesson because it showed the strengths and limits of the movement, and also reminded us that revolution is never one big night or decisive struggle, but many little combats. On the one hand, a capacity to stalemate the government was clearly manifested, on the other hand, a clear incapacity to move to checkmate. To become more dangerous still, we would have to open up the assemblies and break old routines. Assemblies function best by spreading knowledge and creating the capacity for a diversity of actions, and so often breakdown when they attempt to judge actions beforehand. After all, revolutions are decided neither by a vote, nor by the decision of one individual: they are far closer to a spiritual union based on mutual acclaim for acts undertaken, not something based upon compromising and managing political differences.

Of course, on a larger scale, we should also admit a general uncertainty concerning the future of revolt, related to a prevailing political disorientation in our time. Yet rather than a source of weakness, it should be considered as a strength. This great uncertainty about the future and how it will take shape also invites us to question what actions or concepts of classical revolution are still viable. But in this sense, the formally empty but practically pluralistic content of anarchism also expresses something like the general situation: a desire to change the world, but not to dominate the world; a distrust of universal and global solutions, but a determination to change our daily lives.

To resume, this struggle of riots and occupations concerning Nikos Romanos took place and then Samaras called earlier presidential elections, a gamble that appears to have backfired, leaving Samaras with his pants down.

It seems that an implicit right-wing view was that fire and trouble in the streets was beneficial to the ruling party because it could negatively affect Syriza who tend to be equated with images of chaos and instability. This was not the case. An aspect of Greek parliamentary politics is that when the ruling party proposes a presidential nominee but then does not gain enough votes for this largely symbolic position, new elections are called. As we write, there will be new general elections, where it appears probable that the supposedly 'radical-left' Syriza will win. When a new political reality presents itself, we will need more finesse because power will not be represented by the grey men in suits but rather by an image that appears closer to our own. How do grassroots movements and self-organization as a broad mass relate to a new power like Syriza which is already cozily wrapped in a blanket woven from a general social movement discourse? And how will anarchists respond? Will this uncontrollable diversity be taken advantage of by the new power? Perhaps there are some of us who will find themselves fueling the new machine of power, just as we saw Syriza benefit from the sparks of December 2008. The Left consider themselves to be the realistic and practical radicals, and anarchists the well-meaning but foolishly misguided idealists. We think the opposite is rather the case.

Syriza signifies one thing which we are seeing all over Europe: the old established political parties and their proposals are crumbling, as no one buys into their stale and discredited promises, while fringe parties of all kinds are moving center stage, leading us to a world of increased unpredictability. And here, the *metapolitefsi*, the post-Junta political system, is truly over, the old managers of governing have given

way. Nonetheless, between Syriza and radical revolt lies a completely different ethical and political project: Syriza will work within the confines of the present system, they might *try* to reform the state, but not its prisons, parliament and police. Radical revolt, however, puts the basic structure of all these into question.

And yet, despite all this uncertainty, we must not lose ourselves in pessimism, negativity, and inaction.

While all 'undesirables' struggle to live today, others live to struggle. Recent events have given us a broader field to think about: Romanos on strike, the witch-hunt of Operation Pandora in Spain, the slow march of neo-fascism across Europe, the murder of Remi Fraise near Toulouse, of 43 radical students in Mexico, of young black men in the USA. All of these point clearly to one obvious fact: a dying world has declared war on its youth, and by corollary, on all of its undesirables. It has no future to offer the poor, the pensioners, the immigrants, the dissidents. The world presents us with a bleak picture, however because of this, it's quite clear the only possible future left is a revolt that overturns all the rotten structures of the present. So with all these ongoing developments, the old slogan from the Greek movement still rings as true as ever:

*Nothing is over, everything continues!*

The Barbarians  
Athens, January 2015



# TOURISM



We've heard a lot about tourism lately. Throughout the summer, the media, domestic and foreign, followed the tourism statistics intensely. We were repeatedly told that this year's tourist season was to be a bumper crop, more people than ever were visiting Greece, which played a key role in the 'success story' narrative the Samaras government was trying hard to create. The idea was that if the tourists are back and in greater numbers than before, surely this proves that Greece is moving out of crisis? We can see clearly then that tourism has a political role to play as well as being an important pillar of the economy.

Yet there is relatively little criticism or analysis of tourism from a radical perspective. It is a difficult subject to address in a constructive way. This difficulty comes from the fact that tourism, or at least the ability to travel, is one of the few positives of this modern world. Just as with other aspects of the capitalist consumer economy, criticising tourism would also leave someone open to charges of hypocrisy as most of us have been, will be, or are now, tourists. While

it's easy to get behind slogans such as 'let's destroy work', many would be reluctant to get behind 'let's destroy tourism' (though 'Fuck Tourism' is growing in popularity). In addition, there is the ever present danger of slipping into the ethical tourism argument which is as much of a dead-end as other versions of ethical consumerism.

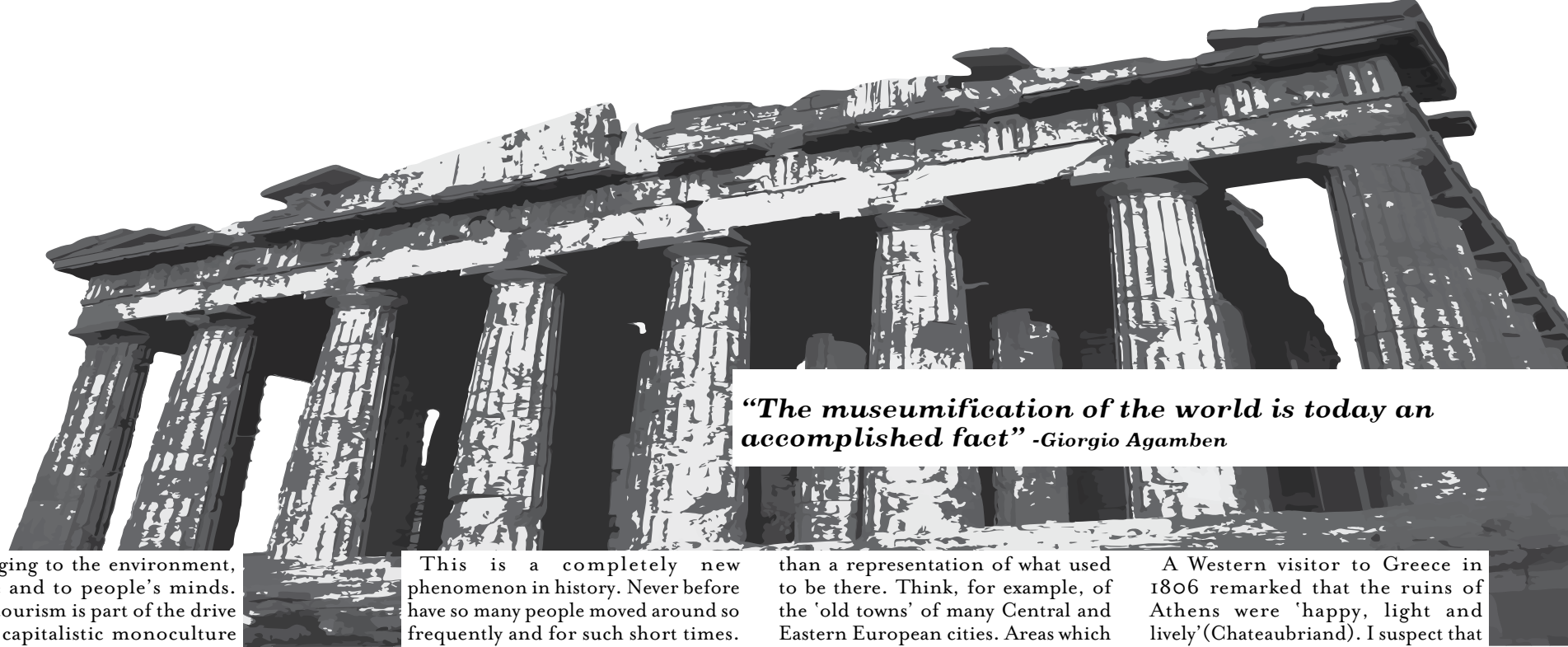
That being said, we can't ignore tourism as an increasingly vital part of the economy and as a political tool. Its impact on people and places is also significant. With this in mind let's have a look at some aspects and thoughts on tourism. First, let's consider the effects of tourism on a place and on the people who live there and those who visit. After that, I will look at the uses of tourism for the state.

## PEOPLE AND PLACE

Tourism is another aspect of the consumer capitalist economy and can not be separated from it. While having obvious benefits at an individual level, it damages the world in the same ways as the rest of the consumer economy.

It is damaging to the environment, to culture and to people's minds. Globally, tourism is part of the drive towards a capitalistic monoculture and locally plays an instrumental role in gentrification. I want to focus here on the effects tourism has on people, tourists and inhabitants, and the places they visit.

The first thing to note is the scale of modern tourism. Gone are the days when just a few eccentrics, lost idealists or peddlers and merchants were the only ones travelling. Gone too, in many parts of the world, are the domestic holidays in some beautiful local spot. Modern tourists are counted in the millions, with this set to increase once the aspiring middle classes of China and Asia begin to enjoy the consumer lifestyle. A few examples demonstrate the current scale of tourism. Barcelona, a city of 1.6m inhabitants, receives an estimated 7.4m visitors a year with plans to increase this still further. Venice can host up to 60,000 visitors a day during peak season, more than the entire population of the city itself. Greece, a country of roughly 11m, hosts around 17-19m annually.



***“The museumification of the world is today an accomplished fact” -Giorgio Agamben***

This is a completely new phenomenon in history. Never before have so many people moved around so frequently and for such short times. Such large numbers of people create a great amount of environmental stress and strain. Airplanes bring pollution and the need for ever more and bigger airports. There's the constant need to build more and more unsightly hotels and hostels. Large sections of the coastline of countries like Spain have been 'developed' into a horrid concrete mass by modern tourism. Such a large number of people cannot pass through a place without changing it in some way. Every major city and tourist destination now has a constant population made up of temporary people with no connection to the place they are in, and are engaging in a form of hyper-consumption.

## 'MUSEUM CITY'

It is a sad fact that many once vibrant and living places around the world have become little more than stale museums. In some cases whole swaths of a once crucial and central area in the life of a community have lost any living presence and become little more

than a representation of what used to be there. Think, for example, of the 'old towns' of many Central and Eastern European cities. Areas which once were the heart of the community that formed the city are now open-air museums filled with cafes, craft shops and tourist traps. In many cases, the real city was destroyed during the twentieth century, so the ancient city people walk around today is often little more than fifty years old.

Athens has largely and luckily escaped the worst of this as it is essentially a young city and until now tourists have viewed it as a place to pass through rather than a destination in itself. Still though, when you walk around the ancient monuments of Athens you cannot help but feel that you are in a dead area, and not just from an historical point of view. Historical monuments were naturally the first part of a city to be declared a museum. From the late nineteenth century onwards they were separated off from the city around them and declared to be special areas which were not to change or interact with the space around them. Organic life was to stop and nothing allowed to change.

A Western visitor to Greece in 1806 remarked that the ruins of Athens were 'happy, light and lively' (Chateaubriand). I suspect that this lively sense came from the fact that what we would call the ruins of Athens were part of the fabric of the city with people living in and around them. The ruins had popular folk tales or superstitions attached to them and in many cases they were respected though not revered like today. Athens would have displayed the continuity of human life as Ancient Greek and Roman foundations shared the same space with Byzantine, Frankish and Turkish buildings.

In contrast, the ruins of Athens, which had always served as an active part of the community for thousands of years, are now sealed, preserved and sold. In this case not only did time stop but it was sent backwards as the Greek state wished to create an ideal Greece. Remains later than the Classical and Roman periods, e.g Turkish and Frankish, were removed to create a pure, artificial monument to the reborn Greek nation which was itself something of an artificial construct.

So, under the cloak of protection, places are removed from everyday life. Much like picking a flower ultimately kills the object of beauty, the heritage industry ultimately kills what it seeks to protect. The tourist industry does the same to whole cities. Tourists are drawn to a place by a series of images which they wish to see before them on arrival. This slowly expands the museum from the historic site to the surrounding old neighbourhoods until large parts of a city are preserved tourist zones. The historical site, traditional restaurant, authentic craft shop and old town are all places designed to fulfil the wishes of visiting tourists- not the residents of a place. In cities with a large tourist industry more consideration is given to the tourist than the local resident.

In some places, such as Athens, this is mitigated by the tourist's behaviour. Basically, a tourist doesn't visit a whole place, just select parts of it. In effect, tourists live within a series of bubbles-the airport, the bus/metro from airport to city, the hotel, 'old town'/tourist attraction. Outside of these bubbles normal life continues while tourists are encouraged to stay in their safe zones. This is facilitated by the official tourism infrastructure. For example, this summer saw the creation of a new bus line which runs directly from the port of Pireaus to the Athens' Acropolis and so allows tourists to quickly cut through the city, get to where they want and back again with the minimum of interaction. The danger to a place is when tourist numbers become so great that these bubbles expand to take in more and more of the city. In Athens we see this process in areas like Monastiraki and Psirri.

Tourism's need for a place and its people to match a certain popular and reproducible image along with the need for it to be clean, safe and

efficient is changing the nature of many places. Instead of the places we live in being evolving, chaotic and habitable, they must become preservable, 'timeless' and safe. In terms of tourism, countries and cities are no longer places where we live, but quite explicitly talked about as something to sell. A place is now a brand and must now be concerned with its brand image. Modern tourism, with its reliance on brand image, cleanliness and safety, expands the atmosphere of the airport to the rest of the city. In some small popular places this process is already on the verge of completely changing the nature of a city. Venice, for instance, is said to be running out of Venetians as the inhabitant population goes into decline and is replaced by rotating bands of tourists.

We should add to this that not only are places becoming museums but, just as modern museums must focus on entertainment and interactivity, these museum cities are also becoming theme parks. The theme park of Rome already has its characters as the men dressed as gladiators and Roman soldiers pose outside the Colosseum. In Athens, the number one and number two attractions on a popular international tourism website are the new adventure and escape room theme park games. In these games you get locked in a room and have to solve some crime or mystery to get out, allowing people to play out their TV-induced fantasy of being a cop for a day. The Acropolis Museum, which for all of its justifiable criticisms, at least has something to do with Athens and its history, comes in at third place behind these games.

People can at times take action to prevent their city becoming a museum. Note for instance the actions of the local assembly of Petralona some years ago. A plan to fence off and

enclose the Philopappou area close to the Acropolis would have changed the right of access to this wonderful and beautifully hidden area. Local residents tore down the fences after they were erected and after a sharp struggle succeeded in keeping the hills open to public access. Had the fences been allowed to stay, perhaps this area would now form a part of the Acropolis landscape, another tourist bubble all but lost to those who live around it.

#### BANALITY

***'Tourism, human circulation considered as consumption, is fundamentally nothing more than the leisure of going to see what has become banal' -Guy Debord***

The ease of visiting foreign places has robbed the action of any adventure and romance. It used to be that a visit to a new place could fundamentally alter someone's view of the world, could even change the course of history. In contrast, we often now know exactly what we will see, experience and feel in a place before we get there, with the result that the once miraculous act of travel has been reduced to a standard commute. The often repeated phrase that 'travel broadens the mind' doesn't quite fit with the modern tourist experience which is more likely to narrow the mind. When it is an image of a place constructed for consumption that is being visited, little can be gained from this. Take, for instance, the British tourist that goes to the coasts of Greece, Turkey, Spain, Cyprus etc. Sleeping in large concrete resort hotels, drinking in British pubs and eating British food, all with as little interaction with the local environment as possible. The



exposure to the sun may fry their minds but there's little opportunity to broaden it.

There is a story, perhaps not completely truthful but useful none the less, that as the rulers of the Slavic peoples of Europe were deciding which religion to adopt, they sent ambassadors around the known world to investigate different faiths. Upon reaching Constantinople these ambassadors were so overwhelmed by the sight of Hagia Sofia, a building they could never have seen nor expected, they decided the Orthodox Christian faith was the way forward and so the Russians became Orthodox. Whereas my first reaction to the sight of Hagia Sofia as the tram glided down the main road of historic Istanbul was more along the lines of 'it's not as big as in the pictures'.

To counter this over-familiarity, the tourist is always seeking to get off the 'tourist track' and find the new and next undiscovered place. An area without much tourist infrastructure and where the local population have not become disillusioned after waves of tourists, is hailed as the place to get to before it is 'discovered'. The number of untapped fresh places is

rapidly dwindling however. There is a limit to how many new places can be found, though frequent wars recreate some older destinations. There was even some surprise this year when a photo of people queuing up to climb Mount Everest was published.

So, unfortunately, the way in which places are presented and sold to us has changed the nature of going somewhere different. Generally, we already know what to expect from a place we visit and will likely find it served up to us when we arrive. Often we have already seen the place we go to and can only confirm the image we have.

#### COLONIAL TOURISM

The flow of tourist traffic is generally from rich countries to poor. People from the poorer parts of the world and its societies don't get the opportunity to be tourists. With much of the work in the tourist industry being based around service- cooking, cleaning, driving and generally looking after people- a place where tourism is a leading industry will see the creation of a large group of people dedicated to serving their often richer customers.

These workers are then often told how they must be respectful and maintain the good brand image of the country in order to attract more tourists.

This can create a situation whereby the rich enjoy their visit to a place while the people who live there can do nothing but serve them. Greece's impoverishment through its current crisis has the potential to turn the holiday resort of the wealthy world. Amongst the media articles and reports on tourism last year there were some hints in this direction. Firstly, we had the opinion writers of some media lamenting not the quantity of tourists but their quality. Greece, it seems, is not attracting people of the 'right quality', the writer of course took wealth to be a marker of quality. So, as well as planning to increase the overall number of tourists, the government would also like to attract more luxury tourists who would need high quality resorts, hotels and restaurants which would be served by, but be beyond the reach of, the local population.

Within the various tourism facts and statistics from last year it was revealed that while tourist arrivals are up as expected, the number of domestic holidays was down. It is not surprising that with money running out and becoming scarce fewer Greeks are able to take a holiday within their country. Put these two things together, the desire for more and higher quality tourists and less domestic tourism, and we see the direction Greece may take. The Greek territories will still be beautiful, if increasingly blighted by luxury resorts, but will be for the enjoyment of the rich primarily.

Greek domestic tourism is a curious mix which shares many of the characteristics of international



tourism I've mentioned so far. One positive strand of domestic Greek tourism is the tendency of people from the cities, principally Athens, to go back to the countryside for holidays. With many Athenians being at most three generations removed from the countryside it's not unusual for families to keep a house or land in the family island/village which is often the destination for holidays. Beyond that, Greek tourists have played a considerable part in the changes brought about by the tourism industry.

In the summertime, Greek islands are often colonised by mainland Athenians. The various social groups of Athens move *en masse* to the islands with the different social groups setting up on their own island, Ikaria for the Leftist, Donoussa for the 'alternatives', etc. While a bunch of free-campers partying and whatever on a beach (apparently with the same kind of drunken abandon and lack of clothes so often lamented in foreign groups) is less damaging than a heavily built up tourist industry, the Greek islands are clearly now dependent on tourism - a process begun and continuing through Greek domestic tourism just as much as

international tourism. The islands are going from distinct communities to glorified hotels for the transported social milieu of Athens, often with the willing acquiescence of many business-minded islanders.

As I said above, modern tourism is a new phenomenon in human history. As such, we can't really say what its full effects will be. What I've tried to say so far is that there are a number of features which are considerably altering the world in a negative direction. Far from a great enlightening experience, modern tourism is creating and spreading a world based on dull and shallow imagery. With tourism becoming increasingly important to capital and state this trend is set to continue and expand.

#### ECONOMY

***'I have noticed that only in Europe is hospitality put up for sale.'*-Rousseau**

Well not exactly just Europe, but everywhere hospitality is up for sale and makes a substantial profit. Globally, tourism contributes around 9.5% to world GDP, generating \$7tn.

In Greece, tourism accounts for 16.4% of GDP and employs around 1 in 5 people. Additionally, the government plans to increase tourism over the next years with hopes that tourist arrivals will reach 27m by 2021. Whilst always taking the Greek government's future plans with a pinch of salt, it's clear that tourism is seen as a major growth sector of the economy.

A country with few industries and little to export, Greece will increasingly have to sell itself to bring about this economic growth. We have already had some hints of what this will look like. During the summer, the Samaras government floated the idea of selling off parts of the Greek coastline in order to pay bills and develop the tourist industry. 'Greece has such a lot of coast line just waiting there to be developed-why not sell some of it?' one foolish minister thought aloud. Large sections of coast could be sold off to private groups to build luxury resorts with private beaches and then charge people for access to the beach. The result would be a blighted environment and a blow to the quality of life as something once free and open becomes closed and monetised.

When faced with the reality of selling the coastline and turning it into something similar to the concrete mess of the Spanish coast (a project started by the fascist government), a large number of people were appalled. Sensing resistance, the government quickly backed down and limited itself to tacking on some minor changes to building regulations to a later bill. If governments are to follow through on their plans to increase tourism and generate more money it will be done through schemes such as this.

We should not underestimate the short-sightedness of governments and economists in their attempt to drum up money with tourism. Previously,

I mentioned the example of Venice, a city in danger of becoming a theme park as its inhabitants leave and waves of tourists arrive. It took several rounds of legal challenges and disputes for the inhabitants to stop a line of super-cruise ships (known as skyscrapers of the sea) sailing up close to the city. The gigantic ships carried thousands of tourists at a time, were so large they towered over the city itself and moved so much water they were a danger to the floating city's foundations. Still, despite the clear danger they presented to the fragile city the cruise industry was able to continue sailing directly into Venice for some time due to the money they produced. As of now, the larger ships are banned from a close approach to the city but can still sail through the area.

This is the reality of economic growth through tourism. As one of a declining number of areas of growth, it will be pursued with little regard to the consequences, environmental and social. However, projects such as these do present opportunities to derail the tourism drive and mobilisations against aspects of the tourist industry are likely to increase. The benefit of this is that halting the further development of the tourist industry in addition to protecting places will cause damage to the economy.

#### TOURISTS AS A HUMAN SHIELD

Aside from the economic benefits, tourists can be used by the state as a form of human shield. Since few people really want to hurt tourists, who are, after all, innocent if naïve people, governments can wheel them out at times of need to protect its interests. We recently saw China criticising pro-democracy protestors in Hong Kong for damaging the city's tourist image. Right-wing commentators in Greece, when adding up the number

of demonstrations since the Crisis began (20,000 and counting), lamented the fact that during all this demonstrating no one was thinking about the poor confused tourists and what they made of all these people demanding their lives and freedoms.

This played a factor in the DEH (Greek national electricity company) strike during the summer. In response to a demand that part of the DEH be privatised, the union representing the workers declared its intention to strike. Such a strike in one of the key pieces of infrastructure had the potential to bring blackouts and cut power across the country and clearly carried a considerable threat. As the dispute was in July, the height of a critical tourist season, the economic impact of the strike would be doubled. In reply, the government brought out the tourists. The minister of Tourism warned that such a strike would badly damage the country's tourist image and the ever entertaining spokeswoman, Voultepsi, stated 'you cannot have 20 million tourists coming to the country and deprive them of air-conditioning'.

This barrage of criticism, using the tourists as its main ammunition, did its job. The union carried out a few days of rolling controlled and scheduled blackouts in suburbs and

remote areas which cut power for a few hours at a time, though supplies were always maintained to key tourist destinations. The union, having given away its key leverage, was soon issued mobilisation orders and its members forced back to work. Syriza's games in parliament were batted away, the DEH sold-off and the tourist season saved.

#### TOURISTS AS PROPAGANDA

As well as being a useful aid in specific disputes, tourism can also help government narratives. The return of the tourists in 2014 gave a significant boost to the Samaras government's attempts to spin the current disaster in Greece as a 'success story'. Throughout the past year, foreign and social media were full of posts and articles proclaiming that Greece was fully recovered, safe to go back to and apparently cheaper than before. At times, it felt almost like a concerted effort to direct tourists to Greece as article after article followed the same line. If the crisis was mentioned in these articles and promotions, it was as a creative force which allowed young hipsters to become ever so creative and more hip.

The fact that Greece has fallen off the international media agenda in recent years has allowed the government to fix the







country's brand image. With fewer riots and strikes in central Athens, and conversely increased images of violence from rival destinations such as Egypt, Tunisia, Israel and Turkey, tourists felt that Greece was safe again. Images that contradict this were brushed aside, riots in Keratsini were isolated incidents, a bomb in the centre of Athens was a footnote to a successful return to the markets and several ministers rushed to the bedside of the tourists the police had shot while arresting Maziotis.

On the ground this is backed up by attempts to fix the centre of Athens. So we saw the restoration of Syntagma, partly paid for by the luxury hotels lining the square. Around Omonia and Viktoria the police sweeping operations have 'cleared away' (who knows where exactly?) the drug addicts, homeless and prostitutes that tourists often had to step over to get to the Acropolis. And so tourism is part of the cycle of propaganda. Good news is created and spread around international media which encourages more tourists to come. This in turn puts money in a few pockets and helps create and spread

a positive image. This cycle fixes Greece's damaged brand image and backs up the 'success story'.

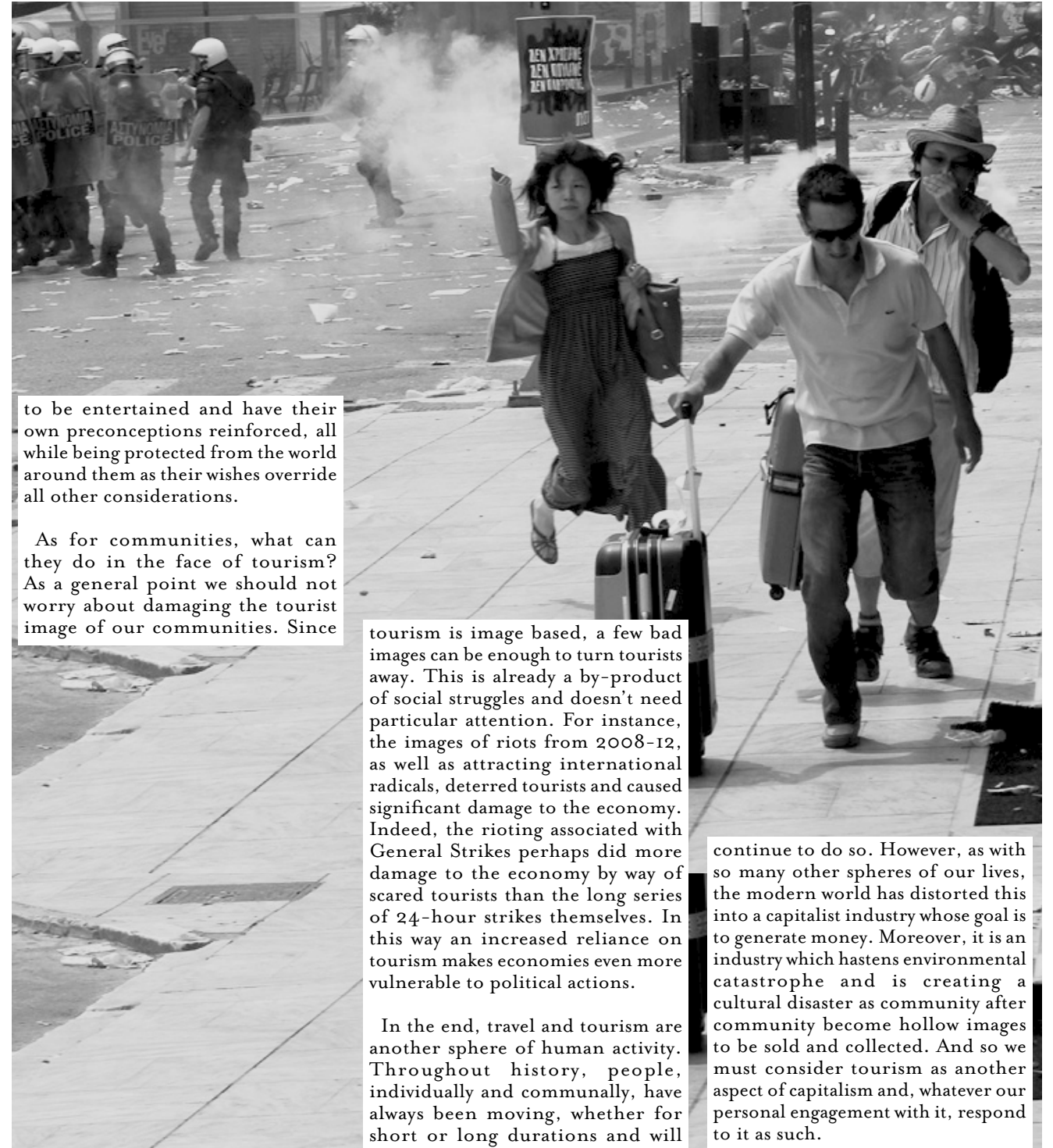
#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can see that modern tourism has a number of negative effects the consequences of which we are only beginning to see. Despite these negative effects, tourism is an important sector of the economy and serves an increasingly important practical and propaganda role for the state. Given this, what attitude to tourism can we take? To dismiss tourism completely would basically make us reactionary as we would have to say that everyone must stay where they came from and not move. A more direct targeting of tourists would quickly turn into an ugly radically accepted form of racism.

Ultimately, I believe we must take the line I've adopted above; tourism is travel in a consumer capitalist form. It is a symptom of a situation not the cause of it. Therefore it will only go away when capitalism itself goes away. In a post-capitalist world where our lives can be an adventure instead of

a horrid day-to-day drudgery maybe we will feel less of a need to turn to tourism for a packaged and acceptable adventure in order to stop us blowing our brains out at home. Just from a practical point of view, in a future with fewer and fewer natural resources the transport infrastructure of modern tourism will likely not last for ever. So, the phenomenon of tourism is something which will pass, though we have to wonder how much the world will change before it does.

Individually, perhaps we can try and bring the adventure of travel back out of the tourism industry. Travelling to and visiting new places are, after all, not bad acts in themselves, as what I have been criticising here is the mass industry which seeks only to do this in the quickest, shallowest way possible. I would say, where possible go slowly, avoid as much of the tourist industry infrastructure as possible, travel for ideas, for love, for revolution, or just to go for a walk. Overall, travel as an observer, look at the world around, interact with it and learn what you can from it. A tourist travels



to be entertained and have their own preconceptions reinforced, all while being protected from the world around them as their wishes override all other considerations.

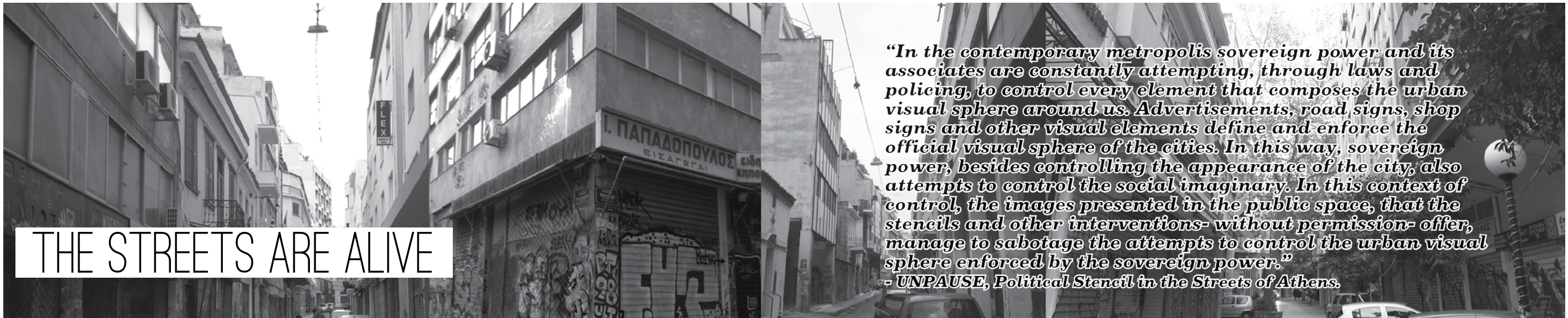
As for communities, what can they do in the face of tourism? As a general point we should not worry about damaging the tourist image of our communities. Since

tourism is image based, a few bad images can be enough to turn tourists away. This is already a by-product of social struggles and doesn't need particular attention. For instance, the images of riots from 2008-12, as well as attracting international radicals, deterred tourists and caused significant damage to the economy. Indeed, the rioting associated with General Strikes perhaps did more damage to the economy by way of scared tourists than the long series of 24-hour strikes themselves. In this way an increased reliance on tourism makes economies even more vulnerable to political actions.

In the end, travel and tourism are another sphere of human activity. Throughout history, people, individually and communally, have always been moving, whether for short or long durations and will

continue to do so. However, as with so many other spheres of our lives, the modern world has distorted this into a capitalist industry whose goal is to generate money. Moreover, it is an industry which hastens environmental catastrophe and is creating a cultural disaster as community after community become hollow images to be sold and collected. And so we must consider tourism as another aspect of capitalism and, whatever our personal engagement with it, respond to it as such.





## THE STREETS ARE ALIVE

*“In the contemporary metropolis sovereign power and its associates are constantly attempting, through laws and policing, to control every element that composes the urban visual sphere around us. Advertisements, road signs, shop signs and other visual elements define and enforce the official visual sphere of the cities. In this way, sovereign power, besides controlling the appearance of the city, also attempts to control the social imaginary. In this context of control, the images presented in the public space, that the stencils and other interventions- without permission- offer, manage to sabotage the attempts to control the urban visual sphere enforced by the sovereign power.”*

*- UNPAUSE, Political Stencil in the Streets of Athens.*

Athens is a shithole, an urban sprawl of mismatched houses and various intentional and unintentional city-planning policy disasters. Long congested streets lined with corporate shops and sad window displays, malls and roadside restaurants. A grey dust of crumbled cement, dirt and pollution covers it and nothing ever feels clean- even the rain brings dust. The hills and mountains surrounding it bear the scars of forest fires and real estate developments and from high up spots one can see the lure of the sea which seems so close but is somehow so far away, the Athenian seafront has been decorated by a big coastal road and industry, the water littered with floating plastic bags, unknown garbage and industrial waste. Yet this city contains some golden nuggets in its randomness, in fact it is full of accidental beauty. Like many cities, once you know it you avoid certain parts and stay only in others. Athens is great in that it offers a game of discovery, a search for interesting areas and experiences amongst a mostly boring landscape. Once known it can deliver surprises of beauty and absurdity over and over again for visitors and locals alike.

In the middle of the city, and not only, many explorers will find their eyes drawn to images here and there. Posters, stencils, stickers and graffiti litter the veins of the urban labyrinth catching the eyes of locals and tourists alike. In the same way that the unexpected beauty of Athens presents itself due to random circumstances, the streets are filled with uncoordinated imagery from vandals, artists and political initiatives. Street art in Athens is an obvious topic in a city which acts like a permanent but ever-changing gallery.

Street art is a direct form of art which does not ask for permission and which manifests itself in the public gallery mostly illegally and without restrictions such as demand, skill, taste or financial incentive. It is DIY in nature, democratic in its accessibility and in these ways contains many of the aspects of punk but also other art forms such as surrealism, dadaism and pop art. It is also controversial and increasingly connected to the process of gentrification. Let us first concentrate on the art form

itself though, as difficult as it may be for anarchists to discuss art without turning immediately to the negative.

***“For the street artist, the joy and passion for art comes not from the finished piece, but rather from the act of creating it. Street art is at its heart an ephemeral art form; meaning that the artwork has a limited lifespan. It’s not meant to last forever. [...] for these artists, the connection to the artwork ended the moment the art was put up on the street and incorporated into the city landscape. The joy comes from the communal aspect of putting work up outside, in public, with little time to worry about perfection.” -Wooster Collective.***

The art form commonly called ‘street art’ is not one which is based on style or meaning or aesthetic direction. It is merely the

definition of an art form which exists in a certain context. Whether it is good or bad, interesting or boring, avant-garde or predictable is uninteresting. The definition is based on the location: the street. Unmediated creativity expressed on walls and all other surfaces the city has to offer, is the definition of a method of delivering art in what could be argued to be the purest form of art around. Art for the sake of art, creativity as a selfish form of expression. Is it not perhaps the case that the central aspect of art is creativity? And what creativity is more pure than one which does not promise any return on the investments of time and cost and even offers the risk of fines and lost freedom?

Art is always presented to be judged; in galleries and museums, in the art world with its critics and on the capitalist market. Art is an industry and works of art have to be new and fresh yet profitable as the commodity that they are, either as the decorations sold by galleries or the entertainment offered by museums. Movements such as the futurists, dadaists and surrealists,

amongst others, offered more than just commodities as they journeyed through philosophical and political explorations, but I can think of no other art method which expresses itself as directly as street art.

Created for no other reason than joy, street art becomes the simultaneous action of creativity and sabotage as the monotony of clean walls and advertisements becomes interrupted by alternative messages and imagery. This does not mean that street art is in itself anti-authoritarian or anarchist but the method is. It is an art form which is anti-authoritarian in its praxis and interrupts the visual images of the city with the potential of disruptive propaganda. Furthermore, the relative ease and accessibility of the methods invites any viewer to become a co-conspirator; it is the direct action version of art.

The above quote by UNPAUSE is a political framing of the phenomenon here discussed, but of course in reality much of what we see on the streets does not come from any complex political purpose.

It is probably fair to suggest that most people who offer their artistic creations to the urban gallery of Athens do it for fun even though groups and individuals also use the same walls and techniques to convey more political messages. In many ways, the process is similar to tagging and many street artists know each other and leave little messages for each other or compliment each other’s works. For instance, in the style of the recent internet phenomenon known as the ‘ice bucket challenge’, several Athenian street artists have been doing a ‘graffiti challenge’ where they create a piece and challenge other artists in it, who in turn create another piece and challenge more.

This playful nature of street art and graffiti in Athens is partly due to the fact that right now it is a city with a weak state and little resources or ambition in relation to preventing graffiti and street art. In this sense, the above quote about how street art manages “to sabotage the attempts to control the urban visual sphere enforced by the sovereign power” might seem a bit



exaggerated. The truth is that when one is out in the streets with some cans and stencils it tends to feel quite safe. You can stand at a street corner in Athens, drinking a beer between applying layers of stencils and have random discussions whilst paint dries and cars and pedestrians pass by. Many artists have had limited contact with the police whilst applying their creations and eventual contact tends not to be very serious. Of course this is not to say that being caught in the act of putting up an image with anarchist text will be ignored by a battalion of Delta cops in a dark alley at 2 in the morning, but the authorities are not targeting street art in any visible way generally.

This is not the case in other cities in Europe, and in relation to the sterility and oppression of street art in these places the playful possibilities in Athens must be seen as a phenomenon which exists thanks to specific circumstances. You wouldn't stand around on a street corner of many places in the UK taking your time putting up posters or graffiti. An abundance of CCTV cameras should assure you that a visit from the police wouldn't be far away, and even if you are fast there is a big possibility that the cameras are keeping up with you and the cops are waiting around the next corner. The chance of getting caught is combined with the possibility of substantial fines that can go into many 1000s of euros and lengthy prison sentences (maximum in the UK is 10 years). In Stockholm, a city policy against the existence of any graffiti as a zero tolerance approach towards all forms of street art was in place since 2007 and just recently came to an end after the defeat of the conservatives in the September elections. This kind of control did however create an interesting counter-offensive as street artists reacted and took action, thereby creating a political element of resistance.



The zero tolerance policy in Stockholm included a general negative attitude from the city which involved preventative measures, especially towards young people- as if street art was some kind of drug addiction-, a total prohibition towards all promotion of graffiti as well as a policy of removing any piece of street art within 24 hours. This created a situation where a near total sterility existed and lone street artists didn't stand a chance as their work would disappear almost instantly. To counter this some street artists started the 'April Offensive' which aimed at creating a coordinated attack every April, filling the streets with so much street art that the city would not be able to keep up with its promise of the maximum 24 hour lifespan. For several years the offensive united street artists and challenged the state discourse and authority. Similarly, some of the same people created a street art advent calendar leading up to Christmas, an initiative they borrowed from Copenhagen. Everyday, leading up to Christmas a different piece of street art would appear somewhere in the city and people would be encouraged to search for the piece and send a

photograph of it to the website which organised the project. Both of these initiatives were coordinated efforts by street artists wishing to defy the zero tolerance policies of Stockholm and existed within a larger political context of trying to challenge these policies through articles and debates.

Even though Stockholm's zero tolerance policy has come to a recent end, as is the case in other European cities where it had also been tested, it can be assumed to have been inspired by the broken window theory which was first presented in 1982 and which has had an international influence on the management of urban space and law and order. The theory can be summarised by this quote from its first appearance:

***“Consider a building with a few broken windows. If the windows are not repaired, the tendency is for vandals to break a few more windows. Eventually, they may even break into the building, and if it's unoccupied, perhaps become squatters or light fires inside.***

***Or consider a pavement. Some litter accumulates. Soon, more litter accumulates. Eventually, people even start leaving bags of refuse from take-out restaurants there or even break into cars.”***

***-James Q. Wilson & George L. Kelling, “Broken Windows”, 1982, The Atlantic Monthly.***

Now consider the clean and sterile Swedish capital in all its conservative glory, the home of the royal family and political elite, with rich brats strolling through the picturesque city and you can understand how the zero tolerance attitude towards street art has been used to maintain the pristine environment desired by this ruling class and no allowance has been granted for the growth of alternative imagery due to the same reasoning that broken windows are believed by some to lead to more broken windows. The imagery of the city is monopolised by capital in the form of advertisements, window displays and street signs telling you what you can and cannot do. In this environment street art becomes immediately political as a challenge to the visual propaganda of the status quo. Then consider the streets of Athens, crowded and mismatched, crumbling buildings with broken windows everywhere, chaotic and lacking any consistent appearance and immediately street art does not seem to be a political expression in its form alone, in that it challenges the visual landscape, because actually it fits in perfectly.

That Athens is a gallery of images is not due only to the street artists and graffiti writers, but rather it is the nature of the city. The sterility of monoculture which has so effectively been imposed on most of Northern Europe is lacking here. Street art in itself might have political aspects but as with all things methods are always connected to tactics, and always in relation to context, so in Athens street art is in itself not political without intent. Political street art takes place within the broader public visual gallery of the city where it does not only compete with the visual propaganda of the state and capital, but exists within a multitude of images like sprayed political slogans

and posters, tags and hand painted advertisements from small time businesses- lets face it, the city is a mess. Even the crumbling buildings and the wild vegetation of empty lots contribute to the visual landscape: the spirit of the city invites you to contribute.

It is not even as if Athens is drowning in advertisements. Compared to other world capitals it is quite limited as there is no overwhelming abundance of billboards, advertisements on public transportation, bus stops, in toilets etc. In fact, the area surrounding Athens is filled with long abandoned billboards withering away next to the highways in fields of olive trees. The only thing which has happened to these billboards in a very long time is that some of the ones lining the road between Athens and the airport have been visited by artists who covered them with some bizarre images and words greeting both people arriving in and departing from the area. So, maybe the war of visual imagery is not exactly triumphant for capital and state at this time and place. The lack of this conflict does not, however, remove the political potential and use of the art form. Political groups also use stencils as a method of spreading easily reproducible graphics, and individual street artists express political ideas through their art- so of course street art is a tool with great political potential and there are aspects about its very definition that could be considered political.

Even though the Greek crisis is no longer hot news, it wasn't long ago that it was, and back then every major international and national news agency who did a report on Athens seemed to want to create a piece on political street art. Many times Athenian street artists did meet up, semi-reluctantly, with journalists



from CNN, BBC, RT and others to give a few quotes to the story of the creativity which was blossoming in the times of crisis. Mostly these journalists omitted much of the analysis which was shared with them and settled for a few good lines, but this does not change the fact that several street artists did have a political analysis of the situation and saw their art as belonging within this context. Though many street artists have a political analysis within which they see their art, others let the art speak for itself and some just want to put cool stuff on walls. Some projects, such as *Political Zoo*, have been more politically defined and act as a group which uses stencils as their tool of expression, while individual street artists contribute regularly to various political events on various levels.

Sometimes more specific projects appear, such as the recent creation of the group *Political Stencils*, a group which was started in order to create a solidarity project to raise legal costs for a comrade who had been arrested during a police invasion of the squatted park in Navarinou square in the Athens neighbourhood of Exarchia. The group was formed to create an exhibition at the VOX squat where art and a specially created book on political stencil street art in Athens were sold in order to obtain money for legal costs. The event featured creations by several artists as well as workshops and attracted new members to the group which has continued to hold exhibitions both nationally and internationally and has gone beyond the initial fundraising purpose to create new pieces and projects.

It could probably be said without much doubt that the three neighbourhoods in Athens where street art is thriving and can be found in abundance are Exarchia, Psirri, and Metaxourgiou. At the moment, these areas offer a golden age of creativity as the lack of repression combined with the ease and acceptance by not only the state, but larger society, combined with an abundance of creative energy produces an ever evolving gallery with a variety of styles. Also, the areas are already pretty rundown to some degree and the lack of clean walls means more painting makes little difference. Some spaces have existed beyond the walls of the streets to accommodate this art form. Exarchia used to host the gallery and creative space *Stigma Lab*, a group which provided an exhibition space for graffiti, street and amateur artists and also organised the international *Meeting of Styles* graffiti festival. In Psirri the street artist gallery *Sarri 12* puts on professionally curated exhibitions with both local and international artists, whilst the more recently opened *Skord-Art* around

the corner offers artists the possibility to exhibit and sell their work on a more open amateur level.

The *Sarri 12* gallery also hosts a Saturday art school for children in the largely migrant populated area. These Psirri galleries do offer artists, at different levels of ability, the possibility to exhibit their work (if not in *Sarri 12* then in *Skord-Art*) and can be seen as a kind of community resource and a gathering point for both local and international artists. They can also be seen as total tools of gentrification. When street art moves away from the street and into galleries, a certain dynamic changes as the works now have a financial value. The area around these galleries in Psirri have been transformed massively by very intentional efforts to use the streets as galleries, something which influences the very image of the neighbourhood. Similarly, the neighbourhood of Metaxourgiou, which is very full of street art, is undergoing an intentional process of gentrification, one which the street artist can unwillingly be contributing to. As city tourism is developed in Athens and the centre starts to change and become cleaned up, however slowly, these kinds of creative initiatives are bound to play a part in the process of gentrification.

***“Urban theorists have debated it for decades. According to one view, the artists kick it off [...] moving into cheap housing and transforming the area from poor to bohemian – then investors and families follow. Another view is that the developers and public agencies come first, buying up cheap property and then selling it for a profit to the middle classes.”-Philip Ball***

When looking at street art, it is impossible to ignore the topic of gentrification but it is not a straight-forward discussion. The state of gentrification in Athens has been on something of a hold as the economic crisis has prevented some of the fuel needed for its continuous acceleration. The current state of neighbourhoods, such as both Psirri and Keramikos are the result of policies aimed at creating planned entertainment districts constructed around the time of the euphoric days of the Athens Olympics back in 2004. In the case of Keramikos, the new metro station opened up on a square where the development of rows of clubs, restaurants and mega-cafes led to the displacement of the ethnic minority population which had lived in the area. One could pop out of the ground from the metro, be in a sterile zone of modern Athens and then disappear back to comfort without having to deal with any of the realities of the urban jungle. But these projects are beyond what many call gentrification, as they are swift and intense city planning policies which are implemented with full force and lead to an immediate and definite transformation.

Gentrification is a word which is used commonly, but the definition is debatable and often overly simplistic. For many, it goes along with specialist cafes, gastropubs, fixed-gear bicycles, galleries, bohemian vegan pizzerias, street art, boutique hotels and hipster barbers. These are symptoms and perhaps tools, but gentrification is something else and it exists on various levels. Gentrification is the process by which an area in a city is transformed by various factors leading to an increase in attractiveness, the influx of new residents, initiatives and businesses, with both positive and negative





results. The obvious negative result is that the cost of living increases, leading to long term local residents being forced to move away as they can no longer afford the new costs. However, the process *might* also create factors which are beneficial to the neighbourhood such as safer streets due to people being more engaged in their surroundings and socialising outside and with each other, a more pleasant environment and increased creativity. Not all pre-gentrification areas are pleasant, as poverty, neglect and poor-on-poor crime can be prominent and not all change is purely negative.

Sometimes gentrification can occur in a 'natural' process where a series of events leads to the change of a neighbourhood, and eventually the process of gentrification causes an economic transformation with a negative impact. For instance, as cities become more and more expensive, low-income inhabitants are pushed out of neighbourhoods where they live due to increases in rent and pulled towards areas where they can afford to live. Some

poorer inhabitants such as artists, squatters, musicians and precarious youth might end up drawn together by financial necessity and common desires. The influx of young, creative and sometimes political people in a neighbourhood can start a process where more people move there, the area becomes interesting and appealing, people start going out there, the media do some reports on it and voilà: It is trendy! Then rents go up, people with money start investing, the area becomes interesting and a more intentional transformation begins. Many of the original inhabitants then have to move, as well as some of the first newcomers, since the factors that attracted them there have ceased to exist. And so the population of cities are often shifted by a series of push and pull factors which are caused by both intentional and unintentional initiatives. However, this is not to say that areas cannot also be transformed by much more intentional processes. Local business and state initiatives can drive gentrification to increase both value and control of areas. There

are several factors that exist around the term and the definitions vary but let me attempt to be specific for the sake of clarity: *Gentrification is the intentional process where an area in a city is transformed in order to increase the financial potential for business and property owners.*

The importance here is that it has to do with a process, not symptoms by themselves. The point is this: street art is one of many factors which can be used by capitalists to transform an area into something which is profitable for them without any concern for the subsequent effects on local residents or, for that matter, the street artists themselves. After the process of gentrification has done its thing, there might just be a sterile monoculture where the playful freedom that street artists enjoy is no longer possible. So the radical potential of the art form is directly connected to an awareness of the processes that street art might unintentionally contribute to: the economic and political transformation of the city.

The artist Shepard Fairey is one of the worlds most famous and successful street artists who has gone on to receive global critical acclaim. He is most widely known for his paste ups of Andre the Giant and the slogan OBEY as well as the design of the iconic 2008 presidential election poster of Barack Obama with words such as HOPE written under the portrait. Above images from the left: 2 famous iconic images of Shepard Fairey, two images by Fairey splashed & finally a piece by Swoon before and after splashing.

***“By challenging what the experts term ‘street art’, our actions have, in turn, uncovered an alliance between the coercive force of the state and the ‘creative class’ of the artist.” -The Splasher Group***

In late 2006 someone or some people defaced several pieces of street art in the trendy bohemian neighbourhood of Williamsburg, (Brooklyn, New York) by splashing them with paint. Political statements entitled “Avant Garde: Advance Scouts for Capital” and “Art: The Excrement of Action” were pasted on the walls next to the artworks. The statements were wheat-pasted with broken glass added to the glue in order to make removal more difficult. The group or individual carried out several actions like this across New York and the actions continued until June 2007 when an

individual was arrested for trying to set off a stink bomb at the opening of an exhibition by Shepard Fairey and charged with ‘third-degree arson, reckless endangerment, placing a false bomb, criminal possession of a weapon, harassment and disorderly conduct’. The group became known as the *Splasher Group*, even though they never gave themselves a name, and disappeared without a trace except for the publication entitled ‘*If we did it this is how it would’ve happened*’ containing various essays on street art, gentrification and the role of artists, which was later released.

Several artworks on the streets of New York were defaced and the actions culminated with the publication which was distributed for free and sent to some media offices. The manifesto is an arrogant and dismissive collection of texts which attacks the art world as a

whole and street artists in particular who are accused of carrying out a ‘bourgeois sponsored rebellion’ and being ‘advance scouts for capital’, signalling that an area is ripe for gentrification. The texts are filled with anarchist and situationist inspirations (and even plagiarisms) and appreciation towards dadaism and surrealism whilst at the same time being negative towards everything, especially anarchists who like and/or are involved in the creation of street art or possibly creativity as a whole. The publication sees street art as a specialisation, a form of advertisement for artists and advancement of their egos. The group instead places ‘cultural activity’ in a revolutionary context by seeing it as ‘a method that can and should be continually developed to ensure the withering away of the division of labour.’ Even though it is full of self-righteous generalisations, offering no suggestions whatsoever,



## ART: THE EXCREMENT OF ACTION

*“A Dadaist once smashed a clock, dipped the pieces in ink, pressed the ink-soaked pieces against a sheet of paper and had it framed. His purpose was to criticize the modernist idealization of efficiency. Rather than inspiring the widespread smashing of clocks and the reevaluation of time in society, the piece of paper has become a sought-after commodity. The production of a representative organ (the ink-imprinted paper) for the action (the smashing of the clock) guaranteed this outcome. Like an idealistic politician, the piece of paper, despite its creator’s intent, can only represent, and it is for this reason that it instantly became a fetishized object segregated from the action. Only in a culture obsessed with its own excrement are the by-products of action elevated above action itself. Representation is the most elemental form of alienation. Art as representation is no exception. It is just another means by which our perceptions and desires are mediated. Art is the politician of our senses: it creates actors and an audience, agents and a mass. True creativity is the joyful destruction of this hierarchy; it is the unmediated actualization of desires. The passion for destruction is a creative passion. We are all capable of manifesting our desires directly, free of representation and commodification. We will continue manifesting ours by euthanizing your bourgeois fad.”*

*-Text from one of the communiques posted next to vandalised street art in New York*

*“Revolutionary creativity does not shock or entertain the bourgeoisie, it destroys them. Our struggle cannot be hung on walls. Destroy the museums in the streets and everywhere”.- ‘The Splasher Group’.*

*“We have now issued our maintenance crews with photographs of Banksy’s work, so if they come across it, they’ll recognise it for what it is. We will then try and remove it if at all possible and auction it for charity. That doesn’t alter our position that graffiti is illegal and attracts other crime.” -[National Rail Spokesperson]*

*Last week, six pieces by Bristol-born Banksy, 32, fetched £372,000 at auction. A work in sprayed paint on canvas, depicting old women playing lawn bowls with bombs, went for £102,000. “*

*- Patrick Sawyer, ‘Rail workers paint over Banksy art’, Evening Standard, 14 February 2007*

the collection of texts and actions successfully formulate a valid criticism towards street art, gentrification, radical politics, the city and the commodification of everything we create.

The fame of artists such as Banksy and Shepard Fairey, probably the most famous of the artists whose works were vandalised, have removed much of the counter-hegemonic aspects of street art, as their success has led to the art form gaining credibility and hype within the art industry and their works now sell for hundreds of thousands of euros. They are street artists who found fame and wealth and thereby moved beyond the role of random street vandals. Banksy’s place in gentrification (voluntary or not) becomes clear when his work changes from criminal to being protected by city authorities or removed and sold for vast amounts of money. Both he and Fairey use political imagery and slogans which can lead to the question: are they using art to sell revolution or are they using revolution to sell their art? Whatever the answer, the criticism

towards them cannot be levelled at a whole art form as street art does not usually lead to wealth, much of it is created for pure joy and it still contains political potential. The criticism which is contained within the texts from the *Splasher Group* is full of contempt towards art as a whole and raises questions about the radical approach to art, creativity and the permission for artists to make money from what they do. Once the ability to make a living from art is criticised, we must ask where we stand in regards to all work and how people make a living? As someone once said, *all money is dirty money.*

The *Splasher Group* became the harshest of art and politics critics when they attacked all street art. There is plenty of validity in the criticism of Banksy and Fairey for using revolutionary chic to make millions. They do express radical politics in the art world to some extent and at least Banksy has continuously mocked the art industry, but now it would be more appropriate to consider them famous artists who sometimes put

their stuff on walls in public. In fact, they now commodify both the phenomenon of street art and general radical political images. However, other artists such as Swoon, who was also vandalised, are much more connected to the anarchist scene and the ideologies which the *Splasher group* draws much of their discourse from “and the destruction of her works led members of Visual Resistance and other anarchist groups to denounce and ridicule the *Splashers* and their project.” (*J. Cockroft*)

The *Splasher Group* managed to create a very valid critique of art and its role in gentrification but they totally dismissed artists as a whole and due to this stance created no possibility to make links with other groups and individuals. In terms of looking at gentrification they focused on a possible precursor rather than at the process and scapegoated a group of people rather than the factors and real players. It has been pointed out to me that some would find the state of gentrification in Brooklyn and New York city generally to be so



appalling that nothing other than a total attack on street art would be possible in dealing with the subject. Still, a constructive analysis of gentrification and street art would need something more thoughtful than their radical art criticism which falls short due to its simplistic approach.

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It is now 25 years since the Berlin wall fell and the city has been transformed massively. The end of the division of the city led to huge changes as the central parts close to Brandenburger Tor and Potsdamer Platz were quickly modernised and commercialised, whilst other parts of the city such as Friedrichshain were left empty after a mass exodus of citizens and soon occupied by squatters who moved in and created autonomous zones of experimentation and creativity. The new united German state gradually gathered its senses again and evictions and legalisations of buildings led to the inevitable reoccupation of the city by capitalist control. Eventually,

a form of gentrification saw evictions and transformations of the city as rents went up and new inhabitants moved in. The rent in Berlin is still considerably cheaper than most European capitals and many artists, bohemians, hipsters, communists, anarchists, media workers, musicians etc. were drawn to the city from both within Germany and beyond, and still are. Young hip families wanted to enjoy the thrills of Berlin, but also wanted clean streets and quiet nights as they started breeding. Property developers built new buildings and ridiculous car lofts (you drive your car into an elevator/garage which takes you and your car into your apartment!). These kind of new developments saw poorer people forced out of the apartments and the projects of the *autonomen* under attack as property became more desirable and the state sought to bring more control to the hip city.

As far as I know, street art has mostly (but not totally) avoided criticism by people participating in anti-gentrification struggles in Berlin even though the city has plenty of it. The facade of the epic Berlin ex-squat and radical space Köpi is adorned with paintings and the graffiti and street art aesthetics are common imagery in the radical scene rather than being blamed for gentrification. Instead, the anti-gentrification struggles have taken



on broad forms as coalitions such as *Mediaspree Versenken* which have gathered massive and continuous opposition against the property development of the Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain sides of the Spree river which cuts through the city. Similarly the *Wir Bleiben Alle* campaign has opposed the evictions of housing projects, squats and autonomous infrastructure in particular and gentrification and city planning policies in general. Recently, there have been cases of mass civil disobedience against evictions of long term residents in areas such as Kreuzberg which have seen massive rent increases. On top of this, a campaign of sabotage against new constructions combined with arson attacks against luxury cars, amounting to 100s per year, was long a popular militant activity that complimented the broader mobilisations to attempt to create a hostile and dangerous environment less attractive to gentrification. Along with creating hostility against the development of Berlin as a trendy metropolis, focus at some point became more personal as focus shifted from state and capital to individuals. Tourists, new foreigners and artists became scapegoats for gentrification as they were seen as pushing up rents and fuelling the new 'poor but sexy' Berlin which successfully focused on tourism and creativity as a top priority (this description was famously coined by Berlin's former mayor Klaus Wowereit). A small text appearing in the direct action publication *Interim* suggested



that tourists might become legitimate targets in the fight against gentrification and that you could 'steal their mobile phones and wallets as you walk by their cafe tables, burn their cars, smash their hotel windows, drop rubbish, throw stuff at tourist buses'. This relatively short suggestion for an 'Anti-tourism Campaign 2011' was widely publicised in both national and international media but largely criticised within the militant left. (It should be noted that the publication is illustrated by 3 images of Banksy stencils). Simultaneously, a low level hostility against foreign speaking newcomers from the 'western world' increased and 'artist' became equated with 'gentrification'. It is true that newcomers could afford the cheap prices and that landlords took advantage of this by not only ripping them off but increasing all rent in the areas. Similarly, artists were given cheap spaces for little shops and galleries by state and business initiatives who sought to transform areas such as Neukölln which had been labelled as a *no go area* for the police by tabloids such as *Bild*, but now host trendy bars, cafes and vegan pizzerias. Still, the general and radical hostility towards outsiders also met with resistance from within the radical scene who criticised the regional (heimat) pride which was inherent in such targeting. The most typical example of this might be the *Hipster Antifa* group who put up stencils with slogans like 'Smash Heimatschutz



(regional protection), *Tourists Against Xenophobia*' and stickers proclaiming a need for more 'tourists, hipsters, bavarians'. These are visual statements which parody and reject this new kind of misdirected xenophobia whilst pointing out the similarities with nazi German discourse.

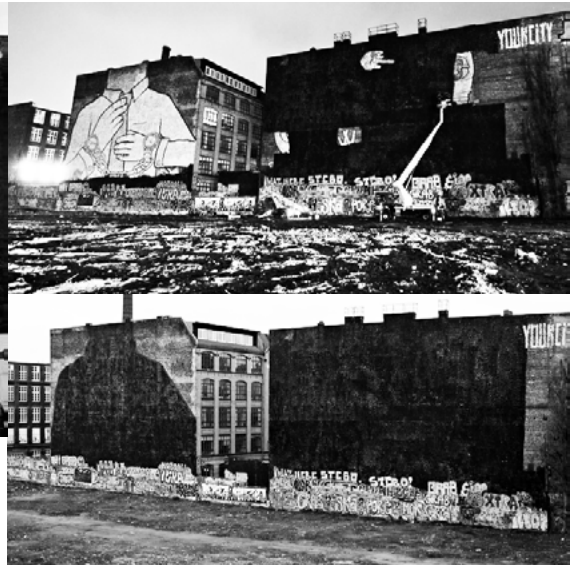
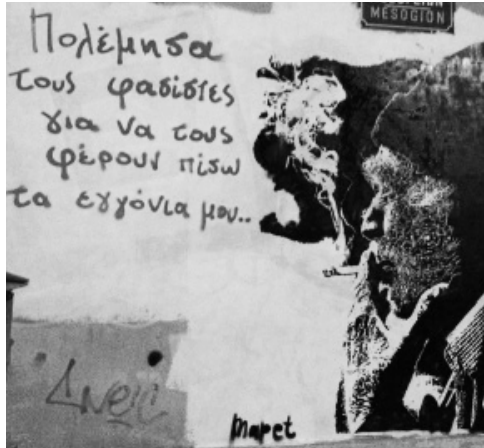
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The targeting of individuals such as artists, newcomers and tourists in the fight against gentrification reeks of nationalism and misses the point. In the same way the *Splasher Group* fails to reach a practical critique of street art by offering absolutely nothing but anarcho art-criticism and dismissing a whole art form. There are moments in time when street art can seem to play into the hands of property developers whilst at other times it can be a resilient pest which pisses off city authorities. The struggle against gentrification can never be combined with the destruction of creativity, but at the same time creative individuals cannot claim total neutrality and ignorance if the products of their creativity are used for the benefit of capital and state. While Athens is re-inventing itself as an urban tourist destination, it might seem that tourists, hip bars, social centres, collective restaurants and street art are agents acting on behalf of the authorities. This is not true, but as street art is something which has been



used to fuel gentrification in other places it is impossible to not point it out as a form of creativity which has uses beyond initial intentions. For instance, there is a difference between a tag, a small political stencil, a sticker, a commissioned work by a corporation and a huge mural paid for by the city. Some pieces play into the hands of city development more than others. In crisis we especially don't have such great choices when it comes to what work we do, and many artists have to create things which they rather wouldn't but are forced to by the same economic circumstances that force most of us to go to jobs we hate.





There is another aspect to the destruction of street art which is worth pointing out. Whereas in Stockholm, as in many other cities, the authorities would have street art destroyed, in Brooklyn artworks would also be destroyed in the spirit of anti-gentrification. But in Athens attacks on street art often come from the fascists of *Chrysi Avgi* (Golden Dawn) and their buddies. Both of the Athenian street artists Mapet and WD have had their work vandalised by nazis. Mapet made an anti-fascist painting of an old man with the text "I fought the fascists and my grandchildren brought them back", but a piece by WD was just a painting of some indigenous children from the amazon and received the text "Fuck your anti-racist propaganda- foreigners out" written across it. This doesn't mean that only the state and the fascists can sabotage street art, it can still be considered a valid tactic in some circumstances and perhaps in Brooklyn the actions of the *Splasher Group* did indeed make sense. If street artists take responsibility for the walls that they paint on and have an awareness of the developments of the city as active participants rather than one way producers, it might be useful sometimes to also sabotage street art and graffiti which

plays into the hands of state and capital. The difficult thing about this though is that as an active street artist, it is hard to decide what's ok and what's not. The open and inviting nature of street art means that anyone can create, so it is hard to then decide that someone is not creating in the right way. When it comes to one's own work however, destruction is easier.

Whilst writing this article a perfect example took place at a very historical location and to a famous piece of street art. The two most interesting areas in Berlin for alternative culture, in all their positive and negative forms, have long been Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain and a visual landmark which has been associated with the border of these two areas (one formerly west whilst the other formerly east respectively) is the set of paintings by the Italian street artist Blu. One image shows two characters unmasking themselves whilst holding up hand signs for East and West whilst the other, which was created more recently, shows a businessman with Rolex-like watches as handcuffs. In early December crowds gathered next to these massive murals, many yelling in protest, as the paintings were painted over by black paint. It was

not, however, the authorities or a property developer who was behind the action, but rather some of the friends of Blu who had helped him put the piece up in the first place, and were now destroying it with his consent as a protest towards the gentrification of Berlin. The artists involved in the creation of what could easily be considered Berlin's most iconic street art mural decided that it had to be destroyed as they did not want to be a part of the current Berlin, stating that:

**"Gentrification in Berlin lately doesn't content itself with destroying creative spaces. Because it needs its artistic brand to remain attractive, it tends to artificially reanimate the creativity it has displaced, thus producing an 'undead city'. This zombification is threatening to turn Berlin into a museal city of veneers, the 'art scene' preserved as an amusement park for those who can afford the rising rents [...] From the first moment**

**of their existence, Blu's murals were doomed to disappear. It is the nature of street art to occupy space in celebration of its uncertainty, being aware of its temporality and fleeting existence."**-  
*Lutz Henke*

So all aspects of street art are relative to their current and shifting realities. The art form can be seen as destructive, it can be seen as something which should be destroyed and it can be destroyed by its creators when the time comes, when its meaning has changed with the changes of the city. Nothing is neutral, everything is fluid, and the street artist can choose how to be an active participant in the surroundings. The big problem with street art is the ability for capital to incorporate anything into itself. Groups like the *Onassis Foundation* and projects like *Living Athens* are initiatives which are purely representative of the interests of capital whilst at the same time promoting and supporting street art and graffiti in Athens. Groups like the *Atenistas* gather the good responsible citizens of Athens to clean up the city using a large

amount of street art techniques to transform parts of the centre which they feel has become too derelict. Their discourse stinks of smugness and middle class values. Whilst street art was illegal in Stockholm, the city of Bristol (home of Banksy) created a huge street art festival a few years ago which transformed the city centre into a massive gallery. Similar initiatives are behind many of the perfect pieces in central Athens. Capital is able to assimilate anything into a commodity and sell it on. Paint-splattered government buildings in Berlin have become tourist photo opportunities whilst holiday flats in Kreuzberg contain photographs of demonstrations and riots on the walls. Revolutionary edgy-ness and poverty chic are trendy commodities and those of us who desire revolt, mobility, alternative living, collective projects and creativity, as opposed to the predictable sterile lives that capital offers good citizens, are doomed to create and partake in processes and initiatives that can be absorbed, reworked and sold. And so it is with street art as with all anti-authoritarian projects, it must be adaptable and aware, free yet hostile, at least if it's to be considered antagonistic in any

way. We don't need any vanguardist radical art police to define which creativity is acceptable and which isn't, but we also need to have a clear understanding that well designed images on walls make areas more desirable- at least to some.

Whilst Athenian street art was an interesting side story for international journalists during the years of crisis and revolt, it is now mentioned more in the narrative of the new Athens and the urban tourism associated with the city. Even the *New York Times* has labelled Berlin as 'over' but the 'poor but sexy', whilst radical and edgy, Athens is only recently starting to be mentioned as an alternative tourist destination. Campaigns such as *#ImAnAthenian* created by *Discover Greece* and Athens Airport are trying to create a new image of the Greek capital. British travel journalist Becky writes on her blog that 'on my recent visit as part of my 'I'm An Athenian' ambassadorship programme with *DiscoverGreece.com*, I got an insight into the growing trend of cultural 'co-working' spaces, new business

initiatives and the dedication locals have to community regeneration'. She goes on to write about various creative spaces and initiatives that are changing previously dangerous parts of central Athens as well as collectives and street art, and goes on a paid street art tour with a local artist. It is the reimagining of Athens as a whole that is for sale: the street art, the radical politics and the collective businesses.

So, this little journey through some cities around the world and their different scenarios has hopefully helped to investigate street art and its political and capitalist abilities. Here are some conclusions: Street art is not political by default, it can be used as a political expression and an active tool, but it can also play

into the hands of capitalists and the state to fit their agendas. The art form itself contains radical elements due to commonalities such as illegality, direct application (direct action), low financial necessities, no immediate financial return and the fact that anyone can do it. Athens is great for it and since there is so much freedom due to various circumstances, many people are involved. But Athens is also changing and there's a big chance that street art will increasingly be used for capitalist development which will have a negative economic effect on certain areas and might eventually lead to the kind of environment where street art is no longer tolerated. The fight against gentrification should not be directed against individuals, be they

street artists, tourists or collective small businesses. There are many other ways to fight. However, those of us involved in creating these images on the walls should have an awareness of how our creations might fit into a broader picture. Street art is not political by default nor without a consciousness of how it fits into the power dynamics of the city, and it is not radical if it is not antagonistic.

- Coraline

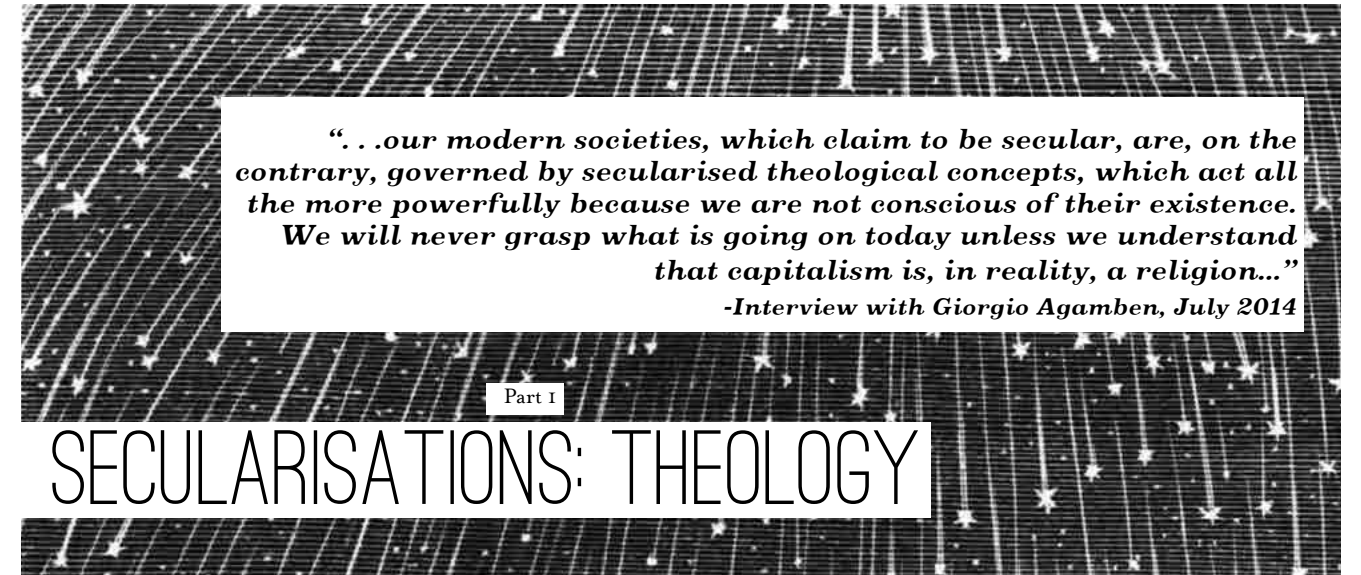
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*The author of this text wishes to point out that s/he also meddles in street art under a different pseudonym and is thereby not in any way impartial in the topics here discussed.*  
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For further interest and reading:

- The Athenian *Political Stencil* group: images and text <http://www.politicalstencil.com/en>
- Athens stencils by Mapet: <https://mapetstencils.wordpress.com>
- Political Zoo: <http://politicalzoostencils.blogspot.gr/>
- An in depth analysis of the Splasher Group: James Cockroft, Street Art and the Splasher: Assimilation and Resistance in Advanced Capitalism, [http://www.jamescockroft.com/graffiti/street\\_art/#n65](http://www.jamescockroft.com/graffiti/street_art/#n65)
- The Stockholm based April Offensive: <http://www.offensiven.com>
- The street art advent calender: <http://kladdventskalendern.se>
- Statement on the destruction of Blu's murals in Berlin: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/19/why-we-painted-over-berlin-graffiti-kreuzberg-murals>

...and of course there's loads more out there on the walls and the internet!



**“...our modern societies, which claim to be secular, are, on the contrary, governed by secularised theological concepts, which act all the more powerfully because we are not conscious of their existence. We will never grasp what is going on today unless we understand that capitalism is, in reality, a religion...”**

**-Interview with Giorgio Agamben, July 2014**

Part I

## SECULARISATIONS: THEOLOGY

No one is perfect, but Agamben seems to be one of the very few thinkers capable of piercing through the post-modern haze. Recently, as in the remarks above, he notes that most of our theoretical problems stem from secularized theology. In passing, I would slightly add something to Agamben's remark, before beginning on a longer disquisition. It is not theology in a general sense that has been secularized, but rather *Judeo-Christian theology*. And not only are our concepts secularized Judeo-Christian theology, but as a parallel our lived history has *secularized Judeo-Christian eschatological events*. This was quite common previously, for example with the eruption of the French Revolution in 1789, to view Bonaparte as either the Antichrist (the reactionary view of the Tsar) or the Messiah (Hegel's view).

Along these lines it has become quite popular today to treat of messianic themes. However in truth this is quite a prosaic theme in our historical moment: real messianism

is now a dead letter, since the messianic moment has *already* arrived. Not only in the undeniable literal sense, as there is once again a Jewish state, but in the metaphorical sense, as the Kingdom of the Poor that entered into phenomenal reality in the October Revolution, those workers who stormed heaven and brought it down to earth. It becomes quite strange, *we live after the millennium*. We are not living at the end of the world, but certainly living at the end of the Judeo-Christian hold on the imagination, since all the teleological goals have been fulfilled, to the extent possible. Now the real question is what to do with the gaping void left by the insufficiencies of this tradition? If the world today seems defective, it is not the lack of fulfillment of tradition, but rather a tradition fulfilled, with its unsightly and all-too obvious shortcomings rendered visible. Societies become decadent only when they achieve their ideals and this is, I think, the primary reason for the general lack of imagination today which is everywhere visible.

With that said, I suppose we should try to find what other remnants of Judeo-Christian monotheism remain as relics in our own time, and see how they are creating our problems, both in the world, and in terms of changing that world. Since we are radicals, we can start with the problems that monotheistic worship and its state have left us with. For example, most radicalism is still busy trying to find the expressions of the one god: the one party, the one leader, the correct theory. Or, in their older theological terms: the elect few who must sort out the good from the bad and rule a dying world, the regent of god on earth, the literal word of god that weighs and judges an era, etc. These ideas are all too common. But in truth and as we know, no one party ever made a revolution, rather one party *has taken over* a revolution. Similarly the idea is to take over the state and to use it for purposes of global moral reform, in which the Christians of the Roman Empire, the Protestants, the Jacobins and later Bolsheviks all have essentially the same operating methods. This



Jan van Leiden, the messiah of Munster.

might confirm Spengler's witticism, to the effect that Christianity was the grandmother of Bolshevism.

This shows itself too in the comportment of the monotheistic state: the state with no dissidents, no other cults, no regional autonomy, no conspiracies. Yet this is completely contrary to the situation in which the modern state was formed, as seen in the early modern history of England or France. The monotheistic state can't tolerate any other religions, because it itself is an ethical religious community: Leviathan digests everything inside it. Even the attempted stamping out of Christianity by the Marxist state (an admirable Enlightenment goal) only showed that it itself was as jealous a religion, as the prior forms of the divine state could not admit either the Protestant heresy or Popish domination. The need is to annihilate the Other that threatens the ultimate truth of salvation. The horrific wars of religion stem from the hatred and intolerance of this tradition, its assertion on the

enforcement of the pure truth, as is well known. One god, one state, one leader, one people, one big error.

Moreover, Christianity is a governmental religion adopted by a dying Empire upon which its structure was modeled. So the confessions of faith and even the book itself were not given by god or even a primitive patriarch, but rather included or excluded depending on the various intrigues of emperors, eunuchs, and courtesans. Thus the entire history is unedifying, and rather than critiquing the supposed idealism of Christianity, I think the most lucid critique is rather to critique *the materialism* of this ignorant tradition. Even the philosophic doctrine of the soul, which Christianity took from Greek speculation, they don't actually support but have to attach it to a decomposing body that will be resurrected one day, and later a heavenly body, like a normal body but slightly more ethereal. There is nothing idealistic at all about that, but a gross worship of the corporeal.

God has not merely to become man (and not a demi-god briefly appearing in human form, as in many other traditions) but the lone deity has to become a man, and also people have to be made to believe this. As a result of this materialism, and an over focus on this material world, the religion is completely predicated on repression and control, since the divine truth has to exist by being fully observed at all times and, if not, it is in serious danger. "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz" (weeping for the dying god, that is to say, Adonis). But it is far too materialistic to think that ultimate truth depends upon the majority or consensus, and in

this way personal choices of faith (and even those of sexual preference or diet) have become issues of cosmic importance. And the well-known: "Thou shalt have no Gods other than me". The jealous God admits the power and existence of the other gods, but one can worship only him. After all, he never says, "I am the only God" but rather, "I must be your exclusive god. In the later more radical versions of Islam and Christianity, what was initially even seen as one god amidst other local gods, often defeated by them, has become the only real god. The difference in intellectual culture also reflects itself, because here we have simply "the book" as if all of human wisdom could be contained in one book, however long. The result is the overly long, repetitive and contradictory Holy Writ.

Also, because of this inherited materialism the cult of the Christians invented the collective practice of the *Noble Lie*. This in its short-sighted, secularized form we recognize today as the cult of expediency, greed, realpolitik deceit, "private vices into public virtues" through the absolution of this curious contradictory thought. Before the radical crisis of values of Late Antiquity, it was quite logically assumed that only good could come from good, and that little good could be expected of the bad. Whereas in our modern world it is common to focus on this unrealistic alchemy of changing bad into good, neo-liberal avarice into social benefits, Stalinism advancing to classless paradise. I remark that even the most perceptive thinkers of 20th century totalitarianism make little or no parallel to the Christian Church. But the first totalitarian bureaucracy is quite obviously the Christian Church- trying to control what others think and feel, trying

to annihilate history and deform language, replacing concepts and denying reason. And the later experiences of Stalinism or modern neo-liberalism, for instance, only reveal the hideousness of this doctrine of apparently justified lying, sacrificialism, and exulting in unhappiness.

This I find the strange emptiness of the Christian faith, its basically "dis-enchanting" character, as it was called by Weber. They themselves know their lies and glosses best of all, and these certainly call into question the supposedly divine origin of their truth. The Christian faith itself is, of all the religions in the world, the most essentially a completely materialistic, bureaucratic, secular and mundane experience. In passing I think this goes a long way to explaining the horrors the monks subjected themselves to, which drove many of them insane. They are lacking actually any real poetical experience rooted in natural life, that of the sacred grove or the friendly spring, the countryside cavern or the majesty of the sea: they simply live cramped together with all comers in a bureaucratically funded and planned building. This is why many of the dreams and visions are inescapably delirious, and to my mind explains the great desire of Christians always to return to the primitive Church, to the Holy Land, etc. Obviously, they prefer the historic time of speaking in tongues and miracles (the free caprice of delusion) rather than organized insanity.

For practical and well-known examples along this theme, we might examine the difference between Jesus and Socrates, a common contrast which basically represents the Judeo-Christian tradition contrasted to philosophy. Not only in regards

to their external culture is the comparison advantageous to Socrates, but also in the practical results of their teaching. Socrates inspires his pupils to go on their own path, and also to engage with and question their

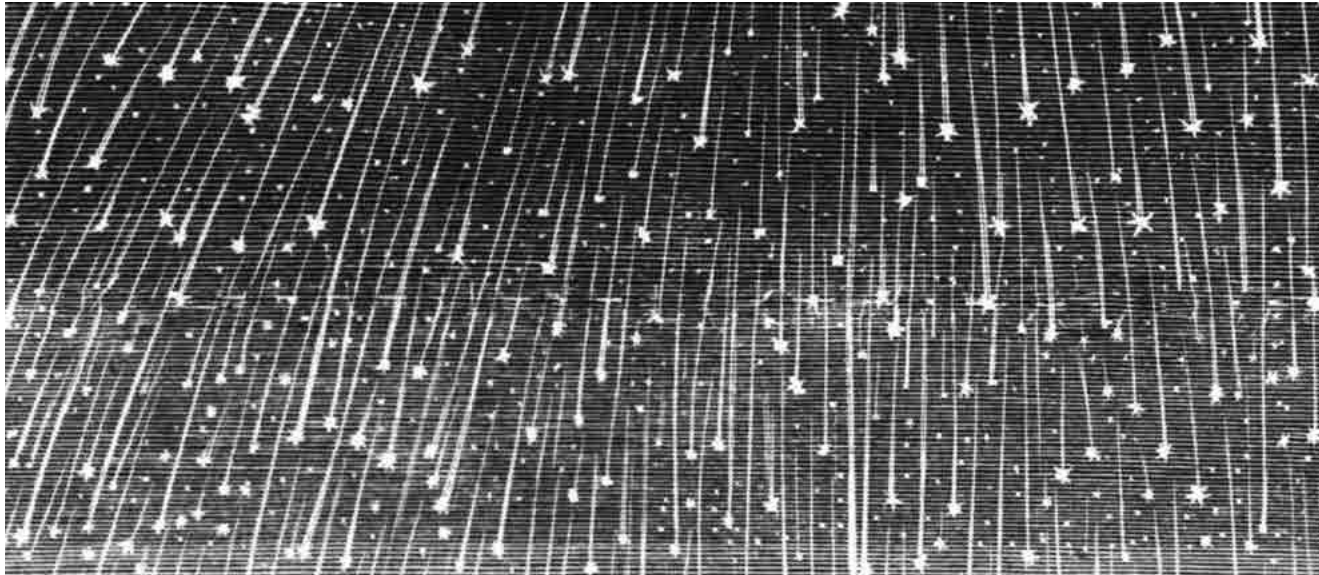


Servetus burned by Calvin. The end of Protestant toleration.

society in the way they see fit. Out of his company come not only generally cultured men, but playwrights like Aristophanes and Agathon, adventurous figures like Xenophon, and also Plato, Antisthenes, and Aristippus, founders of various philosophic schools. Whereas Jesus, so far as we are presented with his picture in the gospels, presents his moral commonplaces (in some cases, contradictions) as the only possible divine wisdom, and in a real way asks his followers to cut themselves off from society. The one tradition is conducive to intellectual and personal ventures, or brings-out, the other radically denies them on the basis of a personal claim to be divine. Finally I think it of the utmost import to note that the philosophic tradition is also situated amongst friends, *the affinity group*, whereas the messianic view is a radical overriding of personal preferences and differences in light of a divine historical mission.

This again seems abstract but I contend you will find much the same behaviour in the differences of tradition. Christianity especially is focused not on bringing-out but on cutting-off, and as a result is basically sterile recitation having crippled its students. This all takes place on the basis of the abstract negation of the ego which can never really be done away with. I think this is also why the one tradition for us represents the necessary diversity of life and joy in it, the other death with its focus on tomb and catacomb; the one strives for contentment, the other for unhappiness. Accordingly the medieval monasteries don't engage with the world in the manner of the Academy or Lyceum even though they are forced in some way to relate to the world, but generally attempt to draw learning and spiritual cultivation away from their proper place. This makes them all the poorer, as intellectual culture evidently belongs to the society out of which it springs. The tragic result is that a defective, impoverished version of the world has been created; a copy that is supposed to be better than the original- just as Christian Rome is an enfeebled Rome and the Soviet Bloc a shabbier West. The philosophic teacher guides and explains but the monastic Father Superior, for example, is concerned with only passing down a tradition, a canon of approved wisdom, and blunting any efforts at independence. The one tradition is basically libertarian, in the sense of allowing others to do what they want, but the defective Christian one is radically tyrannical, taking as its basis a theocracy. The philosophic view teaches us to participate in the life of our times, however many shortcomings it has, the other teaches us to abandon the world, however many educative experiences might be awaiting us there. We can find this difference





of the messianic and philosophic view expressed in Hegel's maxim, "Be not better than your time, but the best of your time".

In fact these same problems of monotheism still continue in the realm of radical theory, where the one leader is dispensing absolute truth and any competition is not a less clear emanation of the same superessential truth but rather deliberate distortions motivated by ill-will. This is quite clear in the poor behaviour of Marx directed against Bakunin and other rivals, Bruno Bauer, Proudhon, Stirner, etc. I suppose this is rather abstruse—but this monotheistic culture of the one and total cause of all things continues in Marx, where this monotheistic god is renamed the economy. Of course, Marx is the most famous exponent of this view, but it continues in the whole past era, for example for Foucault this god is Power, for Deleuze it is Desire, or for Heidegger the metaphysical errors of the West, etc. From this basic structure arrive all the contradictions and problems of these various thinkers

and indeed the general problems of the passing age. But to return to Marx, Agamben, in his *Infancy and History*, laments the purely causal relationship of the economy and all other manifestations of human life, as this forces the theory of Marx into an all-too-obvious crudity. Nothing can save Marxism from a vulgar materialism, because materialism is an inherently vulgar intellectual position:

*...the fear of vulgarity betrays the vulgarity of fear, and so the suspicion of a vulgar interpretation is a suspicion whose formulator has reason to nurture most of all about himself. It is a fear of this kind which inspired in Engels his famous theory of the 'final instance', which is, it must be admitted, a masterpiece of hypocrisy."*

Once we have conceived the economy as the cause of all things, we have simply replaced traditional Christian metaphysics, an idealized materiality (the belief in a divine man) with a materialized ideality (the belief in something called the economy). But we have not left the

sphere of tyrannical over-focus on the one determining cause. As anarchists, we have the more realistic vision of Bakunin:

*"Likewise Marx completely ignores a most important element in the historic development of humanity, that is, the temperament and particular character of each race and each people, a temperament and character which are naturally themselves the product of a multitude of ethnographical, climatological, economic, as well as historic causes, but which, once produced, exercise, even apart from and independent of the economic conditions of each country, a considerable influence on its destinies, and even on the development of its economic forces."*

One would no doubt recognize a superior analysis dealing with the multitude of various and interrelating causes in the real world, than the exclusive and ignorant Victorian prejudice in favour of the economic, which is just as quickly abandoned when it is attempted to apply it to reality (with the famous unhappy proviso, "in the final



instance. . ."). As before, the point is not to deny economic factors in life, but to remove them to their properly lower place. Actually the old philosophic view (and Bakunin's) that all things are emanations of a specific spiritual and material condition of the time would be much more realistic and true. This would allow us to explain Marxism, for instance, as the productions of Marxism are in no way explicable through its own calculus (the theory of the proletariat is formed by Marx and Engels, a German intellectual and a German capitalist). Rather, *Marxism embodied this world-spirit of the past age*, it was itself the product of a specific historical milieu and meaning. But with an unreflective view that the economy causes all things we cannot really explain much (for example art or philosophy or elective affinities) and we cannot explain how this economic view itself became adopted with such religious (not at all rational) fervour. Only if we realize the ground out of which this sprung, Protestantism for the economy, and Hegelianism for the historical view, do we come some way to explaining it.

For a brief digression worth observing: Marxism did to the whole world what Protestantism did to the Catholic World. It split the world by proposing a slightly more radical version of the prevailing religion. In truth, Marx was the "Luther of political economy", or perhaps more appropriately the Calvin, because to the economic Liberal religion of the 19th century he proposed a different interpretation, always situated within the lines of a critique of political economy, a reform of economic projects. Just as a Catholicism become worldly was critiqued by Protestantism, so a Protestantism become worldly (e.g. secularized as what we call capitalism) was critiqued by Marxism. But this is not a pointless repetition: just as the Protestant state unwittingly destroyed the halo of Christianity, so too largely-Marxist revolution has unwittingly destroyed the halo of the state. This leads us to the world of today, where the global states seem little more than decomposing and fractious bands of robbers, and this depiction runs the whole gamut, from Marxist China to the USA, ISIS to austerity Europe.

If we shift back to more recent examples, we find this same problematic continued in official Marxism and its various periodicals, this lack of critical independence which is too obvious to belabour further. In practice this manifests in the well-known critique of any radical thought or event not pre-approved by the party bureaucracy. Even such contemporary and more libertarian characters as Breton and Debord present themselves in this rabbinical or monastic light, because rivals in thought become not less clear versions of a moment in time but dishonest plagiarists, sell-outs or lackwits. The chief theorist is always imposing his view as the collective view but this is a confused situation as everyone always has their own opinion, or they have renounced their own opinion, which is a far from ideal intellectual state. And collaborative intellectual efforts I find partially misguided, since thought is inherently *mon-archic*, in the sense of its singularity. All thinkers are isolated figures, while the groups all follow the same development, as the initial dynamic energy is reduced to

static tutelage. Collaborators with independence are slowly dispensed with in ritualized purges, and at the end repeated stale orthodoxy has replaced the creative ferment that is necessary in all intellectual endeavours. Historical insights have ossified into eternal truths, and all non-adherents to the theory have been denounced as children of darkness. At the end, most tellingly in Situationism, the review dissolves into its chief theorist, Debord. But how much more logical to have unique thoughts in an isolated medium, and collective thoughts in a collective one! Finally, this raises

the question of the proper medium of the book for the highest level of thought, and thought encapsulated in a necessarily-reduced popular form. Wouldn't a truly sensible person either dispense with the fiction of collective participation, in which case the review becomes a cult or else everyone bitterly goes their own way (which are common developments in today's world)? Or better, would they not allow the collective participation to be a part of life itself, as the banter of a group of friends, the affinity group rendered in intellectual expression?

Where does this lead us, practically, in today's world? And why is *The Barbarian* precisely so strange and so unique, with its discordant voices and multifarious intellectual projects and interests? It's nothing more than the tumultuous old spirit of the forum, the *αγορά*, coming back into the world in theoretical form.

...this text continues on page 41.



## PROPER IS THEFT

Wondering about “anarcho-tourism”, and my (A)-experience of Greece, I’d like to focus on a non-glamorous part of it. Not that I am not interested in the demonstration techniques, or conspiracy theories, or terrorists’ accusations, nor that I want to be the boring one either. Moreover, it is a complicated task to get some knowledge about what is really going on politically here concerning the different groups and places of our little anarchist world. So, I find it easier to talk about everyday experiences and practices. Individual practices, but shared practices in the milieu. To be more clear : this article is about the current way of living that I used to have in France and that I am trying to go on with, here, in Athens.

*Take a ticket, let’s say, for Larissa or an other station on the way for Athens... It will be half of the price. But it is very risky to take the train from Thessaloniki without a ticket.*

So, as a newly-settled barbarian, I have to say that my first conversations with friendly people I met here were about taking the train for free. I was in Thessaloniki, and after being kept in the police station for 3 and half

hours because I was on my way to a demonstration, I asked my co-captives how they handle going to Athens for free, or for less money. This way of travelling, a condition of going back and forth to places for political reasons – demonstrations, gatherings, seminars, etc – is also a way of living, a kind of everyday practice that makes me part of the community I belong to.

### WAYS AND MEANS : IMPROVISATION, PREPARATION, EQUIPMENT, ETC.

First, let’s talk about the practice itself. As to sneaking on the train, experience says that there is no rule. To me, everything’s played out once the doors are closed, and I don’t have a ticket. Afterwards, it is all about improvisation.

This first time, I found allies. I recognized them from a political event – not really anarchist – and told them straight away my condition. They helped me. One of them just dropped his ticket close to me after the controller followed me while coming back to my seat from the toilets. We felt kind of forced to socialize after that. I gave them a lot of cigarettes.

The second time, the train was so full of servicemen that I just crossed the controller’s way. In France, we enjoyed those kind of extraordinary occasions like a crazy guy who gave his “crazy-guy-certificate” as a ticket and ran all over the place – I had the information from the controller himself ! – or a guy dying in a wagon...

Also, in regards to the state of exception, the position of the foreigner helps: if you get a fine, you don’t care. That’s what my room-mate told me when we talked about controls in the metro. “In Greece, if you are a young man, you can go to prison during your military service if it appears that you are a compulsive ticket-skipper. And of course you get a big fine.”

I would prefer not to be caught anyway. And it never gets that easy, though, like buying something at the supermarket. In France, we have those expressions about stealing when you have to admit that you felt uncomfortable : either you piss on yourself, or you shit on yourself (*se pisser dessus/ se chier dessus*). The first means you stole the thing, and the second means you put it back, or worst, you bought it. Here, I piss on myself

everytime. But everytime I go to the supermarket, I have to get something for free, most of the time, feta. Even if I am obviously followed – in three months, it happened to me twice...

*To the happy few : En bref, je suis tricarde.*



When you decide to be a compulsive thief, you have to be organized. Hence, you need some preparation, knowledge, techniques, strategies. At first, when I came to Greece, I had this joyful feeling of being in a country of cheaters. Everybody is kind of an outlaw : locking the electric counter, or not wearing a helmet, or smoking just next to the sign that forbids it, or writing whatever you want on the walls, etc. This is the state of mind, then comes the preparation like wearing the *right* clothes, especially the shoes (those grown-up shoes you use only to go to weddings, burials and...the super market).

Finally, you have to be cautious, check the cameras, the security guys, locate the blind spots, etc. but being discrete at the same time. I learned that from collective stealing. I used to do it alone and spontaneously, catching the occasion, let's say. Later, I stole for political reasons – you won't pay to cook a solidarity meal, will you? – and I had a very impressive teacher, whom I now ape. I can still feel him taking my sunglasses off my nose with a fatherly gaze... So, there is also transmission of knowledge...

Last but not least : the thrill. It's not depreciated by the preparation, quite the opposite: it's increased by it.

#### A MATTER OF SUBJECTIVITY

At this point, I have to expose my point of view concerning this kind of everyday practice. I have to say that these individual behaviours contain an individual interest because it gives pleasure, or, to be more spinozist, joy (as for everything, otherwise there is no point). Joy is about increasing your power of being i.e becoming more powerful i.e becoming able to do more stuff.

*1st proposition:* It increases my power of being to eat good feta that I stole.

Pleasure of freeness.

*Scholia:* There are so few free things to enjoy, uh? Although, we can discuss this point, a friend told me that we have to make the intellectual effort not to feel that we earned money.

*2nd proposition:* It increases my power of being to steal feta because I took it from my enemy.

Pleasure of revenge.

*Scholia:* This one is totally fantasmatic, and symbolic, of course. But, on the individual scale, it works.

*3rd proposition:* It increases my power of being to steal feta because I feel part of the community of thieves.

Pleasure of belonging to an actual (factual) community.

*Scholie:* Common topic of sociology, mechanical solidarity, positive face, etc. The thing is that such a community doesn't exist as a social organisation. Still it has some tangible consequences on my own behaviour, and that's why this article is deliberately non-exhaustive about my (our) practices.

*J'suis pas une poucave.*

*4th proposition:* It increases my power of being because I feel part of the anarchist community. Since I know that most of comrades are acting the same.

Pleasure of belonging to a reflexive community.

*Scholia:* For example, one trotskyst friend was very pissed off one time as he joined me at the supermarket, because I almost involved him in my crime. But the main reason to his anger was that I was acting like all those stupid anarchists. It was during my first days in Greece and I felt kind of a relief not being alone, although this belonging to a community was experienced from an outsider's view.

*5th proposition:* It increases my power of being because I feel part of my friend community.

Pleasure of feeling close to "my people".

*Scholia:* In a letter I told my friends that I felt that going on with these practices, even if it was more difficult here, by myself, was a kind of way of staying close to them, to my community.

We can surely find other pleasureable aims that makes us capable of risking getting caught. The individual point of view deals mainly with the balance of pain and pleasure, it doesn't mean that the pleasure has to be immediate. That's where politics knocks on the door.

The joy I seem to get has a lot to do with belonging. The more obvious example is this article, which is a different form of the pleasure of telling stories, a kind of attempt of meta-storytelling. Telling stories about one's exploits, or giving advice, or commenting upon the different places and techniques

we use – this is definitely a part of anarchist habits. That is one of the things that makes the community effective, even from the outside.

#### I DO IT BECAUSE I CAN

I was gathering the leftovers of the market and those guys started giving me a lot of things. I was waiting for my roommate to carry the tons of vegetables I had. We had a little conversation in Greek. "Why?", was the question. I answered "we can feed ourselves (5 people) for one week with all the things I gather". You don't have a job? And your roommates? Despite this interaction, the space created at the end of the market is also part of what we can call a "widening home" feeling.

As an example: using the supermarket as a cupboard. A friend of mine who was living upstairs from a super market took this habit of getting there, immediately, the products he missed for cooking, or other activities.

While cooking french fries, I realised that we had no more salt at home, and my roommate had gone to buy coffee, without his cellphone. I went out and shouted at him in the super market. I was still wearing my apron. I had no money on me. He wasn't there but still I took a packet of salt in my pocket and went out. As if I was home. This idea of extending the sphere of home, or privacy, appears to me as a good metaphor



for the relation with prohibition that has been sketched in this article. The line is moving, getting further and further, or the zone is extending as we go on with these practices. Still, I have this thought that we should mind the scale of our actions, especially stepping away from morality.

As a traveller (you can meet many here if you are a foreigner) such as one who called himself for an unknown and mysterious reason, Nono, came with me at the end of market. It appeared that we were sharing this practice. I have to say that I am increasingly developing techniques and strategies that rely on the interactions with the workers. Actually it's not really strategy but the more you do it the more you recognize the gazes, the expression of the faces, and how to get some free stuff. A teacher of mine used to say that the law of work is that simple: the less you do the better it is, anyway. The more you get for the less you do, that's even better. Anyway, one guy looked very annoyed to see me looking at the *skoupidia* (garbage) and gave me some leeks – saleables. Nono did exactly the same after me, got the leeks and later, gave a speech: "I didn't want to take it, because the point is to eat things that won't be eaten otherwise". I answered: "I don't feel guilty. To me, the point is to get things for free".

Despite the fact that we are sharing a practice we are doing it for different reasons or giving ourselves different

reasons. I don't want to link my practice with a whole conception of the world. The idea is to get some light on my relationship with it.

*The ascetic life of the not-so-lonesome anarchist...*

As a conclusion, I can say that, considering the time it took me to write about this subject and the thousands of thoughts and stories that you've been spared, and the importance of those things in my life – *il faut bien manger* – I can say that I feel kind of alienated. It makes my life more complicated. Therefore, let's say, I have less spare time. I can't read in the metro; In the train, I can't sleep; I'm using more calories out of anxiety than I put in my pockets when I go to the supermarket. Hard is the everyday way to anarchism! And I didn't even talk about getting home for free... But, let's say it is rather the contrary of alienation. For example, when we talk about "being independent", as a grown up, it is all, in fact, about dependence : work, pay bills, etc. The "hard anarchist life" is closer to independence. Reflexivity is included along the path marked out for this shitty life. Independence goes with the consciousness of the wilderness of the outside. And I can say that I am deeply conscious of it...

-Aut.







Any position reduced to the pure negation of being “anti-something”, without any further adjectives is problematic. This kind of thought implies a hollow neo-liberal idea of liberty. An idea for which there are no adjectives but unlimited alternatives, where all qualities and limits—even interstellar distances—are possible to surpass with money, slavery, consumption and extended ecocide. This is an obsessive liberty, where a goal is evaluated higher than the consequences caused by realizing it—any sacrifice does not count.

If we abandon this logic another world is not possible. The famous slogan from the anti-globalization movement is feeble. We have to deal with the dirty old one.

But that’s not all. “One world” presupposes full globalization, even M. Jacksons “We are the world” is not free

of anthropocentric supremacy. Both phrases are presumable only within cultural colonialism, technological hegemony and large scale digital reproduction powered by fossil fuel and global capitalism—which are again phenomena of neo-liberal thought.

Social revolts cannot be reduced to any “we need change!”-kind of demand, nor to pure insurrectional “liberty”. Both of them are empty concepts, since the imperative for the change of a liberalistic subject (and economy) and creative destruction are the exact preconditions for neo-liberal capitalist reproduction.

The idea of freedom has to be re-thought, not universally, but focally(2), not as a general idea but a particular one, not only unlimited but also limited. ‘Universal’, ‘general’ and ‘unlimited’ are again ideas which

belong in a dream-world of neo-liberalism and can be seriously considered only if there is a functioning global infrastructure for distributing ‘universal’ thoughts, physical power to realize ‘generality’ everywhere, practical potential to consume resources, labour and energy to break all ‘limits’. I cannot see how this could happen without slavery and exploitation.

If there are no realistic possibilities to do something, we stop talking and dreaming about those things. We will condemn them as nonsense, right? We will say “nah, it does not work”, just like they say when we talk about revolution. Perhaps they are right. Revolution will never work as it has been classically presented: in both meanings of the word ‘work’. It is not about labour or production and it certainly doesn’t appear universally and without adjectives as many of “us” claim.



The following might sound a bit blasphemous for most radical theories (sorry about that) but it has to be said anyway. If we think our desired social changes from an anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian perspective, and these desires are serious in their objectives, we need to base insurrectional practices on something other than a logic that is thinkable only in capitalism.

If there is any will to be consistent, one foot in the struggle has to stand on something we could call a post-capitalist imagination, while the other stands on insurrection. If universality is a neo-liberal fantasy, this means that a post-capitalist standpoint but also insurrection and its tactics vary everywhere and are not exportable, as such.

We don’t know what post-capitalism actually means, but we know what it does not mean.

If we deny the whole capitalist imagination, we have to expand this denial also to capitalism itself and consider that capitalism is not actually what it claims to be. It is not hegemonic, it is not universal, it is not liberal, it is not homogenized, it is not omnipotent, it is not logical, it is not even utilitarian, secularized theology or based upon money etc. These are just its own fantasies, ideals, failed capitalist day dreams and therefore useless viewpoints for post-capitalist epistemology and analysis.

To be able to imagine post-capitalism and to recognize its embodiments already existing in this reality, one has to see what is peculiar about capitalism for those who observe it, what is peculiar in the place and time from whence it is observed. Capitalism is not a common enemy, but many different

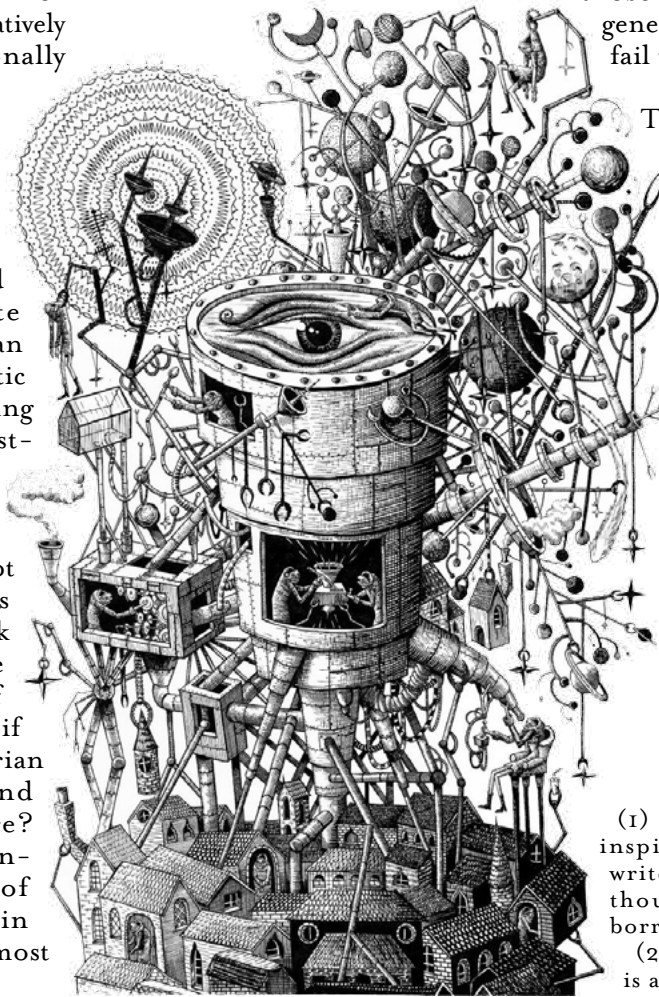
enemies. We cannot cut the head of the beast if we are actually confronting several of those.

The deconstruction of existing capitalist social relations (whose purpose is mainly to ensure the movement of money, ideas and products) is inevitably a process that rearranges material conditions as well. Diminishing the logistical flow of goods and transactions will create a new imagination, new social relations and practical solutions to solve the needs and desires of the people involved. What kind, we don’t know before we try. The promise of an all-enabling liberty will be rooted in new kinds of relations and logistics: the imaginary limitlessness of the neo-liberal project will be replaced with social and environmental “boundaries” which post-capitalist ‘focality’ or nomadism imposes.

Instead of unity, we have to admit that the collapse of capitalism is breaking the world as we see it now into parts and that each part is not an atom or individual—but something between these extremes. Also it is clear that such a future cannot imply mass-society, cosmopolitanism, large scale digital reproduction, globalization, cultural universalism or even a Nietzschean “death of God”—as the God whom Nietzsche talked about was actually the result of the expansion of capitalism—nor can it be expandable, cumulatively progressive or conventionally productive.

Some local struggles that appeared after anti-globalization mobilization (such as ZADs, Halkidiki and no-TAV) pointed out a very appropriate question: is a modern urban metropolis, a fully capitalistic creation with hardly anything else, a real place of post-capitalistic struggle? Does it have anything useful to contribute to a radical political imagination except as a place to socialize? Is it even possible to think post-capitalism if he who is thinking is part of capitalistic circulation and if a big part of its authoritarian power is in urban and industrial infrastructure? Can we get any real (non-imaginary) experiences of ‘heterogeneity’ if we live in cities where capitalism is most complete in its illusions?

Perhaps we can. But that means a struggle must be outrageous if it is to manage to create a post-capitalistic existence within the heart of the beast. We have to fill it with experiences of new focality—city and neighborhood have to be truly lived—while cutting down streams and stems of capitalistic reproduction and ideas. This truly needs some contemplation and experiments, but I’m not going to go more into that now.



Perhaps the general language of generalized life prevents us from thinking with a language of the particular. Perhaps the true political contradiction is not between owners and workers but between a fundamentally unique human collectivity and generalizing universalism. Perhaps past struggles between particular and universal are much more important and radically different than any enlightened, industrial or modern revolution—those struggles that always-generalizing history will always fail to praise.

The question of particularity is a question about practicality, about how practical activities and conditions are creating knowledge. Can you do it in the sameness of a university or factory? In an all-equalizing mass-protest? In front of a computer?

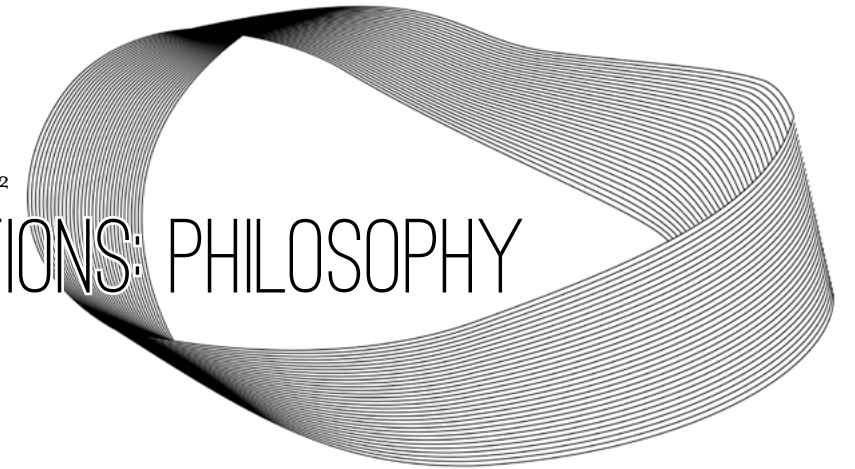
(1) This short meditation is inspired by philosopher and writer Antti Salminen whose thoughts are also carelessly borrowed several times in it.

(2) Rather than ‘locally’, focal is a place of focus.

...continued from page 34.

Part 2

## SECULARISATIONS: PHILOSOPHY



Have we then in this discursus only contributed to a further disenchantment of the world, and thus are we simply taking part of the general rationalizing culture of Christianity, and specifically Protestantism? Not at all. Rather we are concerned with re-connecting what has been thoughtlessly sundered, the ideal world of thought and the material world. In reality we find they are never really apart in their immediacy, but also that historically they re-unite in moments that, seen with the common fragmented way of thinking, appear as far too real. This is important for us because effectively this study is one concerned with the knowledge of history.

A popular conception would have it that revolution is not concerned with history, but this is quite false: the beginning of modern revolt comes from the rediscovery of historical knowledge in the re-birth of the Renaissance, later follows the Protestant critique of Catholic Church history and the admiration for Antiquity of the French Revolutionary period. Even the modern revolt of the proletariat according to its theorists is related to *History and Class-Consciousness*, as

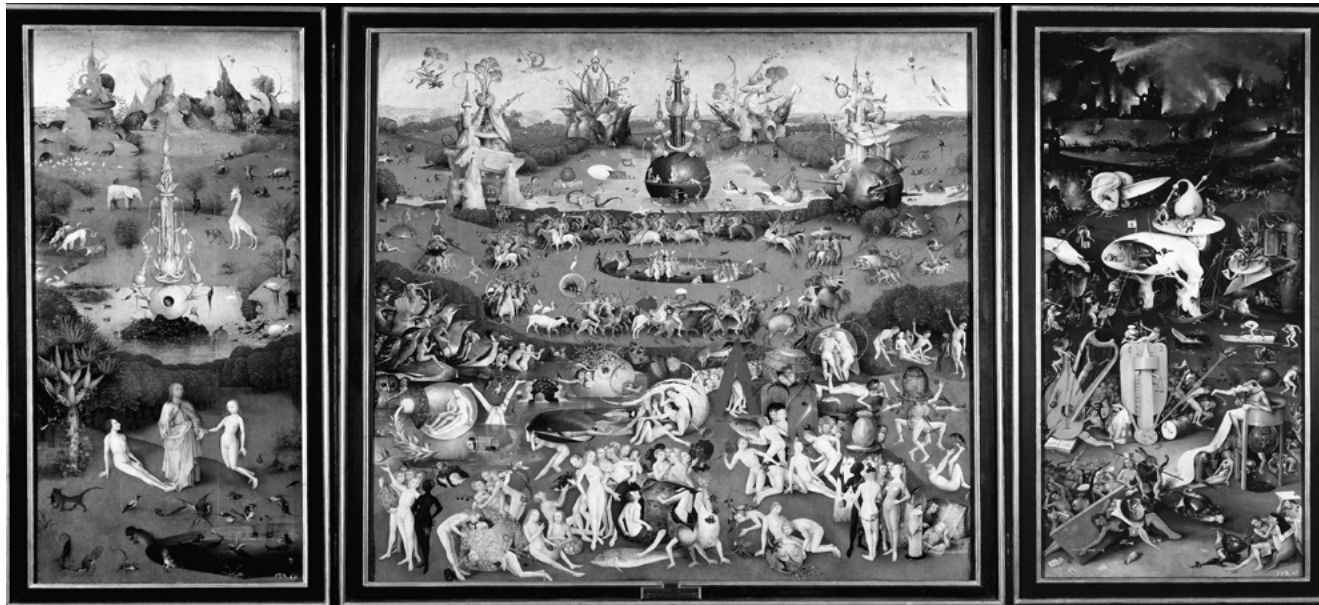
in the title of that most famous work of Marxist philosophy by Georg Lukacs. Thus, upon further examination the true question will be seen to be between different conceptions of history, not getting rid of or denying the possibility of historical knowledge.

Then the question becomes: what can revolutionaries take from history, or in a more real sense, what belongs to them as a legacy? This is particularly important because we find ourselves in the specific situation of a modern Greece harking back to the oldest foundations of the West, structured through a modern nationalism spuriously linked back to Antiquity. Here the pastiche of a few 19th century buildings amidst urban ugliness, eurozone aspirations, Orthodox Churches, Athenian democratic and Roman imperial monuments, and an imagined ethnic continuity are somehow supposed to be plastered into a coherent whole. Yet in order to contest the dominant historical presentation and to combat its clear descent into extremist madness, we would have to have our own historical view, which is what is attempted here. Yet I believe we can plot our ship through the reefs

of under and over-appreciation for the past, in following the obviously reasoned fashion of Bakunin:

*“It is true that the Greek civilisation, like all the ancient civilisations, including that of Rome, was exclusively national and based on slavery. But, in spite of these two immense defects, the former none the less conceived and realised the idea of humanity; it ennobled and really idealised the life of men; it transformed human herds into free associations of free men; it created through liberty the sciences, the arts, a poetry, an immortal philosophy, and the primary concepts of human respect. With political and social liberty, it created free thought. At the close of the Middle Ages, during the period of the Renaissance, the fact that some Greek emigrants brought a few of those immortal books into Italy sufficed to resuscitate life, liberty, thought, humanity, buried in the dark dungeon of Catholicism. Human emancipation, that is the name of the Greek civilisation.”*

Perhaps we can afford to be less enthusiastic and a bit more discerning than Bakunin, while still following the



historic line he traces (which Greek readers will note is continued in the work of Castoriadis, for one modern example). But in this sense, what belongs to modern revolution from Antiquity and from the Renaissance, as well as from the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions, is not a particular political situation or customs, nothing material or ethnic, since these peoples and epochs are forever past. However, what *does belong* is ideal or intellectual, and most clearly these are the conceptions stored in philosophy. In other words (for example that great German one, *aufheben*) philosophic revolution abolishes the old forms of society and yet preserves and improves upon the spiritual memories of the past.

That said, we should continue with our historical and philosophical investigation. The root of the problem is one in logic concerning supposed eternal truth. The real way of looking at things philosophically has always been concerned with the one and many, the *ΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΝ*, but monotheism has simply reduced everything to the one. This leads to gross contortions and problems of meaning and I submit produces the

doubts and sufferings inherent in this tradition: for example the rhetorical exercises of the Book of Job and the Lamentations when respectively, Judea or Christian Rome suffer a loss in battle. After all if God is there, then he has to be acting to defeat what he is supposed to love. From this come the unappealing intellectual contortions about punishment with the consigning of this world to a second practically omnipotent deity, Satan. Or else we fall back on a crude and unjustified theodicy, etc. The polytheism of the ancient world could be remarked as the other side, as purely the rule of the many, which descends into its own problems. The problem there is a disordered descent into infinitude: by the end, for example, the Romans not only mechanically manipulated their religion for purposes of State, but also had multiplied the deities for every specific purpose imaginable (childbirth, crossroads, doorways, luck, war, harvests, etc.). It is no surprise that in these contexts the old faith dies away.

The real solution is to be found in the philosophy that emerged out of the old polytheistic world and gave its

weight to tempering the monotheism of Christianity. In the final working out of this system in antiquity, in Neo-Platonism, we see that there is a real superessential unity behind the fabric of appearances- designated poetically by Aristotle as the unmoved mover- but its emanations are fragmented down into many component parts. These go much further to explaining and mitigating the influences of bad events, as consolation, than only having one source and cause of blessings and pains. In sum, it means a different way of thinking about truth and meaning, and that there is another tradition to which we can apply for political imagery, not just the crude thought that separates Heaven and Earth.

So, we must keep in mind what we said earlier about the transcending of differences of the one and the many in philosophy. Now, the secularized concept of heaven, as we use it in our Christian sense, is utopia. But this prior heaven was always separated from our earth in time. These two terms have been re-united but as still separated. I mean that Utopia is linked to earth, and will arrive in a definite period, just a few

years more- the famous Soviet waiting for communism. However, reality is not really sundered in this fashion- there is a way of thinking about reality that sunders its own unity with the world. Meaning expressed in life (here abandoning the use of the word 'heaven' and 'utopia') is not linked to the marginal practice of cults extended outside of time (e.g. the negation of personality and property with the Essenes, monks, and millennials) but rather appears most clearly in real historical periods. And this occurs not in a crudely linear manner but rather in a discontinuous manner which, however, still does have a progression inside it.

If we really wanted to learn more, we would have to bring up that weighty question, concerning *The Ages of the World*. After all, otherwise the world presents itself as an inexplicable sequence of secularizations and divinizations: what was previously secular becomes divinized as the Holy Roman Empire, out of which we now emerge once more into a secularized world. This remains at the level of observation, which is extremely useful, but not quite explanation, which would be more useful still. Without the latter, we seem to have an endless changing back and forth, where there is in truth just as much meaning in history as in the rotation of the planets, from whence we derive the word 'revolution'. As is well-known, this historical preoccupation largely concerned Hegel, and it is he who made philosophy historical, in a sense it previously had not been. The logical connection between the finished Neo-Platonic edifice elaborated by Proclus and that of the system of Hegel has not really been adequately explored. But in brief it means is that to the 'flat' system of ancient philosophy, Hegel has added 'depth', or the consideration of Time. In a real sense the old transcendence of the one and the many within the neo-Platonic system was also applied to Time by Hegel, and 'the one' of the linear

time of the Judeo-Christian tradition is reconciled with 'the many', the eternal circle of the Greek world. This gives us Hegel's system, an ascending cycle that returns back into its altered self. Hegel has shown that progress toward the Good, in history, is reflected in the advance of Liberty. And if one wanted the secret to these World-Spirits that rule an age, they could perhaps each be conceived of as, in the old terminology, a world-ruler, a *κοσμοκράτορ*.

This has meaning if we want to determine why Anarchy is so special at this specific moment in time. Why is Anarchy possessed of the only energy, and why has Marxism now become a lifeless parliamentary party? No longer do the Marxists expropriate the program of the Anarchists (as with the Commune, October, or the New Left), now it becomes clear that this was only Marxism approximating to the superior form of its own truth. The present moment opens up the revelation that Anarchy is now the only real revolt: Marxism has no more life precisely because it has no more Anarchy left inside itself. The struggles of today like Val de Susa or the Zapatistas are not all consciously anarchist, but they are all fighting against the state, they are *all anarchistic*. In this sense Anarchy might be said to have resolved the contradictions of the past by being "*one many*". Anarchy is the intellectual term that unites a diverse multitude of anti-state struggles, that influences but does not control, the sun that shines down on a world of revolt. In the hourglass of Spirit, the sands of Anarchy have been draining away from Marxism over history. As Marxism is fading away it dissolves into Anarchy, which is seen quite clearly with the EZLN or even the PKK. At the end of the hour is struck, and what has seemed to be Marxist progress, is actually revealed as today's emptiness, and all the real historical content is seen to be on the bottom, in the tradition of emancipation that logically leads to Anarchy. This new type

of revolution will divide the old from the new and reveal the real historical current of the past era. This means we are at the passing of a stage in history.

When eras end, they leave behind them brief flickerings of memory from the illumination they participated in, and it is this lightness of feeling that allows us to describe these great historical moments most appropriately as a Bacchanalian festival. We can recognize a few of these special epochs, knots in the thread of time, as they appeared in history, for example in the Renaissance or around the revolutionary time loosely designated by 1789. The spirit is free from its mundane shackles, allowed the ground to create and live as it likes, and correspondingly these are periods full of Liberty, in all senses of the term. Not the tired course of history that we simply have to accomplish, but to arrive at a new dispensation; not the winding mountain path, but the vista; not the day of labor, but the festival. These special periods embody the truth of the prior age and bring a term to the old era, all while they usher in the promise of the new. But these really-living heroic and noble times have in one sense the most danger, divisions, chaos, collapses, and so forth; but on the other hand they are full of life, full of thought, have the most sublime moments, and above all, the greatest understanding of the passage of time in its richness. These epochs always rise to the clarity to see that eternity appears in time, as an historical, phenomenal appearance. This also accounts for the striking lucidity of the works informed and produced by these moments, as these eras always seem to know their own ethereality as well as their own beauty. In the words of that great spirit, Lorenzo de Medici, *Quant'è bella giovinezza, che si fugge tuttavia:*

*Fair is youth and void of sorrow,  
But it hourly flies away.  
Youth and maids, enjoy today,  
For naught ye know about tomorrow.*



Like the aforementioned poem, *The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne*, these are times that inspire us with that old feeling of joy. For whenever the world rediscovers its joy in life, the old celebration of the Dionysia, the Bacchanal, is never far from it— not in a perpetual way, like the supposed Christ, but in these uneven moments of joy and laughter, as Goethe described the Saturnalia (renamed by the Christians, Carnival) at Rome.

*“On the contrary, knowing that life, taken as a whole, is like the Roman Carnival, unpredictable, unsatisfactory and problematic, I hope that this carefree crowd of maskers will make [the readers] remember how valuable is every moment of joy, however fleeting and trivial it may seem.”*

But this passing of faded loves and of rich moments, of the good and noble, of experiences in time, is not an unhappy doctrine, but rather one that fortifies and uplifts us. The tree that was green withers, but it remains forever in our memory, and the joy of its blossoming, is in a real sense outside of temporal existence. After all how could it not be so, if we can remember and inwardize an event, after it has passed?

*“But, just as the girl who offers us the plucked fruits is more than the Nature which directly provides them—the Nature diversified into their conditions and elements, the tree, air, light, and so on—because she sums all this up in a higher mode, in the gleam of her self-conscious eye and in the gesture with which she offers them, so too, the Spirit of the Fate that presents us with those works of art is more than the ethical life and the actual world of that nation, for it is the inwardizing in us of the Spirit which in them was still outwardly manifested; it is the Spirit of the*

*tragic Fate which gathers all those individual gods and attributes of the substance into one pantheon, into the Spirit that is itself conscious of itself as Spirit.”*

The real meaning of the past comes to us from the recollection of the happy vintage of the harvest, these times that are in truth outside of time— not the periods of gestation, but the fruit itself. This means very much for us as we today live largely in the meaningless present, the linear advance of technology and its promises. But Judeo-Christian revolt against nature can only take humanity so far before humans are forced to realize that they too, are a part of this Nature. As many have remarked, the God-man of Christianity has given way to the Man-god of modernity, but now we progress further and yet come back to the truth of separation, but revealed in its true form: *man, as simply man, content in himself, and god, or the invisible realm, understood now as it always really was, as Thought.*

So to bring us back to contemporary issues, I contend we do head into one of these ages of great formative chaos that later ages recollect with awe. Just as the spirit of the Renaissance was submerged into the Reformation, only to come back out again at the other end, refreshed and renewed in the French Revolution of 1789, so too German Idealism, the spirit and comprehension of 1789, has submerged into the workers' movement. It is now getting ready to emerge once more into its new shape of Anarchy, as the workers' movement quite obviously passes away. It comes home to itself, this revolution getting older and more profound, passing from the France of 68, its old dwelling place, back to the strange and apocalyptic Italy of 77, where there is less talk of revolution than impending

catastrophe threatening the delicate welfare state. But from these Roman lands, we go back ever further in time, back to the land of Greece that German Idealism loved so much. The Odysseus who left in the prime of his manhood is much different from the far-wandering beggar who returns home, but for all that, it is still the same man. In a certain esoteric sense, the revolution that began it all, 1789 in France, gave birth to its son, 1917 in Russia, and now this too as physical incarnation has passed away. But we still need to enter into the period of things revealed in their true shape, the successor to the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions, the third moment, as Hegel might say, as *Geist*. Only Anarchy expresses this sacred and spiritual character of revolution, and only Anarchy shows that revolution is not caused by a sociological status, but rather, *revolutionists participate of liberty*, which is open to all who feel that existential need. In this sense there is no sociological revolutionary subject, *but an ideal one with infinite manifestations*. Liberty today means to destroy the State, and the cup of revolt is passed to whomsoever wishes to drink that heady draught. Thus revolution, like the old mysteries, could be conceived of as a generalized mystical experience. Only now, with philosophy, the mystery is no longer obscure. The moments leave historical time and find the reality of eternity: *Geist* abolishes Time, in its last moment.

Therefore, what is the point of all this investigation, this long research back into time and into lands far away? I think to point out, with a real historical grounding, that the *only contemporary conception of revolt still credible is the state withering away*. But concepts always relate to the world and so in our world, where the state is incontestably dying, many can only see death, not a new life. But

it is, in fact, a completely new world arriving, and not in an otherworldly haze or suspended future but currently. Only, what world is this? *One created by German Idealism*, whose founding document informs us that, *“we must transcend the state”*.

So if we come back full circle from historical thinking to its application, this might mean that true meaning in life is never something separated or unattainable, but rather mundane earthly moments filled with consciousness, unity and meaning, a dangerous intensity that lends value to the scene. Not quantity, but quality. Anarchy is going ever further away from the old separation, but on the only correct basis of separation itself, as “one many”. Anarchy is the refiguration of an essential plurality: *it is the secularization of German Idealism*. In looking at it in a religious sense, we could call this *Pantheism*. I would introduce this term, not only because it was used as a term of abuse against German Idealism by its Christian adversaries, but also to designate its difference between the faded old polytheism and the faded, more modern monotheism, to designate it as a middle ground. In a real sense it has evaded the old problems that plagued both traditions: the unfocused running on into infinity of polytheism, and the too-focused logical quandaries of monotheism. Already both traditions approximated to this: educated Athenians or Romans very rarely took their mythology seriously, or if they did, interpreted it in the symbolic way of philosophy (not the direct, credulous faith of religion) and they had also put something above even the Olympians, namely Thought and its productions. So too Christianity can't really cope with the intellectual sterility of monotheism, and has to bring back several gods in its trinity and lesser gods with its cult of angels

and saints. But in either case, once we have dispensed with the literal faith and seen its substratum of the intellect, when gods have become thoughts, we have left the sphere of religious belief and are already in a more philosophic mode of viewing things. Philosophy is, in this sense, the true revealed religion.



Practically, the pantheistic shattering of philosophic revolution means a return to the disordered chaos of the old times, the popular liberty of the city-states. The small regions will split off from the larger, the villages from the cities, and things will begin to inexorably break down. Whenever the world begins to liberate itself, in the Renaissance, the French Revolution or the revolts after the First World War, philosophy returns

into practicality and political life opens up into broad new horizons of autonomous meaning. And to use a term of Foucault's, there will necessarily be a proliferation of *heterotopias*, not any one model for the whole world, but rather thousands of different metaphysical systems, embodied and really lived in daily life. Their correlate is for thousands of different political entities and sovereignties, all contesting the enormous and unbearable tyranny of this modern world-state, Empire. *When the assemblies, communes and councils return, it means the germ of the city-state of Antiquity, the Renaissance republic, the Soviet of modern revolt, is once more becoming a reality.*

The thoughts of these special eras of the past are preserved and purified in philosophy. Now according to the story, when they removed the statue of Athena from the Acropolis, she fled into the house of Proclus, the last great philosopher of Antiquity. But today, revolt reinstates this wisdom in its true form, *as really lived*. Everyone feels that with revolt in modern Athens something truly historic reaches its end. Philosophy implicitly has done away with the false contradictions of subject and object, reality and utopia, being and thought. In other words, the owl of Athena takes her flight at the falling of dusk on the West. So what Plato called Forms and Aristotle called Categories, the old shell of divine thought, philosophy, *now returns in its secularized form, as revolution.*



# INVISIBLES

They are not around as much anymore as they used to be. In the height of the crisis and rebellions they were always arriving, one after another, some staying for a short time, some for longer. Often a friend of a friend, or some old connection. As internationals we would often host them and hang out with them, but many Greeks did this also. Of course some of them are Greek as well. Many have become good friends if they weren't already, and they wrote interesting things as far as I know. Or did they? They came to see and analyse, to study and report. Many have been involved in political struggles back where they came from and wanted to show a different image of revolt and crisis. They assure us that they are on our side and respect our concerns and limits and perhaps this is true. With some hesitation we allow them to exist amongst us and yet in some way they remain invisible—like the anonymous person behind the camera of a group photo. They are not all the same, but they are similar in their absence from analysis and definition. We get very little from

them, yet their whole existence is dependant on subject matters and situations which sometimes mean us and our lives.

*Academics and journalists are elusive creatures but what an interesting subject matter they are.*

The journalist: most Greeks hate the media and with good cause. Many stories indicate that journalistic integrity is not big in this country—to say the least. However, even though an anarchist aversion towards mainstream media is valid it is not the case that the media is the same everywhere. In many countries sympathetic journalists have exposed police brutality and murders, police infiltration, evidence manipulation in political trials, fascists and their fascist deeds, the conditions at immigration detention centres etc, whilst sometimes also giving a voice to radical movements and initiatives. In some places, state subsidies towards various forms of media mean that cooperative newspapers can be founded and function financially with the ambition of challenging the standard news flow and inserting

alternative views and stories into the media landscape. Amongst these journalists one can find both sympathetic socialists and experienced anarchists.

If we take the example of Greece, the telling of alternative stories of the realities here is something which we should consider being sympathetic towards due to the way the crisis is reported in other countries. We might consider their invitation to not only provide a sympathetic representation of struggles and realities here, but also as a kind of anti-nationalist counter information in the countries where these articles are published. This is because the Greek, and Southern European crisis in general, works as a comfortable subject upon which to build a hidden form of nationalism. Especially in Germany, but not only, the crisis has worked as a way to divide people into good and bad. The responsible, hard working German is a positive opposite to the Greek stereotype: lazy, greedy, selfish, irresponsible. It's enough for the German to feel a little bit of that famous pride which has so unfortunately had to



be repressed (though it seems to be reappearing in various new and reinvented forms in the last years). The bad Greek makes the German feel nice and smug in blankets of national comfort, but without being a racist of course. A simplistic and sensationalist mainstream media representation works to bring national unity and prepares the good Northern European worker to handle coming austerity measures with the enthusiastic responsibility so lacking in the weak character of the southerners.

This backdoor nationalism works for all the Northern Europeans, it is not my intention to simplify this into some Greek versus German nonsense which equally strengthens Greek nationalism in the form of victimisation which is easily used by all sides, including the broad left. The German media has been famously simplistic in its reporting, though the same discourse has existed throughout the north. Sympathetic journalists can counter this discourse by focusing on the real complexities of the euro and european union projects whilst also criticising mainstream media

reporting. So it is possible to imagine and also give examples of journalists as something beyond a pure negative or as the slogan goes “where the cops batons don't reach, the journalists do”.

So the journalist is not by default a pure negative and though most suggest a total rejection of mainstream media, at least internationally, it might not be as simple. But who are they then? Some are careerists and they might want to focus on something a bit unusual or alternative or whatever and this might make sense. But the other one might be a comrade, or ex-comrade, or ally. The truth is that radicals and anarchists in other countries are journalists, as they even are here though possibly with less autonomy and power over their own product. So, there is a radical subject which avoids focus, appearing only as a name at the end of newspaper articles. Who are they? What is their age group, their class & ethnic backgrounds, what are their visions? How do they work? What is their analysis of the media and how do they organise against dominant powers and discourses within it? How do they balance their journalistic ideals and ambitions with the financial

needs and possible state dependence of their publications? Can we really trust them and how do they assure us of this? A fascinating enquiry, has it ever manifested itself in reports? Or is it a case for another group of invisibles?

The academic: It is not my intention here to glorify the journalist against the academic, but one has to wonder, what does the academic really do? The journalist reports, for better or worse, we know the product. The academic exists on various levels. The low level academic is probably doing a masters or bachelor degree, possibly to avoid working, and chooses to write about crisis and cultures of resistance due to interest and involvement— maybe they are not even really academics but rather students. The Phd student or post-doc researcher is not just in this for a temporary relief from the normal work or unemployment benefit scenarios the world offers. The professional academic is working and building a career. If not immediately problematic, the academic certainly poses a threat to a certain degree, not only in terms of representation but also of how they might shape radical milieus. The obvious scepticism is



that not many people read academic papers. Mostly the readers are other academics, but of course the state and its security forces have an interest and the information presented is right there as a contribution and insight into groups and thoughts which are in conflict with the interests of the status quo. If a paper is successful then it usually becomes a part of the university's library and records and may very well be published and therefore is available for all who wish to read it.

The other aspect is that the sympathetic academic who is having some success within the academic world relies on funding. Funding is connected to proposing a certain theory about the world and continuously being able to create papers according to these assumptions. If an academic is connected to social

movements and gets funding related to a certain perspective, does s/he not then have an interest to make things fit into that perspective, rather than freely and openly analyse and

propose? The academic's job is on the line. Their rent and bills depend on things being a certain way, the way which s/he has proposed they are. So does the academic then influence the discourses of social movements to fit into their theories? As this is their job, they can travel to all meetings, hang out with several kinds of groups and it is all work. This academic comrade might have a genuine interest in whatever s/he is involved in, but as an invisible subject, who is analysing how economic and social factors influence their positions? Certainly these are valid points which are not new to academics themselves, these problems must have been dealt with for a long time by now. One would expect great works on the role of academics, the traps for the radicals and the conflicts of their very existence within capitalist society. How do the academics position themselves within their work place, dependency on a salary, the relationship with the State and the way in which they themselves may be influenced in their ambitions by the dependencies they still have? Are the academics out there organising together as a force?

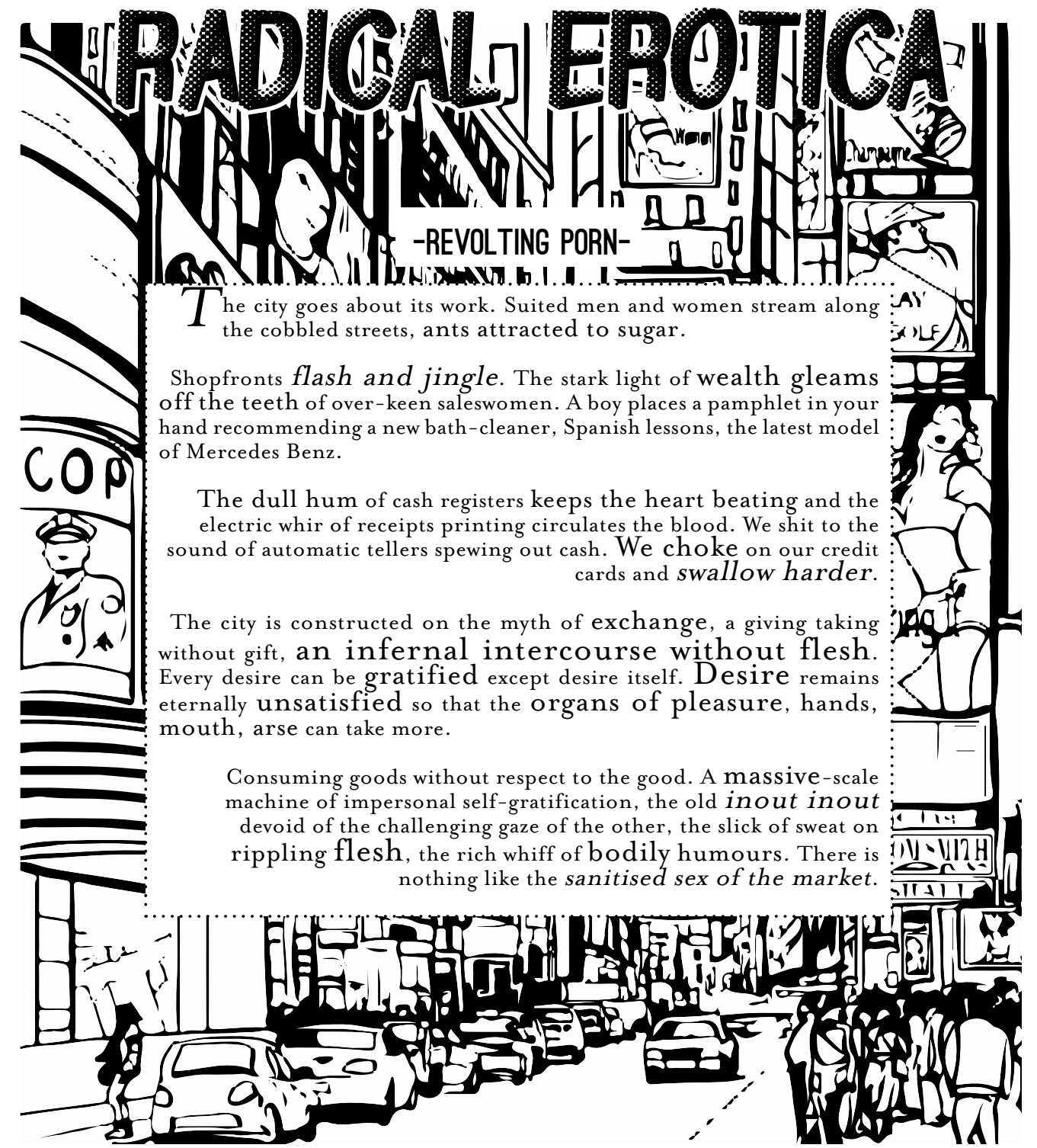
This little piece of writing is in no way an attempt to support or attack the groups here identified, even though it may come across as either one or the other. Similar to the racists' excuse, let me state that many of my friends are academics and journalists. The only intention is to point out that these subjects exist, and that from an academic or a journalistic perspective, they are almost never in the spotlight, at least not as categories of subjects. A total dismissal of these forces as enemies feels like some anti-intellectual totalitarian communist crap. An

anarchist critique might suggest instead that knowledge and information should be freed from the constraints of capitalist institutions such as the media industry and academia. However, these individuals do exist, as a category of invisible subjects. It is easy to point out that journalists and academics can be a danger by exposing practices and structures amongst groups opposed to the state in general and various specific capitalist projects. That they are trapped within the capitalist constraints of their professions whilst often presenting themselves as somehow neutral and even sympathetic, avoiding analysis even though analysing is exactly what they do. These subjects actually commodify themselves, making themselves into products on the market of knowledge and storytelling and like all producers they want their products, which is also them, to gain maximum value. This means that they are shaped by the constraints and possibilities of the environments where they can exist. As one of the worlds most successful radical academics has stated:

***"The whole educational and professional training system is a very elaborate filter, which just weeds out people who are too independent, and who think for themselves, and who don't know how to be submissive, and so on – because they're dysfunctional to the institutions."***

-Noam Chomsky

-Coraline



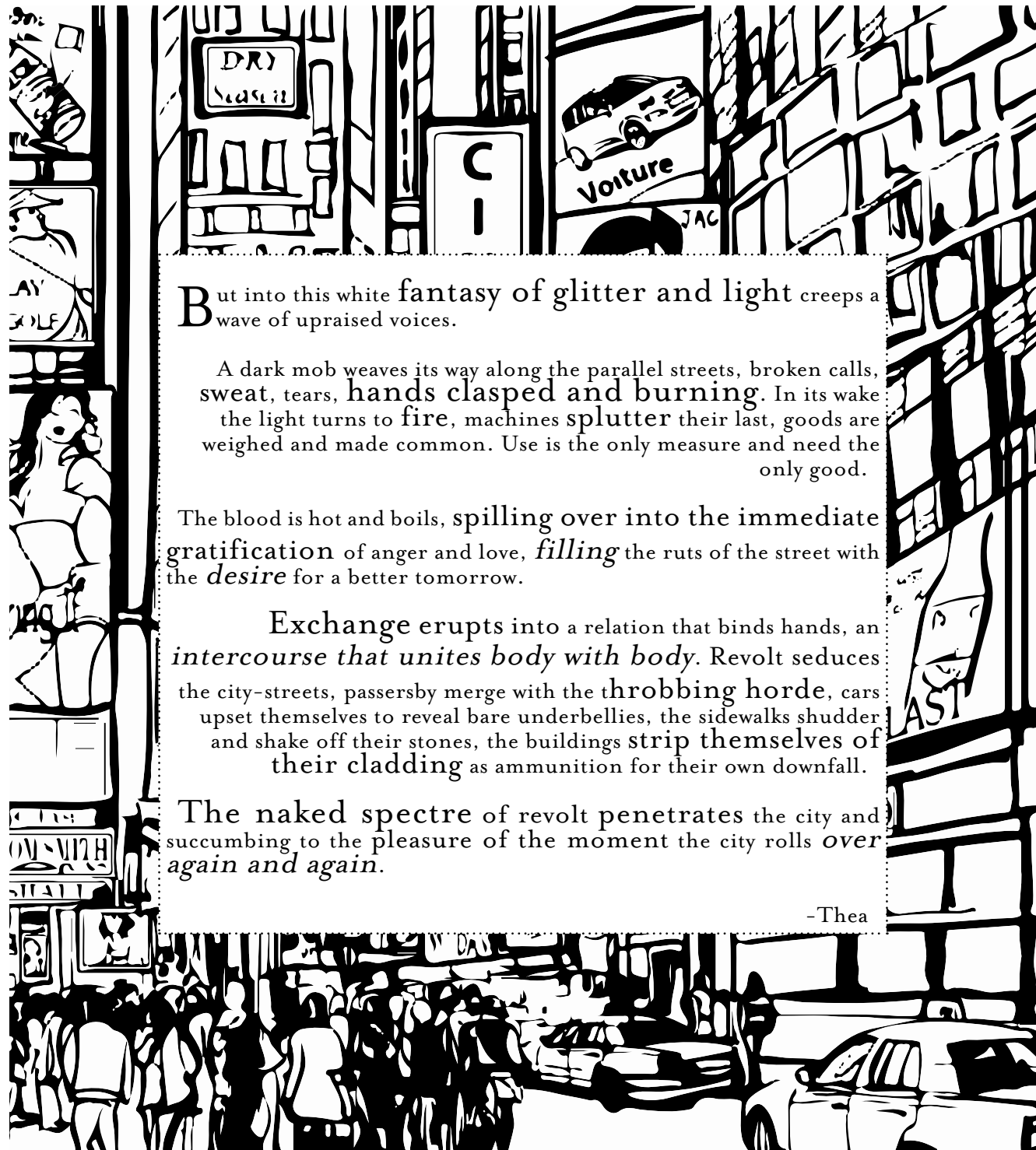
The city goes about its work. Suited men and women stream along the cobbled streets, ants attracted to sugar.

Shopfronts *flash and jingle*. The stark light of wealth gleams off the teeth of over-keen saleswomen. A boy places a pamphlet in your hand recommending a new bath-cleaner, Spanish lessons, the latest model of Mercedes Benz.

The dull hum of cash registers keeps the heart beating and the electric whirl of receipts printing circulates the blood. We shit to the sound of automatic tellers spewing out cash. *We choke* on our credit cards and *swallow harder*.

The city is constructed on the myth of exchange, a giving taking without gift, **an infernal intercourse without flesh**. Every desire can be gratified except desire itself. Desire remains eternally unsatisfied so that the organs of pleasure, hands, mouth, arse can take more.

Consuming goods without respect to the good. A massive-scale machine of impersonal self-gratification, the old *inout inout* devoid of the challenging gaze of the other, the slick of sweat on rippling flesh, the rich whiff of bodily humours. There is nothing like the *sanitised sex of the market*.



But into this white fantasy of glitter and light creeps a wave of upraised voices.

A dark mob weaves its way along the parallel streets, broken calls, sweat, tears, hands clasped and burning. In its wake the light turns to fire, machines splutter their last, goods are weighed and made common. Use is the only measure and need the only good.

The blood is hot and boils, spilling over into the immediate gratification of anger and love, filling the ruts of the street with the desire for a better tomorrow.

Exchange erupts into a relation that binds hands, an intercourse that unites body with body. Revolt seduces the city-streets, passersby merge with the throbbing horde, cars upset themselves to reveal bare underbellies, the sidewalks shudder and shake off their stones, the buildings strip themselves of their cladding as ammunition for their own downfall.

The naked spectre of revolt penetrates the city and succumbing to the pleasure of the moment the city rolls over again and again.

-Thea



## FALSE PERSPECTIVES

Neo-liberalism is not exactly something new, but the obviousness of the facts in question are new to the traditional Left. This is because Marxism has never adequately dealt with the state and its role in the economy. I find this particular problem of Marxism can be remedied by studying the early modern period, and perhaps this can help us return to the viewpoint of our own tradition, where Bakunin saw that the state and the economy were inherently intertwined, and if the state were destroyed, the inherent distaste of people for avarice would ensure the disappearance of the system we call capitalism.

From the beginning, I would add the proviso that I think it is inappropriate to call what we have today, capitalism, which makes it seem a natural force (e.g. like we have magnetism). In this way we have naturalized a system that is far from natural, and given it a sort of regularity that it does not really possess. Rather, capitalism is first of all a way of thinking about a thing, capital-ism. It is the belief in an entity called capital (before the economics of Adam Smith generally known as goods or money) that can grow on its own, this unnatural

belief in usury, or reproduction of money by money. One will recognize this viewpoint as simply the unnatural and fallacious view of money, which in the classical grounding of Aristotle was called *chrematistics*. All Marx has done is take this unwarranted belief in the magic growth of capital at face value, and claim to find this in labour. In truth, *what is to be questioned is the magical growth of money*, not its source. The discussions prior to Adam Smith and his followers were all generally agreed that any generous profit was in some way related to fraud or injustice, which I think is an eminently reasonable view, to which we could add today, also related to environmental destruction.

Well, if we go back before Smith, we find that there are not the same views of economic crises, so-called. I say in a general sense that what distinguishes our modern crises are a speculative collapse followed by general economic gloom: workers are fired, services dry up, people begin to starve. In following the practice of the Victorian era, which especially survives in our economic thought, many transfer back to the past our modern conceptions that

actually have no meaning there, so while there may have been depreciation of currency by Roman Emperors, this is not really an economic crisis in our modern sense. As a further example of this transference of modern terms to the far distant or mythic past, modern productivist notions are placed upon tribes—people who exhibit not the slightest notion of 'the economy' nor much incentive to work. This anthropology is the cornerstone of Smith and also Marx's theory, and so this is a great refutation of the theory, because if there is no real incentive to constantly produce to overcome the shortages of Nature (a Victorian prejudice eternalized in this way) then desires and production in the brute struggle against nature cannot have impelled humanity to advance to higher modes of production. But if we concede this fact (proved among others by Marshall Sahlins in his various works) then the sadly linear historical materialist schema of Marxism (and also Liberalism) collapses, right at its beginning point.

To come back to modern times, I would like to focus on economics, or its study, before the radical change

made by Adam Smith. It is interesting to note that economics, before Smith popularized it in his homely, moralistic fashion, was largely a technical science, not of ultimate human meaning, but of state control. In this way the revenues and balance of trade were debated by Locke and Hume, and we also had the very interesting work of William Petty, who coined his study "political arithmetic". In this work he added up the numbers of ships, sailors, and so forth, in order to tabulate the possibilities of war for the English state. All of this, I would like to note, comes in the matrix of that mode of governance which we call Liberalism. The characteristics of the liberal state, such as it emerged in history, are its Protestantism, its maritime and commercial character (tending towards oligarchy), and also the revolutionary character of this State, having emerged amidst the turmoil of the wars of Religion. It is quite notable that when William of Orange crosses the Channel to England, he brings with him, not only troops and his stout Protestant faith, which make the Glorious Revolution of 1688, but also the practices he took from Amsterdam, concerning a stock exchange and a national bank. These are in no way 'economic' ideas, as if they were known to all, or were common-sense notions. At the time they were known to very few, and were regarded as widely impracticable. The first speculative panic (a term which I prefer to our 'crisis') we can find begins in precisely this very advanced country, the Netherlands. It concerned the trading of exotic goods, like tulips, and eventually collapsed. The difference is that the traders were in no ways bailed out by the state, but the collapse was seen for what it was: the result of moral folly, or avarice. Another collapse we have is the South Sea bubble, now in Liberal England. This is interesting, as the result is that the State bails out the traders, as they are largely connected to the state-owned monopoly, the South

Sea company. Here we have things looking very much like what is supposed to be a "special development" of a terminal capitalism: finance capital, government collusion, colonialism, monopoly, insider trading, etc. In fact it looks very much like today. I would suggest that *capitalism has never really changed*, from its basic role as a State-inspired confidence game, connected to plunder at home and abroad. Many Marxists even now are forced to admit this, finding that 'primitive accumulation' is either back since the 1970's or has never gone away. But if it has never gone away, then their entire presentation of capitalism as a sort of natural system, reveals its *largely state-directed and piratical character*, from start to finish. Here again the Marxist historically progressive schema collapses. Similarly it would show that the character of mercantile capitalism abroad (colonial monopolist ventures) simply comes to be applied at home. In this sense neo-liberalism would simply be the generalization of neo-colonialism to the developed societies, just as its ancestor, fascism, was the application of colonial practices to European society.

This is my contention, and so I remark that none of these things concerning capitalism were possible without, and were indeed directly linked, with colonial ventures. But the colonial ventures do not take place out of economic motives, the economic motives are allowed to exist from the colonial ventures that were started from religious or military reason of state. After all, the conquest of America was treated by the Spaniards as a Crusade. Settlements in New England and South Africa were founded by religious fanatics. Every country soon had to have its share of a carved-up world, or itself be gobbled up, as Scotland was amalgamated with England after the failure of its colonial ventures. As Hobbes says, revealing the thinking of

this period, "Wealth is power". The emphasis in this phrase is on the power, as wealth is obviously wealth, while Hobbes is well-known to be concerned with state power. In doing so I am here reversing the utterly misguided primacy of the economic over the political and putting them back in their proper place of millennia, where the political is above the economic. We see this today, where economies are destroyed by austerity because of the political interests of Protestant imperialism. We have many more examples from history: just as WWI was in the economic interest of no one, and yet still continued for four years (against the predictions of Kautsky, representing Marxist illusions), so too the European Union, a project based on this same liberal, economic idea (that the economic will supersede the political) is being completely refuted by the resurgence of exactly the political differences between the member states that the economic is supposed to erase. Incidentally, as we have previously noted, the fracture in Europe is largely between the Protestant-Liberal states and the rest, who have not succeeded to the same degree. But the template of Liberalism always fails to apply successfully to other lands than Protestant countries.

For Liberalism, the strange thing is that all economic development is always statist. This is seen as curious (the particularities of France), or occasionally bad (the Soviet model), or denounced as backwards. Actually it is really the result of Liberalism denying where it came from, the State, and presenting itself as a *fait accompli* of civil society. But the state directed economic development in Italy, in Germany, in Japan, in all the Soviet models- and also in England too, where this Reformation state enforced the enclosure laws, destroyed the Levellers and Diggers, took over Church lands, sent out its colonies and fleets, etc. These religious and

political state activities directly create the environment for the emergence of this middle class. What is exceptional in Liberalism is not the miracle of things developing spontaneously without the State, since this is not at all supported by any historical evidence. The exception is that Liberalism does not acknowledge the role the state plays in economic development. Marxism, taking a cue from this theory, denied in the past what it implemented in its own time. I suppose since we are exploding myths, then it follows that there has never been anything other than "state-capitalism", to use an imprecise but popular term. It was simply that the Soviet Union took state control to a much further level than anything previously attempted. On the one side, the USSR had no speculative crises, excluding those in the turmoil of its birth and dissolution (again, the economic problems have a political cause). The problems it did have, are not labelled "critical" under traditional economic thought- political repression, the agricultural disasters of the 30's (much like the Potato Famine in Ireland, or the starving peasants of the *Ancien Régime*), environmental catastrophe, etc. This same model applied to Pinochet's Chile allows neo-liberalism to call it a success.

An interesting example of a failure to implant Liberalism in semi-modern garb is the history of John Law in France. The country was having financial difficulties (not from anything inherently economic, but the military and cultural expenditures of Louis XIV bequeathed to Louis XV) and John Law, a part-charlatan part-banker came and promoted a scheme for a national bank founded upon the proceeds of distant colonies. This was exactly what Law had learned in England. But the implementation of this plan was ruinous, and soon resulted in speculation and collapse, after which he was chased from the country. James Steuart, a famed economist just before

Smith, comments amply on this crisis, and is quite clear to draw lessons for future governors. Basically he proposes the use of the state to make a legal halt to withdrawals (state coercion), to restore trust by paying small nominal sums, and in this way to stave off the problems. This was done with the seizure of gold or assets by many governments in the 1930's, and I would not be surprised if we see forced devaluations in the future, which was already talked about in Cyprus.

A great lesson is with the French Revolution as well. There we can see Liberalism having to defeat the governing model of Bonapartism, which was basically the healthier Physiocratic version of economics, and was imposed on the majority of European societies. There was nothing ineluctable about the defeat of Bonaparte; in fact, it was in the words of Wellington, "a near-run thing". This is also where Marx is caught with Liberalism, because the thinkers of his day cannot help but project their own triumph back into a past where it was uncertain. This has Marx regard the 19th century as still progressive, a view one easily finds problematic- whereas the view of the enlightened bourgeoisie was that the fall of Napoleon was the beginning of general decadence. In this sense what we call capitalism has never really been progressive, but can properly be understood as always-already decadent. It was not an economic victory of this nation of shopkeepers, as Napoleon called the English, but a string of naval victories, and Napoleon's own errors. The English promoted the idea of free trade as a method of war, not an economic or morally just "right". They needed to trade with Europe because London was full of unsold goods after 1806, with the beginnings of the Continental System. And only at this period did the franc stabilize itself: e.g., when France had an overwhelming military victory and spoils to give some

confidence to lenders, and could begin to make regular payments, unlike the prior governments of the Convention, Directory, etc. The countries that win wars are allowed a certain period of grace, quite literally, to profit from faith in their prospects which allows them to advance on the market their state debt. This in turn allows them to multiply the amount of money they are able to use, far beyond what they actually have at the time. This it was that Napoleon remarked about fighting the British: the country was always able to continue to raise loans during the wars. Yet this is because it always paid promptly, and was never threatened with political disaster because of its island position protected by its navy. There is nothing economic at all about that, but political calculations.

I think it is worth noting, in passing, that Continental Europe was short of coffee and other amenities at this time. Revolution means a necessary stoicism, which will become a practical observation quite soon. Furthermore concerning England, the measures of Bonaparte were taking effect: the Luddites arose at this time, as the factories were shuttered, and England was quite seriously considering resuming commercial relations. If we think to ourselves in modern terms about this fulcrum point of our history, then Europe being organized as an economic unit was dependent on its keeping out subsidised goods, which meant recognizing the control of the State, the transnational Bonapartist State. England was not full of the only manufactured goods at this time, rather it was commonly observed that English manufactures were generally shoddy or unnecessary (thus there is nothing really new in the critique of the lack of quality in modern production-like everything, this hasn't ever really changed). A tradition of state-directed enterprises, for example the famous porcelain we know as Limoges, or the French military





equipment (or Soviet Ak-47s) were all state-directed and quite superior to anything the undirected market might put out. Again, that toxic junk comes from sweatshops in China, we all know—but in its day, England was just like this China, just as America was after 1914.

Moving on, developmental economics, it has been claimed, have been disproved. I would say rather *the ideas of developmental economics* have been defeated, by the curious developmentalist economics of the Anglo-American world, which don't acknowledge their own state-directed character. When they have a large enough region to exploit, and don't shy away from conquest and violence, then the autarchic states can do quite well: just look at the past of the USA, or Marxist China or Russia. In fact later this autarchic state can present itself as supporting free trade, when it knows it can swamp its smaller rivals and dominate them with commerce. Or with many even more complicated schemes, such as competitive devaluations (inflation) and so forth. We have an interesting scenario today, where the world is basically united

under an American aegis of inflationary spending, which is allotted to America by its military primacy, as it previously was to England.

This is why one cannot help but be amazed at the perspicuity of Goethe in his sequence in Faust part II, where we are,

*Conjuring Helen out of Time,  
like phantom paper-money from the air.*

The devilish Mephistopheles has promoted more or less exactly the same scheme as John Law and Liberalism. I think many are not ready for the enormity of the fraud committed on not only present humanity but on future generations and nature. Liberals and Marxists still think of capitalism as a lamentable but somehow progressive system. I would propose we reconsider it as simply a disastrous continuing error, this system of *chrematistics* made a religion. The speculative game of printing money lasts with some discipline on the part of those running the game (e.g. steady payments, reasonable finances, self-control—

the hallmarks of Protestantism). But this is quite a real perspective: when the next speculative panic hits, it will be seen that nothing really has been done, nothing has been produced, and the official economic statistics which are apparently scientific were made totally fraudulent through political considerations. But this refutes the idea that money is tied to productivity or that it is a commodity tied to labour. It is much more related to political control and imperial domination, with the State. After all the current rouble crisis has nothing economic about it, it is a political speculative attack of the dominant state, the US, against an imperial rival, Russia.

It is then not at all a crisis of economic over-production, but of *political speculation and then political banditry*. Interestingly, in this I am supported by the infamous reformist Edward Bernstein, and common observation, that what we call modern economic crisis is always begun by speculative collapse. But the one causes the other quite obviously, not involving a hidden cause related to production. If things are over-produced, they are over-



produced out of a desire to speculate. Otherwise, the over-production mantra simply repeats the Judeo-Christian dogma of the sinfulness of the material world. But the chestnuts continue to fall every autumn, lining the forest floor to no ill effect, and no one has ever thought fit to call this a crisis of over-production. In this sense the Marxists and Liberals with their confused metaphysics of production are far behind average people on the street, who see the obvious corruption and collusion of a political-financial elite protected by armed guards.

Neo-liberalism is before everything an idea about economics. But as a practice, it can only exist with the state. And as a practice it has to exist with the state since the incompetent ideas of neo-liberalism simply lead to defective disasters every time they are applied. In this sense the speculative crisis is the refutation of Liberalism, but it is not 'natural', which would make it seem like Marx's idea where boom and bust are like tides on the beach. Rather crises always happen, but as houses of cards always collapse: because the inherent idea of money producing

money is impossible, not that there is a discernible rationality with a regulated coming and going. But there are other things that also refute the governing model of Soviet statism, not speculative panics, but environmental and human disasters. The real issue is concerning the nature of wealth and happiness. The systems that exist, both Liberal and Marxist, and everything in between, *are all centred on material goods and money as the ultimate meaning of life*. But this is emphatically not the case, and every day refutes this view more and more. This is incidentally why anarchy is the only thing really ethically different: because the state cannot bring happiness on earth, because the material cannot touch the spiritual. They are on different planes of meaning.

I believe this brief study might help in clearing up various economic intellectual questions and allows us more space to concentrate on more important issues, like philosophy, art or destroying the State. Because Anarchy, through its grounding with Proudhon, Bakunin and Stirner, is much more able to retain something of

a classical heritage of viewing economic concerns as of less importance than spiritual issues; and of seeing that the state enforces and makes possible our modern economy, which is nothing other than a bureaucratic and statist project of control. So if we think about how to envision a world after the revolution, this necessarily means a reduction in our current standards of life (inevitable at any rate) and also a sort of return to a traditional *oikonomia*, to return to the old use of the word—agriculture concerned with consuming the bounty of nature, not despoiling it. Where the only surplus of production is tied with Nature, and then spent in the spiritually-grounded festival. And of which, the management of a farm among friends, is simply the necessary precondition for more rewarding activities—political, spiritual, philosophical, and so on.

# RECIPE FOR A PORNOGRAPHICAL HISTORY



## DISSENT

As a boy growing up in the late fifteenth century Pietro Aretino witnessed a riot in his home town which erupted upon the visit of a Florentine tax collector. The little town of Arezzo was thrown into turmoil as the burghers proceeded to plunder the houses of the rich, mainly supporters of Florentine policy. Houses were burnt to the ground, a priest was dragged onto the street from where he was cowering and butchered,

**“other pro-Florentines were hanged from the balconies or tortured as “sodomites” by having a lighted torch thrust between their naked buttocks... finally, the castle, the symbol of Florentine rule, was destroyed.”**

The symbolism of such violent unrest was not lost upon the Florentines, who sent in the army, sacked the town and carried off thirty important citizens as hostages.

## DEBAUCH AND SCANDAL

For whatever reason, Pietro Aretino left his home town and moved to the nearby Perugia where he was apprenticed to a book-binder. While there he became close friends with Agnolo Firenzuola, who later became an abbot. Although accounts of Aretino's early life are spiced up – he was a prodigious liar – there are scandalous stories of the two friends' debaucherous and drunken antics. Once, the two lads presented themselves in their window naked to the outrage (and presumably pleasure) of the local women. Aretino also undertook his own artistic renovation upon a statue of Mary Magdalene, which he vandalized by painting a lute in her hands (and presumably other more explicit additions that have not remained on record) thereby transforming her back into the prostitute she was before conversion. After this artistic intervention, it was discreetly explained to him by the powerful citizens of the town that unless he made himself scarce, the Inquisition would come to play a potentially crucial part in his life. Aretino legged it to Rome.

## RELIGION

Meanwhile, in Rome, the artist Giulio Romano was working as apprentice to Raphael, with whom he contributed to the paintings in the Vatican. Romano is responsible for some preliminary sketches of a series of tapestries based on the *Acts of the Apostles*, he designed a series of some 50 scenes from the Old Testament. He worked on Raphael's later religious art, such as *The Ascent to Calvary* (Prado), *The Holy Family of Francis I* (Louvre), *The Stoning of St Stephen* (Church of S. Stefano, Genoa). Although the subject matter of his paintings under the tutelage of Raphael was largely religious, he also completed some of his master's works with pagan and historical themes, such as the frescoes of the *Battle of Ostia* and the *Story of Psyche* on the ceiling of the Villa Farnesina. Upon Raphael's death, Romano took over the completion of his master's works, notably Raphael's *Coronation of the Virgin* and *The Transfiguration* in the Vatican.

## COUNTERFEIT

About this time another artist, Marcantonio Raimondi, having received his training as an engraver in the workshop of 'Francia' (Francesco Raibolini, the famous goldsmith and painter of Bologna), had begun to make copies of Albrecht Dürer's woodcut series *The Life of the Virgin*. The woodcut was still a fairly new innovation in the late fifteenth century in Europe and there was no doubt a high demand for this new and easily reproducible art form. Although most woodcuts were relatively crude, those of Dürer were exceptional both in skill and theme. It is unsurprising, then, that Raimondi chose Dürer's works to copy and sell for a good profit. As these were the years before copyright laws, when it came to copying the work, Raimondi also included Dürer's famous AD monogram. Dürer, in response, made a complaint to the Venetian Government, which gave him legal protection for his monogram, but not his compositions. Raimondi continued copying and selling Dürer's works, without the monogram.

## MUSCULAR NUDES

Around 1510, Marcantonio Raimondi also moved to Rome, to become part of the circle of artists that surrounded Raphael. With a dexterous reproduction of Raphael's *Lucretia*, Raimondi so impressed Raphael that he undertook to train the aspiring engraver personally. Other works of Raphael that Raimondi reproduced as woodcuts were *The Judgement of Paris* and *The Massacre of the Innocents*. It could be said that Raimondi's favourite themes were taken from Pagan mythology, though that doesn't mean that he neglected the rich imagery

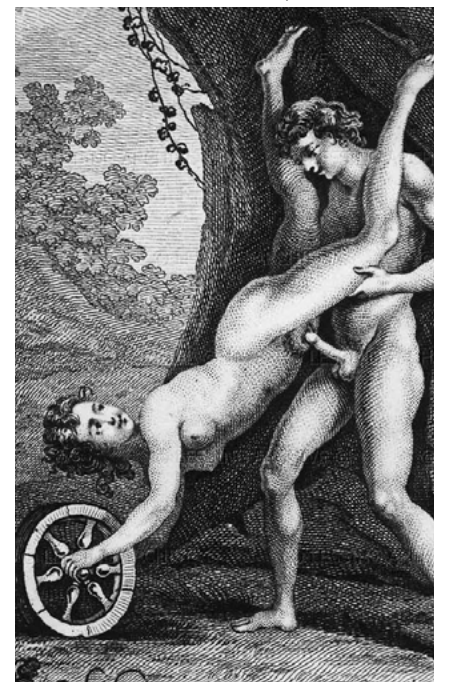
of the Old and New testaments. His works reveal a predisposition toward full-bodied, muscular nudes, such as *The Climbers* which reproduced part of Michelangelo's *Soldiers surprised bathing*. Under the tutelage of Raphael, Raimondi opened and became master of a school that taught the art of engraving, largely but not exclusively copying and disseminating the works of Raphael. This art of engraving would be to art what lithography had been for literature. Henceforth, both word and image were reproducible and available to a public beyond the wealthy privilege of the elite.

## REPRODUCIBILITY

In the 1520's Giulio Romano, having devoted himself day by day to the painting of Raphael's works in the Vatican, obviously suffered a bout of artistic enthusiasm, of spiritual revolt, of inspired genius. Chances are he left the vatican, the site of his holy workplace, abandoning for an afternoon his work of holy reproduction, sat down at the local taverna, or better, in the pleasant not-too-solitary solitude of his bedroom and dashed off some sixteen sexy sketches. Sometime later, in 1524, Marcantonio Raimondi had completed the woodcuts of the same images and had successfully published them as a set in an illustrated pamphlet called *I Modi*, 'Postures'. Although the originals have not survived, there is a later 18<sup>th</sup> century version of the work which suggests the same idea – sixteen different sexual positions, ranging from missionary to wheelbarrow. What makes this work so special is not that it is an artistic reproduction of the various contortions of the body of a prostitute available to the paying customer as advertised on the walls of brothels in Ancient Rome, or the various positions a wife can take with her husband, as illustrated in the Kama

Sutra and other ancient erotic texts which were individually produced by the skilled hand of painters. What was significant about the pamphlet as it was produced by Raimondi, was that it was the first edition of an illustrated text that was reproducible, making it available to a public beyond the wealthy elite. For a small fee anyone could have access to it, take it home, gape over it in the local taverna, take it to bed in solitary pleasure or enjoy it in a crowd, and all this without the immediate prospect of sex with a prostitute. That is to say that if this work is an advertisement, it is an advertisement for the pleasures of sex alone, made for the sole purpose of getting off on. No strings attached.

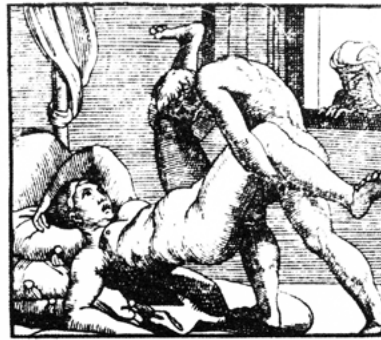
It was this, the accessibility of the work that made it dangerous. It was the first work, as far as we know, that depicted such erotic scenes in a medium that was easily reproducible. A single woodcut could make one thousand copies before it began to suffer a loss of quality, while the



copper engraving technique could make even more. Previously, works of erotic art were available only to the wealthy, to those who could afford it, or to those who were privileged to have a friend dextrous enough to sketch a simple outline on the back of the toilet door. But this pamphlet was much more easily consumable and it was publicly available. No doubt it sold like hot-cakes. That is, until Pope Clement VII ordered all the copies destroyed and imprisoned Raimondi. Interestingly enough, Romano, who was the original artist and whose sketches were identical, was not imprisoned, on the logic that it was Raimondi and his art of engraving that had made the images publicly available. It was the reproducibility of the work that had the papacy quivering in its boots and shaking its spear. (Oh and by the way, Romano is the only artist of the renaissance to be mentioned in a work by William Shakespeare, though he is mentioned in his capacity as a sculptor - which he was not - in *A Winter's Tale* where the Queen Hermione has a statue made of her by 'that rare Italian master, Julio Romano,' Act V, Scene II.)

### RISK

At such a moment of crisis - the man with the wood in bonds, the erotic images sequestered by the church - a hero of sorts is required, or, at the very least, a man with the power to reverse the classical positions of power, of turning religion on its head, or giving the odd monk or two a spicy spanking. Pietro Aretino was just such a man. He had already earned himself the name 'scourge of princes' with his bitter parodies of people in positions of power and caused quite a stir by publishing a document titled *The Last Will and Testament of the Elephant Hanno*. The circulation of this document followed promptly upon the Pope Leo X's commissioning



**A** Pri le coscie, accio ch'io ueggia a bene  
 il tuo bel culo, e ia tua potta in usfo,  
 Culo da compire un parte un paradiso,  
 Potta, ch'i cori stilla per le renes;  
 Mentre, ch'io uagheggio, egli mi uiene  
 Capriccio di basciarmi a l'improviso,  
 E mi par esser piu bel, che Narciso  
 Nel specchio, che'l mio cazzo allegro tiene;  
**A**hi ribalda, ahi ribaldo, in terra, e in letto  
 lo ti ueggio puttana, e l'apparecchia  
 Ch'io ti rompa due costole del petto;  
**I**o te n'incaco franco, e fata uecchia,  
 Che per questo piacer plusquamperpetto  
 Entrarai in un pozzo senza seccia,  
 E non si troua pecchia  
**G**iotta d'i fior com'io, d'un nobil cazzo,  
 E no' prouo ancho, e per murarlo sguazzo;

Raphael to paint a life-sized portrait of an Elephant inspired by a reference to an elephant loved by the Pope in the letters of the German humanist Ulrich Von Hutten. Aretino's *Last Will and Testament* was a parody that ridiculed the most powerful cardinals of Rome. It was an act intended to provoke, and yet it must have been very well researched, as rather than having the obvious side effect, i.e. a stake through the heart and happily roasting flames licking his ankles, Pope Leo X actually took to the impertinent little twerp Aretino, and adopted him into his service. Apparently Leo X sympathised with the Florentine-born Aretino, was disgruntled by his power-hungry cardinals and was quite satisfied to see them taken down a peg or two. In any case Aretino found himself in the Pope's favour and on a longer leash than ever before, not only wealthy but also powerful.

So, when he heard of Raimondi's arrest, Aretino intervened and had the man released. Then he wrote a poem to accompany each image and had it republished in the year 1527, this time as a work of poetry and art. But, once again the papacy destroyed every copy it could find. And the censorship was so strict that no complete editions of the original printings have ever been found. The text and images that we have today are merely a copy of a copy, discovered 400 years later. But at least this second time Raimondi escaped prison.

This publication is considered to be the first appearance on the market of a literary-artistic coupling in a work of pornography. It is this that makes *I Modi* famous as the first piece of pornography. The poems present a dialogue between a woman (presumably a prostitute, but not necessarily) and a man, where they prompt each other with a raunchy vocabulary towards penetration. Some of the characters are even attributed with the names of political men, or those in positions of power (unrelated to the artistic depiction). These are poems of foreplay - they induce the act, and advertise or remind its readers of the wonderful breadth of positions they could adopt. Its intent is arousal, though it wasn't commissioned by a house of ill-repute, rather it could be used by anyone anywhere. And yet it was also political, or the poems were, and with their accompaniment the images became so too. They were crude and were supposed to make fun of men in power.

They did this quite successfully, and one of those men, the Pope's Datary, Giovanmatteo Giberti saw his own representation arrive in a parcel on his desk and found himself in a compromising (though

no doubt exceptionally pleasant) position. He ordered Aretino's arrest. However Aretino had already got wind and fled Rome.



### MONEY

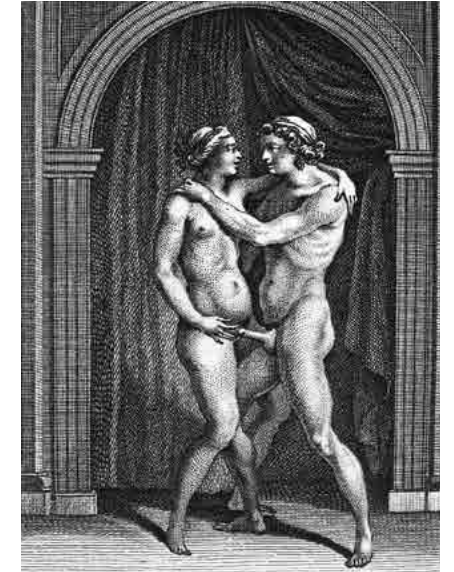
'Pornography' means, literally, the writing (γραφῆ) of prostitutes (πόρνες). Some sources suggest that this word harks back to a time when prostitutes would advertise their skills with the images of possible positions and activities they were willing and able to undertake. The word first appears in Athenaeus of Naucratis' *The Deipnosophists*, where it is used twice in the same context, the word appears once again in a fragment of Polemon which is a direct quote of Athenaeus. Athenaeus' 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD work tells us that certain painters of antiquity, Aristeides, Pausanias and Nikophanes were also quite successful pornographers (πορνογράφοι). It is assumed that such painters took it upon themselves to decorate the inner walls of brothels with various licentious scenes that were designed to prompt even the most frigid customer to spend an obol or two on the more animate examples of house specialities. As is the case with so much about the ancient world, the meaning of this word, and the assumption that

it came into being on account of these images, is assumed on the basis of this single literary reference of Athenaeus. It's a circular argument. But this self-justifying logic where we can't help but come back to where we began, joined with a certain capitalist spirit (money for head and so forth) and a bit of tail-chasing, should alert us to an impregnable, but by no means impenetrable logic in the word 'pornography', especially if it began as an advertisement. Even the word *porne*, 'prostitute' has an etymology linking it back to the Indo-European root \*per- 'to traffic in, to sell', (but note sanskrit cognate, *aprata* 'without recompense, gratuitously'). A *porne*, a prostitute, was simply the woman subject to being bought and sold in the most explicit sense (the others were bought and sold non-explicitly, i.e. you were also buying progeny, you had to pay more, wait more, or risk your life in battle or in the salon of the in-laws).

One thing is certain if we accept this archaic etymology, pornography was always connected with money, exchange (intercourse notwithstanding) and with an artistry of advertising and publicising. This is a significant fact to keep in mind, given that today such images of ancient sexual activities are said to be 'erotic' whereas those that appear in the little windows of your web-page are 'pornographic'. The difference, in this case, is negligible, with or without the presence of negligee. We should not forget this aspect of art as publicisation and advertisement in the following, regardless of how much we get off on it.

### PARODY

After its antique and momentary appearance in Athenaeus, the word then recedes into the dark alleyways of history and, as far as I can discover,



only reveals itself again in the middle of the nineteenth century. One Charles Anthon, in his *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (New York, 1843) lists it among his references:

**"Pornography, or obscene painting, which in the time of the Romans was practiced with the grossest license, prevailed especially at no particular period in Greece, but was apparently tolerated to a considerable extent at all times. Parrhasius, Aristides, Pausanias, Nicophanes, Chaerephanes, Arellius, and a few other [pornographoi] are mentioned as having made themselves notorious for this species of license."**

I don't know where he gets the other names from, but presumably they were known as painters of the explicit, without the particular title 'pornographers' being applied to



them. Obviously, Anthon is relying upon the same source as us. His great achievement, however, was to put the word into circulation. Henceforth the word gathers in popularity to describe pretty much any image or writing of sexual obscenity. That's the history of the word, yes. But it doesn't mean that the object itself, that is, any work of art or literature depicting the activities of prostitutes (and thence, dare I say it, the rest of us) was scarce in the ancient world, in abundance today and absent in between times.

The 1960's may well stand today as a time when art and literature took a sexual (today we would say 'erotic') turn with indiscreet political intent. However, the 18<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed a flurry of sexual (today we would say 'pornographic') iconography directed against the powers that be and the monarchy (think De Sade, and all those images of Marie Antoinette with dildos). If we go back even further, we could say that the trend of pairing political invective with descriptions of erotic extravagance was at its acme during the late Roman Empire (Horace, Petronius, Seneca the Younger). And then, from the period of the renaissance, the papacy, the monks and nuns all become the butt of the joke. Literally.

However, erotica as political satire is very different from erotica for personal pleasure. Or is it? No doubt there is a certain sadism involved when it comes to seeing your enemy fucked, fucked over, fucked up, especially if it's personal. And then you can experience it for yourself, even at the same time, first-hand so to speak, if only metaphorically, or voyeuristically. The pleasure of seeing another suffer is still pleasure,

just as there can be a certain pleasure in suffering or a pain in being pleased...

In the sixteenth century, when the first 'pornographic' images were published there is no doubt that, despite the absence of well-known political or religious figures, the work appeared as a challenge to the status quo. The problem is that it was exactly the *means* that challenged the status quo, the same *means* that give pornography its dubious meaning, such that what it means to us today, or at least so many, is the mechanisation and objectification of the human body and its most basic pleasures.

#### TECHNOLOGY

The rise of pornography follows swiftly upon that of information technology. They could be said to come together. The printing press meant that literature, the sordid as much as the sacred, was more readily available to a wider public, given that they could read, or someone nearby could. The woodblock and later engraving methods made art available to a wider audience, and subsequently meant that a piece of literature could be accompanied by an image. The combination was perfect for the distribution of what might be the most sought after material for humanity's spiritual well-being: porn (the Bible has always been a big seller I admit, but it too has got some pretty hot stuff in there- Noah with his beasts in the ark for how many years?, Mary riding the donkey, Lot with his daughters, Judah and his daughter-in-Law, David raping Bathsheba, without saying a word about M.M and her hair...). However, this correlation between technology and pornography continues (photography, film, video, internet, web cams, skype) making

pornography more and more widely available and simultaneously more and more the subject of discussions about social responsibility and so on and so forth on the one hand, and on the other pretty serious censorship laws that just can't seem to keep up with technology and hackers' abilities and the audience's desire to bypass them.

It's pretty much indisputable that pornography has ceased to be politically challenging. But it would appear that the origin of pornography, namely 'the writing of prostitutes', where it begins as a form of advertising, and leads to the objectification of the body, the mechanisation of our basic instincts and so on *for profit* (and not so much to the profit of the prostitutes individually anymore than that of industry- besides no prostitute ever made a profit for the simple reason that what she gives is priceless), has overwhelmed the possibilities that were only later suggested by the radical nature of mass distribution. And yet, who can say? Maybe we're



all getting it on better because there's a bit more information around, positions in the air, conversations on the radio, signs, advertisements on buses, television. The distribution of pornographic information is massive and largely horrendously reifying, conservative, objectifying. But if you can still get it on, despite and in spite of all this flurry perhaps there's hope yet. There is without doubt, if not a revolutionary, certainly the potential for revolt (sic!!!) in sex. Because who wants to go work for the man when you've got the most exquisite example of manhood/womanhood/whatever-floats-your-boat lying on your bed/sofa/kitchen floor?

#### POWER

By 1525 Aretino had made it to Mantua, where at 2am out of the morning frost a man attacked him and stabbed him twice, once in the chest, once encountering his right hand raised in defence. But Aretino didn't die. And after some days, when Aretino was still too weak to move, and could barely speak, a man approached his bedside and confessed

wholeheartedly for the crime. Aretino knew the man, he was Della Volta. Both he and Aretino had been lovers of Lucrezia, one of the maids of Giberti, the same Datuary who had been ridiculed in the *I Modi*, the same man who had ordered his arrest. Della Volta showed Aretino a letter:

***"Did you write this?" he asked. It was a sonnet addressed to or about the pretty Lucrezia. "Of course," Aretino replied "Could anyone but I have written so excellently?" "It's certainly a decent enough piece of work," the boy admitted, rather sourly. "But you couldn't expect me to ignore it, could you?" "Oh, I don't know," groaned the wounded man "I don't keep your conscience, do I? Go see your confessor." "I have done so," Della Volta retorted sullenly. "He sent me to you." "To me?" "To you, to beg your forgiveness for stabbing you that night."***

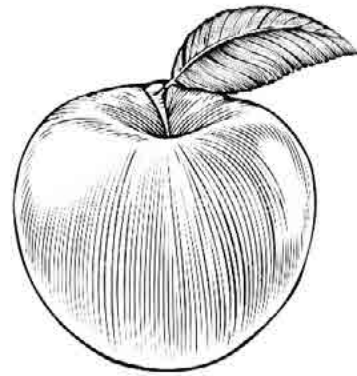
Della Volta's confessor was none other than Giberti. Although it appeared that the three men of power, in this case, the Pope, Giberti his Datuary and Aretino the satirist were at a stalemate, Aretino decided that even Mantua was not safe and relocated to the Republic of Venice where everything was permitted and what wasn't allowed was also permitted if you did it quietly.

In Venice Aretino proceeded to perfect the art of pornography, writing *The School of Whoredom* and other dialogues that are basically educational treatises about how a simple prostitute could fuck over a rich man, both literally and metaphorically. Explicitly, this particular dialogue presents the various means available to a prostitute, but also a courtesan to get by in a world dominated by men. There is a logic here: it reminds women that the world may well be dominated by men, but men are dominated by their desires, and since women have in some cases the exclusive role of satisfying certain of these desires, certain women have the power to dominate men.

Against a pretty brutal reality (at this time the punishment for a disobedient prostitute was the 'thirty-one', named after the number of men who were to rape her vaginally and anally), Aretino posed the prostitute as a woman who could not only survive, but also manipulate the powerful. Although his poetry was not radical, it did have an effect upon the influence and public standing of powerful men. If we take Aretino's works as an example of pornography - which we can do, but he certainly never used the word to refer to his own writings - then suddenly pornography becomes an essential part of the power game.

Pornography, here, is a manual for the repressed, the down-at-heel; it reveals the power of manipulation, influence, pandering and petting until you're the one who comes out on top.

***'Flattery and deceit are the darlings of great men,' says Aretino's character Nanna, 'and so with these men spread the butter on thick, if you want to get something out of them, otherwise you'll come home to me with a full belly and an empty purse.'***



-Thea

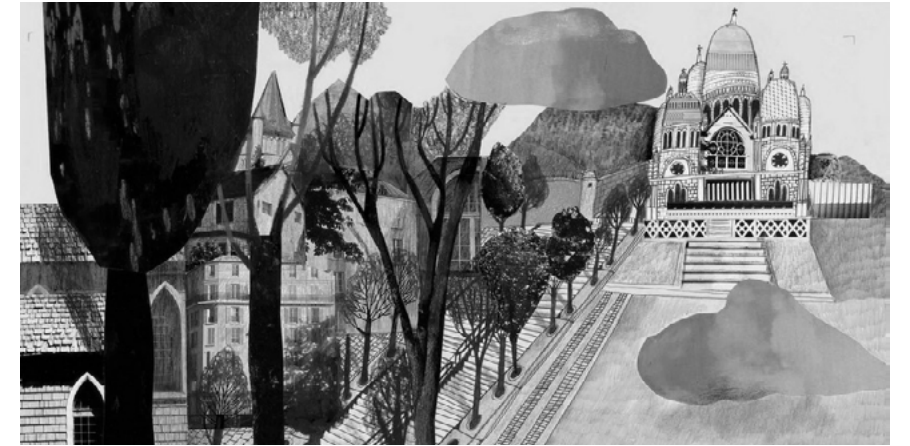
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# PARIS



Wandering around Paris looking for the city of Revolution, other things kept blocking the view. Take for instance Place de la Concorde. The last sunlight of a surprisingly cloudless day was casting long shadows across the square as I stopped to read a shiny metal plaque embedded in the ground. I don't know French but it was easy enough to make out that this was the spot where the people of Paris once killed their king. Looming above me though was a heavy Egyptian obelisk. Below the crispy carved hieroglyphs and above the corner, mounted rotating cameras, a panel of gold letters glinted in the evening sunlight and stated this towering stone, which pushes down the memory of Revolution, was erected by a later, restored, king.

On a later, cloudy day I climbed the hill of Montmatre. In front the whole city was spread out as far as I could see. Behind stood the greying edifice of the Sacre Coeur. After turning away from this unimpressive monument to the destruction of the Commune, I headed down a set of stairs interspersed with patches of grass and benches. At the top of the stairs a little sign, as well as saying what is forbidden here-cycling, skating, drinking, dogs- claims this area is officially known as Square Louise Michel. Again, a memory of Revolution down on the ground while a monument of Reaction soared above.

Paris can't seem to make its mind up about its history. Memories of Revolution and

Reaction coexist everywhere as if two cities inhabitant the same spot. It is a place that is Royalist and Revolutionary, Communist and Democrat all at the same time. Perhaps we should not be so surprised, this is a place where above ground trees can be cut and controlled into exact and precisely shaped rectangles to mirror the straight lines of the human world around them whilst at the same time below ground people casually, and with some agility, jump the metro barriers.

To escape this confused and confronting history Paris has taken refuge in its late nineteenth/early twentieth century Golden Age. Walking along the river bank passing row upon row of elegant



apartments, through the gardens of the various palaces and the echoing corridors of art galleries feels like being sent back in time. There's even the odd factory chimney bellowing out smoke to complete the picture of a bygone age. Standing sentinal above it all is that ubiquitous symbol of Paris, the Eiffel Tower. What is this giant mass of metal if not a huge pin to forever hold Paris fast to its Golden Age?

It's understandable why this is the dominant image of Paris. It was the time when every major writer, artist, poet or exile came here seeking safety or inspiration. It's a nice, safe moment to remember, between the barricades and bullets of the nineteenth century and the defeats, decolonisation and massacre by the Seine of the twentieth. Today though, those nice little cafes, with their wicker chairs, round metallic tables and grumpy waiters, seem a little empty of struggling, starving artists. With €600 rents, €10 museum tickets, €5 sandwiches and €2.65 metro tickets modern Paris is more likely to smother inspiration than spark it.

If we accept that this creative Paris is vanishing to leave the tourists chasing a shadow, what comes next? With France being labelled the new sick man of Europe, a Socialist PM pleading that the country is pro-business and the Far-Right building

in the wings, the city of Revolution seems to have become another playground for the rich. There was a time when the flame of insurrection in Paris would ignite the whole continent. Now we look elsewhere for our sparks of inspiration. We look to the banlieue, to Sivens or Nantes, or further afield we look to Cairo, Athens, Istanbul or Rio to light these dark days. The City of Lights itself, having done all it can, we leave to grow dimmer in peace.

***“I shall thus limit myself to a few words to announce that, whatever others may say about it, Paris no longer exists. The destruction of Paris is only one striking example of the fatal illness that is currently wiping out all the major cities, and that illness is in turn only one of the numerous symptoms of the material decay of this society. But Paris had more to lose than any other.”***

*-Debord, 'In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni'.*



## POLITICS OF ART

It was a bit after December 2010. Two years after the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos. Two years followed of riots & explosions, sabotage, bullets and a still-growing multitude of social projects, mixed with all different types of crisis-provoked peoples' movements, strikes and protests in Athens and all around Greece.

It was one of those days—the scent of tear gas and burnt rubbish in the morning air. I can't recall if it was after a general strike or just a demo that kicked-off, when I went down to the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens to check out an exhibition titled 'Politics of Art'.

I have to admit I didn't have high expectations. However, after descending down to a quiet art-smelling exhibition space (processing chemicals, paint, glue & heated resistors of electronic devices burning dust), sneaking amongst deliberately illuminated art objects and endlessly flickering video screens, I felt convinced enough to

come to the conclusion that there is actually no such thing as politics in art.

This need not be an accusation against this specific exhibition or any of the exhibitors. There was nothing especially unconventional about this show. It was the time and the city, molotovs and batons, resistance and repression, strikes and withdrawals and all the other social and existential conflicts on all levels of society that were being lived daily everywhere, but art simply couldn't reflect all of that anymore.

My days in Athens had crystal-clearly showed me that 'le belle arti' has nothing to do with anything that is political, neither in creation nor in destruction. It is the political climate that distinguishes Athens from e.g. Berlin, where art—as we know it now—seems to bear some kind of meaning (whatever it is, don't ask me). It is impossible to imagine a variety of different pop-up art spaces and alternative galleries here in Athens as in Berlin and other North European capitals.

Not because people in Athens don't like art but because art can't communicate anything important within the current political reality.

However, on that same night I got wasted with a French friend I haven't seen since, wandered back to the museum with a couple of spray cans on me and painted out a question in dog sized letters on the white marble of the building: "Is this art or politics?"—addressing the dilemma mainly to myself.

On the way back home I passed that part of the city, right next to the National Garden, where many foreign embassies are and where, regardless of the time of day or night, some young lads in blue uniforms stand on guard on every corner with submachine guns upon their lumpy shoulders. — What a meaningless piece of crap I just did!, I thought, it was just some spray paint on a wall.

### WHAT IS ART ALL ABOUT?

As 20th century avant-garde movements have taught us, art doesn't have any qualitative attributes. It can

be practically anything. However, despite its substantial liberty, art is not—and never has been—‘anything’. There are mechanisms other than creativity, freedom of expression or the cheerful insanity of artists that constitute aesthetics and define what is art and what is not.

Art is to creativity what religion is to spirituality. It is an institution—cruel and sombre—meant to rule out certain phenomena from all-diverse and multi-practical creativity and title them as ‘art’. Art is suppressed expression, dominated by the high priests of the art world: museums, academies, galleries, curators, art-markets and markets of artistic ideas where speculation is based on profitable taste and ethics replaced with aesthet(h)ics.

However, what makes art ‘art as we know it now’, and what is common to art from ancient times until today, is how it mainly manifests itself in representations, abstractions and symbolic expression. Art is an image—a representation or a performance of some sort, strictly divided from the hard reality of everyday life practices. Art is an allegory of human life communicating its own existence as an allegory but very rarely as life itself. It is a story or description of its object rather than an actual event, and its relation to its object is aesthetic rather than practical.

From now on I will call this kind of re-presentative art ‘art-as-we-know-it’ to separate it from all the other possibilities and potentialities art could have and especially from another kind of art that I’m going to present later in this text.

#### WHAT IS POLITICS?

I’m not interested in how politics is defined by the state or political science. The definition I find useful concerns

everyday reality and sees politics as an interplay of differently motivated people who are practically producing or re-producing a reality that they share together on some level.

It is important to underline that politics is always about practical actions and so is distinguished from so-called ‘political imagination’ or ideology. Ideology is an ensemble of ideals and evaluations that, for example, defines the targets that politics aims at. Ideology is, of course, connected to politics, but as long as there is no act there is no politics either.

What separates politics from other social activities is that politics appears only when there are two or more different and contradicting interests. By dealing with these contradictions politics produces material and social conditions where different experiences of unity or inclusion and alienation or exclusion are taking place. Without such a division no politics exists.

It is a very common misconception to see politics just as radical actions that change a political reality radically. Actions—even the most ordinary ones—that reproduce and maintain existing reality and its logics are equally political. The everyday reality does not hold as such without constant reproduction and maintenance.

In this frame we can conclude that because of a lack of practicality art-as-we-know-it, if anything, is eminently ideological, but not political. We have learned that art-as-we-know-it has the exceptional liberty to highlight social and human phenomena, criticize or even disgrace them, but that’s all it can do.

If art-as-we-know-it is somehow political it is such only by reproducing itself and its institutions as representative, non-practical,

ideological and so, paradoxically, ‘non-political’. This is a politics of non-politics that the great majority of artists and art institutions are stubbornly hanging onto.

As George Orwell wrote, “the opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude”, and a very reactionary one. Art in general doesn’t have such limitations nor does it imply that only representative or symbolic ways of expression are art. There is no higher law forbidding art from operating on a level of political praxis; from participating directly in the (un)creation of everyday reality, not only through reproduction but transfiguration. By ‘transfiguration’ I do not mean spilling paint or colourful words around public space, doing ideological street theatre, performances or artistic activism – bollocks. I mean large-scale social and material changes and ethical re-evaluations.

#### WHATEVER YOU PAINT MAY BE USED AGAINST YOU

To get closer to an idea of the politics of art, it is essential to understand that the development of the modern economy has effectively reduced the possibilities of all kinds of representations—including art-as-we-know-it—to participate in politics in any active way. The reason for this is capitalism’s ability to use representations and images on its own behalf, to maintain and strengthen economic power relations in society.

There is a great deal of financial profit to be made today, as the consumption of immaterial products has grown proportionately much more important than the consumption of plain material products. Even toothbrushes are sold by images of a healthy, ecological and happy life where there are no screaming kids or

relationship problems. This kind of imagery is much more important for market success, and therefore profits, than the difference between products themselves. Also, as we see, all kinds of pseudo-political awareness—social and ecological—have already found their way into commercial imagery in the form of organic products, fair trade, ‘green technology’ or solidarity products. This is, obviously, all bullshit. As long as someone profits, social divisions are maintained, just as in good old capitalism.

If we recognize these developments in the history of capitalism we see to what extent the relation between image and capital has changed during the last century and how visual and literary representations have been very effectively economized.

This notion will put Adorno’s famous and over-interpreted phrase “there can be no poetry after Auschwitz” in a new light. Post world-war capitalism which has grown from the same insanity as gas-chambers, has integrated all imagery to itself to such a degree of accumulation that the whole process of accumulation has become ‘an image’ itself and therefore an object of desire. This means that all art, including previously mentioned poetry, has been banalized with the same confident certainty as capitalism produces Che Guevara T-shirts or radical theory while provoking wars and building new concentration camps to secure material bases for its profits. What I am saying here is that these phenomena—exploitation and ethical or intellectual superiority—are not separated from each other as long as they both occur within the same markets. It is not the substance of products that upholds everyday life but money that is the actual social relation and that makes capitalism and its feeble side-effects real.

What happened to experimental Dada or the revolutionary Situationists or to rebellious street art? As we see now, those radical art movements which were supposed to get rid of bourgeois and reactionary art together with its institutions and uproot a superficial society as a whole, turned out to be part of the reproduction of bourgeois institutionalism and superficiality. As avant-garde theorist Paul Mann saw, those movements were “not the victim[s] of recuperation but its agents, its proper technology”. Recuperation is a name for a process where capitalist markets and social normality adapts radical or marginal activity into one of its own commercial products and general ordinariness.

It is not so long ago that a personal collection of notes and letters of the most stubborn situationist, Guy Debord, was sold by his widow to the National Library of France and presented for the first time to the public in a building named after ex-president of France, François Mitterrand: a spectacular recuperation of the author of ‘The Society of the Spectacle’.

Street art is another great example of this. Street-art style and actual pieces have found their way into the fashion world, appear in lifestyle publications, advertisements, Hollywood, Music Television, record covers and galleries, and, of course, as reproduced prints on living-room walls of the working class folk and as originals on those of the rich elite. Graffiti is now a big part of gentrification rather than a symbol of autonomy in public space. As far as I know, this was not supposed to happen.

If art has turned out to be just another commodity for capitalist reproduction, something similar has happened to artists too, who

are producers of immaterial goods operating on precisely the same level as labour which is directly embodied in the production of material goods. Even those who are doing their creative work outside of art markets and institutions are constantly contributing to immaterial production by creating public imagery that will be recuperated by commercial purposes in one way or another. As it is also the case with all other labour, the surplus of artistic work will flow to capitalists, since the means of production and transaction are still owned by them.

#### AESTHETICIZATION OF ECONOMICS

If art-as-we-know-it is fundamentally based on old capitalist values, intentions and infrastructures, it seems to serve such social tendencies and power relations that are maintaining the old or constituting new totalitarianism instead of opening ways to more humane and less authoritarian societies. The reason for this is, precisely, in processes where 1) art-as-we-know-it gets its value as a commodity and therefore benefits the ruling class, and 2) where it pacifies political dynamics by concentrating on (liberal) ideology not politics.

If we focus on the latter, we can notice how art-as-we-know-it appears as a technique for aestheticizing economic power. This is a similar process—though substantially reversed—to what Walter Benjamin called ‘the aestheticization of politics’ which he saw happening in Europe during the 1930’s. The strength and glory of fascist aesthetics aimed to create an ecstatic mass-spectacle that attempted to include the whole nation in its sublimity, where fascist politics could be accepted.

Now, an endless visual flow of images, neo-liberal 'freedom of expression' and especially profitable and ideological art-as-we-know-it—aiming to provide liberty, moralize or raise 'awareness'—is creating a similar blinding aesthetic haze that conceals the deranged realm of capitalism where people are oppressed and enslaved, and actual political opponents imprisoned, tortured, even killed. Art's liberty to make representations freely is maintaining the ideal of an open and just society, capable to reform and advance, although people's possibilities to participate in actual politics—in the actual meaning of politics—are more and more restricted.

So, it is clear that art-as-we-know-it has reached its terminus as a transformative power. However, let's not forget that it played an important part in the fight against cultural conservatism up until the 1970's, and perhaps can still be used for such a purpose somewhere. But what if the enemy is not conservatism but

a bastardized form of liberalism, as capitalism could be portrayed? Art-as-we-know-it has definitely been in the front line pushing further those developments that we now call 'liberal democratic societies', 'capitalism' and 'neo-liberal values'.

Because of this, many radicals dismiss artists and the pointless world of contemporary art, while some of them are even tempted to lean towards reactionary culture in their search for a greater meaning or spirit than that which art often transmits. There is surely plenty of truth in that scorn, but being reactionary is ugly.

From my point of view, both art-hating radicals and contemporary artists are stuck in a conservative concept of art and an equally conservative concept of politics. Sure, art-as-we-know-it smells rancid like off-milk. Sure, it is self-destructive in its logic, making everyone who truly desires freedom and meaning, frustrated, powerless and ultimately crazy.

But let me repeat myself here. Why should art participate in immaterial production and be fully integrated into present capitalism? Why should art reproduce those hollow neo-liberal ideas our time is so keen to manifest? There is no rigid precondition why art should do so. There is no God who commands that art has to be immaterial, representative and apolitical by nature. There is no such thing as the 'nature of art'. It is all in the hands of artists just as are such concepts like 'work', 'economy', 'tolerance', 'fairness' or 'social'. It is all in the hands of the people—even though this work of definition might sometimes mean social war.

If we have any intention to deal with the transition from capitalism to something we could call 'post-capitalism', to direct its course and pursue something worthwhile, artists must have a certain sensitivity to identify the creativity of this process and place themselves within it. If imagery is abducted by the economy, this requires us to rethink art.

#### TOWARDS POST-CAPITALISM

As some critics had already noted back in the early days of capitalism—and what we clearly see now—is that neo-liberalized capitalism is no more desirable than state-controlled capitalism, since the economic system itself is a badly defective interface for human relations or the environment, and turns out to be exploitation and social cannibalism in one way or another.

However, it is much more important to see that liberal capitalism is no longer even a realistic option for the future—whether we want it or not. There are multiple examples showing how capitalist faith has been degrading in the 'western world' over the last 20 years and this is still the case. This coincides not only with 'the crisis' but with more general and ideological promises of capitalism: growth, progress, expansion, peace, freedom, tolerance, well-being, happiness, increasing quality of products and life and so on. I'm fully aware that 'the death of capitalism' has been prophesied for at least the last

200 years. However, this is the first time in a modern economy that the signs are so clear. Let me give some examples.

Since the 1980's the size of the global finance economy has been rapidly growing and it is now about four times bigger than the size of the so-called 'real economy'. This means that when we are talking about economic growth we are, first of all, talking about the growth of finance markets, and second, we are talking about an economy that never finds material forms. The world's real economy has actually been decreasing since 2008.

But this is not enough on its own. Drastic changes have been happening on all the levels of capitalist praxis and faith. The individual liberty and political freedom that capitalism was suppose to increase has been reduced since 2001, not only in the USA or by NSA(1), but in most countries, because the authority of the police and other civil forces have been extended at the expense of individual privacy and freedom. In Spain and

many other European countries the right to demonstrate has been recently limited. This kind of regression of political and individual rights and liberties was not supposed to be possible, as economic liberty was promising to grant both individual liberty and political freedom(2).

The war in Ukraine is something that was not supposed to happen either. One of the main arguments, widely used to legitimize capitalist economy, is that the 'free market', as a platform for expressing desires and competition, is a nonviolent way to solve conflicts inside or between capitalist countries(3). Recent riots in Greece, Spain, France, Stockholm, London, Ferguson, Hong-Kong and other capitalist societies are proving the contrary.

And, of course, Fukushima, or any other of the many environmental accidents, was not supposed to happen, because the capitalist market had promised to be an infallible mechanism to find the best and safest solutions, not only for nature, but for mankind(4).



Racism, fascism, poverty, unemployment, global warming, scarcity of resources etc.—all these, and many more, were supposed to be solvable by capitalism. What we have now is quite the opposite.

I chose these examples to point out that the predominant stagnation is not only financial or material but cultural and spiritual as well. It has a lot to do with the whole belief system called 'capitalism' or 'market liberalism'.

I'm not saying, by any means—as many leftists do—that 1980's capitalism was something to go after. No way. I just want to point out that some kind of creepy but coherent causality which post-war capitalism had, doesn't support the horizon anymore. Something has crucially changed that makes me assume that we have entered a post-capitalist period where the new logic and values are about to take over the old ideals and institutions. This notion will bring us back to art.

#### POST-CAPITALIST ART

So, is political art possible at all? The answer is, yes indeed. It is a simple thing. Stop using narratives or being ideological, stop representing and start doing things.

Different transitions from capitalism to post-capitalism are happening in a political and practical realm. This sounds very materialistic, but it is not, since 'spirit' or substance—however you call it—is not separable from practical actions and the different realities acts create. It is clear that post-capitalism needs 'spiritual' changes as well as practical ones. But as we know, 'spirit' cannot just be invented outside of practical life, nor in the university or the laboratory. Claiming there is a law of causality that demands thought before action is not actually true. As Nietzsche noticed, a thought cannot be declared as a first cause since there is always something that makes us think. But this is not important here.

More important is to realize that if art is sensitive to those on-going social dynamics and therefore exists in

relation with those social changes, an aesthetic question must be practical, and art and artists one of the subjects of that change. Otherwise, art will take the role of an historian—a role already reserved for academics whose job is to interpret—and social change itself will remain culturally conservative.

Literally, this means that art must actively participate in a process of re-evaluating fundamental values—which some might call a 'revolutionary process'. It has to be all about the emancipation of artists and creativity, not only on the level of the substance of art, as 20th century avant-garde movements proposed, but on the level of actual social relations. This objective should outstrip all contemporary and classical conceptions of art and aesthetics.

To be able to do so, art has to abandon all representation-centred common aesthetic matters, such as beauty, harmony, composition, expression, style, genre, form, content and discourse. Instead, post-capitalist aesthetics should

be based on the contemplation of concrete and practical qualities in art: what kind of actual reality does art create? How well is the work or act of art eroding systems of spectacle and distinguishing artists from immaterial production, capitalist value formation and neo-liberal thought?

Actual post-capitalist aesthetic questions are: how does art create immediate life? What kind of material conditions and social relations does it require and create? What is its relation to power? What kind of concrete actions does it take? How is it related to the environment? How does it connect with other post-capitalist phenomena? What kind of resources does it consume? What kind of economy does it use or constitute? What happens after art? How will it be disposed or decomposed? And so on. Such re-evaluations do not set any technical limitations for artists, they only connect art to those matters post-capitalism has to face at this particular moment of time when the old conventions are losing their validity.

If we look at classical painting or sculpture from this kind of practical point of view, the only thing we see is artists moving their tools, rubbing poisonous paints on canvas with a brush or removing small pieces of marble from a bigger chunk. Digital art with digital devices, body-art or performance does not do much more. In relation to post-capitalist aesthetic viewpoints, none of these appear aesthetic. Of the modern arts, only architecture carries some practical aesthetic qualities, as it is mainly about reforming concrete reality—though it is almost always done for capitalistic purposes and is therefore unaesthetic.

But, if we replace mallet and chisel with sledgehammer and instead of marble use a bank building as a medium of sculpture, or, if an artwork manages to destroy a large quantity of money, disable cops, paralyze a stock market or a busy shopping street or telecommunication connections, or if it manages to create permanent alternatives for social relations or satisfy some basic needs outside of capitalism, we have surely achieved

some kind of aesthetic value in the post-capitalist sense. I do not mean artists have to take care of all activities in a future world(s), but somehow concretely relate to its practices and subjects. How this can actually happen, I leave artists of the future to answer. But with a little imagination we can see that there are many, many ways to act.

Sculptors, break open and dig holes in asphalt. Painters, change your oil paints into flammable liquids. You who build installations, build them to block the streets and logistic routes. Musicians, hit the beat with flying cobblestones. Poets, stick your hands into soil. Actors, bring people together. Create and break, solve and sabotage.

***“Art makes life possible. It is the great enticer of life, the great stimulant. Art as the only form of superior resistance against every form of denial of life.”(5)***

## WHY ART?

Some friends and colleagues have shown their concerns about my perspective and asked why call it art, why not politics, social struggle or revolutionary politics? How is post-capitalist art differentiated from 'normal' insurrection? There are a few thoughts about that.

First of all, the point here is not to reclaim social struggles or insurrections and aestheticize them by claiming them as art—quite the opposite. The question is rather to politicize art and artists by disposing of the restricting separation between representation and actual political action.

Art and especially avant-garde movements (I don't mean it in a sense of vanguard, but those who experiment with the new) have always set important preconditions for history, present and future. In this sense, art has been, and still is, an essential part of human culture, but is a form of social sensibility as well. It is difficult to imagine any civilization without something we could call 'art', nor any anti-civilization ideology that could draw a meaningful life without art. Desirable post-capitalistic life cannot be conservative in culture and therefore it has to create its own art based on its own demands and evaluations—and also use creativity to create both of those. If it fails to follow the existing social dynamics it will evidently end up with some sort of totalitarian post-modern transmutation of superficial historicism and the constant spiritual degeneration already visible in those traditions that try to actively control and limit creativity. However, in the end it's all about creativity, isn't

it? Whatever life brings, art has to discover and whatever art brings, life around must adapt to. This attitude describes the ethics of art and the artist much more clearly than any other attempt.

Secondly, politics, insurrection or social change is not an empty platform, but it is enacted by real people with real qualities. Saying "radical politics is only for so-called radicals" means that there is no longer subjectivity but a faceless 'radical process' acted by non-persons. This is why artists and those who are devoted to creativity must make their own insurrection. To actually become an active part of revolutionary processes from one's own particular point of view is the only way to keep this particularity throughout social change. I do not mean people should not change, but they should not lose the sources of their desires either.

An artist who is not sensitive enough to understand the current collapse of capitalism and its post-capitalist dynamics cannot continue as an artist when social structures will change. This is already evident, as only very few artists are able to keep up and follow their desire to create in the on-going economic crisis. The same goes with many other fields of interest too.

From my perspective, radicalization has to grow from everyone's own understanding, and it has to be based on those desires, skills, life experiences and practices that a person is familiar with as an individual but also in affinity with the social surrounding. It is important to stress that different people with real differences should discover their radical subjectivity based upon their particularity within their daily

activities, thus those activities will form a solid part of their radicalism. This kind of understanding opens many accesses to political reality, not only for artists, but other walks of life as well. For me this is more than convenient, as there is no other way to approach this diverse world than in diversity. Only diversity will lead to diverse struggles and diverse realities. It is far too arrogant and academic to demand that revolution should be neutralized of its subjects.

Where are the political theories of shoemakers, car mechanics, sailors, bakers, doctors, thieves and farmers? How are they planning to liberate themselves from a joyless slavery and the dullness of their own profession or social position? Not to become the same as others, but to rejoice in their desires, skills and experiences more meaningfully; to redefine their 'jobs' as based on their own creativity and relations. I don't want to stress professionalism here, just to say that it is all about people's needs, desires, skills and different life experiences that matter. Where are all those different revolutionary theories? The impersonal and exportable revolutionary theories of impersonal and exportable academics (or "professional" revolutionaries) we all know. But is this anything real? For heaven's sake no.

## BUT...

If the artists are fighting cops, burning banks, demolishing highway intersections and sabotaging telecommunication towers, who is going to provide that obligatory strangeness that is essential for all life?

From my point of view the world should never be turned into pure 'revolutionary' utilitarianism.

Not even for a moment. Such a thought is an empty memento of revolutionary theories of the past, a relic of those evaluations which see us as an impersonal oneness—oneness in multitude or in unity. Nothing good can come out of that. The revolution I have been talking about here is not that of abandoning or simplifying meanings or aiming towards transcendent emptiness—this is closer to the reality we are living at the moment: the void of nihilism.

The strangeness is hiding. It is in those fugitive logics that escape the degrading core of capitalism and modernity and can be seen through the ruptures of this malevolent 'economy of crisis'. Behind, there are other life forces and logics, unique and particular: giving, sharing, hiding, abdicating, looting, breaking the law and other and

weirder and more elusive ones than we are used to deal with. Perhaps it is difficult to see another world from within the 'crisis', perceiving it as mere signs of poverty. But it is not. It has nothing to do with it.

When the capitalist economy degrades, something else grows. This is the soil that art has to find and tunnel into, to drag some strangeness to the daylight. If utilitarianism was the foundation of the (neo)classical economy and of capitalism, post-capitalism is no longer utilitarian. Contemplating this is odd enough to start with.

For these reasons I propose that the 'irrational' which we have learned to associate with the arts, with stories and narratives, should be expressed as a conspiracy between a few with an affinity and held amongst them in mutual trust. Strangeness is a process

of finding. Art is secret and beauty, something very personal, not for sharing just like that with anyone.

However, this conspiracy is in each case realized, art—to be something meaningful—has to become a real problem for contemporary society, a problem that cannot be solved by modern or capitalist deeds, material or spiritual. A 'real problem' that is practically and spiritually 'incorrect' in regards to capitalist reproduction and thought. (6)

## Footnotes:

- (1) The National Security Agency (NSA). The massive extent of the NSA's spying, both foreign nationals and U.S. citizens, was revealed in June 2013 by Edward Snowden.
- (2) Liberal economist Milton Friedman promoted economic freedom as both a necessary freedom and also as a vital means for political freedom.
- (3) Immanuel Kant wrote in 1795 in his essay 'Perpetual Peace', "the spirit of commerce . . . sooner or later takes hold of every nation, and is incompatible with war". Today, at least four theories of capitalist peace can be identified, with some of these theories claiming that a capitalist peace may subsume the democratic one, given that capitalism may be the cause of both democracy and peace.
- (4) "I believe it is time for a new era in environmental protection, which uses the market to help us get our environment back on track—to recognize that Adam Smith's invisible hand can have a green thumb" – Bill Clinton 1992. This way of thinking is called green liberalism and it is very common all around the 'Rich North'. Most of the Green Parties in Europe are pro-capitalist and politically closer to right-wing liberals than left.
- (5) From a film: "Dias de Nietzsche em Turim" by Júlio Bressane.
- (6) With gratitude to Antti Salminen.

“Against death, we demand *life*; against silence, *words and respect*; against amnesia, *memory*; against humiliation and disdain, *dignity*; against oppression, *rebellion*; against slavery, *freedom...*”  
-from *Between the Light and Shade: the Last Words of 'Subcomandante Marcos'*

“I believe in life. And I have seen the death parade...” -from the poem '*Affirmation*' by Assata Shakur

“*He is a fanatical lover of life. He wants to live,*” -Giorgos Romanos describing his son Nikos during the hunger strike at the end of 2014





“The Barbarians are just around the corner.”

