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Against the Logic of Submission: *The* Subversion of Existence

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The desire to change the world remains merely an abstract ideal or a political program unless it becomes the will to transform one's own existence. The logic of submission imposes itself on the level of daily life offering thousands of reasons for resigning oneself to the domination of survival over life. So without a conscious project of revolt and transformation on this level, all attempts to change the world remain basically cosmetic — putting band-aids on gangrenous ulcers. Without an intentional projectuality toward freedom and revolt here and now a myriad of potentially worthy projects — the occupation of abandoned spaces, the sharing of free food, the publication of a bimonthly anarchist periodical, sabotage, pirate radio stations, demonstrations, attacks against the institutions of domination — lose their meaning, becoming merely more hustle and bustle in a confused and confusing world. It is the conscious decision to reappropriate life in defiance of the present reality that can give these activities a revolutionary significance, because this is what provides the link between the various activities that make up an insurgent life.

Making such a decision challenges us to figure out how to realize it practically, and such a realization is not just a matter of involving ourselves in a variety of projects of action. It also, and more essentially, means creating one's life as a tension toward freedom, thus providing a context for the actions we take, a basis for analysis. Furthermore, such a decision takes our revolt beyond the political. The conscious desire for total freedom requires a transformation of ourselves and our relationships in the context of revolutionary struggle. It becomes necessary not merely to rush into this, that and the other activity, but to grasp and learn to use all of those tools that we can take as our own and use against the current existence based on domination, in particular, analyses of the world and our activity in it, relationships of affinity and an indomitable spirit. It also becomes necessary to recognize and resolutely avoid those tools of social change offered by the current order that can only reinforce the logic of domination and submission — delegation, negotiation, petition, evangelism, the creation of media images of ourselves, and so on. These latter tools precisely reinforce hierarchy, separation and dependence on the power structure — which is the reason why they are offered to us for use in our struggles. When one resorts to these tools, revolt and freedom degenerate into a mere political program.

Analysis that does not arise from one's desire to reappropriate life here and now tends to reinforce domination, because it either remains baseless or turns to an ideology or political program as its base. A great deal of what passes for social analysis today falls into the former realm. Having no base from which they make their critique, those who follow this path tend to fall into a ceaseless round of deconstruction that ultimately concludes that domination is everywhere and nowhere, that freedom is impossible and that, therefore, we should just make the best of it either through conformity or the staged oppositional games of groups like *tute bianche* (the famous “white overalls”) which are intended to challenge nothing. Arguably, this is not analysis at all, but an excuse for avoiding real analysis, and with it concrete revolt. But the road of political ideology and programs is no more useful to the project of subversion. Because this project is the transformation of existence in a way that destroys all domination and exploitation, it is inherently *anti-political*. Freedom, conceived politically, is either an empty slogan aimed at winning the approval of the ruled (that American “freedom” for which Bush is fighting by bombing Afghanistan and signing increasingly repressive laws into effect) or merely one end of a continuum with domination. Freedom and domination become quantitative — matters of degree — and the former is increased by decreasing the latter. It is precisely this sort of thinking that caused Kropotkin to support the Allies in the First World War and that provides the basis for every reformist project. But if freedom is not merely a question of degrees of domination — if

bigger cages and longer chains do not mean greater freedom, but merely the appearance of greater mobility within the context of continuing enslavement to the rulers of this order — then all the political programs and ideologies become useless to our project. Instead it is precisely to ourselves and our desires that we must turn — our desires for a qualitatively different existence. And the point of departure for the transformation we seek becomes our lives and relationships. It is here that we begin to undermine the logic of submission with the aim of destroying all domination. Then, our analyses of the world are aimed at achieving an understanding of how to carry out our own struggle in the world and to find points of solidarity (where we see our struggle in that of others) to spread the struggle against domination, not at creating an interpretation of the world in terms of an ideology. And our analyses of our activities are aimed at determining how useful they really are for achieving our aspirations, not at conforming our actions to any program.

If our aim is the transformation of existence, then the development of relations of affinity is not just a tactical maneuver. It is the attempt to develop relationships of freedom within the context of struggle. Relationships of freedom develop through a deep and ever increasing knowledge of the other — knowledge of their ideas, their aspirations, their desires, their capacities, their inclinations. It is knowledge of similarities, yes, but more significantly, it is knowledge of differences, because it is at the point of difference that real practical knowledge begins, the knowledge of whether and how one can carry out projects and create life with another. It is for this reason that among ourselves — as in our relationship to that which we are struggling against — it is necessary to avoid the practice of compromise and the constant search for common ground. These practices are, after all, the heart and soul of the democratic form of domination that currently rules in the world, and thus are expressions of the logic of submission that we need to eradicate from our relationships. False unities are by far a greater detriment to the development of an insurrectional project than real conflicts from which individual intelligence and creative imagination may flower brilliantly. The compromise from which false unities develop is itself a sign of the submission of the insurrectional project to the political.

Unities brought about through compromise are the opposite of affinity since they spring from a suppression of knowledge of oneself and of the other. This is why they require the creation of formal decision-making processes that hold the seeds of a bureaucratic methodology. Where there is real knowledge of the others with whom one is carrying out a project, formal consensus is not necessary. The awareness each has of the others' individuality creates a basis where decision and action need not be separate. This is a new form of sociality that can be brought into existence here and now in struggle against the order of domination, a form of sociality grounded in the full enjoyment of the singularity of each individual, of the marvelous difference each of us carries within ourselves.

On the basis of these relationships of affinity, real projects that reflect the desires and aims of the individuals involved, rather than simply a feeling that one must do something, can develop. Whether the project is a squat, a sharing of free food, an act of sabotage, a pirate radio station, a periodical, a demonstration, or an attack against one of the institutions of domination, it will not be entered into as a political obligation, but as a part of the life one is striving to create, as a flowering of one's self-determined existence. And it is then and only then that its subversive and insurrectional potential blossoms. If joy and wonder, and a beautiful, indomitable existence are what we want, we need to try to achieve this here and now in rebellious defiance against all domination, eradicating the logic of submission from our lives, our relationships and our revolutionary struggle — for the destruction of politics and the creation of life without measure.