

The Right To Be Greedy: Theses On The Practical Necessity Of Demanding Everything

For Ourselves

1974

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The positive conception of egoism, the perspective of communist egoism, is the very heart and unity of our theoretical and practical coherence.

This perspective is the essence of what separates us from both the left and the right. We cannot allow its fundamental importance to be obscured, or ourselves to be mistaken for either the right or the left. We cannot allow any Leninist organization to get away with claiming that it is only 'a little bit pregnant' with state capitalism.

Introduction

1

Greed in its fullest sense is the only possible basis of communist society.

2

The present forms of greed lose out, in the end, because they turn out to be not greedy enough.

3

The repression of egoism can never totally succeed, except as the destruction of human subjectivity, the extinction of the human species itself, because egoism is an essential moment of human subjectivity. Its repression simply means that it returns in a hidden, duplicitous form. If it cannot show itself in the open market, it will find itself or create for itself a black market. If it is not tolerated in transparent n1 relations, the repressed self will split in two; into a represented self, a personal organization of appearances, a persona, and that which cringes and plots behind this character-armour n2. The repression of egoism, contrary to the dictates of every one of the so-called “Communists” (in opposition to Marx and Engels), from Lenin right down to Mao, can never be the basis of communist society.

Moreover, the repressive conception of “communism” misses precisely the whole point. It misses out on the validity of the egoistic moment. This is true even in the inverted form in which it emerges from an immanent critique of altruistic ideology: if I die, the world dies for me. Without life, I cannot love another. However, what it misses in “theory” — i.e., in its ideological representations — it nonetheless preserves in practice, and precisely with the help of that very ideology: its real basis is the egoism of the state-capitalist bureaucracy. This ideology of self-sacrifice serves admirably the task of extracting surplus-labour from the proletariat.

The actual negation of narrow egoism is a matter of transcendence (“aufhebung” n3), of the transition from a narrow to a qualitatively expanded form of egoism. The original self-expansion of egoism was identically the demise of the primitive community. But its further self-expansion will resolve itself into a community once again. It is only when greed itself at last (or rather, once again) beckons in the direction of community that that direction will be taken. Here the ancient Christian truth that no earthly force can withstand human greed rejoins us on our side of the barricades.

4

It was the struggle over their growing wealth which rent asunder the early tribal and village communities n1. The elaboration of the patriarchal pattern, the growth of exchange-relations, of usury, debt-slavery, and war can all be traced to this. It is only when the same motive which originally occasioned this dissolution of community calls for its reconstitution that community can be constituted again. And this motive is, simply, the struggle for a richer life. For only that motive is irresistible: only that motive — greed — can undo its own work. It is only when that subjective moment, through the historical deepening of its own possibility, turns against its own present objectification — in a word, capital (capitalist private property, privative appropriation; that is, privatization, exclusion — “society” as an association of strangers, of estrangement — in short, the totality of alienation) — that the threshold of the great transformation is reached. And the struggle of this new subjectivity against the previous objectification (global capitalist society; in a word, capital), the process of the negation of that objectification IS the communist revolution.

5

We have no doubt that people are corruptible, but we know for ourselves that there are things more tempting, more seductive, than money, capital, and Power n1 — so much so that no genuinely greedy human being could possibly resist their allure — and it is upon this corruptibility of man that we found our hopes for revolution. Revolution is nothing other than the self-accelerating spread throughout society of this more profound corruption, of this deeper seduction. Currently, greed is always pursued and associated with isolation and privatism simply because everyone under the reign of capital is condemned to pursue greed in this narrow way. Greed doesn't yet know its own potentiality.

We say once again: the present forms of greed lose out in the end because they turn out to be not greedy enough.

6

Narrow greed is a holdover from times of natural scarcity. Its desires are represented to itself in the form of commodities, power, sex(-objects), and even more abstractly, as money and as images. We are told in a thousand ways that only these few things are worth having — by rulers who work to insure that these are the only things available (to be bought). The survival of the narrow greed in a world of potential plenty is propagated in the form of ideology by those very people who control access to these things. Ultimately, in our daily lives, we suffer the humiliation of being forced accomplices in the maintenance of this “scarcity,” this poverty of choices.

7

Narrow greed will turn against itself. No more powerful weapon against greed could possibly be found than greed itself. There could be no more formidable tool for transforming narrow selfishness than this selfishness itself. In its own process, through its own development, it must discover a fuller form of greed, and a richer form of wealth. It must discover its own narrowness.

A frontal assault on someone's narrow selfishness will run up against his strongest defenses. Wouldn't it be easier to turn that strength around upon itself? Wouldn't it be easier to induce that person to transform (him)/(her) self n1 through (his)/(her) own desires? This is the method of seduction. It involves speaking from what is most radical in you to what is most radical in the other person; that is, speaking from what you really have in common: root subjectivity; radical subjectivity, the basis, at last historically discovered, upon which to work out the construction of authentic community. This is the method of immanent critique n2; of the evocation of self-critique. It is the practice of dialectic itself. Hic Rhodus! Hic Salta!

8

The perspective of communist egoism is the perspective of that selfishness which desires nothing so much as other selves, of that egoism which wants nothing so much as other egos; of that greed which is greedy to love — love being the “total appropriation” n1 of man by man.

9

Our reversal of perspective on egoism n1, our detournement n2 of “greed,” and the scandalous effect which this produces and is intended to produce in the prevailing consciousness, is no mere formal trick, and no arbitrary play on words. Words, and precisely because of their meanings, are a real part of history, of the “historical material,” and of the historical process. To abandon them to their usurpers, to invent new words, or to use other words because of the difficulty of winning back the true, historic words, is to abandon the field to the enemy. It is a theoretical concession, and a practical concession, which we cannot afford. To do so would only add to the confusion, a confusion which, in part, forms the basis of the established order n3.

Our reversal of perspective, on the contrary, is clarifying within the very terms of the confusion. It is already a revolutionary act at the level of the subjective conditions of revolution: the reversed perspective — the revolved perspective — is the perspective of revolution itself. Ideology is the sublime hustle. The use-value of ideology is as a tool for exploitation — the ideologue uses ideology to con you into letting him put his egoism above yours, in the name of altruism, morality, and the “general interest.” Our winning back in a positive connotation of a word like “greed” or “selfishness” — the central, universal, and mutually agreed upon pejoratives of the two extreme representations of modern capitalism, private capitalist and state capitalist ideology, which try to confine the totality of possible opposition within the universe bounded by their polar pseudo-opposition — is such an act because it locates precisely the point of their essential unity, the exact point of departure for a revolutionary movement which, by breaking away there, simultaneously, identically, and singularly breaks with both.

No less is our expropriation of a word like “communism” such an act, for it is already an “expropriation of the expropriators.” c1 The “Free World” is not free and the “Communist World” is not communist.

10

We use the words “communist society” to mean the direct opposite of that which masquerades as such in the present world namely, bureaucratic state-capitalism n1. That the classical private capitalist societies of the “West” — themselves maturing toward a form of state-capitalism — collude with “Eastern” powers in the propagation of this lie, is hardly an accident, and should come as no surprise. It is, rather, one facet among myriads of an “antagonistic cooperation” n2 which reveals the hidden essential unity binding together these pseudo-opposites.

The true communist society begins with the expropriation of the whole of capitalist society by “the associated producers, c2 which, if we are to judge by the numerous n3 historical attempts at this process so far, will take the form of global organization of workplace, community, regional, etc., councils; the workers’ councils, or, to use their original, Russian name, expropriated (in fact, as in name) by the Bolshevik bureaucrats — the Soviets.

11

We conceive the realized social individual, “communist man,” as having for his property — that is, for the object of his appropriation — his whole society, the totality of his social life. All of society is wealth for him. His intercourse with his society — i.e., his living relations with the rest of the social individuals and their objectification — is in its totality the appropriation of social life. Productive activity becomes a form of individual consumption just as consumption itself is a form of (self) production.

The activity of simultaneous appropriation by each individual of all the rest, or of the appropriation of society by all at once inter-appropriation (realized inter-subjectivity, or co-property) — itself constitutes the totality of social production. This appropriation by all at once of all is none other than the resonance n1 state of egoism:

“Communism is the positive abolition of private property, of human self-alienation, and [is] thus the real appropriation of human nature through and for man. c3

In communist society, according to its concept, the “form, of intercourse c4 becomes the total appropriation of man by man. Social individuals can appropriate one another subjectively (i.e., as subjects), and all-sidedly, through all the forms of human intercourse — by talking together, producing together, making love together, etc., etc., and all the fruits of their appropriation, i.e., themselves in their developed richness, become thus the property of themselves, and of all society, of all the other social individuals.

The fruits of your appropriation, of your consumption of physical and emotional riches, is something from which I am excluded at the level of immediacy, of immediate consumption: you eat the pear, therefore I cannot eat just that bite of just that pear; you share your love with this person, and I am perhaps excluded from sharing myself at this moment with you. But this is not at all a problem for me, for I am busy elsewhere, with the same project and praxis of self-enrichment on my own and together with others. But later, mediately, when I come back to you, your appropriation, and the self-enrichment you derive from it, comes back to me, becomes my consumption, my appropriation, in my appropriation of you, and is the richer for it. Today, we have to be jealous of each others’ pleasures not because our pleasures are so many and so great,

but because they are so meager and so few. Here, on the other side of poverty, on the other side of scarcity, my jealousy would only deprive myself, my exclusion of your pleasure would only exclude my own, and I am free at last to take pleasure in your pleasure. Whereas, within the realm of poverty, your strength is a threat to me, your development is at the expense of mine, and in general your addition is my subtraction; on the contrary, in the society of realized wealth, your strength is my strength, the inner wealth of your being is my wealth, my property, and every one of your human powers is a multiplication of my own. Thus, the contradiction between my consumption and yours, between my appropriation, my property, and yours; the conflict between my well-being and yours becomes its opposite: synthesis; identity; inter-reinforcement; interamplification; resonance.

12

The positive conception of egoism, the perspective of communist egoism, is the very heart and unity of our theoretical and practical coherence. This perspective is the essence of what separates us from both the left and the right. We cannot allow its fundamental importance to be obscured, or ourselves to be mistaken for either the right or the left. We cannot allow any Leninist organization to get away with claiming that it is only 'a little bit pregnant' with state capitalism.

I. Wealth

13

“When the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers, etc., of individuals, produced in universal exchange a1 ?” c5

14

“The exchange of human activity with production itself as well as the exchange of human products with one another is equivalently the species-activity and species-spirit whose actual, conscious, authentic existence is social activity and social satisfaction. As human nature is the true communal nature, or communal being of man, men through the activation of their nature create and produce a human communal being, a social being which is no abstractly universal power opposed to the single individual, but is the nature of being of every single individual, his own activity, his own life, his own spirit, his own wealth.” c6

15

“The new proletariat inherits the riches of the bourgeois world and it gives it its historical chance. Its task is to transform and destroy these riches, to constitute them as part of a human project: the total appropriation of nature and human nature by man. A realized human nature can only mean the infinite multiplication of real desires and their gratification.” c7

16

The resonance of egoisms has to be looked at from the point of view of wealth (greed): developed individuals make a richer community, and a richer community makes for richer individualities. Beyond a certain stage of the development of productive forces, “collectivism the suppression of individuality” is a forfeiture of wealth for the community, just as ‘individualism = the suppression of community’ is a forfeiture of wealth for the individualist.

17

The impoverished man typical of capitalist society, the so-called “greedy” man, is the man who is only excited by money, who is only interested in fragments of other people — in buying their

skills, their services, their products, and the rest is “none of his business.” He lives in a world of prostitutes, that is, a world of proletarians. He is the master of the partial appropriation of man by man, that is, of exploitation.ⁿ¹

The rich man, the greedy man of communist society, is the man who has discovered how to appropriate the richest “thing” around, the most interesting and valuable object, the subject, beginning with the appropriation of himself as such; the man who has socially mastered the possibility together with the necessary conditions of this total appropriation of man by man, the coherence of whose social life is the self-need of man. This is the secret of what we mean when we say: the negation of capital is the realization of real wealth, subjectively and objectively.

The communist egoist, the genuinely greedy person, wants other subjects. The narrow egoist, the exploiter, only wants something from them.

18

A society rich in selves is the only really rich society. Richness in subjects, in subjectivity, in practically and creatively potent human beings, is finally the only real wealth for the subject.

19

Ultimately, wealth is nothing but society itself.

20

The logic of exchange-value, of commodity exchange-relations, is the very logic of narrow egoism itself.

In the exchange of a commodity which I own, for money owned by somebody else, I have parted with, alienated, the use value of the commodity. It is lost to me, in order that I may realize its exchange-value, its money form, its general use-value, that is, its expression in the form of general social usefulness or abstract labour-time, which I can then reconvert into any particular use-value to the extent that its production has, by my stage of capitalist development, assumed the form of commodity-production. Its general usefulness — its usefulness as money, as exchange-value — is here in direct contradiction to its particular usefulness, its specific use-value.

The logic of exchange-relations in communist society, according to the inner coherence of its concept, is quite the contrary however. The use-values in whose production I participate, and in whose consumption you and I both participate, are not lost to me except if I consume them immediately, i.e., your consumption of them is not a loss for me. They are social use values, and society is my larger self, my necessary self, absolutely necessary to my production and reproduction. (Even if I should take up the life of an isolated hermit, and somehow survive at it, my changed self-activity would shortly render me a different person). Their use-value, consumed directly by others returns to me in the form of the maintained or improved creative capacity of those others in social production; in the form of the repositied or increased production of the class of human beings upon whom my reproduction depends — the single class — or rather, the single global non-class of associated producers, who produce the totality of the wealth I consume; pre-requisites to my production of my self. Thus, no social use-value is alienated from me. Rather, all

of it stays within my (expanded) self, accumulates there, and goes to enhance the total quality of my life.

Therefore, also, within the global production-planning process of the councils, I have a legitimate beef whenever asked to participate in some production which does not satisfy this logic. Any production which does not satisfy this logic is truly socially destructive, antisocial, and an anti-use-value (anti-wealth). It is therefore, at very best, a waste of my time, that is, of my life. Anything that is not worthy to be preserved will have to be destroyed.

21

“The independent, material form of wealth disappears and wealth is shown to be simply the activity of men. Everything which is not the result of human activity, of labour, is nature and, as such, is not social wealth. The phantom of the world of goods fades away and it is seen to be simply a continually disappearing and continually reproduced objectivization of human labour. All solid material wealth is only the transitory materialization of social labour, crystallization of the production process whose measure is time, the measure of a movement itself.” c8

22

In the last analysis, all you have to give is yourself. Your self is your only gift. If you don't possess yourself — i.e., if you let yourself be forced to sell yourself — you have nothing to bestow upon another individual, another self. In the realized society called communist society, exchange must become visibly and fully what it always was essentially, self exchange.

II. Individualism and Collectivism

23

“To be avoided above all is establishing ‘society’ once again as an abstraction over against the individual. The individual is the social being.” n1 The expression of his life — even if it does not appear immediately in the form of communal expression carried out together with others — is therefore a manifestation and affirmation of social life. The individual and generic life of man are not distinct, however much — and necessarily so — the mode of existence of individual life is either a more particular or a more general mode of generic or generic life a more particular or universal mode of individual life.

“...Though man is therefore a unique individual — and precisely this particularity makes him an individual, a really individual communal being — he is equally the totality, the ideal totality, the subjective existence of society as thought and experienced.” c9

24

“Altruism is the other side of the coin of ‘hell-is-other people’; only this time mystification appears under a positive sign. Let’s put an end to this old soldier crap once and for all! For others to interest me I must find in myself the energy for such an interest. What binds me to others must grow out of what binds me to the most exuberant and demanding part of my will (volonte) to live; not the other way around. It is always myself that I am looking for in other people; my enrichment; my realization. Let everyone understand this and ‘each for himself’ taken to its ultimate conclusion will be transformed into ‘all for each.’ The freedom of one will be the freedom of all. A community which is not built on the demands of individuals and their dialectic can only reinforce the oppressive violence of Power. The Other in whom I do not find myself is nothing but a thing, and altruism leads me to the love of things, to the love of my isolation... For myself, I recognize no equality except that which my will to live according to my desires recognizes in the will to live of others. Revolutionary equality will be indivisibly individual and collective.” c10

25

“Let us notice first of all that the so-called rights of man... are simply the rights of a member of civil society, that is, of egoistic man, of man separated from other men and from the community... Liberty is, therefore, the right to do everything which does

not harm others. The limits within which each individual can act without harming others are determined by law, just as a boundary between two fields is marked by a stake. It is a question of liberty of man regarded as an isolated monad, withdrawn into himself... Liberty as a right of man is not founded upon the relations between man and man, but rather upon the separation of man from man. It is the right of such separation. n1 The right of the circumscribed individual, withdrawn into himself... It leads every man to see in other men, not the realization, but rather the limitation of his own liberty.” n2, c11

26

“Too many corpses strew the path of individualism and collectivism. Under two apparently contrary rationalities has raged an identical gangsterism, an identical oppression of the isolated man.” c12

27

Is it necessary once again to point out the self-absurdity of the one-sided abstractions “the individual” and “society,” and of the ideologies founded on this one-sidedness — “individualism” (or “egoism”) and so-called “socialism” (or “collectivism”)?

We can be individuals only socially.

We can be social only individually.

Individuals constitute society.

Society constitutes individuals.

28

Dig deeply enough into the individual and you will find society. Dig deeply enough into society and you will find the individual. Dig deeply enough into either and you will come out the “other” side. The concept named “the individual,” fully grasped, is the same as the concept named “society.” The concept named “society,” fully grasped, is also “the individual.” One is impossible, does not exist, without the other. At the heart of society is its “opposite,” the individual. At the center of the individual is his “antithesis,” society. We must speak of the social individual. Both of the abstract universals, “society” and “the individual” find their concrete universal in the social individual.

29

Society, without the individual, is empty, is without its existence, just as the individual, without society, is without its existence — and even outside human society, is not a human individual (even if it should chance to survive as a biological individual. However, even as such, it is the issue of a human social — in this case, sexual — relationship). Unless both these moments can be affirmed simultaneously, univocally; grasped as a single, unitary concept — in fact as a concep-

tual singularity — their contradiction having been transcended (to begin with, in thought), then neither “the individual” nor “society” has been understood.

30

Self-production can only be social; society is self-production, that is, society is the only possible means-of-production of selves. You cannot ever talk about the “self” without identically implicating or talking about “society.” The “self” exists only in association with other selves, i.e. in and as an association of selves, a society. It is no accident that the Latin root of ‘consciousness’ — conscientia — means literally “together-knowledge”; “to know together.” c13 Subjectivity is essentially intersubjective, that is, essentially social.

31

Your “individuality” is already a “social structure,” and has been so from its very inception (including, from its very conception).

32

Individuals are produced only by society. Society is produced only by individuals.

33

Society can be realized only egoistically, just as the ego can be arrived at, can be realized, and is possible at all only socially.

34

The self is pre-eminently and essentially social; society is pre-eminently and essentially selfish.

35

If the philosophers of one-sided individualism, of narrow egoism — that is, of the axiology of the self — want to understand Marx’s socialism, they should reflect on his statement to the effect that the other is a necessary part of your self. c14

36

The principle “I want nothing other than myself” — the principle of self-desire, self-attachment (self-cathexis, or self-centration) — becomes the principle of daily life in communist society once it is socially actualized that the other is a necessary part of my self. c15 Society becomes an object of cathexis without this any longer necessitating projection-identification — i.e., the alienation

of cathexis from the self — once the social nature of the self, and the “self nature” of society has become a palpable and transparent truth of experience.

37

State-capital, in subsuming private capital, negates or represses private capital. The ideology of anti-individualism — that is, of collectivism or one-sided socialism — so essential to Maoism in particular and to revolutionary ideology in general is congruent precisely with the project of the repression of private capitalism and private accumulation, together with the characterological tendencies corresponding to these, on the part of bureaucratic capitalism (state-capitalism). This policy of repression, typified by the Maoist slogan “smash self”, also has the effect of inhibiting the emergence of communist egoism within the home proletariat; a form of egoism which the bureaucracy confounds, consciously or unconsciously, with bourgeois egoism.

38

Even privatism itself is a social expression (see Thesis 23); an expression of social life in a definite historical form of society. That is, privatism is itself an expression of the social individual produced by contemporary society. People who do not think dialectically end up making enormous errors here, practically as well as theoretically, because they can not grasp contemporary as itself a social truth, an (admittedly self-reproducing) subjectification (i.e., internalization), of capitalist society, which is precisely an antisocial society. So much so that ‘the socialization of society’ is, where capitalist society is concerned, but another name for the project of social revolution itself.

The ideologies of anti-socialism are based on the misery of association (collective boredom, inauthentic association, etc.) under contemporary conditions, that is, on the misery of association-as-alienation and as-estrangement. They are expressions of the poverty of social life — its virtual nonexistence as such — in the world of strangers, the bellum omnium contra omnes, which is capitalist society.

39

The leftist, trapped in the permanent false choice between following his own immediate desires and sacrificing for his ideals, despises the “selfish” person who unhesitatingly chooses immediate, private satisfaction. The genuine communist also despises this latter type, but for the opposite reason: being restricted to immediate private satisfaction is not satisfying enough. To the communist, furthermore, for such “selfish” people to remain satisfied with their privatized, alienated lives is a direct barrier to the realization of the communist’s own expanded self-interest. Somewhere in every rank and file leftist lurks a confused intuition that this is the real reason for his contempt: but this intuition is continually stifled by the leftist’s own insistence on the “necessity” of sacrifice.

40

The lonely individualism of Ayn Rand c16, et. al., is only alienation accepted and alienation perfected.

Communist individualism or individualist communism is the name for the solution to the riddle of pre-history, which, while it has momentarily, at times and places in this century, existed, as yet knows not its own name.

41

Any “collectivism” on our part is an individualist collectivism. Any “individualism” on our part is a collectivist individualism.

42

“Nothing is more to me than myself.” c17

Fine. As it stands, this theorem is wholly acceptable. This is a classic statement of the egoistic postulate by the classic exponent of individualist anarchism and narrow egoism, and an early antagonist of Marx, Max Stirner. His latter-day followers, conscious and unconscious, include the “Objectivists,” the “classical liberals”, and the so-called “libertarian right” in general. The problem is that, in the further elaboration of his own book, Stirner’s own understanding of his own statement proved to be unequal to it. Stirner proved to be insensitive to what the concept of “self” — in order to be adequate to reality — must entail; what must be its content, if it is expanded (i.e., developed) beyond the level of its self-contradiction — namely all of the other selves which intermutually “constitute” or produce it; in short, society. This error in general must be attributed to undeveloped concrete self-knowledge; Stirner did not know himself, his own true identity. He did not know himself as society, or society as his real self.

43

If the validity of the egoistic moment has not been understood, then nothing has been understood. For each social individual, when his life is at stake, everything is at stake. If I allow myself to be sacrificed, then I have allowed the whole world — all possible values — to be sacrificed as far as I am concerned. If I am lost, then all the world is lost to me. Each time a person dies, a world dies.

44

The community of egoists is the only possible community not founded on the repression of individual development and thus ultimately of collective development as well.

45

“Communist egoism” names the synthesis of individualism and collectivism, just as communist society names the actual, material, sensuous solution to the historical contradiction of the “particular” and the “general” interest, a contradiction engendered especially in the cleavage of society against itself into classes. This “solution” cannot be of the form of a mere idea or abstraction, but only of a concrete form of society.

46

The global and exclusive power of workers’ councils, of the anti-state n1, of the associated producers n2, or “generalized self-management” a1 that is, concerted egoism, is the productive force and the social relation of production which can supersede all the results of the uncoordinated egoistic activity of men. These are, in their totality, alienation; the unconscious development of the economy, and the unconscious production by the proletariat of the economic “laws” of capitalism, with all their disastrous consequences for the proletariat. The theory of communist egoism is complete only as a theory of revolutionary organization and as a theory of revolutionary practice in general; as a theory of the new social relations and as a theory of the practice of the councils. That is, it is adequate only as a theory of communist society and as a theory of the transition from (state) capitalist to communist society. Obviously then, these theses have still a long way to go toward the concrete.

47

The essence of communism is egoism; the essence of egoism is communism. This is the world-changing secret which the world at large still keeps from itself. The unraveling of this secret as the emergence of radical subjectivity is nothing other than the process of the formation of communist society itself. It already contains the objective process.

48

“But man is only individualized through the process of history. He originally appears as a generic being, a tribal being, a herd animal — though by no means a “political animal” in the political sense. Exchange itself is a major agent of this individualization.”
c26

49

Thus, in a sense, all history has (in the long run and if only implicitly) been a process of individualization. This individualization reaches its highest point of advertisement in the epoch of corporate capitalism. But private property’s “individualism” is naught but its most cherished illusion. The predominant characteristic of private property is a materialized reification where the egoism of its subjects (capitalists and workers alike) is suppressed and subordinated to the

pseudo-subjectivity of the “economy for itself.” n1 The truth of the capitalist society and its private property is not individual property, but dispossession — viz., the proletariat. The truth of private property is nothing other than the production, reproduction, and growth of a dispossessed and propertyless class, i.e., the class of wage-labour. Private property is thus the very negation of individualism and of individual property. For the overwhelming majority of its subjects, i.e. the proletariat, private property is by no means individual property, but rather it is loss (i.e. sale — alienation) of self, being-for-another. Even the capitalists are at best mere agents of capital — managers of their own (and of the general) dispossession. The mythical “individualism” of capitalist society can only be realized in its own negation and in the negation of the society from which it sprang. Thus the Paris Commune of 1871, the first realized “Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” n2, c27 attempted to abolish private property in order “to make individual property a truth.” c28 “The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labor of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of the law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of the negation. This does not reestablish private property for the producer, but gives him individual property [!] based on the acquisitions of the capitalist era: i.e., on cooperation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production.” c29 The revolution of generalized self-management is the movement from narrow to full egoism, egoism’s own self-enrichment. It is egoism’s ascent from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom.

III. The Dialectic of Egoism

50

The concept of communist society can be arrived at, by one pathway, through the analysis and development of the self-contradiction of egoism, of the self-contradictory structure of the egoistic project. Communist society itself, and the self-transcendence of the narrow egoism of privatized man, can only be the outcome of the immanent and historical dialectic of egoism itself.

51

The egoistic project, in order to become adequate to itself, must include more than one ego.

52

Communist egoism, likewise communist society, is only the final conclusion of the immanent critique, the self-critique — of bourgeois egoism, of privatized life.

53

“Communism is simply incomprehensible to our saint because the communists do not put egoism against self-sacrifice or self-sacrifice against egoism nor do they express this contradiction theoretically either in its sentimental or in its high-flown ideological form; on the contrary, they demonstrate the material basis engendering it, with which it disappears of itself. The communists do not preach morality at all, such as Stirner preaches so extensively. They do not put to the people the moral demand: love one another, do not be egoists, etc.; on the contrary, they are well aware that egoism, just as much as self-sacrifice, is in definite circumstances a necessary form of the self-assertion of individuals. Hence, the communists by no means want, as Saint Max believes, and as his loyal Dottore Graziano (Arnold Ruge) repeats after him..., to do away with the “private individual” for the sake of the “general,” self-sacrificing man... Communist theoreticians, the only ones who have time to devote to the study of history, are distinguished precisely because they alone have discovered that throughout history the “general interest” is created by individuals who are defined as “private persons.” They know that this contradiction is only a seeming one because one side of it, the so-called “general,” is constantly being produced by the other side, private interest, and by no means opposes the latter as an independent force with an independent history — so that this contradiction is in practice always being destroyed and reproduced. Hence it is not a question of the Hegelian

“negative unity” of two sides of a contradiction, but of the materially determined destruction of the preceding materially determined mode of life of individuals, with the disappearance of which this contradiction, together with its unity, also disappear.”
c30

54

The suppression of private egoism follows the same course as private egoism c31. The path out of narrow egoism is the straight and narrow path of this egoism itself. c32 (But, as Einstein argued with respect to physical time-space, what is straight and narrow from the narrow viewpoint of the immanent observer may be anything but straight to a larger view — highly curvaceous, in fact; even curved back on itself). The abstract negation of egoism — repression — will not suffice, but only its determinate negation, and its immanent negation — that is, auto-negation.

55

The development of egoism — the historical phenomenology of subjectivity — is a dialectic also in this sense: the way out of narrow egoism passes through narrow egoism itself. And all attempts to block this way tend only to inhibit the development and arrest it at this narrow stage.

56

Private egoism is egoism in conflict with its own essence. (But this becomes true visibly, and therefore fully, once, and only once, the conditions necessitating narrow appropriation — often lumped sloppily under the confusionist category “scarcity” — are gone and the conditions for a fuller, wider appropriation have matured. Specifically, this means the conditions for the appropriation of other people as subjects (mutuality) as opposed to merely as objects (exploitation). Thus, for example, the present “recession,” the growth of poverty and desperation which it entails, has been at first a major setback in this regard, and has drastically curtailed the daily experiential base which for a while — at the peak of the “prosperity” of the sixties — made this critique feel true.).

57

What we tend not to be immediately aware of is that the prevailing narrow and impoverishing form of egoism, of self-gratification, is one deeply mixed with its opposite; with the renunciation of self-gratification; that the “greed” we normally experience is a greed radically admixed with its own negation, with the embittered renunciation of greed, basing itself as it must on the narrow conditions of self-enjoyment presently available and especially formerly available to it, under conditions of extreme deprivation and toil. Specifically, the form of self-enjoyment which is excluded, the secret self-denial hiding at the heart of privatized egoism, is the denial of all the social pleasures, the communal pleasures of spontaneous gregariousness, the warmth of human solidarity, the exuberance of authentic festivity — the pleasures of association and social satisfaction in

general. The vestiges of these are confined within the ever-narrowing circle of the private family, itself the nuclear remnant, adapted by capital, of the bygone primitive-communist kinship societies and their “extended families”, which publicizes its final self-critique in the burgeoning rates of divorce, divorce being recognized as and officially titled “estrangement.” This especially in the “advanced” capitalist countries — that is, the countries which have reached the advanced stages of social alienation.

The lag in appropriation of the newer conditions of “non-scarcity,” of potential and (to some extent already) actual abundance, is the context in which the present historical stage of the ‘dialectic of egoism’ must be understood. The positive moment of the early “hip” movement (of which moment today’s professional street vermin and gutter hippies are in no sense the heirs) — the whole libidinal emergence which began in the sixties, and now, in the recession of the seventies, is eclipsed again is comprehensible in part as a beginning of the appropriation of those new conditions.n1

58

The root illusion of all pious and ascetic ideologies is that, since exploitation is the partial appropriation of man by man, the way to rid the world of this “sin” is in instituting the non-appropriation of man by man, rather than the total appropriation: that the way to the negation (“quieting”) of desire is its repression rather than its fulfillment: touch me not and I will touch not thee. The logic of privation.

The problem of the misery of narrow egoism admits of only two solutions: either (1) its exaggeration to the point where it overflows its own limits; its expansion until it becomes one with the totality, rediscovering precisely within itself its supposed opposite and that which it formerly excluded, or (2) its repression, and with that evidentially, the unending reign of the present form, which is all that its historical repression has so far succeeded in producing.

59

Communism is not the self-repression of egoism. It is only when narrow egoism wants to transcend itself for its own deepest reasons: when it finds internal reasons, egoistic reasons; when it sees itself becoming its own ruin, defeating to itself, self-defeating, and — therefore, self-contradictory — that it brings itself to its own end, and communism begins. Private egoism historically is its own undoing. Its exercise brings about its own socialization — social egoism. Communism is the negation of egoism only by virtue of being a higher form of egoism — egoism’s own higher form. Narrow egoism, the ideology of self-gratification and self-realization, and the practice of exclusive self-gratification and self-realization becomes, at a certain stage in its development, a fetter upon self-realization and a fetter upon selfgratification. It becomes the main limit and obstacle to its own goals. It becomes a barrier to itself. This is the self-negativity which awakens in it the desire for its own transcendence: for self-transcendence, a supersession in accord with itself, with its own essence, and on its own terms, basing itself on the possibility of the community of gratification as the unlimited amplification of gratification. This is the immanent self-critique of narrow egoism; the death sentence which it pronounces upon itself. Thus the determinate negation of narrow egoism can only be through its own organic development,

its own further development. That is, it can only be self-negation. “Happiness” at the expense of others; the exclusion of the others’ happiness from your own henceforth appears as a miserable basis; as the opposite of happiness, as misery, and private property as a wealth of poverty, compared to the new basis which has grown up secretly with modern society itself.

Communism is the comprehension of exclusive egoism as historically self-contradictory and thus finite: doomed to perish — as not eternal “human nature” but, on the contrary, self-canceling; transitory; transitional; as the decidedly unnatural (antisocial) condition of man prior to the historical self-completion of the human species. Communism is the comprehension of bourgeois egoism as already containing and implying its own historical negation, as containing its own negation in embryo — containing the seeds of its own destruction — by virtue of its being false to itself. Society, “socialism” — and social production — was its repressed essence all along.

60

All along the line, consciously or not, “me first” has always been the necessary pattern of everyone’s practice. Everyone at every moment of their lives consciously or not acts in his own self-interest at some level. Anything else would be inconceivable, impossible. Unable to pursue his desires directly, a masochist uses the mediation of pain. The masochists of morality, ideology and causes seek pleasure by means of the pain of subordinating themselves through these projections.

The moral idealist attempts to get what he wants through the mediation of his projected ideal, because he doesn’t know how to get what he wants directly. He doesn’t know the practical means within himself as the subject and center of that practice, so he posits his center outside of himself as a rigidified generalization which is to “decide for him.” In so doing he makes the mistake of thinking that consistency with his ideal is always consistency with his self-interest.

61

“Communist egoism” names the negation of the negation of primitive egoism (narrow egoism). But the aspect of the process as an immanent or self-critique, and never an external or mechanical negation (e.g. the “smash self” ideology of Maoism) must above all be emphasized, against all coercive and bureaucratic methods. Social(ized) egoism, communist egoism, is the negation of the negation of capitalist egoism, but it is the self-negation of the self-negation of that egoism. This second negation is essential to narrow egoism itself, no less than the first negation, which produces its antithesis — moralism, anti-egoism; altruism. This second negation is necessary to narrow egoism, to the preservation of its own premises, once it advances to a certain threshold in its self-development. The proper method to catalyze — to stimulate and accelerate — this process is another, i.e., from the ‘outside’, is the evocative method; the method of seduction. The method of rebuke, though useful at certain crucial turns here too, is, especially in the form of the method of chastisement, more adequate to the first, not the second, negation of narrow egoism. The method of chastisement is that of forcibly drawing out moral projections from the psyche, of creating “handles” in the victim’s head for easy manipulation (“handling”) by authorities and ideologues of all sorts; of instilling submissiveness, of inducing the split in the victim between the sense of duty and the sense of inclination; of forming the guilt-loop of alienated self-control.

The second negation means, on the contrary, the negation of altruism, the overcoming of all these separations; the collapse of the projections back into the psyche; their re-owning in the coalescence of the self: the centration, instead of the alienation, of self-control. This is the very formation of the “self” capable of “self” management.

62

Don't get us wrong. Make no mistake. This theory is no apologia for narrow egoism. We have no interest in that negation of altruism which is simply a return to narrow egoism; a regression. Communist egoism, and not altruism, is the true opposite of narrow egoism. Communist egoism, and not narrow egoism, is the true opposite of altruism. Although altruism and narrow egoism are commonly taken as true opposites, they have this in common: an immanent critique of either must arrive at communist egoism. That is, communist egoism is the synthesis of altruism and narrow egoism. Communist egoism is simultaneously, identically both of them and neither; it is that unitary rejection of both which is also their unitary affirmation. n1

IV. The Resonance of Egoisms

63

“In place of the old bourgeois society with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” c33

64

“In the laboratories of individual creativity, a revolutionary alchemy transmutes the basest metals of everyday life into gold. First and foremost, the problem is to dissolve the consciousness of constraints — that is, the feeling of impotence — in the magnetic exercise of creativity; melt them in the surge of creative power, in the serene affirmation of its genius. Megalomania, sterile on the level of prestige and the spectacle, represents in this context an important stage in the struggle opposing the ego to the coalesced forces of conditioning.

“Today, nihilism reigns triumphant, and in its night the spark of creativity, which is the spark of all real life, shines only the more brightly. And while the project of a superior organization of survival proves abortive, there is, as these sparks become more frequent and gradually dissolve into a single light, the promise of a new organization, based this time on a harmony of individual wills. Historic becoming has taken us to the crossing point where radical subjectivity is confronted with the possibility of transforming the world. This privileged moment is the reversal of perspective “. c34

65

Communist society is conceivable only on the foundation of the resonance of egoisms. Thus its basis is the cohesion of egoisms, whereas heretofore egoism has appeared as the force of separation and privatization par excellence.

66

The essence of the resonance of egoisms is this: the other person is a part of your wealth. c35

67

The resonance of egoisms is the unity, the synthesis, the singularity, of the “particular” and the “general” interest: communist society.

68

The cohesion of communist society, once the threshold of its conditions-proper has been reached, is conceivable on this basis: that the community, society, association itself is the greatest personal value that the social individuals each possess. That is, their social relationships are this greatest value and this greatest wealth. The social relation itself becomes the unitary, unified, and universal means to the attainment of every end; to the gratification of every need, and thus also an end in itself. Society holds together to the extent that the social individuals find a greater value in its reproduction than in any act that would destroy it.

V. Communist Society

69

“... in place of the wealth and poverty of political economy, we have the wealthy man and the plenitude of human need. The wealthy man is at the same time the one who needs a complex of human manifestations of life, and whose own self-realization exists as an inner necessity, a need. Not only the wealth but also the poverty of man acquires, in a socialist perspective, a human and thus a social meaning. Poverty is the passive bond which leads man to experience a need for the greatest wealth, the other person. The sway of the objective entity within me, the sensuous eruption of my life-activity, is the passion which here becomes the activity of my being.” c36

70

“Authentic common life arises not through reflection; rather it comes about from the need and egoism of individuals, that is, immediately from the activation of their very existence. It is not up to man whether this common life exists or not. However, so long as man does not recognize himself as man and does not organize the world humanly, this common life appears in the form of alienation, because its subject, man, is a being alienated from itself.” c37

71

We anticipate a profound reversal of perspective at the threshold of communal society, in which any possible strictly privatized value will pale into insignificance, and be experienced as narrow and impoverished, in comparison to the individual, personal, “private” value to each social individual of his social existence. And this attitude would be then, under those conditions, no mere idealistic posture or pious wish, no mere moral abstraction, no representation over and above the real conditions — which is all it can ever be today — but, on the contrary, would arise from the most immediate, palpable, and concrete facts of life. Increasingly up to the present, since the breakup of early communal forms, all wealth has been private, that is, only private property has been recognized as wealth. In the future, if there is a future, the narrow and the privatized will be revealed as the essence of poverty, and wealth will be realized as social wealth, as wealth in human beings; in their relations and their capacities, in their faculties and their objectifications. n1 That is, the greatest wealth, and the necessary context of all wealth, is society itself.

72

The central problem of communist social relations is the following: what is to be the basis of human relationships, of the interpersonal cohesion, beyond kinship and exchangevalue, that is, beyond the blood-relations which formed the incredible binding-force, and great weakness, of primitive communist societies, and the exchange-value relations into which these increasingly dissolved in the formation of class societies?

The solution can only be of the form of real affinity, practically, sensuously discovered and verified, practically superseded and dissolved; free association; the resonance of passions. But within this statement of the solution, everything still remains to be said.

73

Let's get one thing straight right now. All this talk of "historical necessity" and "inevitability" only succeeds in making of this mystic "necessity" a pseudo-subject, and of decoying attention from the real subjects, ourselves. Communist society is "historically determined" and "objectively determined" to be produced only to the extent that we are subjectively "bound and determined" to produce it. And this does not deny at all that such a subjectivity has its necessary objective conditions that can only develop historically.

VI. Radical Subjectivity

74

What is this “radical subjectivity”? c38 From now on, the revolutionary subject is the conscious — and positively self-conscious — egoist, as opposed to the unconscious or negatively self-conscious (guilty) egoists among whom the revolutionary walks unrecognized but recognizing them. He can sustain this positive attitude toward his expanded egoism, and its first signs in others, by virtue of his comprehension of its positive social outcome in a society, separated from this one by the socio-psychotherapeutic process of revolution, in which the egoism of each is the first condition for the fulfillment of the egoism of all.

75

Contrary to the ideological banality, it is only the most greedy people who can never be “bought off.” a1

76

What we have called “communist egoism” is essentially the same as what Vaneigem and his Situationists have named “radical subjectivity.” In all their writings, it is there in “spirit,” if not ever fully in “letter.” In their failure to develop this concept in all its ramifications, and to cohere their whole practice with it, and in the remnants of moralism and secular Christianity n1 which therein still remained, we locate the very root of their failure.

77

Radical subjectivity, that is, communist egoism or the (realized) “social individual” c39 (Marx) is the concrete universal which is emergent in our time. It is the particular which is (potentially) everywhere. Radical subjectivity is our very root, the root of what we all have in common, the real basis of community. Root subjectivity — the “primitive” human root — could only be divulged as such at the far end of prehistory, as the outcome of the process of that prehistory itself, and as the secret basis of its supersession.

78

“I am nothing, but I must be everything.” c40

Within this monstrous decrepitude of contemporary “society”, the nihilist, its commonplace product, knows only the first half of this statement. I am nothing. Therefore, anything else can only be less than nothing to me. In the upside-down world of alienation, it is the totality of things, of commodities, of money, of capital, that is everything, and we, the workers who make it, are shit. The nihilist is like a syllogism suspended at the minor premise, an acrobat whose somersault is broken in mid-flight. For him, the logic of this empirical truth, this truth of experience, of daily life, does not immediately tumble over into its opposite, its necessary conclusion: I am nothing, but I must be everything! – the conclusion that would make a revolutionary of him.

We produce commodities, money, capital. We produce everything that makes up social wealth. We must become explicitly what we already are implicitly: everything! This becoming-visible, this becoming-true of the social truth expresses the total process of the communist revolution.

VII. Pleasure

79

Bourgeois political economy, the science of the exchange-value, was always only the false consciousness of the economy, and the science of alienation. n1 This is the first and final message of its Marxian critique. With the dying-out of exchange-value, the science of use-value (thus all the concrete sciences, now unified through their unified subjective use) will become the only useful science. And the science of use-value is the science of pleasure.

80

“Real economy – savings – consists in the saving of working time (the minimum, and reduction to the minimum, of production costs); but this saving is identical with the development of productivity. Economizing, therefore, does not mean the giving up of pleasure, but the development of power and productive capacity, and thus both the capacity for and means of enjoyment. The capacity for enjoyment is a condition of enjoyment and therefore its primary means; and this capacity is the development of an individual’s talents, and thus of the productive force. To economize on labour time means to increase the amount of the free time, i.e. time for the complete development of the individual, which again reacts as the greatest productive force on the productive force of labour. From the standpoint of the immediate production process it may be considered as production of fixed capital; this fixed capital being man himself. It is also self-evident that the immediate labour time cannot remain in its abstract contradiction to free time as in bourgeois economy. Work cannot become a game a1 as Fourier would like it to be; his great merit was that he declared that the ultimate object must be to raise to a higher level not distribution but the mode of production. Free time – which includes leisure time as well as time for higher activities – naturally transforms anyone who enjoys it into a different person, and it is this different person who then enters the direct process of production. The man who is being formed finds discipline in this process, while for the man who is already formed it is practice, experimental science, materially creative and self-objectifying knowledge, and he contains within his own head the accumulated wisdom of society.”
c41

81

The major shortcoming of contemporary individuals is their incapacity for pleasure. Our daily lives are impoverished in part because we are open to the world, and therefore to pleasure (as

well as to pain) only in such narrow and limited ways. These are the defenses, the character-armor, congruent with a world overloaded with pain, a world of suffering, which was and is the world of poverty with its struggle for existence, its “war of all against all,” where to be open is to be weak, and to be weak is to be made a victim. The self-contradiction of bourgeois egoism sharpens and becomes conscious only in the environment of that incipient world of plenty and world of pleasure which bourgeois society, during the prosperity phase of its economic cycle, itself foreshadows; that is, only when the walls which lock out pain begin to be perceived in daily experience as walls which lock out pleasure. The struggle against the social organization for pain and for the social organization for pleasure is the revolutionary struggle.

The problem, formulated another way, is the present narrow character of “the appropriation of nature and human nature by man.” c42

82

In the revolutionary process, the struggle is the struggle of pleasure; the pleasure is the pleasure of struggle.

83

Today, people oppress each other by the smallness of their desire; their poverty of social needs; their lack of a fuller egoism, a fuller greed. We are asking people to ask for more, so that we can ask for more, and get more from them — get what we can only get by being allowed to give more.

We do not ask you for much: we ask from you only your own egoism, and we do so not out of altruism, but for our own egoistic reasons. From the depths of our own, we ask you for the depths of yours. But in asking you for that, we ask you to give everything you’ve got; to give your all.

84

“Positive human self-consciousness” c43 can only be guiltless egoism, which can only mean communist egoism, the egoism which does not exclude the pleasure of other egos, but on the contrary, appropriates this as its own pleasure, includes it precisely for its own selfish reasons.

85

The negatively self-conscious egoist is the guilty egoist, the egoist who strives after his own narrow desires guiltily, and thus works against himself; resists himself — opposes a part of his own energy to his own project.

It is the energy presently tied-up in guilt, in self-policing, in self-repression — character-armor — which, once freed can build the new world.

People seeking, in good conscience and without guilt, more pleasure for their own everyday lives, contain the whole of the revolution.

86

Self-sacrifice is always Christian. Always.

87

The 'expansion of egoism' refers not only to the expansion (of self-identity) over many selves at any one time, but also to its expansion over time "at" any one self. The sacrifice of a future, greater pleasure to a more immediate but lesser one is precisely that: sacrifice; not the other way around. The responsible individual must decide for himself what is to his greatest advantage: this theory is no morality that can decide for him. The theory and practice of expanded egoism can have no consort with any ideology of hedonism, any more than with any brand of puritanism. This theory and practice is inseparable from the expanded consciousness of pleasure whose possibility has developed in the historical labourprocess, in the expansion of human capacities, selfpowers, and needs. And it is inseparable no less from that pleasure of consciousness which it implies and contains and which simultaneously contains it. Self-discipline, as directly opposed to authoritarian discipline, externally imposed and internalized as such — the coherent use of my life for myself, according to my own immanent standards and to ends of my own, is in itself already a pleasure for me. Self-mastery, the conscious and effective wielding of myself for myself in the world, is indeed an esthetic self-pleasure. It is the art of life. a1

When my self is the work of my own art, and my own work of art, then I take pleasure in myself.

Then I know myself as wealth — for myself as well as for others. I know myself as rich, as rich in myself, as a wealthy man through my self-possession. And yet this subjective wealth, this richness in self which I possess is also society. This is proven by the fact that outside society, or without it, all my wealth would wither into dust. The identity of myself and my society is proven by the fact that the nonexistence of society implies the non-existence of myself. But this is a dialectical, mediated identity, not a formal, abstract, immediate one; an identity that preserves within itself the moment of differentiation.

VIII. Sexuality

88

“The immediate, natural, and necessary relation of human being to human being is also the relation of male-to-female. n1 In this natural species relationship man’s relation to nature is directly his relation to man, and his relation to man is directly his relation to nature, to his own natural function. Thus, in this relation is sensuously revealed, reduced to an observable fact, the extent to which human nature has become nature for man and to which nature has become human nature for him. From this relationship man’s whole level of development can be assessed. It follows from the character of this relationship how far man has become, and has understood himself as, a species-being, a human being. The relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human being to human being. It indicates, therefore, how far man’s natural behavior has become human, and how far his human essence has become a natural essence for him, how far his human nature has become nature for him. It also shows how far man’s needs have become human needs, and consequently how far the other person, as a person, has become one of his needs, and to what extent he is in his individual existence at the same time a social being.” c44

89

Orgastically potent n1 sexual experience is the very archetype of the resonance of egoisms: the immediate unity of pleasure-getting and pleasure-giving.

90

I don’t just want a fuller sex life; I want my whole life to be a “sex-life”!

91

The sociality of man reveals itself nowhere more strongly than in sexual sociability and sexual solidarity. The sexual need, more profoundly and more immediately than any other, reveals the fallacy of narrow egoism — the need to touch another person, another’s body; to be physically close, to caress and be caressed. Perhaps it is out of the desire, congruent with narrow egoism, to deny the inter-subjectivity of this most profoundly intersubjective of needs, that so many perversions begin; in order to objectify a1 the subject who is the aim of this need.

But here also is a threshold, and an “attractor” n1 where the expansion of egoism can stop, can get hung-up for epochs: a collective egoism that never grows bigger than the couple, the

collective of two; the isolated duo, the nuclear family. We have here the ideology which holds that the egoistic project could become adequate to itself if only it included two egos. This is but another form of the ideology of antisocialism; the ideology that seeks to deny the social ingredient in the individual, the self, the personal world, and ends up by denying and depleting the self as well; ends up with an emptied self. According to this ideology, only the personal, intimate, family world, the private world of the home, is real. The strange, crazy, cold “outside” world — the social world — is held to be unreal, though it must be related to, if only to support this narrow “real” world. This ideology knows society only as an invasion of privacy. This is the ideology that will keep the personal world narrow and impoverished, and the social world menacing and alien. Will we get beyond it? Do we want to? Need to? Only time will tell. Capitalist anti-socialism is now rapidly reaching its logical conclusion: the destruction of society. Over this question, all of our lives are at stake.

92

Freud even bases his case for instinctual repression on the postulate of such an eternal condition as described above (with the help of a few of his typical reified n1 false antitheses). “The conflict between civilization and sexuality is caused by the circumstance that sexual love is a relationship between two people, in which a third can only be superfluous or disturbing, whereas civilization is founded on relations between larger groups of persons. When a love relationship is at its height no room is left for any interest in the surrounding world; the pair of lovers are sufficient unto themselves, do not even need the child they have in common to make them happy”.^{c45} Like most calls for moral enforcement, it assumes, unbeknownst to its author (who characteristically believes, on the contrary, that people already want too much and are already too selfish) that human greed will not expand beyond a certain narrow domain.

93

The early women’s movement was one of the few loci of the nearly self-conscious emergence of radical subjectivity within the New Left. The women who created it refused to put off the struggle against their special oppression until “after the Revolution”.

If human beings have reduced each other to sexual pseudo-objects, have “objectified” a1 each other sexually, this is by no means the only or the most fundamental way in which they have been “objectified”. This is only one facet of a general dehumanization and de-subjectification. The overcoming of this specific “objectification”, of the problem posed most subjectively by the early women’s liberation movement, and named “sexism” by the partisans of that movement, can only be of the form of sexual subjectivity as opposed to this sexual “objectivity”, and (expanded) sexual egoism as opposed to sexual duty, sexual self-sacrifice, and sexual exploitation. This solution is opposed identically to the various directions taken by the later ideological expropriators of the women’s movement; namely that of the abstract negation of sexism — counter-sexism (anti-masculinism), reverse exploitation through the ideological manipulation of male guilt, sexual abstinence, or moralistic lesbianism.

Lately, more and more women have felt called on to act in a new role — that of “sister.” The joy of the initial abstract unity has been replaced by the threat of exclusion for unsisterly behavior. Oppression takes a new form: women over women.

It’s not the moments of genuine warmth and intimacy, of authentic community, within the women’s movement that we want to criticize, but precisely the ideology that ultimately poisoned these.

The “community” founded on gender is still an abstract community, still a false community; still the domination over the individual and her desires through the use of abstract categories and external qualities, by the ideological representatives of these. The pseudo-community of “sisters” — assumed and moralistically enforced — is still a community founded on oppression: the repression of radical subjectivity; the representation and enforcement of an abstract determination defining a group of people in this case, gender n1 — over against their concrete particularity and their conscious self-determination.

Bosses come in all genders, no less than in all colors. How much humiliation will it take to learn that a boss having similar skin color or the same type of sexual glands “objectifies” one no less than any other? Next time a feminist bureaucrat addresses you as “Sister”, listen to the tone of her voice. Why is she whining? Do her words fall like a threat, or like a chain? What is it she wants from you? Does she want a subject or a slave; a sex, i.e., a walking abstraction, or a person?

IX. Authority

94

The development of generalized self-management is impeded by, precisely, generalized incapacity for self-management — the terror at the thought of freedom; frozen subjectivity; the authoritarian personality. This usually takes the form of a dire fear and distrust of others in a situation of revolutionary self-management — “the other guy is a fuckup”; “the other guy is too stupid and irresponsible to ever make it work,” etc. — valid fears, to which we can only say that everybody is right about everybody else to date.

The authoritarian personality is essentially the slavish personality, the personality that needs authority — that precisely can't manage without it. This character-structure hides its essence in the role of the master; it reveals its essence in the role of the slave. Capitalist society is society founded on the expanded reproduction of the habit of submission, of the alienation (disowning) of subjectivity (wage-labour). The proletarian is precisely the desubjectified man, the pseudo-object, ruled by the pseudo-subject, capital, which he produces and reproduces. Revolutionary practice is therefore the practice of “subjectification” n1; of the expanded reproduction of subjectivity, or radical subjects. n2 The detournement of moralism (of the pseudo-critique of “greed”), the validation and expansion of egoism, is thus an essential moment of revolutionary practice. And this is a moment of that moment.

Beyond the need of authority lies the authority of needs and the authority of desire.

95

In any hierarchical relationship the dominator as well as the submissive pays his dues. The price paid for the “glory of command” is indeed heavy. Every tyrant resents his duties. He is relegated to drag the dead weight of the dormant creative potential of the submissive all along the road of his hierarchical excursion. Obviously, this cannot compare to the amount of pleasure-energy released playfully and willingly, not coercively, when everyone plays the game. (The price of one's authority over others is the sumtotal of one's acceptance of the same authority over oneself.).

96

In a self-managed society, the prevention of communal squalor, of social malpractice in general (the nonfulfillment of production-plans, etc.) depends, not on nobody being an authority, but on everybody being an authority where his own needs and desires, his own interests, are concerned. And this means expanded self-interests; social self-interests. This means that anybody must be self-authorized to mess with anybody else befouling a communal place, impeding collectively

agreed-upon production, etc., and must know how to do so. Only such a non-centralized, all-sided flow of practical-critical feedback and social dialogue can reproduce such a society. The end of specialized supervision can only be in the process of generalized supervision and collective self-supervision. The end of the special police depends on general self-regulation, that is, generalized self-management — people taking responsibility for their social needs. This is the opposite of the repressive conception, “self-policing” based on the present external policing, which serves an alien interest, and is internalized as such.

97

In the socialist society of the future — if it is to be at all — everyone will have to be his own expert, his own authority, on “savoir-vivre”, on “how-to-live”. There will be no higher authority over a given matter than the general assembly of those self-interested in that matter.

98

Every treatise on the theory of practice is a “Traite de Savoir-Vivre” c46, a “Treatise on How to Live”, whether its author fully knows it or not. “How-to-live” is just the general problem of the theory of practice stated most subjectively.

99

Freedom from external authority means being your own authority; self-authority. Freedom = self-mastery. The meaning of the phrase “a world of masters without slaves” c47 can be conceived only in the concept of self-mastery. But this cannot be limited to “individual” self-mastery. The concept of individual self-mastery already necessarily includes the moment of social self-mastery. Communist society can only mean the conscious self-mastery of the totality of their social self-production by the associated producers. Self-determination, self-government, self-management — in their necessary, completed meaning, can mean nothing less. The general name of the problem we confront is “to learn how to live,” i.e. socially, how to “associate”. c48 “Live” here is opposed to merely surviving, and to dying supposedly trying to live (the “beautiful losers” syndrome), etc. But this has nothing to do with morality — nothing, that is, but to abolish it!

X. Morality

100

The old moral question of whether one “thinks first of oneself or of others” falls apart when we come to think only of ourselves and for this reason negate the otherness of others.

101

Intelligence ends where morality begins. Morality ends where intelligence begins. The theory of practice, the unitary critique of all ideology, must at the same time be the critique not only of any moralism, but of any possible moralism. Every moral is subjectivity disowned and subjectivity alienated. Every moral is a psychic totem, a mental fetishobject, before which the moral fetishist subordinates himself, bows down, and offers sacrifice — indeed offers himself in sacrifice. Every ideal is separated subjectivity; a part of the self separated off, ejected, frozen, and held over the rest of the self. It is a depletion of subjectivity, a loss of freedom, a choice made in advance. The formation of the moral ideal is at the same time a decline in subjective mobility and maneuverability; a ball-and-chain about the dancer’s ankle; a self-laming and self-maiming in the dance of life.

102

Morality and that which ties you to it, self-guilt, guilt for even being, is an enormous encumbrance. You can throw it off! You can drop all that weighty moral baggage, before it drags you down! You don’t need it! It is but a poor substitute for the fine tool of practical intelligence, expanded self-interest, self-consciousness itself.

When, if I should encounter a contradiction between a useful abstraction I had made about my practice, and my concrete self-interest in a given situation, if I abandon my concrete desire in favor of the practice of that abstraction, that mere generalization, out of abstract respect for superficial “consistency”, or, say, at the behest of another, who threatens me with the word “hypocrite”, then I am projecting that abstraction into a position above myself, freezing it into a “principle” n1, a moral, and I am reproducing as an ideologue the other person who has rebuked me in comparison to that moral, by being susceptible to him expropriating the representation of myself which I have erected or condoned, and using it against my real self. As a mere generalization, a practical abstraction — as theory — I have already refuted it for myself in practice, proven its invalidity for this instance. But as a moral reification, on the contrary, it is my duty to obey it. Not I but “it” is my master: “it” gives the orders, I alienate my will into it; “it” is the subject of my practice, I “its” object.

103

The projections of my subjectivity, nurtured by guilt, stick out of my head like so many handles offered to any manipulator, any ideologue, who wants to get a hold of me, and whose trade skill is the ability to perceive such handles.

Only when I dissolve my guilt, when I free myself to be shamelessly selfish, when I grasp selfishness as my only “duty” – taking care of myself as necessarily my first social responsibility – can I be free.

104

The critique of the totemic relationship, clarified by Feuerbach c49 in relation to religion, thence applied to political economy by Marx c50, and lately developed one-sidedly by the Gestalt therapists (especially Perls c51) locates the inversion that lies at the heart of all domination and self-enslavement. Totemic fetishism or projection lies also at the heart of every moral ideology, which is revealed also in the observation that every ideology is a moralism, and a social plan for the allocation of guilt. While usable precisely for the same ends, ideology in general, moralism in particular, are in essence the more sophisticated and subtle means of exploitation, as opposed to naked coercion.

105

It is my guilt about my desires which makes me susceptible to ideological exploitation by others, and which motivates me in producing excuses and justifications (rationalizations) in terms of the dominant ideology (the ideology which I let dominate me). The trick of ideology consists in this: to re-present desires in a pseudo-universal – i.e., unselfish, altruistic – and therefore unreproachable, form, always in terms of some abstract “general interest”. In order to reconcile myself with my ideology I must make myself a liar. But it is a losers’ game. The lawyers of the dominant class already have it set up in advance their way, and here I am on their terrain. The use-value of practical generalizations is that of theory – intelligence of human practice; knowledge of means, techniques, and consequences. The use-value of morality is that of ideology – to dominate others, to attempt to get what is wanted in a narrowly selfish way, by representing it as unselfish, universal, in a climate where transparent selfishness, and transparency about desires, is not tolerated, is chastised.

106

In the abstract negation of morality, its mere antithesis – typical especially of the Situationist mentality – moralism is transformed into anti-moralism, which is really only an anti-moralism moralism, and not truly the opposite of moralism at all. According to the logical substructure of this ideology, one has a duty to do at all times what is immoral according to the dominant ideology – that is, the ideology by which the Situationist still defines and dominates himself, though here in a negative form. Thus, it is abstractly required to live by stealing, to practice

sexual promiscuity, to live in squalor, to drop out of school, to never work, etc., etc. This is still qualitatively as far from the determinate negation of moralism as is moralism itself.

107

As for ourselves, we have no morality. We have only our feelings, our needs, our desires; our thoughts, our consciousness, our practical knowledge of practical consequences, at each given stage of our development. In short, our subjectivities, our selves. Compassion doesn't need to be coerced out of us; it comes naturally. We feel others' suffering, as well as their joy, because we are open to feeling our own.

108

“The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of men is a demand for their real happiness. The call to abandon their illusions about their conditions is a call to abandon a condition which requires illusions. Their criticism of religion is, therefore, the embryonic criticism of this vale of tears of which religion is the halo.”

“Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers from the chain, not in order that man shall bear the chain without caprice or consolation, but so that he shall cast off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusiones man so that he will think, act, and fashion his reality as a man who has lost his illusions and regained his reason; so that he will revolve about himself as his own true sun.

Religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself.” c52

As with religion, so with respect to the other projections, individual and collective (commodities, money, capital, the state, ideologies of every description, morality in particular, reified [hierarchical] institutions of all sorts — pseudo-subjects all. Try substituting them in!)

109

“The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the supreme being for man. It ends, therefore, with the categorical imperative to overthrow all those conditions in which man is a humiliated, enslaved, despised and rejected being.” c53

110

The criticism of morality ends with the doctrine that you are the supreme being for you. (That is, your being, your self-consciousness, your being-for-yourself, is the necessary medium through which all other values — which constitute or give content to its value — including my value for you, or myself as one of your values, come into being for you. If you should lose your being, then all other beings, and therewith all values, would be lost to you. Further, and more concretely, to the extent that we produce socially, and that we produce a society; that we exchange self-powers

and their objectifications, that we depend upon one another for the reproduction of ourselves, then my loss, or the loss of me, is your loss, and a depletion of your self). It ends, therefore, with the categorical imperative to overthrow all those conditions under which you, the subject, are subordinated to some thing — some fetish, some totem, some projection, some reification, some cause, some ideal, some moral, some principle, some pseudo-subject — some being supposedly “higher than your self.”

111

What cause or ideal is there, what projection out of yourself, that can be higher, for you, than you, its source? What external to your self that you value can warrant for you your sacrifice? What value is there that you would not lose if you lost yourself? Something can be a value for you only if it includes and conserves in it your self, the necessary foundation of all your values. When you are lost to you, all the emanations of yourself, and all the values in the world that you affirmed, are lost for you also; cut off at their root.

Taking risks is another matter. You must gamble your self in order to gain any value; you must risk yourself in order to gain yourself back again more richly. What is called cowardice’ is not the practice of the realization expressed above, but its opposite: too little value placed on one’s self, and on those values and other persons which are part of it, so that one fails to defend one’s self in the expanded sense, or mistakes mere survival for life.

112

It is not by any means only the narrowly “selfish”, “egoistic” desires and tendencies which are repressed continually (moralistically, while at the same time being reinforced practically) in the daily life of privatized society, but also — really, more so — the “non-egoistic”, the so-called “unselfish” tendencies: natural gregariousness, spontaneous human solidarity, natural compassion and empathy, simple sociability and love. There is an energy produced in each human being every day which aims at a social satisfaction and which if not satisfied socially turns against itself, becomes depression, withdrawal, etc. Unlike tribal societies, wherein these “unselfish tendencies” form the main base of social survival, in our society, overdeveloped (late) capitalist society, these emotions only break surface occasionally, exceptionally. In the vast accumulations of constant and variable capital n1 known today as “cities”, the continual steadfast repression of these tendencies is increasingly a necessity of survival. With increasing rarity does social good-feeling pass between strangers on the street. Any stranger is best regarded an enemy. And these teeming anthills are a world of strangers. The growing phenomenon of mass, random murders can be understood as a becoming apparent of what was always essential to capitalist society, now entering its historic extremity: “the war of all against all” is becoming armed. a1

Once anesthetized, beginning in the early life of the individual, these social desires and tendencies can usually be re-evoked only falsely, artificially, coercively. Hence the belief that these emotions need to be enforced through the manipulation of guilt. Anyone still manifesting such tendencies in their direct, spontaneous form into young adulthood is immediately suspect, or at best, considered “naive” and a “fool” for his apparent “idealism” and/or “childishness” (despite all the altruistic pretenses of official society): these emotional tendencies are being seen as a weak-

ness (which, in the society of estrangement, they undoubtedly are, until or unless such an individual develops full consciousness of these tendencies and of their social context, appropriating these as part of a revolutionary project).

113

I listen to criticism because I am greedy. I listen to criticism because I am selfish. I would not deny myself another's insights. But egoistic criticism is a use-value or it is nothing; use-value not only to its recipient, but to its donor as well. I would not bother to criticize someone in whom I had no interest. Anything else would be service rendered to an ideal, a moral projection — only a moralist seeks to strike against what contradicts him, his moral, equally over the whole manifold of space-time; only an ideal is “eternal” in this way. Whereas I am mortal. My libido is concentrated around myself; its intensity falls off exponentially with subjective distance from its source.

This egoistic criticism is the opposite of the masochistic and ritualized (spectacular) “criticism and self-criticism” of Maoist morality. Authoritarian criticism aims at my repression, at reinforcing and reproducing passivity and servility, at maintaining the habit of submission. It aims at weakening, rather than strengthening, my subjectivity, at keeping me an authoritarian personality — a slave.

Egoistic criticism, on the contrary, aims at strengthening me, in the mutual interest of my self and my critic, for the benefit of our common wealth and our common project. It is immanent criticism, criticism of me in my own interest. By the same token, for such criticism to be possible, for someone's criticism to “interest” me, I must see myself in them, and them in myself; we must share a common interest, a concrete community.

114

The critique of revolutionary ideology, anarchist and Leninist alike, with its sacrificial collectivist morality and, in particular, the critique of Maoism with its morality of poverty, reveals once and for all the poverty of all morality.

And this in a double sense. First, in that morality is the ideological product of poverty; of the underdeveloped state of human productive forces, and especially of the cleavage of the “general” and “particular” interests, whose root is the self-cleavage of society; social classes. Morality is the expression of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. It locates the general interest as a projection out of a social situation in which it could only be found as a contradiction. In morality, the contradiction is represented as an abstract identity of the interests of all men, as the interest of an abstract man who has no real social existence. Second, in the sense that morality — which is projection, or selfdisowning — is a depletion of the real social wealth, of subjectivity, the wealth of the self.

115

Our subjectivity and our self-discovery in every here and now, i.e. our self-reproduction, is the only possible guarantee of our subjectivity. We must re-win ourselves constantly. “Commu-

nist egoism” can be made into an ideology. “The right to be greedy” can be turned into a morality. Easily. No objectification is immune. This ideology begins whenever some bureaucrat — for this act would confirm him so being — tries to order me, in the name of my “self-interest,” to desist from some activity I have freely undertaken, on the grounds that it is “objectively” sacrificial, and I let him get away with it. (Here is revealed the lie of representation: he represents me even against myself — he owns “me”, is more “me” than I am.) If I keep this up, the final scenario can be easily envisioned: some bureaucrat points a gun at me saying: “In the name of your expanded self-interest, that of the proletariat as a whole, we have determined that it is best for you for us to kill you” and pulls the trigger. (cf. Kronstadt, the ideology of the National Caucus of Labor Committees, etc.). n1

116

In a revolutionary situation it takes much more than the mere wish to prevent a bureaucracy from arising. The roots of bureaucracy lie in personal self denial a1, in treating myself and my desires in a bureaucratic manner, in short, being a bureaucrat with myself. The mere abstract negation of its institutionalized form is like arriving with a bucket of water after the house has already burned down. In every rationalization and hesitation, in every stuttering and swallowing down of desire, of felt resentments, miscommunications and secret humiliations lie the seeds of our demise, our Thermidor. The logical outgrowth of any self denial by any revolutionary is the triumph of the counterrevolution and the reign of the Bolsheviks all over again.

“...it is always the principle of useful suffering and willing sacrifice that forms the most solid base for hierarchical power.” c54 The moment you sit by passively while not getting what you want, you are preparing the ground for your own destruction.

117

We are on the verge of liberation only when it can be said of each of us that he/she has become so rebellious, so irrepressible, and so unruly that she/he cannot be mastered by anything less than his/her self (i.e., among other things, when no mere projection or reification of a part of ourselves will suffice, any longer, or will be able successfully to rule over us.).

118

The “game” a1 is a form of armour, ideology is a “game”, character-armour is compulsive role-playing, the “script” is the self-image projected through time, the temporalized self-spectacle. In the white heat of the act of their comprehension as lived experience and as interpersonal praxis going on all around us, these names, and the concepts they name game, armour, ideology, role, character, script melt into one.

The self-spectacle, the spectacular self — self-representation — will be found necessary, a necessary use-value, a necessary interpersonal tool, in fact, a “survival kit”, and thus be reproduced, so long as (1) the dissonance of egoisms, the totality of conditions known in general as “poverty”, “scarcity”, prevails, and consequently, (2) people cannot get what they want often enough by being transparent with one another, by simply asking for it, and, (3) they cannot or will not take

the risk of asking, the gamble of transparency, either for fear of the pain of refusal or out of the desperation of their need, and would therefore prefer to extract what they can by circuitous means, by subterfuge and deception, decoy and trickery — in short, by intransparent means.

The spectacular presentation of self in everyday life, the personal organization of false appearances (persona) — partly compulsive and involuntary, as especially in muscle armour — the little lie — these are the means of the devious route to the realization of desire. In their conscious part, they will be resorted to so long as the more direct means, transparency, does not work any better. In their more unconscious, compulsive part, they are the mark of repression and domination, the cowering wince of the whipped cur, frozen into a posture.

Character-armour is indeed the form of peoples' complicity in the spectacle. Not that feeling guilty about one's character-armour will do anything but exacerbate this problem.

XI. Revolution

119

“Productive forces and social relationships — the two different sides of the development of the social individual — appear to be and are, only a means for capital, to enable it to produce from its own cramped base. But in fact they are the material conditions that will shatter this foundation.” c55

120

In the end, egoism is our only friend; in the last analysis greed is the only thing we can trust. Any revolutionary who is to be counted on can only be in it for himself. Unselfish people can always switch loyalty from one projection to another. Furthermore, only the most greedy people can be relied on to follow through on their revolutionary project. Others less greedy can always be bought off so as to stop short of themselves.

121

The practical necessity of greed and the truth of our statements concerning the failures engendered by greed which is not greedy enough are demonstrated continually in the history of the modern revolutionary movement. Just as, in 1871, internalized ideology and a miserable handful of guards were enough to deter the armed Communards from seizing the French National Bank at a time when money was desperately needed, so in 1968 French insurgents (mystified by trade-unionist and anarcho-syndicalist ideology) failed to comprehend all the world around them as social property (and therefore theirs) and thus tended to restrict self-organization to “their own” work places. Though greedy and egoistic in their own right, both these movements fell victim to the mystification, the fetishism of privatized territory. In both cases, the revolutionaries were left in paltriness, the pathetic possessors of mere fragments of a revolution (these fragments by their very nature sublated into naught). In both cases it was a limited greed, in their theory and their spirit, that led to the practical (indeed even military) defeat of these revolutions. The meaning of Marx’s “I am nothing, but I must be everything” unfolds its truth fully when we realize that only when we become everything shall we cease to be nothing.

122

“Revolution ceases to be as soon as it is necessary to be sacrificed to it.” — graffiti, Paris, May-June, 1968. c56

123

The social revolution is when social human beings, social individuals wake up inside the living, waking nightmare of privatized life.

124

Revolution is the social moment of the collapse of all projections. In the moment of social revolution the present, the historical present, the presence of history opens up like the sky.

125

Don't be too afraid. What is left after the collapse of all projections is you, your self, precisely that in you which alone was not self-projection. Don't panic — you've been lost so long, it may take you a moment, after the deluge, to find your self again, there at the center of everything. Apres le deluge, moi! After the deluge: you!

And your self will not be found alone.

126

The road to further evolution passes through revolution. The path that leads from survival to life passes through the valley of the shadow of death. We have decided to go, to take the gamble, for ourselves. Do you want to come with us, for yourself? We want you. We need you. You decide.

For ourselves!

May 1, 1974

Postnotes

I. Notations

Thesis 3

n1

By “transparent” relations we mean relations beyond duplicity; relations in which the essential is also visible, i.e., in which the essence appears. “Transparency” is when you can see from the surface of social phenomena through into their core; when their truth is apparent on the surface. On the contrary, the social relations of capitalist society are opaque; shot through with a contradiction between appearance and essence; things are, more often than not the exact opposite of what they appear to be. For example, in capital, the apparent social imperative of the production of maximal use-value — “we’re here to serve you”; “to produce a quality product”, etc. — conceals their ulterior motive of the production of maximal exchange-value (profit), and this hidden, essential imperative reveals itself only where the two imperatives come into conflict, in which case the use-value is sacrificed to exchange-value (planned obsolescence, production of worthless products, fad products, destruction of crops and other products to keep prices up, and in general, the tendency of all products produced as commodity-capital to deteriorate in quality over time; the “tendency of use-value to fall.” Marx envisioned the emergence of transparency in social relations as an aspect of the emergence of communist society, in the following words:

“Let us now picture ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour-power of the community ... The social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are in this case perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution ... (mystification] can, in any case, only then finally vanish, when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellowmen and to Nature..”

— Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, book I, International Publishers, (New York, 1967). pp. 78–79, in Chapter 1, Section 4: “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof”.

n2

Character: An individual’s typical structure, his stereotype manner of acting and reacting. The organomic concept of character is functional and biological, and not a static, psychological or moralistic concept.

Character Armour: The sum total of typical character attitudes, which an individual develops as a blocking against his emotional excitations, resulting in rigidity of the body, lack of emotional contact, “deadness.” Functionally identical with the muscular armor.

— Wilhelm Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm*, Meridian (New York, 1971), Glossary, pp. 359–360.

Generally, character-armor may be viewed as frozen modes of otherwise normal behavior — the point is the inability of an individual to choose or to change certain aspects of his behavior. Metaphorically, it is the unseen shield that blocks expression and perception of a person’s “core”, their subjectivity, keeping it from the surface and usually from consciousness. It is the inauthentic self — the fictitious or non-self — that conceals and harbors the real self.

The involuntary modes of behavior that characterize armor are generally “learned” during childhood as a “rational” response to an irrational, oppressive world. Thus, armor is essentially not a thing located in each individual, but a social relation, a layer of callous, deadened to the self and other, built up in the wear and tear of (anti-)social interactions; in the agony and constant danger of alienated association. This is demonstrated in the following observation: change a person’s social relations and his armouring, his character adjustment, will also begin to change to re-adapt, to become congruent again with his social life, his new relationships. Thus, it is erroneous to locate armour simply in the individual taken separately, although it is true that his social relations, his way of relating and surviving socially, may be “reflected” — mapped onto his body — in the form of muscular armouring; of a pattern of chronic contraction in the various muscular segments.

Character-armour is thus (1) the personal aspect of the spectacle. It is the personal organization of false appearances: self-representation; the self-spectacle. It is the self-image one seeks to project to others; the “front” one puts up; the role one plays: the “reputation” one accumulates. The projected, surface motives belonging to character are at the same time a surface denial and repression of certain forbidden, impermissible motives, which persist beneath the surface of character as ulterior motives, conscious or not. In their more conscious part, these ulterior motives express themselves as character in the form of lying, cheating, trickery, the con, hypocrisy, etc. — all the familiar backstage of the spectacle of “good character.” Character is the very locus of interpersonal duplicity — precisely the “duplication” of the self (cf. Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”, thesis IV, in *The German Ideology*, Progress Publishers (Moscow, 1968). p. 666, see also Marx’s remark in his Preface to *A Contribution To The Critique of Political Economy*; “Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so we can not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness.” in Lewis Feuer, op. cit., p. 44.)

Character-armour is also (2) the personal aspect of capital. In the proletarian, character is the locus of his “nature” as a commodity, his use-value to capital as an obedient pseudo-object, and hence his exchange-value — his exploitability — as “labour-power”; as a worker. Character-armour is the encrustation surrounding his self; a shield shielding both the world and his pseudo-self from his own potential subjectivity. It is built up through long years of social labour-time bestowed upon him by other individuals — his parents, priests, school teachers, policeman, and authorities of every sort, including his own peer group — and is part of the labour time socially necessary to produce a usable proletarian wretch from the available human raw-material, hence is included in the (exchange-) value of labour-power. It is the “value-added” to the individual as he “matures” by the labour of the social authorities, the immediate and (semi-conscious) agents

of class society, who must see to the reproduction of individuals characterologically congruent with Capitalist social relations: with capital.

The production-process of character must thus be comprehended within the critique of political economy, as an aspect of the reproduction-process of capital, of capitalist society, as a whole. This process, the production process of proletarians, a special form of commodity production carried out in special factories known as “schools”, “churches”, “prisons”, “families”, etc., is usually referred to, in general, as “child-rearing”, “education”, or “socialization”. It consists in (a) the destruction of subjectivity in its direct form, and (b) the development of a narrow form of subjectivity, in an indirect (perverted) form, mediated by authoritarian permission. It is the totality of the processes of “adaptation” necessary to make the proletarian “fit” to endure the “life” of a worker. When the process miscarries, as it often does these days, the product is said to be “unemployable” – useless to capital. In the “finished” product, the adult, character-armour is the repository, the objectification of this process, the location of all the stored programs, habits, practices, roles, and behavior patterns necessary to the proletarian survival kit – submissiveness, slavishness, self-contempt, passivity, obedience, irresponsibility, guilt, fear of freedom, and so on. Character-armour is the layer of frozen subjectivity that makes the worker functional as a worker in capitalist society, i.e., manipulatable as a pseudo-object. It is what makes the worker suitable for authoritarian management. It is what makes him (presently) incapable of self-management. The way through the problem is to have people not armored but “armed” – physically, psychologically, and theoretically – to bring what is involuntary more under conscious control.

n3

“To transcend (*aufheben*) has this double meaning, that it signifies to keep or preserve and also to make cease, to finish. To preserve includes this negative element, that something is removed from its immediacy and therefore from a Determinate Being exposed to external influences, in order that it may be preserved. – Thus what is transcended is also preserved; it has lost its immediacy and is not on that account annihilated. – In the dictionary the two determinations of transcending may be cited as two meanings of this word. But it should appear as remarkable that a language should have come to use one and the same word for two opposite determinations. It is a joy for speculative thought to find words which in themselves have a speculative meaning...”

– G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, volume I, “Objective Logic”, translated by W.H. Johnston and L.G. Struthers. Humanities Press, (New York, 1966), pp. 119–120; “Transcendence of Becoming.” Observation: the Expression “to transcend”

Thesis 4

n1

“All previous forms of society foundered on the development of wealth – or, which amounts to the same thing, on the development of social productive forces. Therefore ancient philosophers who were aware of this bluntly denounced wealth as destructive of community.”

– Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie*. Quoted in, Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, translated and edited by David McLellan, Harper & Row, (San Francisco, 1971, p. 120).

Thesis 5

n1

By “Power” with a capital “P”, we mean separate power; alienated power, whose major modern examples are state power and that social power known as “capital”. In state-capitalism, the highest form of capitalism, these two, always interpenetrate essentially, become one visibly. In pre-modern times, in Medieval Europe, the Church would be another example of separate social power.

We have no quarrel with “power” as such, that is, with self-power — the power of social self-determination and self-production; creative, productive faculties and power over one’s own life. On the contrary; this is the very development and enrichment of individuality itself. On the contrary; The re-appropriation of ourselves, the repossession of ourselves from capital, the re-owning of alienated self-powers, is the essential purpose of our revolution, the communist revolution; and is our purpose in it. It should be obvious, then, from what has been said, that Power is the opposite of power. The greater the Power of the State and Capital, the more powerless, the more impotent are we, the proletariat, for that Power is nothing other than our lost, our alienated power; the labour power we sell to capital and the political power we give up to our “representatives”.

It was necessary to say this because of the legions of moralistic masochists and worshippers of impotence presently traipsing through the spectacle, for whom we might otherwise have been mistaken. These self-castrated passivists believe that not just Power, but power also, corrupts, absolutely, and desperately “fear to touch it”, along with money and capital, out of dread of being instantly corrupted by it. They have never let themselves grasp that the only way to be safe from this pathetic “corruption” is to be — not beneath it, but beyond it.

For an account, unsurpassed in its brilliance, of the dialectic of self-powers and their alienation, see Lorraine and Fredy Perlman’s book-length detournement of revolutionary ideology, *Manual For Revolutionary Leaders*, “by Michael Velli” (BLACK AND RED, P.O. Box 9546, Detroit, Michigan, 48202; pp. 11–49). (Unfortunately for all of us, the Perlmans decided to truncate their theory just at the threshold of its practice, by abstractly negating revolutionary organization — to the effect that all organization is hierarchical organization and all revolutionary organization is necessarily Leninist organization — and so end up embracing impotence for themselves as revolutionaries).

Thesis 7

n1

From here on out, unless otherwise specifically indicated, the use of masculine pronoun forms is meant to include the feminine, since this is the closest thing to a unitary pronoun the English language contains, for most purposes.

n2

Immanent critique is critique which bases itself in the same foundation, logical, etc., which forms the core or essence of the object of the critique; critique which locates itself inside its object. It thus locates the internal contradictions of its object — the self-contradictions — becoming a

critique which is essential to the object of critique itself. Thus immanent critique is an intimate, internal critique, in fact, a self-critique of the object, a critique based on the internal standards of the object of the critique itself, and not an external or alien critique — a judgment from a standpoint outside that which is judged.

Thesis 8

n1

By “total appropriation” we mean, in general, all-sided appropriation — that is, social relations not restricted to a specialized and compartmentalized interchange of “things” or of parts of people as “things” (money, commodities, images, etc.) — as in the present organization of social interaction according to roles, which enforces a strict separation of the various aspects and interests of life, “Total appropriation” is, among other things, where you are no longer confined to “talking shop” even in the shop.

By “total” appropriation of another person we mean, in particular, an appropriation of them which included in itself their appropriation of you; i.e. it can occur only when it is reciprocal, when each person is both appropriator and appropriated. This is unlike either the case of the appropriation of an object, which can’t “appropriate back,” or the partial appropriation (exploitation) of a subject; the appropriation of a subject as if an object, excluding, disregarding his or her desires, needs, expectations, and reciprocal appropriation of the appropriator. That is, we would mean that you appropriate their appropriation of you as itself a necessary part of them; include in the “them” that you “totally” appropriate their desires, needs, attitudes, and expectations with regard to you in some way; appropriate their subjectivity as the essential part of them; relate to it. “Total appropriation” is thus the encounter by a subject of another subject as a subject. It would involve the appropriation of the other person’s response to you, including of their response to your responses to them. True infinity. Total appropriation exists when you can (actually and directly — not just vicariously) appropriate someone else’s joy as your own.

One might very well say that there is plenty about contemporary “subjects” that one not only doesn’t want to appropriate ‘totally’, but in fact doesn’t want any part of. And to this we could only agree, with however the additional commentary that (1) most of what we don’t want any part of is non-self, non-subjectivity (frozen subjectivity; armour) to begin with, and: (2) this negated subjectivity has to be dealt with in one way or another anyway: no matter what, it has to be faced, even in present-day society — perhaps 90% of the fuck-ups in present-day capitalist business-practice are due to such characterological “personality factors”. And in the context of associated production, where sustained association is an egoistic necessity, the problem becomes a question of what is the best way of confronting these “factors”, from an expanded-egoistic point of view. There is no doubt that “total appropriation” will be, among other things, a conflictual process, a fight. Direct “appropriation” — i.e., here-and-now contestation — of such “personality kinks” as they come up in the social (re)productive process, rather than in their avoidance or polite toleration which bespeaks an attitude of resignation to the person tolerated as a static being incapable of further self-development, and to the person tolerating as impotent to provoke change — can, where appropriate, render daily social interaction itself an accelerated “psychotherapeutic” growth process.

Expanded egoism, that is, total appropriation, is a process. Only as exploitation in social relations lives out its use-value will we begin to develop expanded egoism concretely. At the beginnings of communist society, radical subjectivity will not miraculously manifest itself in everyone, at the same time, to the same degree of intensity or sustainedness. The development will be an irregular process. To abstractly affirm an idyllic, non-conflictual image of total appropriation of another when in fact the other remains to varying degrees a frozen subject is to morally project and idealize total appropriation.

Total appropriation is a social-historical process which grows out of people's collective transformation of the world and themselves. The fact that we feel a need for such transparency shows that the process has already begun. But already this process has come into conflict with the objective conditions (i.e. the present social relations). Ultimately, only in revolution can we succeed in ridding ourselves of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.

Thesis 9

n1

By "egoism" we mean something which, in its full development, is quite different from, in fact, "infinitely" different from or opposite to "egotism". Egotism is personal practice in favor of one's self-spectacle, one's social image, one's persona. It is precisely, therefore, activity in the interest of one's non-self, truly selfless activity. Whereas, by egoism we mean, on the contrary, personal activity in the interest of one's authentic self, to the extent one recognizes and knows this self at any given time, however narrowly or expandedly. Egotism is spectacular, other-centered (alienated), the vicarious living of your own life; egoism is autonomous, founded on self-centration and on concrete, social self-knowledge. Egotism is thus one of the lowest forms of egoism. It is, like moralism, egoism by means of a projection, and turns into its opposite.

n2

The term "détournement", employed especially as a technical term by Situationists, has been defined as the revolutionary practice "by which the spectacle is turned back on itself, turned inside out so that it reveals its own inner workings." See *Loaded Words: A Rebel's Guide To Situationese*, NEW MORNING, February, 1973, New Morning Collective (P.O. Box 531, Berkeley, California, 94701), p. 14 [also see: *Loaded Words* download in the at the Lust for Life website]

This mode of practice is not confined merely to the turning-against-themselves of the words, the language, of spectacular ideology. The technique has also been applied to the momentary seizure of the spectacular images of various dominant ideologies and institutions for the purpose of broadcasting through said images a revolutionary critique. Such "momentary expropriation" of the means of communication has been used, for example, in cases where fraudulent memorandums attributed to prominent bureaucrats, posters announcing events or opinions in the name of dominant spectacular organizations, press releases and other works attributed to government officials or other spectacular (imaged) personages, issues of newspapers or other periodicals, advertising materials, etc. have been disseminated and the resulting scandal or confusion of denials used as a lever to gain publicity for revolutionary theory.

n3

Words — written and spoken — are, in the beginning, the only means of production which we, as proletarians, possess: the very means of production of revolutionary consciousness itself.

Thesis 10

n1

“State-capitalism” is a term used to describe the form (stage) of capitalist society which is characterized in different ways and to different degrees by state management of the economy, while definitively capitalist relations (separation of the producers from the accumulated means of production, wage-labour, etc.) are left intact. Historically, state-capitalism has taken widely varied forms, ranging from relatively minor regulation of the private institutions to total nationalization of basic industries into a state-monopolized national Capital. Its forms vary from right-wing (fascist) to left-wing (Leninist/Stalinist) and other forms “in-between” (Social Democratic, Nasserist, and “African Socialist” in general, Peruvian militarist, “communalist”, etc.). “In any case... the official representative of capitalist society — the state — will ultimately have to undertake the direction of production... But the transformation... into state ownership does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces... The modern state, again, is only the organization that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments of the individual capitalist as of the workers. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist; the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers — proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is rather brought to a head.” c57

n2

“...the global decomposition of the bureaucratic alliance [world Stalinism] is in the last analysis the least favorable factor for the present development of capitalist society. The bourgeoisie is in the process of losing the adversary which objectively supported it by providing an illusory unification of all negation of the existing order.”

— Guy Debord, *The Society Of The Spectacle*, BLACK AND RED, (Detroit, 1973), thesis 111.

“Until now, the most durable source of support for sustaining and enlarging the operation of the state-management has been the pattern of antagonistic cooperation between the U.S. state management and its Soviet counterpart.”

— cf. Seymour Melman, *Pentagon Capitalism: The Political Economy Of War*, McGraw-Hill, (San Francisco, 1971), Chapter 9, “1984 By 1974? Or, Can The State-Management Be Stopped?”, p. 215:

n3

Workers’ councils have emerged historically as a revolutionary force beginning with the Paris Commune of 1871, where they took the form of a community council without workplace councils (given the underdeveloped state of the factory system in the Paris of that time); in Russia in 1905

and again in 1917 in the form of city-wide (and later nationwide) Soviets, and factory committees; in Germany during 1918–1919 as the classical ‘Soldiers’ and Workers’ councils’; in Italy in 1920 (the Turin Soviet, etc.); in the Kronstadt Soviet of 1921; in Spain during 1936–7 in the form of the Catalonian workers’ councils and peasant cooperatives; in Hungary in 1956, where for the first time since Kronstadt workers’ councils appeared as the organs of revolutionary struggle against a state-capitalist bureaucracy instead of a bourgeoisie; in Algeria in 1963; and most recently in Chile (1970–73) in embryonic forms such as the *comandos comunales* (community proto-councils) and the *cordones industriales* (multi-workplace proto-councils), which were, however, still largely dominated by various bureaucracies.

Thesis 11

n1

The root definition of “resonance” coming from physics, from the mechanics of oscillators, is revealing here. For example: “(a) an abnormally large response of a system having a natural frequency, to a periodic external stimulus of the same, or nearly the same, frequency. (b) the increase in intensity of sound by sympathetic vibration of other bodies.”

– C.L. Barnhart & Jess Stein, *The American College Dictionary*, Random House, (New York, 1964), p. 1033, “resonance, n.”

That is, mechanical resonance occurs when the natural frequency of oscillation – the ‘immanent’, ‘essential’, or internal frequency – of the resonating object is identical to the frequency of externally “forced” oscillation, i.e., to the external frequency.

Social resonance occurs as inter-recognition; when social individuals recognize themselves in each other, the other in themselves, and themselves in the world they produce; when they recognize their concrete universality. It occurs when what “society” needs of them is also what they need of themselves: their own production; their own development; their own self-realization; when what “society” needs of them is not imposed as an external, alien force, coercively by the state or unconsciously, as the “law of value,” by capital, but as their own, internally generated self-force, welling-up spontaneously within them. From each according to his desire, to each according to his desire. This is possible sustainedly only once the necessary social conditions for such a recognition and such a need have been produced historically, i.e., only once certain relations of humanity to itself, – namely, inter-production – grasped early in an alienated form as the “eternal truths” of religions, have become fact, that is, become historically materialized.

Thesis 17

n1

Note that this “typically” applies to both capitalist and proletarian individuals – spans the class divide.

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of

the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas: hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, hence the ideas of its dominance.”

— Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, Progress Publishers, (Moscow, 1968), p. 61.

Thesis 23

n1

The passage may appear to be confusing here and throughout, perhaps in part because the translators did not comprehend the dialectical concepts being used nor the full radicality of what was being asserted, which, to the Kantian or “Flatland” mind is impossible or absurd. For instance, “social being” = “the being of society”; “the existence of society”; “social existence” — and not just “a” social being. Marx is asserting here that the social individual is the essence of society: the substance and “nature” of society—the place where the character of society, the social character, becomes visible, manifest.

Thesis 25

n1

Capitalistic liberty is the official sanction for each to enhance and garnish his own separate misery in private, with the blessing of law. Capitalistic liberty is the right to put ribbons onto shit.

n2

The concept of freedom used here by Marx is obviously the non-linear, super-additive concept as opposed to the linear, atomistic one central to bourgeois society.

Thesis 37

n1

The term “sublation” is sometimes used as the technical English equivalent for the German “aufhebung” as developed by Hegel (see the third note to Thesis 3).

n2

Revolutionary theory and revolutionary ideology are not only different, but opposed. ‘Revolutionary theory’ names the theory of the production of social revolution: of the practices necessary to this production — the coherent system of ideas of how to create communist society. ‘Revolutionary ideology’ names the representation of this revolutionary theory by state-capitalist bureaucracy; the transformation of revolutionary theory into a spectacle through which the last stand of capital, as state-capital, momentarily strengthens its position by masquerading as the very negation of capital, i.e. as communist society. The distinction has never been more aptly put than in these words of Guy Debord:

“Revolutionary theory is now the enemy of all revolutionary ideology and knows it.”

– Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, BLACK AND RED, (Detroit, 1970), last thesis in Chapter IV, “The Proletariat As Subject And As Representation”.

n3

The slogan “smash self!” was introduced during the period of the so-called “Cultural Revolution” in China. See for instance the pamphlet which was compiled out of ‘exemplary stories’ which appeared in the official press around the time of that spectacular ruckus, entitled (appropriately) “Fear Neither Hardship Nor Death In Serving The People” (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970), which pamphlet discusses “the principle of wholly and entirely serving the people and utter devotion to others without any thought of self.” (p. 55.)

Thesis 46

n1

The term “anti-state” was employed by the Situationists to designate the organization of social self-management, the power of the workers’ councils which, although it would be an administration of society, would not be a “state”, but, on the contrary, hostile to every form of “state”.

A well-known authority on Marx’ views described the anti-state character of the Paris Commune thusly: “This was, therefore, a revolution not against this or that, legitimate, constitutional, republican, or Imperialist form of State Power. It was a Revolution against the State itself, of this supernaturalist abortion of society, a resumption by the people for the people of its own social life. It was not a revolution to transfer it from one fraction of the ruling class to the other, but a Revolution to break down this horrid machinery of Class domination itself.

The Commune – the reabsorption of the State power by society as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own force instead of the organized force of their own suppression – the political form of their social emancipation, instead of the artificial force (appropriated by their oppressors) (their own force opposed to and organized against them) of society wielded for their oppression by their enemies. The form was simple like all great things... It begins the emancipation of labour – its great goal – by doing away with the unproductive and mischievous work of the state parasites, by cutting away the springs which sacrifice an immense portion of the national produce to the feeding of the state-monster on the one side, by doing, on the other, the real work of administration, local and national, for workingmen’s wages. It begins, therefore, with an immense saving, with economical reform as well as political transformation.” c18

n2

See Citation 2. Even as early as the Paris Commune of 1871, at a time and place where the objective socialization of the means of production had not proceeded very far (in terms of large factories, etc.), this theory of associated production had begun to become consciously revolutionary practice. The document quoted below, a mandate from two labour unions for their delegates to the Commune’s Commission on Labour Organization, proposes a form of what would appear to be council-capitalism, and employs the term “associate” to designate the producers after they have ceased to be proletarians:

“At its meeting of April 23rd, 1871, in keeping with the Commune’s decree of April 16th, the Mechanics Union and the Association of Metal Workers have designated two citizens to the Commission on Labour Organization and given them the following instructions, “Considering: That with the Commune, product of the Revolution of March 18th, equality must not be an empty word; That the valiant struggle to exterminate the clerical-royalists has, as its objective, our economic emancipation; That this result can only be obtained through the formation of workers’ associations, which alone can transform our position from that of wage-earners to that of associates; “Therefore instruct our delegates to support the following objectives; “The abolition of the exploitation of man by man, last vestige of slavery; “The organization of labour in mutual associations with collective and inalienable capital.” c19

Thesis 49

n1

“The spectacle subjugates living men to itself to the extent that the economy has totally subjugated them. It is no more than the economy developing for itself. It is the true reflection of the production of things, and the false objectification of the producers.”

“The spectacle within society corresponds to a concrete manufacture of alienation. Economic expansion is mainly the expansion of precisely this industrial production. That which grows with the economy moving for itself can only be the alienation which was precisely at its origin.”

– Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, op. cit., respectively Theses 16 and 32.

n2

It is important above all here to note that this “dictatorship of the proletariat” can be nothing other than the international power of the workers’ councils itself. It is a dictatorship of the still-proletarian class over the remnants of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy, because it acts coercively against their efforts to re-expropriate social power and, whenever it (that is, the general assemblies of the workers) deems necessary, by force of arms. But it is an anti-state dictatorship, especially with regard to the suppression of the state-capitalist bureaucracy, with respect to which, the suppression of the state and the suppression of the class are one in the same (it goes without saying that the “suppression” of a class as a class, its destruction as such, does not necessarily entail the “destruction” or “liquidation” of the individuals who composed it; it is the class determination which is to be determinately negated here, not biological individuals, and social relations can not be negated without “negating” individuals). On the concept of the “anti-state”, see first note to Thesis 46.

In a letter to August Bebel (March 18–28, 1875) Engels (as a delegation of himself and Marx) gave a critique of the draft programme of the United Social-Democratic Workers’ Party of Germany. His severe criticism, particularly of its muddledly statist aspects, is of much significance not only for this particular programme, but furthermore it sheds much light toward a correct interpretation of virtually all of his and Marx’s works:

“The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the Commune [the Paris Commune of 1871], which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. The ‘people’s state’ has been thrown in our faces by the Anarchists to the point of disgust, although already Marx’s book against Proudhon [*The Poverty of Philosophy*] and later the Communist Manifesto

directly declare that with the introduction of the socialist order of society the state will dissolve of itself and disappear. As, therefore, the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is pure nonsense to talk of a free people's state: so long as the proletariat still uses the state, it does not use it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist. We would therefore propose to replace state everywhere by Gemeinwesen, a good old German word which can very well convey the meaning of the French word 'commune!' " c58

This critique is perhaps one of the most important statements ever made by Engels or Marx.

Thesis 52

n1

"Final" for bourgeois society and for human prehistory; but only the beginning for human history, for communist society — that is, socialized humanity.

n2

See second note to Thesis 7.

Thesis 57

n1

Not that we prefer the psychedelic cretins and nouveau-Babbits of hip capitalism (Berkeley has provided an interesting development of these respective forms. Here their abstract unity has digressed into a disgusting symbiosis between the "winner" and "loser" forms of the hip movement's remnants. Thus we have the rise of the merchants of counter-culture, who's "success" largely feeds off the continuing degeneracy of the post-psychedelic lumpens).

Thesis 60

n1

Here even the old "human nature" argument — in all cases the last recourse of bourgeois ideology — is turned against itself and the miserable cretins who would propagate it.

Thesis 61

n1

See the third note under Thesis 37.

Thesis 62

n1

This relationship might be clarified in terms of a dialectical symbolic logic, with p , $\sim p$, and $\sim\sim p$ symbolizing states — states of affairs, states of some system, “states of the world” — or symbolizing sentences which represent “statements”; formulae about or formulations of these states of affairs. The tilda “ \sim ”, the negation sign, here symbolizes some transformation, some determinate negation, of the sentential letters, such as p , to which it is applied as a prefix (the exact content of this operator thus has to be specified in each case). Thus, $\sim\sim p$ is related, by negation to $\sim p$ and to p . The doubly-slashed equals-sign, #, is here employed as the symbol for the relation of dialectical contradiction.

With p representing that (social) state of affairs characterized as “narrow egoism”, $\sim p$ representing the state of “altruism”, and $\sim\sim p$ “communist egoism”, we can formulate this relation as follows:

$$(\sim\sim p \# p) \ \& \ (\sim\sim p \# \sim p) \ \& \ (p \# \sim p)$$

or simply:

$$(p \# \sim\sim p \# \sim p)$$

The latter two conjunctions would be granted truth even by formal logic, but the first belongs exclusively to dialectical logic. Only a vestige, a shadow of the first conjunct holds within formal logic:

“A sentence and its negation are called contradictories of one another. Though any sentence of the form $\sim o$ has two equivalent contradictories, o and $\sim\sim o$, it has become customary to speak loosely of ‘the’ contradictory of a sentence.”

— Benson Mates, *Elementary Logic*, Oxford University Press, (New York, 1972). Second Edition, p. 119n.

The above quotation holds for dialectical logic as well, except that in the case of dialectical logic, o and $\sim\sim o$ would not be equivalent, but rather would be also contradictories. We might clarify this by modeling dialectical logic as involving not merely two truth-values, but rather (at least) three related truth-states (really, an indefinite number of negation-related truth-states — see dotted trajectory in figure 1). We might depict the relations among the sentence-symbols p , $\sim p$, and $\sim\sim p$ in terms of a truth-state-space, as follows, the different states being connected — linked semantically and/or temporally — as extreme points or “moments” along a state-space trajectory:

figure 1: Truth-Space for Dialectical Logic

p is an opposite of $\sim\sim p$ because, relative to p , $\sim\sim p$ has an extreme value of the trajectory coordinates in a component direction away from p (in this case the $+y$ direction). This criterion of relative extremity gives an immanent standard of “oppositeness”, i.e., the point p is more opposite of $\sim\sim p$ than p is, but it does not occur immanently, that is, on the trajectory, and so is not a criterion; $\sim p$ is an opposite (or contradictory) of $\sim\sim p$ (in the $+x$ direction), as well as of p (also in

the $+x$ direction), and vice-versa, and so on. Thus, p , $\sim p$, and $\sim\sim p$ correspond, in an approximate way, to aspects of, respectively, the “thesis”, “antithesis”, and “synthesis” of vulgar dialectics.

So under these definitions the formulae (1) hold for the depiction of figure 1, and for them it represents a valid “model” or “interpretation”.

We can arrive at a formal-logical version of this model by reduction, specifically, reduction by one dimension (the y dimension) — yielding a kind of “top view” of figure 1:

The great advantage of the Dialectical Logic (Fig. 1) is seen concretely by using the interpretation:

p : (the) “narrow egoism” (theory) is true of the world.

$\sim p$: “altruism” is true of the world.

$\sim\sim p$: “communist egoism” is true of the world.

The model posits $p \Rightarrow \sim p \Rightarrow \sim\sim p$ as the course of an evolution relating (“connecting”) the three states. It could be interpreted as depicting, for example, the evolution of the social individual from a state of narrow egoism to one of altruism to expanded egoism, or the evolution of a society from a state characterized as (by) “narrow egoism” and “altruism” to one characterized as “communist egoism”.

Here indeed p and $\sim\sim p$, “stacked” one on top of the other, appear to coincide, hence, are “equivalent”. The dimension in which the separation of p from $\sim\sim p$ occurs is here invisible. The trajectory from p to $\sim p$ to $\sim\sim p$ or p again is here merely a vicious circle, getting nowhere new. It merely bespeaks an endless, ineluctable Kantian oscillation within the “antimony” of narrow egoism (p) versus altruism ($\sim p$).

The y dimension might be posited here as the temporal, historical dimension — as either the coordinate for historical time itself or for some time-like state-variable (= a state-variable whose magnitude grows monotonically with time). With the elimination of this dimension (abstraction from time, from history, from concrete duration), the depiction succeeds as a model of the formal logic of these sentences (p , $\sim p$, $\sim\sim p$) and their inter-mutual relations.

Thesis 71

n1

Objectification names the specific quality of human production in general.

Objectification is the making objective, the making into an external, immediately observable, sensuously manifest object, of something that was subjective, invisible, internal to the subject producing the objectification. Through his activity, even if this activity is only an instantly perishable gesture, the subject inscribes himself in the objective world, makes the part of it upon which he labours into a reflection of himself; materializes his thought, his intentions, his needs, his desires, his imaginations. This is the externalization of the internal: exteriorization; extension. This is the self-objectification of the subject.

Thesis 76

n1

We use the term “secular Christianity” to refer to all those non-theological (“secularized”) ideologies which grew up out of the long historical decomposition of Christianity, forming its

secular continuation, up to and including the Church of Lenin, and which all of them feature self-sacrificial and moral-fetishist syndromes, coupled with an interpretation of human behavior in terms of a concept of sin (no matter what this concept happens to be named in a particular ideological variant, or whether it is recognized as such and named in that particular variant at all).

In fact, a part of the initial impetus which led to the formulation of this theory (the theory of communist egoism) arose from the personal contact of several of our founding members with the malpractice of one of the early pro-Situationist groups in Berkeley, named (appropriately) “Contradiction”, who busied themselves precisely with going around condemning, “excluding” (excommunicating), and “breaking with” everyone in sight in retribution for sins against various Situationist anti-morals; sins such as “being bourgeois”, “participating in spectacular life”, etc. The general name for the “sin” concept central to this particular brand of secular Christian ideology was “separation” — having “separation” in one’s daily life was the general form of reprobate behavior. That such “separations” might be a source of conscious misery of which an individual might gladly rid himself or herself at the earliest possible opportunity, without need of moralistic coercion, seemed never to occur to these Pontiffs, evidently because of their singularly ungreedy investment in sado-masochistic transactions.

— (cf. NEGATION, *The State and Counter-Revolution: What Is Not To Be Done*, (P.O. Box 1213, Berkeley, California, 94701), 1972, p. 11; also: Tom Woodhull, “Council-Communism, Wilhelm Reich, And The Riddle of Modern History”, *NEW MORNING*, January, 1973.).

Thesis 79

n1

It should be no secret by now that the secret of the economic anchorage of the concept of alienation in Marx is in none other than the exact, juridical-economic meaning of that term: to “alienate” is to sell; “alienation” is “transfer of property”; the very activity of commodity — or “quid pro quo” — exchange itself. Thus the theoretical comprehension of the alienation of man in capitalist society is grounded in the self-alienation of the worker; the fact that the proletarian must sell himself to capital for a wage, and thereby forfeit all control over his productive, creative life, and over the objective world which he produces in the exercise of that life — the fact of the proletarian’s self-dispossession.

The fact of his dispossession of the means of (re)production of his life under capitalism is thus only a corollary of his non-ownership of himself in production. Bourgeois political economy is the science of selling; of the social activity of exchange-value exchange and production. It is first of all in this sense that bourgeois political economy (and, for that matter, bureaucratic “Marxist” “political economy”) is “the science of alienation.”

Thesis 88

n1

To avoid confusion because of the way the term “man” is employed in the rest of the passage, we have altered the translation here, which read “the relation of man to woman” to read “the relation of male to female”.

Thesis 89

n1

“ORGASTIC POTENCY. Essentially, the capacity for complete surrender to the involuntary convulsion of the organism and complete discharge of the excitation at the acme of the genital embrace. It is always lacking in neurotic individuals. It presupposes the presence or establishment of the genital character, i.e. absence of a pathological character — armour and muscular armour. Orgiastic potency is usually not distinguished from erective or ejaculative potency, both of which are only prerequisites of orgiastic potency.”

— Wilhelm Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm*, vol. I of *The Discovery Of The Orgone*, World Publishing Company, (New York, 1971), pp. 360–361, (Glossary).

Thesis 91

n1

This is a bit of systems-theory state-space terminology. “Attractors” are the “ruts,” the “vicious circles” where evolution gets hung-up and tarries; where evolutionary trajectories are “captured”, sometimes for long periods. All of the major historical social-relations (“modes of production”; “forms of intercourse”, or “means of production” as Marx sometimes calls them in *The Grundrisse*) — the primitive communal, the “asiatic”, the slavery-based, the feudal, the capitalist, etc., can be seen as “attractors” in social evolution, with the “asiatic” mode of production (“Oriental despotism”) representing, as a highly history-resistant form, a particularly strong “capture”. See Hans J. Bremerman, “On The Dynamics And Trajectories Of Evolutionary Processes” in *Biogenesis And Homeostasis*, Springer-Verlaag, 1971).

Thesis 92

n1

Reification names the inversion of abstract and concrete — the treating of abstractions as if they were exterior things, and more specifically, the inversion of subject and object — the treating of objects or abstractions as if they were subjects; of subjects as if they were objects or abstractions.

Thesis 93

n1

The community of “sisters” is the society of radical subjectivity, the concrete unity of selves, the resonance of egoisms — turned on its head! Here lies the supreme reification. The would-be concrete particular is not a concrete particular (i.e. a subject, self-determinately objectified) at all, but rather only a particular case of the abstract universal (in this case, “sister”)... nothing other than an abstraction of an abstraction — concrete inversion, reification, being-for-another; a materialized self-spectacle. This reification is epitomized in ideological moralisms of “liberation” in “sisterhood”, such as when the spontaneous, subjective negativity by an individual ego is met with the aphoristic moralism that “Sisters don’t treat each other that way!”

Thesis 94

n1

“Subjectification” (in quotes) is here the contrary of “objectification” (in quotes; see the footnote to Thesis 91); it means not the making subjective of the objective, as in the production of knowledge (“internalization of the external”), etc. but rather the making more subjective of the pseudo-objective; of a subject who has been reduced to a pseudo-object — the return of subjectivity to the real subjects, previously “de-subjectified”.

n2

Obviously, this necessarily includes the self-objectification of this new inter-subjectivity.

Thesis 102

n1

While we criticize the use of the term ‘principle’ when this usage is a symptom of projection (self-disowning), as in phrases like “Let’s live up to our principles”, there is a usage of the term which, we recognize, escapes this critique. That is the usage where ‘principle’ serves as a synonym of “invariant”, “law”, “secret”, “key”, etc., as in “The principle of this machine is...” or “The principle of this natural process is...”, or “The principle of this social relation is...”, etc.

Thesis 112

n1

For a definition of the terms “constant capital” and “variable capital” see Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I. International Publishers, (New York, 1967), Chapter VIII, p. 209, et. passim.

Thesis 115

n1

The “National Caucus of Labour Committees” — N.C.L.C. — is the major left danger to the authentic revolutionary movement in the “West,” now zeroing-in on it for the kill from one side, at the same time that the increasingly desperate forces of classical private capitalism, themselves turning state-capitalist, zero-in on it from the other in the context of the present, and rapidly deepening, general social crisis. N.C.L.C. is about the only relatively live, dynamic tendency on the Left in the U.S., the only one which is in any sense contemporary with the present historical moment, and, despite its increasingly paranoid hysteria, is still lucid enough to be the only Leninist organization on the scene even potentially capable of bringing the Stalinist variety (pure-bureaucratic/bourgeois ruling-class; hybrid, state/private capital) of state-capitalist totalitarianism to power in the U.S. The organization has had a meteoric rise, and continues to grow rapidly.

In two recent articles on the “psychology” of working-class organizing practice, articles which contain many brilliant developments — secretly borrowing much from Reich — which we must

greedily appropriate, Lyn Marcus, the Fuhrer of N.C.L.C., reaches an almost Maoist (cf. quote in the third note to Thesis 37) pitch of psycho-pathology in his tyrantings on the subject of greed, self-interest, selfishness, etc.:

“The will of the worker must become the will to do that which is in the historic interest of the world’s working class as a whole, nothing else. If the workers passionately cling to any contrary sentiment of imagined self-interest that sentiment must be seized upon and ripped out of them. No human being has the right to believe or “feel” anything except that which impels him to act in the historic interest of the world’s working class as a whole.”

— (Lyn Marcus, “The Sexual Impotence Of The Puerto Rican Socialist Party”, *The Campaigner*, 7:1, November, 1973, p.44).

See also Lyn Marcus, “Beyond Psychoanalysis”, *The Campaigner*, September — October 1973, pp. 88–89, et. passim.

II. Annotations

Thesis 13

a1

We realize that this expanded concept of exchange maybe difficult to accept for a reader whose objective life has been dominated by exchange-value relationships. However, the critique of exchange-value is not to be confused with an abstract or moralistic negation of exchange itself as such. The concept of exchange is much “bigger” than the concept of exchange-value — or quid pro quo — exchange: of commodity exchange-relations. Exchange-value exchange is a transitory, an historical, disappearing necessity. Exchange as such, however, is a necessity of society in general, of social existence as such, both with regard to society’s relations to nature and with regard to its self-relations, the social relations proper:

“The labour-process... is human action with a view to the production of use-values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements; it is the necessary condition for effecting exchange of matter between man and Nature; it is the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence, or rather, in common to every such phase.”

— Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique Of Political Economy*, International Publishers, (New York, 1967), pp. 183–4. See also, Karl Marx, “Free Human Production”, in Easton and Guddat, *Writings of the Young Marx On Philosophy and Society*, Doubleday and Company, (Garden City, 1967), p. 277.

Exchange-value is historically specific to a certain phase of the development of the social productive forces (of the social individual): exchange in general is historically general, independent of any given form or stage of human society. Exchange characterizes in fact not only the labour-process generally, but every aspect of human activity; intercourse with other human beings and with nature. In fact, all interaction, social and natural, and all life-processes in general — conversation, dining, sexual intercourse, and even “passive” contemplation of nature — fall within this expanded concept of exchange — are at the very least, “exchange-of-action”. Even in one-sided gift-giving; even when someone gives you an object and you give no object in direct return — let alone an exchange-value equivalent in return — an exchange has taken place, though not an

exchange-value (commodity) exchange; not an exchange of the sort which reproduces the law of value. (In capitalist society there also exist various underdeveloped forms or approximations of exchange-value relationships, e.g. bartering — even the bartering of “favors”. In fact, *quid pro quo* — literally “this for that” — is, in a society based on privatized survival, a standard and a paradigm which pervades not only “economic” relationships as such, but comes to dominate all aspects of social life — including the most “intimate” personal relationships).

Communist society is inconceivable with any but the most minimal, marginal survivals of exchange-value exchange, but it is likewise inconceivable without exchange; exchange in objects, information, energy, experience, etc. between man and man and between man and nature — without what Marx calls “social metabolism”.

Thesis 38

a1

“Let’s face it: human relationships being what social hierarchy has made of them, impersonality is the least tiring form of contempt.” (Vaneigem, *op. cit.*, footnote 10, p. 36). It was a similar (though more isolate) disgust which drove Luis Nada, in the vapidness of the postwar years, to declare: “In general, I consider the human race to be a daily intrusion on my life.” (Quoted from *The Life and Times of Luis Nada*, by Anna von Schtuk, Ex Nihilo Publishers, 1974, p. 231.).

Thesis 46

a1

“Generalized self-management” is a term which has been used by Situationists to describe the mode of production of communist society. It refers to the process whereby we take directly into our own hands every aspect of social life. This must mean the determinate negation of Capital, commodity production, and of all separate powers, i.e., of all powers other than that of the associated producers themselves. Embryonic forms of self-management have appeared repeatedly through modern history. Its very possibility was first demonstrated in the Paris Commune of 1871, and throughout the twentieth century in the movements of the workers’ councils. Workers’ councils have arisen repeatedly, usually in critical situations where the ineptitude of the present owners of society had been clearly and practically demonstrated. On such occasions (Russia 1905, Kronstadt 1921, Spain 1936–37, etc.) proletarians have recognized that they’ve been running everything all along, and that now it was only a matter of running everything for themselves. If generalized self-management means “a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle,” c20 it can allow no accommodation to any higher authority, fetish, or reified social relationship. In the past, Situationists have clearly recognized that the importance of self-management is not only its form, but also and decisively its content — clearly “self-management” of the present world (i.e. of commodity production, etc.) is of little interest to a radical subject. They have been interested only in the self-management of the total and qualitative transformation of the world.

We have since expanded the definition of generalized self-management to include more sides of its manifold dialectic. As we now use it, it must mean not only the management by selves of the world (and presumably of a world of marvels), but furthermore it must mean the management

of self. What we are talking about is the dialectical unity of subject and object whereby our activity — i.e. our sensuous relationship with the objective world — becomes the realization, i.e. actualization i.e. the objectification of our subjectivity — of our selves. The making explicit of all that we are implicitly. This is largely what Marx was getting at when he spoke of man's environment as his "inorganic body" c21. A necessary meaning of Marx "I must be everything" c22 (emphasis added) now becomes clear in its many-sidedness. "We want the whole world to be our conscious self-creation" c23 i.e. not only the creation by but the creation of our selves. (This concept is to be further expanded in an upcoming article which will probably appear in our journal.)

Clearly therefore, any form of "self-management" which does not decisively put an end to all forms of commodity production and, indeed, of labour itself, loses altogether this side of the dialectic. In a "self-managed" workers enterprise (of e.g. the anarcho-syndicalist or Titoist model), the workers at best manage their non-selves, i.e., the process and the congelation of their own alien activity (non-self-management). "Generalized self-management" in its fullest sense must be the breakdown not only of all separate power, but of separation per se (legal, political, social, personal, etc.). We must be everything! Thus, "the proletarians, if they are to assert themselves as individuals, will have to abolish the very condition of their existence hitherto (which has, moreover, been that of all society up to the present), namely, labour. Thus they find themselves directly opposed to the form in which, hitherto, the individuals, of which society consists, have given themselves collective expression, that is, the State. In order, therefore, to assert themselves as individuals, they must overthrow the State." c24

What is generalized self-management, "if not the absolute elaboration of [man's] creative dispositions, without any preconditions other than the antecedent historical evolution which makes the totality of this evolution, i.e. the evolution of all human powers as such, unmeasured by any previously established yardstick — an end in itself? What is this, if not a situation where man does not reproduce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality? Where he does not seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?" c25 What if not all the world as the realization of our passions?

Thesis 53

a1

Max Stirner.

Thesis 75

a1

That is to say, they cannot be bought off within the narrow realm of corruptions I normally offered. We are the last to deny that "every man has his price." But just as Hegel demonstrated that mere quantitative differences can, past a certain point, actually become qualitative changes, so the radical subject escalates his price so high that it finally transcends altogether the realm of exchange-value, and for that matter, of all partial appropriations.

Thesis 80

a1

This does not at all mean, for Marx, that productive activity cannot become pleasurable, attractive, self-realizing activity. It only means that work cannot become “play” in the sense of frivolous play in class societies, where the subject’s survival is not immediately at stake in his activity, i.e. where his survival is guaranteed by the productive activity of others and where his activity is confined to a sequestered zone and specialized social category “play” which is not allowed to overspill into “serious” social production proper. “Work” activity thus has an aspect of conscious necessity, danger, which frivolous “play” activity lacks. This indicates how the resolution of the present contradiction between “work” and “leisure”, or “production” and “consumption”, cannot take the form of one-sidedly embracing the antithesis of work, “play”, but only of the unitary negation of both – that is, the negation of their contradiction itself; their synthesis: free creative activity, or “free human production”. There is another passage in *The Grundrisse* wherein Marx seems to pass over the same region of his conceptual manifold, with slightly more amplitude on this aspect of the question:

“It seems to be far from (Adam] Smith’s thoughts that the individual ‘in his normal state of health, strength, activity, skill and efficiency’, might also require a normal portion of work, and of rest from rest. It is true that the quantity of labour to be produced seems to be conditioned by external circumstances, by the purpose to be achieved, and the obstacles to its achievement that have to be overcome by labour. But neither does it occur to A. Smith that the overcoming of such obstacles may itself constitute an exercise in liberty, and that these external purposes lose their character of mere natural necessities and are established as purposes which the individual himself fixes. The result is the selfrealization and objectification of the subject, therefore real freedom, whose activity is precisely labour. Of course he is correct in saying that labour has always seemed to be repulsive, and forced upon the worker from the outside, in its historical form of slave-labour, bond-labour, and wage-labour, and that in this sense non-labour could be opposed to it as liberty and happiness’.

This is doubly true of this contradictory labour which has not yet created the subjective and objective conditions (which is lost when it abandoned pastoral conditions) which make it into attractive labour and individual self-realization. This does not mean that labour can be made merely a joke, as Fourier naively expressed it in shop-girl terms. Really free labour, the composing of music for example, is at the same time damned serious and demands the greatest effort. The labour concerned with material production can only have this character if (1) it is of a social nature, (2) it has a scientific character and at the same time is universal labour, i.e. if it ceases to be human effort as a definite, trained natural force, gives up its purely natural, primitive aspects and becomes an activity of a subject controlling all the forces of nature in the production process. Moreover, A. Smith is thinking only of the slaves of capital. For example, even the semi-artistic workers of the Middle Ages cannot be included in his definition.”

– Karl Marx, “Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie,” cf. Nicolaus, Penguin, 1973, p. 611–612, and David McLellan, Harper & Row, 1971, p. 124.

Marx and Engels early on referred to this transition from unfree to free modes of human productive activity as the abolition of labour’ – “Aufhebung der Arbeit” – see *The German Ideology*, Progress Publishers, 1968, pp. 70, 77, 86, 96, 224, 240, and footnote p. 70.

Thesis 87

a1

The ideology of hippy-slobbism will find no asylum here.

Thesis 91

a1

This is “objectify” not used in the sense of the subject who inscribes himself in the objective world through his activity; expresses his subjectivity in objects and objective states-of-the-world he creates, but in the sense of the subject who is treated like a thing; turned into a pseudo-object. These two senses are thus almost exactly opposite. Throughout, we indicate this second usage by enclosing the word in double quotes, to distinguish it from the unquoted usage.

Thesis 93

a1

Here again the sense of objectified differs from our normal usage, which is the reason we put quotes around it. See the annotation to Thesis 91.

Thesis 112

a1

In some cases these random mass killers prove to be not only the most apparent extremity of the war of all against all, but also a conscious self-critique of it. In many cases the active nihilist deliberately and consciously epitomizes everything he hates.

Thesis 116

a1

If you don't know by now that narrow egoism is self-denial, you might as well stop right here.

Thesis 118

a1

The word “game” is employed here, not in the sense of the theory of situations and of the construction of situations developed by the Situationist International, but in the sense of the “Transactional Analysis” ideology of psychotherapy.

III. Citations

Thesis 9

c1

“Along with the constantly diminishing number of magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolize all the advantages of this transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist reproduction itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labor at last reach a point where they become incompatible with the capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist-private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.”

— Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I, International Publishers, 1967, p. 763, emphasis ours.

Thesis 10

c2

The phrases “the associated producers”, “free and associated labor”, or “the associated workers”, occur again and again throughout Marx’ works when he seeks to name or characterize the social relation of production of communist society: association itself. This is something that Leninists of every variety scrupulously avoid mentioning for, with all their talk of the “socialist state” and “workers’ governments”, etc. they would much rather all this be conveniently forgotten. No more apt phrase could be contrived to name and describe the management of society as a system of workers’ councils than precisely “the associated producers”. A few selected citations of representative passages where this description occurs, are listed below:

- Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1, International Publishers, (New York, 1967). p. 80; vol. III, p. 437, p. 607, p. 447.
- David McLellan. *The Grundrisse*, (Harper and Row, 1971) pp.152.
- Karl Marx, *Capital (Vol. IV): Theories of Surplus Value (Part III)*, Progress Publishers (Moscow, 1971) p. 273.
- Karl Marx, “Writings on the Paris Commune” in *The Civil War in France (First Draft)*, Hal Draper, Editor, Monthly Review Press, 1971, p. 155.
- Karl Marx, “Instructions For The Delegates of The Provisional General Council: The Different Questions” #5: “Co-operative Labour”. p. 81 in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works, Volume 2*, Progress Publishers, (Moscow, 1969). Karl Marx, “The Nationalization of The Land.” p. 290, *ibid*.

Thesis 11

c3

Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts” in T.B. Bottomore, Karl Marx, Early Writings, McGraw-Hill, (New York, 1963), p. 155.

c4

This is Marx’ early term for what he later calls the “social relations of production”. See: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, Progress Publishers, (Moscow. 1968), pp. 89, 92, etc.

Thesis 13

c5

Karl Marx, The Grundrisse, in “Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations,’ Hobsbawn and Cohen, translators and editors, International Publishers, (New York, 1965), p. 84.

Thesis 14

c6

Karl Marx, “Money and Alienated Man”, in Easton and Guddat, Writings Of The Young Marx On Philosophy And Society, Doubleday (Garden City, 1967), pp. 271–272.

Thesis 15

c7

Situationist International (Mustapha Khayati, et. al), “On the Poverty of Student Life” (published by BLACK AND RED, P.O. Box 9546, Detroit, Mich., 48202) p.24.

Thesis 21

c8

Karl Marx, Theories Of Surplus Value, Part III, (Vol. IV of Capital), Progress Publishers (Moscow, 1971), p. 429.

Thesis 23

c9

Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (our translation) cf. T.B. Bottomore, op. cit. p. 158 and Easton and Guddat, op. cit. pp. 306–307.

Thesis 24

c10

Raoul Vaneigem, *Treatise On Living For The Use of the Young Generation* (English translation of part I available from Bureau of Public Secrets, P.O. Box 1044, Berkeley, Calif., 94701) p. 45–46.

Thesis 25

c11

Karl Marx, Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, in T.B. Bottomore, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–25.

Thesis 26

c12

Raoul Vaneigem, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

Thesis 30

c13

Heinz von Foerster, “Logical Structure of Environment and its Internal Representation”, in *Proceedings of the 1962 Design Conference*, Aspen, Colorado, R.E. Eckerstrom, editor, (Herman Miller, 1963).

Thesis 35

c14

Karl Marx, “Free Human Production,” in Easton and Guddat, *op. cit.*, p. 281:

“Suppose we had produced things as human beings: in his production each of us would have twice affirmed himself and the other... I would have been the mediator between you and the species and you would have experienced me as a reintegration of your own nature and a necessary part of your self...”

Thesis 36

c15

Ibid.

Thesis 40

c16

Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness; A New Concept of Egoism*, New American Library, (New York, 1965), *et. passim*. *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, New American Library, (New York, 1964).

Thesis 42

c17

Max Stirner, *The Ego And His Own*, Libertarian Book Club, (New York, 1963), p. 5, in “All Things Are Nothing To Me”.

Thesis 46

Citations 20–25 are found in annotation 1 of Thesis 46.

c18

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “Writings On The Paris Commune” (from the first draft, by Marx, of *The Civil War In France*), Hal Draper, editor, pp. 150–154.

- See also: Karl Marx. *The Civil War In France: The Paris Commune*, International Publishers (New York, 1968), pp. 54–61, especially p. 58.
- See also: Guy Debord, *Society Of The Spectacle*, BLACK AND RED (P.O. Box 9546. Detroit, Michigan, 48202), (Detroit, 1970), thesis No. 179 in Chapter VII “The Organization of Territory”.
- See also: “Situationist International No. 1”, Review of the American Section, June, 1969, p. 27.
- See also: Raoul Vaneigem, *Notice To The Civilized Concerning Generalized Self-Management*.

c19

Eugene Schulkind, *The Paris Commune of 1871: View From The Left*, Jonathan Cape, (London. 1972), p. 164. [The documentation contained in this book of the socialist tendencies within the Commune, and the influence therein of the First International, are, in general, astounding relative to what has been available before and quite thrilling.]

c20

Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, op. cit., p. 592. Vol. I.

c21

Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, International Publishers, (New York, 1964), et. passim. in the chapter “Estranged Labour” see also *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, op. cit., p. 85–99 where this concept is developed considerably.

c22

Karl Marx; see Citation 40; see Thesis 78.

c23

For Ourselves, “Preamble To The Founding Agreements” (see Appendix).

c24

Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, (Progress Publishers, Moscow or international Publishers, New York) closing line of Part One. In one edition (*The German Ideology, Part One, with selections from Parts Two, Part Three, and Supplementary Texts. New World Paperbacks, New York, 1970*) the text is arranged somewhat differently and the passage appears on p. 85.

c25

Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse in “Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations,”* loc. cit., p. 96.

Thesis 48

c26

Karl Marx, *Grundrisse in “Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations,”* loc. cit., p. 96.

Thesis 49

c27

In the words of Frederick Engels: “Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!” (Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France: The Paris Commune*, op. cit., p. 22, closing line of the introduction by Frederick Engels.)

c28

Karl Marx, *The Civil War In France*, op. cit., p. 61.

c29

Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique Of Political Economy*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 763.

Thesis 53

c30

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, op. cit., p. 272.

Thesis 54

c31

Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts”, in T.B. Bottomore, op. cit., p. 152 (in “Private Property And Communism”).

c32

Situationist International, “On The Poverty Of Student Life”, op. cit., p. 1.

Thesis 63

c33

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party”, in Lewis Feuer, Marx & Engels, Basic Writings On Politics And Philosophy, Doubleday, (New York, 1959), p. 29.

Thesis 64

c34

Raoul Vaneigem, *Traite do Savoir-Vivre a l’Usage des Jeunes Generations*, Gallimard, (Paris, 1967), P. 200. [translation ours.]

Thesis 66

c35

Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts.’ in T.B. Bottomore, op. cit., pp. 164, 165. etc. (see also Thesis 69 and Thesis 88).

Thesis 69

c36

Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts.’ in T.B. Bottomore, loc. cit., pp. 164–165, (Manuscript III; “Private Property and Communism”).

Thesis 70

c37

Karl Marx, ‘Money and Alienated Man,” in Easton and Guddat, op. cit., p. 272.

Thesis 74

c38

Raoul Vaneigem, *Traits de Savoir-Vivre a l’Usage des Jeunes Generations*, op. cit., Chapter 23: “The Unitary Triad: Realization — Communication — Participation”; Section 3 — “Radical Subjectivity”, pp. 255–258, and passim. [An English translation of this section of this chapter is available from RE-INVENTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE, P.O. Box 282, Palo Alto, California, 94302].

Thesis 77

c39

Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, translated by Martin Nicolaus, Penguin, (London, 1973), *passim*.

Thesis 78

c40

Karl Marx, *Contribution To The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy Of Right*, "Introduction". Quoted in *King Mob Echo Number One*, London, April 1968 (Post Box: BCM/King Mob London WC1), (cover quotation). [In some cases this has been translated as a slightly weaker "I am nothing, and I should be everything"].

Thesis 80

c41

Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, translated and edited by David McLellan, Harper & Row. (San Francisco, 1971). Pages 148–149. cf. Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, translated by Martin Nicolaus, *op. cit.*, pp. 711–712. Nicolaus, in true Maoist grey-life fashion, translates the German "Genuss" and "Genusses", which McLellan translates as "pleasure" and "enjoyment", as "consumption." He has indeed produced, as best as can be, the state-capitalist translation of the *Grundrisse*, as is evidenced also in his rendering of *ager publicus* ("common land", cf. Hobsbawm & Cohen; Karl Marx, "Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations", *op. cit.*, p. 67) into "State property" (see p. 471, footnote 620).

Thesis 81

c42

Situationist International, "On The Poverty Of Student Life", *op. cit.*, p. 24, (see Thesis 15 for full quote).

Thesis 84

c43

Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts", in T.B. Bottomore, *loc. cit.*, p. 167.

Thesis 88

c44

Ibid., p. 154.

Thesis 92

c45

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Hogarth Press, (London, 1949), pp. 79–80.

Thesis 98

c46

Raoul Vaneigem, *Traite de Savoir-Vivre a l'Usage des Jeunes Generations*, op. cit., [the first two sections — eleven chapters — are obtainable from Solidarity Bookshop, 713 Armitage, Chicago, Illinois, 60614, and very soon the entire text will be available from Tom Woodhull, P.O. Box 531, Berkeley, California, 94701).

Thesis 99

c47

Ibid., Chapter 21, “Master Without Slaves”.

c48

See Citation 19.

Thesis 104

c49

Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence Of Christianity*, translated by George Eliot, Harper & Row, (New York, 1957), passim. (See, for example, p. 73).

c50

Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, op. cit., Chapter 1, Section 4, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof”, pp. 71–83.

c51

F.S. Pens, *Ego, Hunger, and Aggression: The Beginning of Gestalt Therapy*, Random House. (New York, 1969). passim., and especially Chapter VII, “First Person Singular”, pp. 216–219.

Thesis 108

c52

Karl Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, Introduction, in T.B. Bottomore, op. cit., p. 44.

Thesis 109

c53

Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." Introduction (our translation). cf. *ibid.* p. 52 and John Lewis, *The Life and Teaching of Karl Marx*, p. 7 (frontispiece), International Publishers (New York, 1965).

Thesis 116

c54

Raoul Vaneigem, *Treatise On Living For The Use of the Young Generation*, *op. cit.*, p. 41, in Chapter 4, "Suffering".

Thesis 119

c55

Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Okonomie*, p. 143 (McLellan, *op. cit.*) and p. 706 (Nicolaus, *op. cit.*).

Thesis 122

c56

Situationist International (Review of the American Section) No. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

c57

Frederick Engels, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*, Part III.

See also: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Progress Publishers, (Moscow, 1970), pp. 144–145. [The same statement appears almost verbatim in Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, *Herr Duhring's Revolution in Science* (New World Paperbacks, New York), pp. 303–304).

c58

Ibid., pp. 34–35.

IV. Graphical Additions (by Lust for Life)

Cover

g1

From *Panic* by Topor (City Lights Books, 1965).

g2

Unknown by unknown.

Introduction

g1

From H.R. Giger's Retrospective 1964–1984 (Morpheus International, 1997), page 27. "Beggar".

g2

From Listen, Little Man! by Wilhelm Reich (Noonday Press, 1971), page 17. Illustration by William Steig.

Section I. Wealth

g1

From Une Semaine de Bonte: A Surrealistic Novel in Collage by Max Ernst (Dover Publications, Inc., 1976), page 196. In Third Visible Poem.

Section II. Individualism and Collectivism

g1

From Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll, (Grosset & Dunlap, 1946), page 211 (Chapter IV of Alice Through the Looking Glass, "Tweedledum and Tweedledee"). Illustration by John Tenniel.

Section III. The Dialectic of Egoism

g1

From Panic by Topor (City Lights Books, 1965), page 30.

Section IV. The Resonance of Egoisms

g1

From Going Going Gone: Vanishing Americana by Susan Jonas and Marilyn Nissenson (Chronicle Books, 1998), page 127.

Section V. Communist Society

g1

From Une Semaine de Bonte: A Surrealistic Novel in Collage by Max Ernst (Dover Publications, Inc., 1976), page 195. In Third Visible Poem.

Section VI. Radical Subjectivity

g1

From *Flatterland: Like Flatland, Only More So* by Ian Stewart (Perseus Publishing, 2001), page 283 (Chapter 16, “No-Branes and P-Branes”). Every point in space is really a multidimensional hypersurface.

g2

Birdcage from unknown by unknown.

Section VII. Pleasure

g1

From *Film as a Subversive Art* by Amos Vogel (Random House, 1974), page 210. From the Yoko Ono’s film *The Fly* (1970).

g2

From *Flatterland: Like Flatland, Only More So*, (Perseus Publishing, 2001), page 62 (Chapter 4, “A Hundred and One Dimensions”).

Section VIII. Sexuality

g1

From *Film as a Subversive Art* by Amos Vogel (Random House, 1974), page 155. From the Dusan Makavejev film *WR: Mysteries of the Orgasm*.

g2

From *Erotica Universalis, Volume II* by Gilles Neret (Taschen), page 653. Illustration by Hans Bellmer.

Section IX. Authority

g1

From *Listen, Little Man!* by Wilhelm Reich (Noonday Press, 1971), page 19. Illustration by William Steig.

Section X. Morality

g1

From *The Underground Sketchbook of Jan Faust* (Dover Publications, Inc., 1971), page 78.

Section XI. Revolution

g1

From *The Hundred Headless Woman* by Max Ernst (George Braziller, 1981), page 223 (“Quietude” from Chapter Six).

Appendix: Preamble To The Founding Agreements of *FOR OURSELVES. Council for Generalized Self-Management*

We have woken up to discover that our lives are becoming unlivable. From boring, meaningless jobs to the humiliation of waiting endlessly in lines, at desks and counters to receive our share of survival, from prison-like schools to repetitious, mindless “entertainment”, from desolate and crime-ridden streets to the stifling isolation of home, our days are a treadmill on which we run faster and faster just to keep the same pace.

Like the immense majority of the population, we have no control over the use to which our lives are put: we are people who have nothing to sell but our capacity to work. We have come together because we can no longer tolerate the way we are forced to exist, we can no longer tolerate being squeezed dry of our energies, being used up and thrown away, only to create a world that grows more alien and ugly every day.

The system of Capital, whether in its “Western” private corporate or “Eastern” state-bureaucratic form, was brutal and exploitative even during its ascent: now, where it is in decay, it poisons air and water, produces goods and services of deteriorating quality, and is less and less able to employ us even to its own advantage. Its logic of accumulation and competition leads inexorably toward its own collapse. Even as it links all the people of the world together in one vast network of production and consumption, it isolates us from each other; even as it stimulates greater and greater advances in technology and productive power, it finds itself incapable of putting them to use: even as it multiplies the possibilities for human self-realization, we find ourselves strangled in layers of guilt, fear and self-contempt.

But it is we ourselves — our strength, our intelligence, our creativity, our passions — that are the greatest productive power of all. It is we who produce and reproduce the world as it is, in the image of Capital; it is we who reinforce in each other the conditioning of family, school, church and media, the conditioning that keeps us slaves. When we decide together to end our misery, to take our lives into our own hands, we can recreate the world the way we want it. The technical resources and worldwide productive network developed under the old system give us the means: the crisis and continuing collapse of that system give us the chance and the urgent need.

The ruling ideologies of the world superpowers, with their interlocking sets of lies, offer us only the false choice of “Communism” versus “Capitalism.” But in the history of revolution during this century (Russia, 1905; Germany, 1919-20; Spain, 1936-37; Hungary, 1956) we have discovered the general form through which we can take back power over our own lives: workers’ councils. At their highest moments, these councils were popular assemblies in workplaces and communities, joined together by means of strictly mandated delegates who carried out decisions already made by their assemblies and who could be recalled by them at any time. The councils organized their own defense and restarted production under their own management. By now, through a system of councils at the local, regional, and global level, using modern telecommunications and data

processing, we can coordinate and plan world production as well as be free to shape our own immediate environment. Any compromise with bureaucracy and official hierarchy, anything short of the total power of workers' councils, can only reproduce misery and alienation in a new form, as a good look at the so-called "Communist" countries will show. For this reason, no political party can represent the revolutionary movement or seize power "on its behalf," since this would be simply a change of ruling classes, not their abolition. The plan of the freely associated producers is in absolute opposition to the dictatorial Plan of state and corporate production. Only all of us together can decide what is best for us.

For these reasons, we call upon you and upon all the hundreds of millions like you and us, to join us in the revolutionary transformation of every aspect of life. We want to abolish the system of wage and salaried labor, of commodity exchange-value and of profit, of corporate and bureaucratic power. We want to decide the nature and conditions of everything we do, to manage all social life collectively and democratically. We want to end the division of mental from manual work and of "free" time from work time, by bringing into play all of our abilities for enjoyable creative activity. We want the whole world to be our conscious self-creation, so that our days are full of wonder, learning, and pleasure. Nothing less.

In setting down this minimum program, we are not trying to impose an ideal on reality, nor are we alone in wanting what we want. Our ideas are already in everyone's minds, consciously or unconsciously, because they are nothing but an expression of the real movement that exists all over the planet. But in order to win, this movement must know itself, its aims, and its enemies, as never before.

We do not speak for this movement, but for ourselves as of it. We recognize no Cause over and above ourselves. But our selves are already social: the whole human race produces the life of each one of its members, now more than ever before. Our aim is simply to make this process conscious for the first time, to give to the production of human life the imaginative intensity of a work of art.

It is in this spirit that we call upon you to organize, as we are doing, where you work and where you live, to begin planning the way we can run society together, to defend yourselves against the deepening misery that is being imposed on all of us. We call upon you to assault actively the lies, the selfdeceptions born of fear, that keep everyone frozen in place while the world is falling apart around us. We call upon you to link up with us and with others who are doing the same thing. Above all, we call upon you to take yourselves and your desires seriously, to realize your own power to master your own lives.

It is now or never. If we are to have a future, we ourselves must be that future.

FOR OURSELVES!

February 16, 1974

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The Right To Be Greedy: Theses On The Practical Necessity Of Demanding Everything
1974

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