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We are living through a long anti-1960s. The various anticapitalist experiments in communal living and collective existence that defined that period seem to us either quaintly passé, laughably unrealistic, or dangerously misguided. Having grown up and thrown off such seemingly childish ways, we now think we know better than to try to bring heaven crashing down to earth and construct concrete utopias.

Despite our occasional and transient enthusiasms and Obamaisms, we are all political realists; indeed, most of us are passive nihilists and cynics. This is why we still require a belief in something like original sin, namely, that there is something ontologically defective about what it means to be human. The Judeo-Christian conception of original sin finds its modern analogues in Freud's variation on the Schopenhauerian disjunction between desire and civilization, Heidegger's ideas of facticity and fallenness, and the Hobbesian anthropology that drives Schmitt's defense of authoritarianism and dictatorship (which has seduced significant sectors of the left hungry for what they see as Realpolitik).Without the conviction that the human condition is essentially flawed and dangerously rapacious, we would have no way of justifying our

disappointment, and nothing gives us a greater thrill than satiating our sense of exhaustion and ennui by polishing the bars of our prison cell. Nothing can be done about it, we say. Humanity is a plague.

It is indeed true that those utopian political movements of the 1960s, in which an echo of utopian millenarian movements like the Free Spirit could be heard – such as the Situationist International – led to various forms of disillusionment, disintegration, and, in extreme cases, disaster. Experiments in the collective ownership of property, or in communal living based on sexual freedom without the repressive institution of the family – or indeed R. D. Laing's experimental communal asylums with no distinction between the so-called mad and the sane – seem like distant whimsical cultural memories captured in dog-eared, yellowed paperbacks and grainy, poor-quality film. As a child of punk, economic collapse, and the widespread social violence in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s, it is a world that I have always struggled to understand. Perhaps such communal experiments tried to be too pure and were overfull of righteous conviction. Perhaps they were, in a word, too moralistic to ever endure. Perhaps such experiments were doomed because of what we might call a politics of abstraction, in the sense of being overly attached to an idea at the expense of a frontal denial of reality. Perhaps, indeed.

At their most extreme – say in the activities of the Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and the Red Brigades in the 1970s – the moral certitude of the closed and pure community becomes fatally linked to redemptive, cleansing violence. Terror becomes the means to bring about the end of virtue. Such is the logic of Jacobinism. The death of individuals is but a speck on the vast heroic canvas of the class struggle. Such thinking culminated in a heroic politics of violence, where acts of abduction, kidnapping, hijacking, and assassination were justified through an attachment to a set of ideas. As a character in Jean-Luc Godard's *Notre Musique*

remarks, "To kill a human being in order to defend an idea is not to defend an idea, it is to kill a human being."

Perhaps such groups were too attached to the idea of immediacy, the propaganda of the violent deed as the impatient attempt to storm the heavens. Perhaps such experiments lacked an understanding of politics as a constant and concrete process of mediation. That is, the mediation between a subjective ethical commitment based on a general principle – for example the equality of all, friendship, or, as I would say, an infinite ethical demand – and the experience of local organization that builds fronts and alliances between disparate groups with often conflicting sets of interests, what Gramsci called the activity of "hegemony." By definition, such a process of mediation is never pure and never complete.

Are these utopian experiments in community dead, or do they live on in some form? I'd like to make two suggestions for areas in which this utopian impulse might live on, two experiments, if you will: One from contemporary art, one from contemporary radical politics. These two areas can be interestingly linked. Indeed, if a tendency marks our time, then it is the increasing difficulty in separating forms of collaborative art from experimental politics.

Perhaps such utopian experiments in community live on in the institutionally sanctioned spaces of the contemporary art world. One thinks of projects like *L'Association des temps libérés* (1995) or *Utopia Station* (2003), as well as many other examples gathered together in a show at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in Fall 2008, *Theanyspacewhatever*. In the work of artists like Philippe Parreno and Liam Gillick, or curators like Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Maria Lind, there is a deeply felt Situationist nostalgia for ideas of collectivity, action, self-management, collaboration, and indeed the idea of the group as such. In such art practice, which Nicolas Bourriaud has successfully branded as "relational," art is the acting out of a situation in order to see if, in Obrist's words, "something like a collective intelligence might exist." As Gillick notes, "Maybe it would be better if we worked in groups of three." So much con-

temporary art and politics is obsessed with the figure of the group and of work as collaboration, perhaps all the way to the refusal of work and the cultivation of anonymity.

Of course, the problem with such contemporary utopian art experiments is twofold. On the one hand, they are only enabled and legitimated through the cultural institutions of the art world and thus utterly enmeshed in the circuits of commodification and spectacle that they seek to subvert; and, on the other hand, the dominant mode for approaching an experience of the communal is through the strategy of reenactment. One doesn't engage in a bank heist, one reenacts Patty Hearst's adventures with the Symbionese Liberation Army in a warehouse in Brooklyn, or whatever. Situationist détournement is replayed as obsessively planned reenactment. The category of reenactment has become hegemonic in contemporary art, specifically as a way of thinking the relation between art and politics – perhaps radical politics has also become reenactment. Fascinating as I find such experiments and the work of the artists involved, I suspect here what we might call a "mannerist Situationism," where the old problem of recuperation does not even apply because such art is completely co-opted by the socio-economic system which provides its lifeblood.

To turn to politics, perhaps we witnessed another communal experiment with the events in France surrounding the arrest and detention of the so-called "Tarnac Nine" on November 11, 2008, and the work of groups that go under different names: Tiqqun, the Invisible Committee, the Imaginary Party. As part of Nicolas Sarkozy's reactionary politics of fear – itself based on an overwhelming fear of disorder and a desire to erase definitively the memory of 1968 – a number of activists who had been formerly associated with Tiqqun were arrested in rural, central France by a force of 150 anti-terrorist police, helicopters, and attendant media. They were living communally in the small village of Tarnac in the Corrèze district of the Massif Central. Apparently a number of the group's members had bought a small farmhouse and ran a cooper-

ity: In other words, communism, understood as the "Sharing of a sensibility and elaboration of sharing. The uncovering of what is common and the building of a force."

It is also the case that something has changed and is changing in the nature of tactics of political resistance. With the fading away of the so-called anti-globalization movement, groups like the Invisible Committee offer a consistency of thought and action that possesses great diagnostic power and tactical awareness. They provide a new and compelling vocabulary of insurrectionary politics that has both described and unleashed a series of political actions in numerous locations, some closer to home, some further away. The latter is performed by what the Invisible Committee calls – in an interesting choice of word – "resonance." A resonating body in one location – like glasses on a table – begins to make another body shake, and suddenly the whole floor is covered with glass.

Politics is perhaps no longer, as it was in the so-called anti-globalization movement, a struggle for and with visibility. Resistance is about the cultivation of invisibility, opacity, anonymity, and resonance.

ative grocery store, besides which they were engaged in such dangerous activities as running a local film club, planting carrots, and delivering food to the elderly. With surprising juridical imagination, they were charged with "pre-terrorism," an accusation linked to acts of sabotage on France's TGV rail system.

The basis for this thought-crime was a passage from a book published in 2007 called *L'insurrection qui vient*, or *The Coming Insurrection*. It is a wonderfully dystopian diagnosis of contemporary society – seven circles of hell in seven chapters – and a compelling strategy to resist it. The final pages of *L'insurrection* advocate acts of sabotage against the transport networks of "the social machine" and ask the question, "How could a TGV line or an electrical network be rendered useless?" Two of the alleged pre-terrorists, Julien Coupat and Yldune Lévy, were detained in jail and charged with "a terrorist undertaking" that carried a prison sentence of twenty years. The last of the group to be held in custody, Coupat, was released without having faced prosecution on May 28, 2009, on bail of 16,000, and was forbidden to travel outside the greater Parisian area. Late that year, fresh arrests were made in connection with the Tarnac affair. Such is the repressive and reactionary force of the state – just in case anyone had forgotten. As the authors of *L'insurrection* remind us, "Governing has never been anything but pushing back by a thousand subterfuges the moment when the crowd will hang you."

L'insurrection qui vient has powerful echoes of the Situationist International. Yet – revealingly – the Hegelian-Marxism of Debord's analysis of the spectacle and commodification is replaced with very strong echoes of Agamben, in particular the question of community in Agamben as that which would survive the separation of law and life. The question is the relation between law and life, and the possibility of a nonrelation between those two terms. If law is essentially violence, which in the age of bio-politics taps deeper and deeper into the reservoir of life, then the separation of

law and life is the space of what Agamben calls politics. It is what leads to his anomic misreading of Paul.

The authorship of *L'insurrection* is attributed to La Comité Invisible and the insurrectional strategy of the group turns around the question of invisibility. It is a question of "learning how to become imperceptible," of regaining "the taste for anonymity," and of not exposing and losing oneself in the order of visibility, which is always controlled by the police and the state. The authors of *L'insurrection* argue for the proliferation of zones of opacity, anonymous spaces in which communes might be formed. The book ends with the slogan, "All power to the communes" (*Tout le pouvoir aux communes*). In a nod to French philosopher Maurice Blanchot, these communes are described as "inoperative" or "désœuvrée," as refusing the capitalist tyranny of work. In a related text simply entitled Call, they seek to establish a "series of foci of desertion, of secession poles, of rallying points. For the runaways. For those who leave. A set of places to take shelter from the control of a civilization that is headed for the abyss."

A strategy of sabotage, blockade, and what is called "the human strike" is proposed in order to weaken still further our doomed civilization. As the Tiqqun group write in a 1999 text called "Oh Good, the War!": "Abandon ship. Not because it's sinking, but to make it sink." Or again: "When a civilization is ruined, one declares it bankrupt. One does not tidy up in a home falling off a cliff." An opposition between the city and the country is constantly reiterated, and it is clear that the construction of zones of opacity is better suited to rural life than the policed space of surveillance of the modern metropolis. The city is much better suited to what we might call "designer resistance," where people wear Ramones T-shirts and sit in coffee shops saying "capitalism sucks," before going back to their jobs as graphic designers.

L'insurrection is a compelling, exhilarating, funny, and deeply lyrical text that sets off all sorts of historical echoes with movements like the Free Spirit and the Franciscan Spirituals in the Middle Ages, through to the proto-anarchist Diggers in the English Revolution and different strands of nineteenth-century utopian communism. We should note the emphasis on secrecy, invisibility, and itinerancy, on small-scale communal experiments in living, on the politicization of poverty that recalls medieval practices of mendicancy and the refusal of work. What is at stake is the affirmation of a life no longer exhausted by work, cowed by law and the police. These are the core political elements of mystical anarchism.

This double program of sabotage, on the one hand, and secession from civilization on the other, risks, I think, remaining trapped within the politics of abstraction. In this fascinatingly creative reenactment of the Situationist gesture – which is why I stressed the connection with contemporary art practice – what is missing is a thinking of political mediation, where groups like the Invisible Committee would be able to link up and become concretized in relation to multiple and conflicting sites of struggle, workers, the unemployed, even the designer resisters and – perhaps most importantly – more or less disenfranchised ethnic groups. We need a richer political cartography than the opposition between the city and the country. Tempting as it is, sabotage combined with secession from civilization smells of the moralism we detected above: An ultimately anti-political purism.

That said, I understand the desire for secession: It is the desire to escape a seemingly doomed civilization that is headed for the abyss. I would argue that the proper theological name for such secessionism is Marcionism (an early Christian belief system) which turns on the separation of law from life, the order of creation from that of redemption, the Old and New Testaments. In the face of a globalizing, atomizing, bio-political legal regime of violence and domination that threatens to drain dry the reservoir of life, secession is withdrawal, the establishment of a space where another form of life and collective intelligence are possible. Secession offers the possibility of an antinomian separation of law from life, a retreat from the old order through experiments with free human sociabil-