

Is Politics Possible Today?

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to discuss and answer the question of the possibilities of doing politics today. It begins by stating that politics is indeed the inescapable condition of humanity in general, and as such it is a tragic condition. This is what is to be reformulated. It is an attempt to discuss the question of what kind of politics is effective today, in our contemporary situation.

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I. Politics is the inexorable condition of humanity and it is a tragic condition.

Therefore, we must first reformulate the question.

What kind of politics is effective today? Is it desirable and if not, can we attempt gestures that are not in vain to change them?

I would have liked not to dwell too much on current politics where a vicious circle has put democracy, as a political power of egalitarian freedom or freedom as non-domination, in a vice under three figures of adversity that feed on each other.

Neoliberalism undermines the good life and the social state. In response, it feeds two anti-democratic figures: populism and the religious orthodoxies of all monotheistic religions. In return, these two tendencies allow the neoliberals to pass themselves off as saviors in the face of fascism and fundamentalism. It seems difficult to escape from such a vice. It is becoming more pronounced in France and Sweden, for example, where right-wing parties are no longer afraid to consolidate their power by forming legitimizing alliances with these populisms. What until recently was considered despicable by those who held to the rule of law that emerged from the Enlightenment has gained a new right to exist. Now the Enlightenment enforces the "right government" à la Bodin by democratic principles and the control of cruelty.

We could have hoped that the dangers linked to the destruction of the planet and to the ecological disaster would have allowed us to re-establish a new common horizon.

But each small fundamentalism has its green policy or its technicist policy. And each one can make its market according to its belief in knowledge, science, progress, the forms he or she gives it: a molecular meat for all or a farm with Ronsard roses and a breeding of organic sheep. With or without migrants, taking into account planetary limits and global interdependencies or taking into account bioclimatic regions that look back to the 19th century peasantry.

The magazine *Limites* thus plays on the common sense of the Catholic right, ecology, and nature as a norm. Eugenics is not far away. Therefore what could have been common is pre-fragmented as is the neo-liberal society that dreams of individuals who would only be in contact

through the mediatization of innovation, meaning the connection of everything, the great dependence on energy and computers.

Populism wants war. Civil war in the USA with Trump, international or even nuclear war with Putin. A nuclear power plant receives bombs in a war that sees two nations, Ukraine and Russia with mixed blood, but which claim two antagonistic historical narratives.

In most Western countries, neo-liberalism is winning the day and is colored with variations that go from white to pink. On the African continent, post-revolutionary or jihadist conquest fundamentalisms are on the rise, and many countries are undergoing Chinese neo-colonial imperialism.

The countries of Eastern and Northern Europe have seen populist extreme right-wing groups make their mark and even take power. South America is struggling with its demons. Chile has just given up on a democratic constitution and is still working on its constitution. Colombia is thinking about its wounds and hopes in its renewal. Brazil will see the extreme right allied with the army under the figure of Bolsonaro again, and a beloved but ambiguous socialist figure with Lula again.

In the Middle East, both Israel and Palestine are bogged down. Democratic Syria has failed to emerge, Iran worries us about its nuclear ambitions and its support for dictatorships. Lebanon is struggling... it is a strange list of disastrous situations that should be drawn up. We can despair and consider that we have entered a great age of tyranny where we should keep a low profile to save our skins and go underground to prepare a radical alternative able to face the planetary disaster. As for ecological disasters, the planetary limits have been crossed and few care; as for social disasters, the pauperization is getting worse every year; and as for political disasters, the democratic and utopian revolutionary hope seems to have disappeared from the map. *Socialism or barbarism*, it sounded in 1948, to fight against the totalitarian cruelty. Our "becoming [a] ferocious beast" is not absolutely new, but it seems even more difficult to circumscribe. "The Revolution" (a word hijacked by E. Macron) is a political and moral monster if its purpose is to ensure the felicity of a few hundred individuals, and to consolidate the misery of millions of citizens. It is an insulting derision to humanity, to claim unceasingly the name of equality, when immense intervals of happiness separate man from man, and that one sees smothered under the distinctions of opulence and poverty, of happiness and misery, the declaration of rights which recognized no other distinction than that of talents and virtues." Thus Collot d'Herbois expressed himself in 1793 in front of the rich Lyonnais exploiters and monopolizers, said the women who didn't accept the inflation with "assignats".

However, the desire of emancipation remains, anchored in a myriad of movements of self-emancipation, popular universities, places of associative life, spaces of reciprocal help in food banks which are

politicized around a radical ecology, and then there are the Zone to defender (ZAD, inventive and courageous. In the order of the more classic struggles, the struggles against the labor law and to a lesser extent against the state of emergency, against police violence, for dignity and against racism, testify to a real liveliness, but nevertheless a minority. And then with the Yellow Vests in France we know that the so-called neo-liberalism is ready for a cruel repression, as it is ready to use the criminal law of the enemy. This law that excludes from the law those who are declared "enemies" according to the law of war, but enemies from within. In this criminal law of the enemy, only the individual is criminal, the law is that of war, one can or even must put to death. Kill boxes, drones... one kills in a deep state or in bright light in countries that have abolished the death penalty in criminal law, but find it without trial in the criminal law of the enemy.

So, what to do? The question is eminently topical!

II. What to do?

Serious ideological stakes, or ideological displacement that is worked.

There is no magic social transformation that would be linked to a ritualized event like the elections. The moment of the ritual has only one virtue, it can be de-ritualized, but otherwise things are played out upstream. To change the world, one needs first of all a discursive formation, that is to say a project, a utopia, an imaginary, and arguments that make another possible world sparkle, then a social formation, homogeneous or heterogeneous, that recognizes this discourse. And at the intersection, a political formation. For the French revolutionary period, the discourse was of the Enlightenment, the Third Estate and the party of patriots. We have not constructed this triad.

The social formation of the oppressed does not have a unified consciousness of its interests, locally or globally. Alienation remains strong. How many dispossessed people are there in this world? However, if those who have internalized the idea that each country must pay the debt like a family that keeps its accounts remain numerous, others are calling for a stop to the dismantling of health and education. The quest for critical lucidity is too often met with expert discourse that forgets about doubt and responds with conspiracy and fake news. It is on a legitimate desire of criticism which has become hypertrophied that it becomes difficult to assert any idea of "truth" whether it is scientific, subjective, or situational.

But how many are those who think that it is necessary to admit hierarchies and borders and that it is necessary to know how to stay in one's own place. The worse for equality. And equality is the only horizon of a democracy.

Why so much alienation? Because our discursive formation is colonized by the right. In France, but this is only one example, Marine Le Pen is the product of a long process which began after the events of 1968. The theoreticians of the right and of the extreme right decide to manufacture the hegemony of an anti-Marxist discursive formation that could capture the misfortune of the deprived on the side of the extreme right. Without having conquered all the ground, far from it, this work is well advanced because it has been supported by second-left and liberal anti-Marxists. In short, on this side the ritual event cannot do much. The social transformation as denaturalization of the social is certainly in the minds, but its dynamics seem to be on this right side.

So, no work is futile. To displace ideology we need scientific research, we need to know our possibilities and to maintain the critical spur, and for that not to be afraid to make alliances with all the places of criticism in hard science or in human science, the scientists are not all in the desire to optimize capitalism, to manufacture facial recognition and lab-grown meat. To have techno-scientific platforms engage in decisions that are ideological, and to act on this plan, leads to avenues of research that allow a subverted use of the new techniques, in short to think of socio-technical alternatives

and to be aware of global systemic risks. We need literary research, that is to say a new utopian imaginary to clear the dystopian imaginary that has been flourishing for so long and that requires more effort of imagination, not only to take out one's magnifying glass but really to imagine the "other". We need films, novels, debates, family debates on Sundays, at work around the coffee shop, we need amateur shows and songs. We need to affirm our dream world and believe in our dreams.

Most radicals in their desire for *buen vivir* want to abandon written, narrated, and filmed utopias and they instead declare that we must act, and make concrete and immediate utopias, acting where it was possible and urgent. I believe that we need to reconcile these beliefs, not only because the written word remains a good ideological vector, but moreso that the people of Marseilles are right to denounce those who would only have "mouths" and would never put into action their promises, whether they are amorous or political, would never put into practice the common good. But I also believe that the refusal of any projected theoretical thought is a mistake, a way of shooting oneself in the foot, that it is necessary to have a thought in advance and to rectify it, because we never start from nothing but from our lived and reflected experiences. But what is an experience? According to Canguilhem, human beings, by polarizing the world into values, create an anti-fatalism. This is why they act. There are therefore first value judgments, the cry of the heart "it is unjust!", then an activity to reduce the felt injustice. For Canguilhem as for Kant, sensations are already perceptions, they are already marked by the understanding. Without sensibility, no object would be given to us, and

without the understanding, none would be thought. It is only to the extent that they combine that critical knowledge can be produced. Experience is then based on the activity by which the mind freely orders the lived world, polarized into values. Knowledge and morality are thus in fact closely linked and linked in particular to orient the thought of action. The strategy of a movement rests then on this critical competence, which consists in experiencing the action and from one step to another, in revising it in view of a greater success or at least of a better adjustment to the analysis of the situation. The making of a critical knowledge is an operation which, far from arising from a comparison between a representation, a definition, and an object which would be external to the thinking subject, proceeds according to Canguilhem from an operation of connection carried out by the subject within its representations and in contact with the action as impulse. The critical position is both impulse and judgment; it is a criticism in action. Then comes the critical knowledge, linked to the indissociable moral and reflexive reversal on this impulse. The "experience" is then the combination of an experimental reason, in situation and of values put on the lived world. The "experience" would be a reflected, evaluated, and judged experience. So far from just repeating gestures, each one makes them evolve thanks to his critical competence; gestures complexified, sometimes abandoned or self-subverted. The resulting movement is based on what I call a dynamic of criticism. In this dynamic, emotions are fully-fledged faculties to judge in action. But these emotions are always linked to a reflexivity that allows making decisions, that is to say, to choose orientations. That these experiences are partial and biased is certain, but they are what make us living beings who continue to desire the best, the most beautiful, the most joyful, the most alive, and the most clever.

Among these dreams today disqualified, that of the hybrid, of the mixed race, that of the desire of spawning with the other, the different.

Identity logics always end up essentializing beings, declaring the only structures responsible for the oppression of majorities over minorities, by cornering victims into demanding protected and therefore separate places, reproducing ghettos in the name of the cause. This is why they are not emancipatory, at best they protect, at worst they reinforce social, mental and spatial segregation.

If in the 1970s and 1980s some people thought they could implement a strategic essentialism, it has gone wrong and today we have to rethink the question differently. We need to think of antidotes to all oppressions: gender oppressions, ethnicized groups, cultural oppressions of all kinds, ideological oppressions that will not only be dissolved by political and social non subordination. This will help, of course, in the long term, but in private contracts, in homes, in inherited and reproduced imaginaries it will remain present and tools will be needed to firmly refuse it. Because to obtain democratic control without controlling the potential of domination

of a majority cultural group on the culture and knowledge, with all the available forms in order to create a cultural counter-hegemony to the one we are experiencing.

"It is necessary to stop believing that to be free is to declare oneself independent to do evil"¹. For my friend Saint-Just, to do evil is to exercise domination, whether it is that of men over women, of the rich over the poor, of the old over the young, or of the young over the old... of some over others. This domination is an oppression, but in the same way that the oppression of men over women will not be stopped by producing a unique gender with two sexes, we cannot imagine stopping the oppression of social or cultural groups over each other, by simply making them disappear in an ideological acid bath. To reimagine the current conditions of freedom as non-domination supposes to think in a new way the religious, cultural, political coexistence, the religious, cultural and political hybridization. Finally, it is necessary to give back empirical reserves of freedom of conscience to the concept of secularism too often deviated by its association with the imaginary of the eradication of the religious, even of the eradication of the religious other. The ideal of those who founded secularism did not aim at neutralizing the religious, the political, the cultural, the minority, but at allowing it to be recognized in its very plurality in the school, which led to create effectively with the school a "safe space" for all. What does that mean? A place where otherness must be welcomed by teachers who must never hurt the conscience of a child or a family by derogatory remarks about a group, a religion, a people. Do not degrade, scorn, humiliate, disqualify... but welcome differences and put them to work for a school community. Even religious norms must be respected in their dignity, provided that they do not hinder scientific instruction and common education. On the other hand, religious, cultural and social quarrels and vindictiveness must be left at the door. The school does not have to be an eradicator, it must also preserve the freedom of conscience. Everywhere it would be necessary to take into account all the religious calendars so that no determining test can take place on a day considered as sacred by the family of a schoolchild. This would be a good arrangement and a good start. Schools should not force debates, but should provide tools for children to debate, to defend their opinions, their history and their worldview, and to learn to develop their point of view, as individuals and as members of a group. This cannot be done without a truly democratic political framework, and the school can only fulfill our desires if it is part of such a framework.

The wanderings stem from the impossibility of teaching democracy when it is flouted day after day in the ordinary world. The "safe space" is not there to create a fragile bubble, but so that in this elementary school common, the temptations of gate communities like ghettos can

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¹ Saint-Just 2004, p.764.

be thwarted. The process of this desire for non-dominance and non-segregation cannot be accomplished outside of a democratic context. They must accompany each other.

There are men and women, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and a thousand other ways of believing and shamanizing and thinking and laughing and living. We must protect this multiplicity, and to protect it, let it become even more multiple, not by favoring serial hegemony, but by making sure that each living culture hybridizes with every living culture, according to its subjective affinities. For subjectivity is not identity, and rather than thinking of a homogeneous and grey world, we should know how to appreciate the kaleidoscope of our incessant brainstorming and recognize that even in the face of adversity, it is not necessary to resemble each other in order to come together.

For if we inherit a history, a heritage, a tradition, which can either nourish us or oppress us – in fact often both at the same time – we are also actors of the history that we make and we can fork, squander, or make the inheritance bear fruit, we can also make our tradition fork, we can invent its future.

Economic and ecological conditions

The questions seem insoluble. If growth is there, then unemployment falls, but if growth is deployed according to the current rules of the market, not only does the planet go haywire, but the standards of social well-being fall and have been falling for more than 20 years at an ever faster rate, not only in terms of purchasing power, but in terms of social protection, of the right to health, to retirement, to education, to unemployment, to any procedure of securing a vast right to a dignified existence, a vast right to live in a living world recognized as such, that is to say in its fragility and consequently which must be respected in this fragility.

This knowledge is not new, but the natural parks which aimed at protecting ecosystems recognized as heritage have shown their limits for a long time. They have too often authorized the manufacture of garbage cans at their borders: there uranium is mined, there PFOE is manufactured, there cement, there glyphosate, a factory classified as SEVESO explodes, bodies suffer, children vomit, but the State affirms that everything is fine... They have also led to authorize a deleterious urban sprawl, the polluting car, the unfair taxes that weigh on those who live far from the center but need the center...

The world is one and either we protect it everywhere or we end up protecting it nowhere, as we know from experience now with global warming and the pandemic.

We should therefore give up this idea of growth, or, as heterodox economists tell us, propose a new calculation for this growth that includes on the side of gains what is today considered as losses. Quality

of air, water, food, life, protection of biodiversity could be part of the calculation. In order to invent this growth, it would be necessary to accept industrial decline and to value the growth in the number of farmers, teachers, caregivers, researchers, artists, etc. To increase the share of added value recognized for all these professions which certainly do not bring in money but which found the social relationship by educating, raising, and caring. For the Montesquieu's "*doux commerce*" is first of all the commerce of people, that is to say not slavery but the free links that they spin, knot, and weave, not in a commercial relationship but in a relationship of social affects: hospitality, friendship, fraternity, solidarity, even love.

The market relationship is harsh and calculating, cold by definition. The current squaring would consist in re-articulating the polarity between these non-market and incommensurable activities and market activities and in recognizing that the value of societies rests on the incommensurable rather than on the commodity.

Certainly, we live in a regime of scarcity of certain things, but also in a regime of overabundance of many others. Producing to destroy is no longer reasonable. We should therefore try to redefine the share of luxury and the share of ordinary in our consumption and offer luxury and ordinary to everyone.

It is clear that such a proposal consists in jointly rethinking our production and our consumption, but also in equalizing our living conditions. But such a process supposes, of course, and above all, to reverse the embedding of the economic and the political. Today, the naturalized economy dictates its laws to politics, to the point of having only managers in charge of decisions. Trump and Macron are archetypes of this situation of the embedding of politics in economics. The de-subordination of politics with respect to economics would allow it to be disembedded and thus to be able to conduct another public policy, including one on debt and money.

We could then recognize the fictitious character of money as a convention and thus the possibility of distinguishing debts over the long term that are certain public debts, possible to cancel as soon as they have operated their effect of satisfactory revival of life. Debts of medium duration (social actors) with rules allowing the initiative in favor of decarbonization and reasoned degrowth to make a new *buen vivir* (time scale three to five generations) and debts on the scale of a life, or of a sequence of life for individuals or private actors.

The Covid experience has shown us two things. Easy money exists. Billions have been poured into the sectors that the state manager wanted to revive, but this easy money has not been poured into the public hospital, research, or education. What is rejected is money that produces a return on investment that is not commercial but living. What is rejected is public expenditure or investment to make sociality bear fruit and not

individual enrichment. In short, we will not be able to say that we do not know that these choices are first of all ideological choices and that it is a question of changing ideology and therefore political economy. We need to reinvent the role of debt, of individual property, of collective or common property, of national goods. We no longer want losses to be nationalized and gains privatized. We want to live from our work and live well, not just survive.

The squaring then lies in the global economic situation, because it would be necessary to be able to act in concert with other partners, other countries, other organizations, this reversal will probably not be able to be done in a single country, unless we regain a banking power that has been despoiled, but not so long ago.

Banks are one of the first places that could be communalized and this depends on the state, so in our proposal on the political. The banking desubordination could be realized with our wages. It is our effort, our sweat, our time, our life that this money that we deposit every month, and we must take possession of it.

Reinventing political organization is urgent

When it comes to political organization, the rubble of the old parties seems to prevent anything from being invented today. The experience of the pitfalls is not transmitted and on this level, hope is in limbo. But this does not mean that we are not going to find something else, something more in line with our dreams, political cooperatives, a better articulation of the local, municipal or libertarian and the central, whether it be a national or wider centrality, since the questions to be resolved are on a planetary scale. This is urgent because the desire for a leader is very different from the desire for centrality and some people confuse it. Centrality is a relationship to the common law and it can and must even be realized under the cover of democratic control, while « leadership is in many ways a relationship of obedience that removes all responsibility, all anguish. Also, wanting to solve the political squaring supposes to think together the organization of the common and the state question. For it is this whole that is at the heart of our turmoil when disaster takes shape. The spring of 2020, in the face of Covid, the organization of the common was played out, for example, in the coordination of work at the hospital from March to June 2020, the state question in the elaboration of public policies without democratic control, or even sometimes without governmental control, of which the hospital has been the plaything for the last ten years. Many doctors warned that the hospital was going to collapse, they explained, demonstrated, went on strike, but the governments remained deaf and dumb. Caregivers have stood up valiantly thanks to their collective intelligence, department by department, when the undemocratic state has been unable to organize brigades of voluntary

auxiliaries. They signaled themselves and were never called: doctors just retired, nurses on leave are numerous to have been simply ignored. Then, the executive power which has in fact become an absolute power which concentrates the decision and takes the parliament for a recording chamber worthy of the Parliaments of the Ancien Régime. But the hospital cannot do without the State, it is an institution that needs a national scale because its investments are heavy. And the State cannot do without the hospital because it is the body invested to protect the population. It is the place *par excellence* where it is necessary to articulate social and state expenditure as a right of claim, and the social organization of work as a disobedience in the relationship to the state. Already in 1793, public assistance, of which the hospital is a part, is thought of as a "sacred debt" that society owes to its members. A department head must be able to invent, with his caregivers, his way of working in the best way possible within this logic of debt, where the immeasurable medical work is compensated by society, so that everyone is well cared for. We knew how to do it, so we have to do it better. Perhaps one day, this department head will no longer be a department head and will become a referent in case of doubt. The imaginary symphony orchestra with its fiery conductor and bored musicians cannot serve as a model. It is necessary to return to the baroque ensemble, where mutual listening, the flights of singular *affetti* make the quality of the musical as "ensemble".

But, if the State has a de facto protective or predatory function, the elaboration of norms by global institutions that decide with or without the States, but never with the people, on the circulation of capital and men, is also a State function. If the State is the pole that claims to decide for us, to organize our life, our survival, our well-being, then the State is also lodged in moving sovereignties that decide without us what happens to us, large international organizations like the WTO, multinationals, stock exchanges, complex NGOs... If we must think together the local common and the global, it is without the illusion that the local receptacle of the global can alone fight against its now unquestionable oppression. To think together, therefore, not to imagine that the common can alone overcome the molar State, but to question other scales of politics where our experience is only in ricochet; for the better when statism is synonymous with the generalization of the progress of social protection, for the worse when statism is synonymous with the confiscation of the tax deducted at source to pay oppressive debts, armed police, for the worst when statism is synonymous with the abandonment of the responsibility for health and the confiscation of the mutualist spirit of the social security. The State is tyrannical when it acts against the common good, against the general interest. The alibi of the trickle-down effect is long gone and if it can still be used to camouflage voluntary servitude, it is not a figure of the common good, but of the confiscation of the intelligence of each person and of the collective intelligence by the subordination

that is not only organized but sealed by the laws on work, the state of emergency, the universities, the auctioning of assets, in Greece, in France and everywhere else where short-termism is at work for a return on investment that only benefits the richest.

The question of democratic control today has become crucial, those who act, make life on a daily basis, cultivate, teach, care, create things, ideas, forms, receive clients, those who found homes, create beings, know intimately what is just or unjust, efficient or not, and it is necessary to valorize all the current and inactual forms so that they can, in democracy, be heard and listened to, so that their intelligence is translated into laws. Demonstrations, petitions, conventions, primary assemblies, referendum, all these tools must make the panoply of a political disubordination. This desubordination cannot be only local or national, it would be to fall back into the ferocity of the isolation indifferent to the fate of the common humanity and to ignore the reality of our situation.

This first squaring supposes therefore to rethink step by step our conception of the social and political links: in order not to have to produce in front of unjust laws of insubordination, it would be necessary to tend to this desubordination, to take again possession of our intelligence without giving ourselves up to leaders, persons in charge, decision-makers, administrators, soft consensus and without debate, words of authority, charismatic figures... It is thus a question of re-founding democratic institutions which guarantee this desubordination, organize it, protect it. It is not a question of waiting for the miracle of the common to happen, but of re-founding the common humanity and the tools of democratic control that could protect it.

But this will not be miraculous either. It is necessary to have this aim and to think at the same time of an overthrow of the current regimes. So we need to rethink revolution.

The hegemonic ideology that we have to fight makes of every revolution a moment of foreign interference or of conspiracy, refusing to grasp how a society, in rare moments, sees its process of resolution of contradictions accelerating, without, however, a plan has been elaborated beforehand in a limpid way. In the vocabulary of Sartre of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, a revolution is a kind of totalization without a totalizer but with tipping points that should be observed in detail. Realities are moving and uncertain, and when there is a union, ecological or even political radicalization, it testifies to a shift in consciousness. It can go stronger and faster than that of the organizations. It is then necessary to recognize the position of individuals as actors; as active subjects in history. We are far from a system that would function without observable human decision, far from structures that, as if by magic, would arrive at maturation; but just as far from these demiurge totalizers, whether they are named leader, conspiracy or authority of the political organization with political police force. A Revolution, and it is the first important

point, is first of all an event of subjectivities that resist in a new way to the oppression. They discover then that this resistance converges and becomes power of action, power of innovation, of utopia even. In short, there can only be a revolution at the moment when the ideological work is in a certain measure allied to the lived experience arrives at multiplying these subjective points of support. In the families, at the school, at the work, everything can change because everything is imaginable again.

But then begins the counter-revolutionary adversity that can go until the civil war. This concept has been used since the 1990s not to describe revolutionary processes but to describe the impossible revolution. Civil war is the entry into the scene of the counter-revolution and of what it generates of major obstacles within the revolutionary processes.

No avoidance of the problem is possible because revolutionary cruelty is generated by polymorphic counter-revolution. The stake for our historical consciousness is indeed there. Faced with those who affirm that any revolution inevitably becomes totalitarian, it is a matter of trying not to leave the tragedies of the past unresolved. Not understanding the present well is often not understanding the past well either. Now in the Russian Revolution there were early aspirations to authority, to the desire of leader and authority which is manifested from the start on the side of the base as well as the summit: "authoritarian democratic, at the base, authoritarian centralist at the top"², but from the outset authoritarian. Thus, if the bureaucratic counter-revolution is certainly to be credited to the absence of a long-term democratic culture, to the brutalization linked to the war, to the social division of labor, it is above all the product of choices, confrontations, and desires that crystallize in the end in the Party form, which relieves each one of his responsibility to make democracy live. Freedom of opinion, pluralism, elective principle are soluble in the desire of authority...

There is undoubtedly a bringing to heel of the soviets, but also a weariness to make politics, a desire to return home, and an obscure need of reassuring order. The 1920s were years of fusion and changeover when this desire for order took precedence over the libertarian revolutionary promise. Already in the 18th century, Saint-Just wondered what could have made men lose the desire to assemble and deliberate and desire to hand themselves over to a tyrant, a leader. For the latter, "men did not spontaneously abandon the social state. The wild life arrived in the long run and by an insensible alteration"³. "When the people lost the taste of the assemblies to negotiate, to cultivate the ground or to conquer, the prince separated himself from the sovereign: here ends the social life and

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2 Bensaïd 2017

3 Saint-Just 2004, p.1051.

begins the political life or the convention"⁴, still called in the text of the nature "report of force".

Now a revolution can be only a revolution of freedom. The freedom that expands by the freedom of the other and that founds thus a project of lived equality and not coercive equalization.

At a time when the desire for order is embodied in a desire for chieftaincy in all directions, there is something to ponder again. What we observe today of the handing over of oneself to chiefs, to incarnations, cannot augur anything good. The idea that the spirit of civil war, which today is called "agonistic democracy" in an oxymoron that is rarely used, can produce a new and desirable world seems very derisory.

There is a question that too often remains unanswered in the political responsibility of each revolutionary present, and it is both time and its strategic stakes. To know how to deal with temporality is also to know how to deal with politics, with strategy. At a time when the notion of strategy seems to be reduced to the choice of a qualifier to be attached to the word democracy: "agonistic", "participatory", "wild", "real", far from any fine thought of "broken time", it is necessary to reintroduce this question in a clear way. Often the revolutionary fact is seen as a moment of acceleration, mastered or not.

Walter Benjamin, and those who have read him well, have led to a Marxist critique of homogeneous and empty time addressed as much to Marxists themselves as to others. If the actors of history are thinking subjects, then time teems with branches, far from any historical determinism, far from the great programmed scansion and from a destiny conception of history. The time is the manufacture of the subject in the uncertainty and the lived perception of the rhythms, the accelerations, the *kaïros* not to be missed when it is a question of starting an insurrection. One might think that these are only epistemological sophistications of history for refined people who like conversations that unfold in beautiful gardens of knowledge. Yet in fact no, it is about what is missing today to those who claim to make radical politics, an awareness of time, therefore of strategy and tactics, a lived awareness of what is coming, of what must be tried, an awareness of what would be revealed as too late, as a missed move or too hasty. It is necessary to thwart the idea of a revolutionary event as a "purely natural phenomenon, controlled by physical laws" according to the expression of Marx himself. A "revolutionary crisis" is about beats, pulsations, rhythms, and therefore a contained impatience to choose the time parade that will make you get out of the infinite circle of antagonism between "parliamentary routine and leftism". Struggles are only effective if they are adjusted to the actual, lived temporality of the situations that have been accurately

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4 Ibid

analyzed. "The art of the watchword is an art of the conjuncture"⁵ said Bensaïd. An insurrection supposes maturation, but it is necessary not to let the situation rot, it is therefore necessary to have an awareness of "it is time". This is why the figures of the watchman and of Walter Benjamin's threshold of time are not mere literary formulas. The watchman knows that when the time comes, time must be broken in the event: there lies the revolutionary gesture.

This is why it is necessary to listen "in the manner of a psychoanalyst attentive to displacements and condensations".

But what does it mean when we continue to think that it is the party that is listening?

The party becomes what for Lenin it was: "the tool that founds the continuity in the discontinuous fluctuations of the collective conscience". But isn't this to credit it with a competence that it cannot have, because the consciousness of its members or even of its leadership is not less discontinuous? Can the apparatus and the real social movement then not enter in contradiction? We find again the question of a vanguard that can obviously become bureaucratized, even if it does not sink into the vulgate of a politics dependent on economic infrastructures. But politics is alive or it is not. It is always more multifaceted and alive than it is possible to predict when it is revolutionary. This is why there is no assimilation of social positions to political positions, and because of this very fact it is necessary to reject from the outset the primacy of the party over the classes it represents, just as it would be necessary to reject the professionalization of politics, the bad temptation, under the guise of the responsibility of the representatives before the represented, of the imperative mandate. It is necessary rather to foresee a "right of recall of the deputies" because it is necessary to be able to deliberate freely in order not to empty of all content the very idea of democracy. The latter because it rests on the effort of a heterogeneous social to govern itself must invent its own unpredictable and determining syntheses of what can happen. Therefore the real question is that of the plurality of organizations for the same class and thus the taking into account of the heterogeneity and the plurality of antagonistic tears in the same social world. Without plurality upstream, there is no synthesis to be made and thus no elaboration but rather an imposition.

The doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat conflates the party, the State, and society within the same entity. It is then finished with democracy and with the confidence given to the heterogeneity of the social. And in fact, without heterogeneity assumed as such, there is no more democracy. Beyond that, politics no longer exists, it has been dissolved in the administration of things.

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5 Bensaïd 2017.

Rosa Luxemburg knew intimately that socialism would be dissolved if a minority, even if it was proletarian, organized a new domination. It is therefore necessary to think jointly the art of reinforcing the extra-parliamentary action and the parliamentary art of politics. Far from this antagonism "parliamentary routine and leftism in the society", it is necessary to combine the two sides, and to militate to prescribe new elections and a constituent. Rosa Luxemburg, will be the only one to worry about a telescoping of the military decision and the political decision, of the confusion of the roles and of the confusion of the state of exception and the democratic rule. Faced with a party that wants to decide and believes itself to be clairvoyant, it revalues public opinion, those social forces that make the drum beat in the situation of any revolution. By suppressing democracy, what is obstructed is the living source of social knowledge and its competence to change the world. Without democracy, indeed, bureaucracy triumphs.

The tension between institutions and subjects of history, between communalist powers and state structure, party, class, proletariat, parliament and constituent, international, trade union, state, all these great concepts are to be re-examined and subverted in the light of their disguise or their abusive simplification, to ask ourselves what necessary roles they have played, what obstacles and impasses to reflect upon and bypass they have produced. It is not only a matter of history. At a time when the forms in which politics could move are no longer obvious, it is a way of giving ourselves light to become inventive again and to know that if the State is, as Foucault says, only one of the forms of governmentality, it is illusory to want to abandon the State for the benefit of the only civil society in islands or archipelagos, just as it was mortifying to renounce the powers of life of society for the benefit of the party-State.

There has never been a direct percolator from the ideas to the texts, from the texts to the social worlds, from the social worlds to effective politics. But, we have to advance with our political tinkering from the smallest child that resists the oppression by the very anorexia, to the most powerful union that could decide to think beyond its tradition, from the most fleeting of situations to the most structural, from the briefest of moments to the longest of projections, from the most local to the most cosmopolitical. We have to because cosmopolitics is not the global politics but the recognition at each scale of action that there are not decision-makers and agents, but free subjects, actors who can abdicate or resist, invent or repeat.

Is this a return? A return to Kant and the French Revolution of the Declaration of Peace to the World? Is it contrary to Freud? To Lacan? Is it still this illusion of a sovereign in the house of reason?

I believe that there is never a return to the native land, only tools to clear a path and yes, we must invent a cosmopolitics at the level of Freud and Lacan, but above all at our level of women, men, children in an ethic

that is as new as our desire to live in a living world and a respected earth.

Canguilhem, in the 1930s, quoting Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, calls for organization in the face of fascism: "What is the great action that is not impossible at the time it is undertaken? It is when it is accomplished that it seems possible to common beings. He addresses high school students thus: "The problem is to choose between an attitude of submission to historical contingencies or necessities, whether one considers them metaphysical or physically founded, and an attitude of resistance or rather of organization."

Time is always running out, that's our lot. But waiting for the eve of a disaster to attempt a gesture of organization, it is cruelly lacking.

So yes, politics is possible but it supposes from now on utopian imaginary, diffusion of dreams, and nevertheless this effort of organization.

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