

Against non-life

Anarquía y Comunismo

December 12, 2017

Today the desire to cast off our current way of life is taken as common sense. Whether it's the life of others we desire to take on or a completely different way of life; striking a commodified humanity is the passive acceptance of the existent which clashes with generalized dissatisfaction.

The daily movement which makes up our lives could be summed up as the coming and going between our homes, productive centers and centers of consumption. These various places in which proletarianized humanity moves about incarnates the compartmentalization of their lives: households have become more and more extensively transformed into overcrowded cubicles, veritable prisons for human rest; when one works it is not done to fulfill one's own needs, but rather to meet the needs of commodity-production, and one's work merely supplies for some bare necessities, which are also commodified; one's rest and leisure time, in which one can finally dedicate to oneself and to the others we are separated from, due to the very obligations and privations produce by capitalism, is generally spent in front of screens or around the consumption of other commodities, under the same crushing weight as the rest of our social obligations; we are as compelled to entertain ourselves as we are compelled to produce, under the same constraints of time and energy. Further, there is the time spent going between places by machines, made by Capital, apt for the circulation of wage slaves within it. Within the overcrowding of people in transport, their physical closeness is contrasted with their real isolation; obliged to find each other there, the way that they avoid each other demonstrates their mutual isolation. The conditions which condemns them to this overcrowding are the same which keep them isolated. All of this activity is the result of a single fact: the reduction of humans to mere carriers of labor power.

The lack of control over our very lives also show up in our affect privation: in the apathy and incommunicativeness with those we live with; in the competitiveness and discord at work, where every co-worker is a potential snitch; in the neurosis and dependency which entail our romantic relationships; and the endless litany of frustrated attempts to break this isolation, poor substitutes for genuine comradeship and genuine communication. What unites modern slaves is their separation, and this brings about an impoverished affect which then further reproduces this isolation.

In our times, tedium, boredom and weariness are commonly shared feelings among those who live in the capitalist zones of peace and comfort. For much of the rest of the world there are the most miserable conditions of exploitation, hunger and war.

Despite the generalization of this nonsense which characterizes our times, a certain common sense sensitivity gives an account of this generalized dissatisfaction: each time someone demonstrates the tedium which they claim to deal with everyday at work; each time someone asks you how your week was; every time one wonders about their youth, which went by so fast and which only remain a few barely noticed moments of real life. The problem is that when people recognize their misery, and that of others, they often square the blame on some personal failure, or on some unjust or accidental meting out of opportunities – always tied to the logic of success and comfort of the dominant ideology – or as the inevitable consequence of a supposed human condition.

But there are those of us who do not think that we suffer from an ineluctable destiny and we know that that which this society tries to offer us as its best (success, happiness, 'love,' etc.) involves the same existential misery. Rather, we conceive the central cause of all of our miseries the following: the existence of work, money, the commodity-form, class society, the State, etc. We conclude that the poverty of the content of our lives is the direct result of the existential conditions which make impossible our control over our lives. So that if we want to take back our lives and end our misery, this cannot occur without tearing up from the root the material base of the totality of the existing order.

It is here where our understanding of the existent, and about the revolution to bring this all to an end, becomes fundamental: what has condemned past generations of struggle is their overlooking of Capital as the central nucleus of all of this, with their aspirations to revolutionize its management, a point of view that still dominates among those who clamor for social revolution. We do not deny their good intentions, but we think that their understanding of Capital and its overcoming, is still narrow and superficial. Their revolutionary understanding barely skims the fundamental pillars of capitalist civilization¹.

As we organize ourselves we do not look to create niches in which we seek to save ourselves from our misery. If we act it is because we have conceived two options: either we organize ourselves for the overcoming of this errant stage of humanity, or we abandon ourselves to its fate, with the abdications and miseries which this implies.

We believe that if capitalism is the reign of the separations which compartmentalize our lives then communism and anarchy must be the suppression of all separation and the reclamation of the control over our very lives, and of our full realization as individuals in collectivity.

Communization or misery!

Addendum: We asked 'Anarquía y comunismo' about their use of 'ultra-left' in their piece and they gave us this illuminating response demonstrating how 'ultra-left' is used quite differently in the South American context:

¹ In the case of the ultra-left, the idea that consciousness is something that must come from above to proletarianized humanity, without which it would not be able to understand anything, condemns them to an immediacy which would could only aspire to reform the existent, even in its most subversive expressions. Something different, but similar happens in certain sections of anarchism which still touts self-management, forgetting that capitalism is not just those who incarnate it (bosses, the bourgeoisie), but that it is a whole set of social relations, and that it cannot be done away with by simply eliminating the bosses and self-managing the same ol' bullshit. Other sections of anarchism seem to get closer to the root of the problem, critiquing the whole of capitalist civilization, but filling itself with its ideas and practices. The idea that the only thing left to do is to hurl at capitalism all the hate and rage which builds up day by day within us has created a certain nihilism, whether acknowledged or not, which in its way evidences the notion that capitalism is the only horizon possible for humanity.

The term ‘ultra-left’ tends to be an ambiguous one. In Chile, and probably throughout South America, the term is principally understood to denote the distinct varieties of existing Leninisms, which is to say, the positions of pseudo-radicalized Social Democrats. At any rate, it is generally contemptuously used by other more moderate Leftists, though it is possible to find some groups or tendencies which use the label as their own. Some other groups that would wear this label would be Trotskyists, Maoists, Guevarists and maybe even some [Left]Liberatarians.

But those who collaborate with ‘Anarquía y comunismo’ bulletin also understand that ‘ultra-left’ includes the European communist currents that effectively broke with social democracy, and were early on attacked by Lenin in his famous text, “‘Left Wing’ Communism: An Infantile Disorder.” Such currents correspond with the communism of German-Dutch councilists and the Italian Left-Communists. The contribution of these revolutionary tendencies are, of course, included in the ‘Anarquía y comunismo’ bulletin and in fact the development of these tendencies is where one can obtain robust arguments against the vanguardist notion of “consciousness” that is found in all forms of Leninism.

We thank you for your translation and dissemination of this text.

Abrazos!

A&C

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