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Bernard Lyon

17 Theses on Communism

1997

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Originally published in *Théorie communiste* n°13, 1997,  
published and translated in memoriam of Bernard Lyon  
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## 17 Theses on Communism

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1. Production does not constitute a sphere that is separate from all other activities, it is "absorbed" within relations that are all productive relations. "Absorbed" means that the result of the activity is not opposed to the activity, that the objectification of the activity is that of relations which, although productive relations, are not "relations of production". All the relations are relations between individuals whose singularities are no longer a contingency but are in fact their actual relations. Communism is not a mode of production; all activities are not reduced to a common norm that is immanent to each of them (value, surplus-value, the surplus product in general).
2. For each activity people gather in networks. Each network has a different character and their basis may be geographic, thematic or emotional. As we said, they encompass material production. The networks are not "structures", i.e. they are not subjects that differ from those who form them, but rather voluntary means of decision-making and practices in all domains; they constitute praxis itself.

3. The central element of praxis is the *palabre*<sup>1</sup>, which is at the same time antecedent, concomitant and subsequent to all action. The palabre is the mode of decision, of control and rectification of all acts; it has no end. It includes all activities, and for all activities we take the time to go right to the (provisional) end of the palabre. The palabre is knowledge of the real, conscious action. Conscious history means that we come to an agreement!
4. Within a network, each member is more or less a "person-resource" for an aspect of the network's activity. Knowledge and competences are diffused within the network by all the person-resource. In this way, within the network, the decision and the execution contain learning and research that are not separate from the palabre. In the network everyone constantly, and each in their turn, totalizes the action of the group, and therefore of the community, through the palabre. The speech which circulates incarnates the community in action.
5. The quest for the best possible decision, for the maximum possible points of view, for an action that can be changed, or even canceled, not weighing down the future, is the constant concern of the palabre in and between the networks. Conflicts are never conflicts of interest because there is no situation to reproduce in which the conflicts are insoluble. Each individual participates in a multitude of networks, which is itself a network of networks. There are no "public networks" and "private networks," since all of them are "public" and all are "informal".
6. Networks are in constant transformation, they diversify, emerge, spread or disappear in relation to the tasks

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<sup>1</sup> "Palabre" is a French term meaning "endless discussion". Because of its significance in what follows we have left it untranslated

that are given to them. Individuals practice nomadism between the networks, those they find already in existence for an ongoing activity, and those they create for a new activity. The network is a place and a moment as changeable as the lives of the individuals who form it.

7. There is not a super-network incorporating the totality of networks. Each network can unite with other networks for a particular action on the global level. Indeed this is constantly necessary in order to apprehend the becoming of each local or sectoral action. The possibility that a network specializes in the universal (large-scale orientations) is contained in the very movement of diversification, since such specialization involves a closing in on itself and its problem. In this way the problem, although it concerns everyone, can be treated as though it concerns others that the network thus tends to manage. But this possibility is normal, it is a tension towards the universal. Nomadism and attraction will always be there to end up dissolving these networks which are a permanent aspect of the totalization and are permanently reabsorbed by other networks. It is also in this way that communism totalizes and projects itself.
8. Communism is not a "society", the relations do not separate the individuals who relate to one another, their relations reunite them without thereby constituting their separation as a *social* bond. Individuals are not submerged in "the social", there is no average individual belonging to the community, whose independent existence as society would signify its division into classes and its representation by the dominant class or its crystallization in a network of networks.
9. With communism the sense of history as the history of capital as movement of accumulation ceases to exist.

”Progress” was the programmatic version of the meaning of capital as development of the productive forces. Far from liberating the productive forces, communism abolishes them, and absorbs production into individual relations. Conscious history is not a conscious meaning of history, a visible hand instead of an invisible one.

10. Every activity has its end in itself, every production is directed towards a need that it satisfies. People communicate their products to help each other, to please. They don't receive products to "consume" them, but to realize the goal of their production. That is to say, themselves in their relations to others. With communism the individual is the end in itself, the individual realizes the substance of products even if they disappear in that moment.
11. Inter-individual relations are not a sum of contracts; it is in their immediate and concrete form that communism exists as a non-societal totalization.
12. There is a command over the implications of all actions in relation to nature, which implies realization of that which underlies ecological demands through the abolition of nature, as necessary outgrowth of the society that is itself abolished. There is once again nothing more than the inorganic body of man as integrated element of communism, as objectivity of these relations.
13. Conscious production by everyone of their individual and transindividual lives immediately implies the production of human beings in a demography which integrates inorganic bodies. This is the precondition of a harmonious occupation of the planet. The absorption of production by relations produces the end of the numerical explosion of human beings, and produces frugality. Communism knows nothing of famine or obesity. Productive

forces cease to exist when unchained from capital. The palabre takes its time.

14. The permanent revolutions of the capitalist labor process unleash an accelerated transformation of all the relations and all their material incarnations. It becomes increasingly impossible to "move with the times", because of the accelerated obsolescence of objects and modes of being in the context of an increasingly obligatory uniformity. Communism, the new mode of production of life, is total diversification, end of all norms; but it is the end of all "development"; tranquility and solidity, nomadism and polyglotism, reflection and wisdom; [sic]
15. Networks are human groups. They concern all the aspects of life. The feelings which characterize the relations between people are: love, friendship, respect, compassion. Relations are built of reciprocity, all that orders them is the recognition of the self in the other as a unique individual.
16. Science as productive force is abolished along with all productive forces. The dialectical knowledge of humans about themselves, their world and the practices which unite them no longer constitute science.
17. The history of communism is the memory of individuals. There are decedents and hypercomplex lineages as a result of widespread polyandry and polygynie. After the communist revolution there is no more society.

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