

Pre-

The Logic

Occu-

of Occupation

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Someone stands on a table and yells, “This is now occupied.” And that’s how it begins.

*The New School, New York City
occupied from Dec 17-19, 2008*

- I. Days and nights of conspiracies beforehand, materials in waiting, meetings folded within meetings, tension dripping like sweat from the palms of individuals who a week earlier never believed they'd be at the front of the barricades in their very own school. A panopticon of consumption and labor turned into a zone of offensive opacity. Identities that clouded our communication evaporate before our eyes and we see each for the first time as not who we are but how we exist. Adverbs replace both nouns and adjectives in the grammar of this human strike, where language is made to speak for the very first time without fear of atrophy.

An occupation is not a dinner party, writing an essay, or holding a meeting; it's a car bomb. The university is our automobile, that vehicular modem of pure alienation, transporting us not outwards across space but inwards through time. If our goal is the explosion of time, then occupation is our dynamite. We use our spaces and bodies as bombs and shields in this conflict with no name. Indiscernible, we sever the addiction to visibility that only guarantees our defeat. Thought has no image, and neither shall we. Shards of words bounce off inoperative objects and reverberate through the occupied halls, telling a story of accomplished impossibilities and undecidable victories.

- II. The university shall never again be merely the lukewarm appendage to civil society that our (hypo)critical theorists so highly acclaim; rather, as our friends in Greece have shown, the university can also be an appendage to civil war, a space in which impenetrable bodies and inflammable knowledges can conspire towards the dissolution of their very condition, that is, separation. Yet it is exactly that sharing between life and thought that is preemptively banned from the territories marked under the sign "university." Such territories betray their innocence not only in their concrete unfolding, but in their very name.

There is nothing “universal” about the university anymore except the universality of emptiness. Students and professors spend their waking lives covering up this void with paltry declarations and predictable nonactions. The void should no longer be avoided; it should be unleashed.

Seceding from the university is no longer enough. One must bring it down as well.

- III. The New School for Social Research, that walking archive of decay, lives off the consumption of potential threats to its own institutional perpetuation. The labor of knowledge that fills journals, books and classrooms produces a social catalogue of investment opportunities for the managers of capital and the administrators of security. Every insight into the structure of social life produced therein is formulated as a proposal for modifications in the measurements of our prison walls. This activity of producing novel recommendations for the continued submission of the population is called *critique*.

Critique holds the key to the meaning of the present, for it is now by means of critique that every possible liberation is foreclosed. Notice an abomination in the distribution of sensibility we call experience? Critique it, submit it, and be assured that the object of your outrage will be incorporated into the next year-end report under the heading, “To be Developed.” Critique illuminates all the errors of a society that its managers have overlooked. It is the perfect interlocking mechanism of stagnation, stunting the growth of burgeoning, subjective revolt by offering one a whole buffet of irresistible, irrelevant options for “change.” A release valve for intellectual dissonance, critique today resembles the state-sponsored “strikes” of communist countries, where the desire for resistance is satiated by a regimented diet of acceptable means of conflict, supervised by its very enemies. Critique must

be abandoned in favor of something that has no relation whatsoever to its enemy, something whose development and trajectory is completely indifferent to the nonlife of governance and capital.

By nicely folding unruly subjects back into the order of horizontal domination, the New School fulfils its legacy as site of *liberalism*, that glorious ideology and practice of self-sponsored subjugation. Its reputation—its historical image—is the means by which it impales the present on the spike of the past. The only way to escape this slow death is to abolish its history altogether. No more founding moment, no more exile, no more nightmare; no more alibis, no more justifications, no more memories. The New School is dead, and with that we are born. We are an image from the future, and the past is yet to come.

“Social Research” is the name for the mechanism by which ideology invades its most salient critics. Its purpose is to account for all the parts of the social whole, and to organize it in a way that is presentable to the police for the care of the population. The police-care of “social research” is one of our enemies, and we can no longer use that phrase in good faith. We are moving from the New School for Social Research to the New School for Social War.

- IV. How does one block the inertia of banality that structures our daily rhythms? Not by activating the identity of a political subject within us, an identity which only works to tailor more precisely the clothing of our subjugation, but by demobilizing the field of vision before us. For every object we see and every movement we envision is already a fossilization of our desires, and in order to truly wrench open a course of action, we must close down every route we’ve been given. Our dreams provide no directions and no maps. It is rather from within the territory itself that our imaginations can be constructed.

The intersecting vectors of capital and governance bind us to forms of living that are not straightforwardly deflected. It is easy to stop exploiting others for a day; it is hard to stop exploiting oneself. We are not up against an enemy that can be knocked down and trampled over; we are positioned within an enemy that must be stripped away. Every site houses the potential for this stripping, but not every time welcomes this interruption. The task of the provocateur is to probe the locations that stitch together their own circulation within the metropolis. One must listen to the tempo of authority that codes the functions, logics, and schedules of order on every block. Penetrating the secret of every site, it is only a matter of time before time can be exposed therein too. There is a cadence to chaos, and if its notes are played right, inertia's silence will shatter like glass.

- V. Unalienated activity doesn't "just happen" but neither is it so well planned. Only its conditions can be staged, and from then on, nothing is certain. But if one can achieve even that moment, that break-through, then nothing else matters.

We notice three moments in this gesture: solidify, probe, strike.

To solidify is to build secret solidarities with others based on the sharing of wants and needs. This is not the creation of a political organization or the formation of an affinity group. This is the practice of binding oneself to others through a collective dependency that makes common the means of existence. No more loose networks and no more short experiments. To solidify means to dis-identify oneself alongside others, creating denser relations of mutual necessity in the process. One's self dissolves as the relations solidify, building shared trust, commitment

and desires without individual interruption. One solid relationship is more effective than a hundred vague ones. The extension of the domain of struggle will be determined by such solidities.

To probe is to test for those moments when possibility can pierce through the cell bars of normality. In other words, to notice the short openings when hierarchical power fractures, and to deepen it. Opportunities can be very quick, and one must have fingertips on the pulse of the situation to see if it's ready to burst. Probing means looking for the void of every situation, marking what is absent and how its absence is policed. Exclusion, mismanagement, inequality, illegitimacy—these are some motifs that signify a potential lacuna. There is no way to account for these voids by speculation alone. Why? Because they are structurally negated by the order of the situation itself. They are *inconsistent* by definition with the logic of the situation. They only respond to direct interruption, the exposure of the contradiction at the heart of a situation. To probe is to test the inconsistency of a situation, and this means ripping all consistencies that bind oneself to it. Irreducibly singular, the minutest of detail might just reveal a tiny window into the irruption of anarchy. What is difficult to accept is our non-agency in the genesis of these moments; we cannot mobilize towards them. We can only take advantage of their self-generated mobility.

To strike is to attack the function of a space and to suspend the rhythm of its time in a determination location. The question is not how to make this happen, but what impedes our own capacity to unleash it. For the potentiality of action lies in our ability to remove the impotentiality that structures our very existence. In other words, to go from potentiality to act, one must first traverse the impotentiality of our lives, eliminating it fear by fear. At every moment of danger, the task is to push the situation farther until

it is easier to go all the way across the world instead of turning back around. Every strike is singular, composed of a specific and contingent set of lives and desires, contexts and contents. But these singularities share certain universal forms: inoperativity of essential functions, a suspension of time, an undecidability of its existence, and the birthing of new horizons of possibility. An anti-police brutality riot, a workplace slow-down, a restaurant sit-in, a vandalized gallery, a university occupation—all are strikes in different ways. A strike cannot start from a general problem, but it can become one. What distinguishes revolutionaries from reformists today is not the ideologies of either, but rather their activities in relation to the generalizing or inhibiting of singular strikes. Still, the strike is only a unit in the general strategy of sabotage, giving it content, opening its wounds. If it is accomplished, then new subjects are left in its wake, faithful to its occurrence, committed to its continual detonation.

The occupation of the new school was such an adventure. It was not without its problems.

- VI. To defuse spontaneity, have a meeting. Then another, and another. Wait ten minutes, and then start over. This is the logic of the radical liberals. Ashamed of the failures of the 60's, they seek to relive its worst moments and rectify them in the present, as if that would bring honor to the cemeteries which house their dead. Every site of conflict is deemed counterproductive, and every moment of possibility is deemed too soon. Believing that they are the true heirs to the "lessons" of the past, they smother the present with their dead language, providing false directions that lead only to entrenched stability. Comfort is their goal, and compromise is their strategy. Their tactics vary from scripted civil disobedience to scripted civil obedience. They embrace their own image, incapable of moving forward without a mirror to guarantee their existence. Names,

demands, and identities fill their arsenal, and one should be wary of their approach. To expose them does not mean to oppose them directly, for opposition can produce a sense of legitimacy of their project. Rather, like certain villagers do to state authorities when they come by to see how their colony is doing, one should nod and agree, and then act according to their complete irrelevance. Indifference can be a weapon if it used right. These individuals should be made redundant, entirely superfluous.

Avoid them at all costs.

- VII. The logic of the demand is not as straightforward as one would hope. On the one hand, it grounds one's struggle in terms that are easily recognizable, consensual, and 'strategic'; but on the other hand, it binds one to the very power it seeks to depose, guaranteeing its further existence. Perhaps this is where the concept of the "infinite demand" enters. For if our demands are *infinite*, so goes the thought, then our struggle will be too. The goal is then to batter the opposing power with an infinite series of demands, which they can begin to concede, but never possibly complete. Compelling, but ultimately an alibi for reform, a series of binding delays which blunts the force of any potential upheaval.

However, the political strategy of 'infinite demands' has absolutely nothing to do with the ethical principle of 'infinitely demanding.' While the former is directed to the hierarchical power that dominates it from those who critique it, the latter pours out from the void of a situation towards the subjects who compose it. Those who occupy, strike, or sabotage are not the ones who infinitely demand, rather it is occupation, striking, and sabotage themselves which are infinitely demanding in their fulfillment. We do not demand something infinite by means of occupation; we are demanded by occupation to infinitely extend it. This

is why there is no excuse for conceding in an occupation. Every demand is already a defeat, and the only genuine failure is one that occurs in the attempt to expand it.

- VIII. The only thing worse than the radical liberals are the authoritarian anti-authoritarians, those caricatures of militants who fear commitment like it was the plague. Unable to clip the chains that bind them to their own boredom, they seek refuge in the hostility of others, where alienation can be exposed, but never destroyed. Clever in their manipulation of people, their activities resemble the broken movement of marionettes who, having puppets of their own, think they control themselves. Only going so far as their fears allow them, they run at the first sight of exposure, incapable of lasting in the light. They have clear enemies, but no clear friends, since their trust is grounded only on the ability to default. Their words speak volumes in what they conceal, namely, themselves. Like shopping malls, their texts are indistinguishable across the planet, providing the same atmosphere of desolation and the same program of rebellion.

Let them produce their conflicts, for they won't last beyond their expiration date.

- IX. Why was it that an overabundance of philosophy students were involved in the occupation? Not to say students of economics, political science, anthropology, and others weren't there, but it did seem sometimes like we were at the Piraeus in 400BC. The reason for this opens up onto a metareflection, a thought on the way we think the relation between thought and practice. In "grounded" disciplines, disciplines of the "real world," there is a certain collective agreement that there must be an equal and identifiable attunement between our words and our deeds, between what one studies and what one lives. This seemingly

respectable attitude presupposes that every thought has a direct correlation with some political strategy or tactic. Hence, the critique of neoliberal trade policies comes with a certain set of recommendations on democratizing trade, the critique of racial profiling comes with a set of actions that confirm one's anti-racism. In other words, one is trained to attach every concept to a compatible affect, and the combination of the two provides a politics.

Philosophy, however, entails no such treaty with the words it uses, and this gives it both its poverty and its wealth. On the one hand, this can be said to signal the decay of moral integrity by which thought is abused. But on the other hand, this releases our thought from the strictures of a dead politic. Philosophers have no allegiance to programs, platforms, or "practice." Rather, life and thought can merge in a zone of indistinction which needs no justification. When this is accomplished, no form of thought is too abstract, and no form of action is too extreme. What unites them is not some democratic council of reason, but a form of life which no reason can govern.

This ungrounded relation is called *ethics*.

- X. Occupation mandates the inversion of the standard dimensions of space. Space in an occupation is not merely the container of our bodies, it is a plane of potentiality that has been frozen by the logic of the commodity. In an occupation, one must engage with space topologically, as a strategist, asking: What are its holes, entrances, exits? How can one disalienate it, disidentify it, make it inoperative, communize it? The problem with this practice of spatial inversion is that it requires a particular mode of temporality which makes such actions more or less conducive. What blocks the physical reinterpretation of spatial function is the time of "emergency," when everyone is in a perpetual crisis due to the encroaching police or some force of

repression. When this state of exception structures the time of the event, everyone becomes smothered with fear, and meetings dominate the use of the territory. To escape this downfall, buffer zones are necessary, multiple rooms, hallways, and passages to defuse the incoming threats. Reconfigurations of space are useful for not only mediating the barrage of internal and external policing operations, but also for providing a release from the pathetic injunction to “mobilize.”

- XI. In the end, there is one enemy that unites them all: the order of time. The homogenous wait of time, pushing us down, stringing us along its empty routines and endless cycles, enforced by the largest coalition of individuals across the planet. Every boss, every policeman, every administrator, every authority—those are the obvious ones. For the violence of time is furthered by all those citizens and critics whose plans, programs, and platforms are based on the uninterrupted continuation of the present. But we know that no such future is possible. The acceleration of time is matched by the passivity of those who live it, and this recipe can only conclude with the victory of time through the complete annihilation of space. Our task, impossible, is to seize time itself and liquefy its contents, emptying its emptiness and refilling it with the life that is banned from appearing. To stop the rhythm of inertia, the human strike must begin.
- XII. The coming occupations will have no end in sight, and no means to resolve them. When that happens, we will finally be ready to abandon them.

Q. Libet
January 2009

[Appendix]

From Athens workers to the students:

Don't stay alone. Call us; call as many people as possible. We don't know how you can do that, you will find the way. You've already occupied your schools and you tell us that the most important reason is that you don't like your schools. Nice. Since you've already occupied them change their role. Share your occupations with other people. Let your schools become the first buildings to house our new relations. Their most powerful weapon is dividing us. Just like you are not afraid of attacking their police stations because you are together, don't be afraid to call us to change our life all together.

Don't listen to any political organization (either anarchists or anyone). Do what you need to. Trust people, not abstract schemes and ideas. Trust your direct relations with people. Trust your friends; make as many people as possible in your struggle your people. Don't listen to them when they're saying that your struggle doesn't have a political content and must seemingly obtain. Your struggle is the content. You only have your struggle and it's in your hands to preserve its advance. It's only your struggle that can change your life, namely you and the real relations with your fellowmen.

Don't be afraid to proceed when confronting new things. Each one of us, as we're getting older, has things planted in their brains. You too, although you are young. Don't forget the importance of this fact. Back in 1991, we confronted the smell of the new world and, trust us, we found it difficult. We learned that there must always be limits. Don't be scared by the destruction of commodities. Don't be scared by people looting stores. We make all these, they are ours. You (just like we in the past) are raised to get up every morning in order to make things that they will later not be yours. Let's get them back all together and share them. Just like we share our friends and the love among us.

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