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*For
The Ones
To Come*

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For The Ones To Come

"Communism is the material process that aims to render sensible and intelligible the materiality of the things that are said to be spiritual. To the point that we're able to read in the book of our own body all that humans did and were, under the sovereignty of time—and to decipher the traces of humanity's passage upon an Earth that will preserve no trace."

Franco Fortini

What within us is anxious to protect the inner chains that bind us,

What there is within us so sick that it clings to our conditions of existence, precarious though they are,

What's so exhausted from troubles, jolts, needs, that on a given day tomorrow seems farther away than the moon,

What finds it pleasant to pass the time in hip cafes sipping lattes with jungle in the background while surfing on one's MacBook—the Sunday of life alloyed with the end of history,

Is expecting *solutions*.

Cities in transition, social and solidarity economy, Sixth Republic, alternative municipalism, universal basic income, the film *Tomorrow*, migration into space, a thousand new prisons, expulsion of all foreigners from the planet, man-machine fusion.

Whether they're engineers, managers, activists, politicians, ecologists, actors, or simple hucksters, all those who claim to offer solutions to the present disaster are really doing just one thing: imposing their definition of the problem on us, hoping to make us forget that they themselves are plainly part of the problem. As a friend said, "The solution to the problem you see in life is a way of living that makes the problem disappear."

We don't have any program, any solutions to sell. To *destitute*, in Latin, also means to *disappoint*. All *expectations* will be disappointed. From our singular experience, our encounters, our successes, our failures, we draw a clearly partisan perception of the world, which conversation among friends refines. Anyone who finds a perception to be correct is adult enough to draw the consequences from it, or at least a kind of method.

However repressed it may be, the question of communism remains the heart of our epoch. If only because the rule of its contrary—economy—has never been so complete. The delegations from the Chinese state who go every year to place flowers on Marx's tomb in London don't fool anybody. One can avoid the communist question, of course. One can get used to stepping over the bodies of the homeless or migrants on one's way to the office every morning. One can follow the melting of the polar ice in real time, or the rise of the oceans and the panicked pell-mell migrations of animals and humans alike. One can go on preparing one's cancer with every forkful of mashed potatoes that one swallows. One can tell oneself that the recovery, or a dose of authority, or ecofeminism will eventually fix all this. Continuing in such a manner is possible, at the cost of suppressing our feeling that the society we live in is intrinsically criminal, and one that doesn't miss a chance to remind us that we belong to its little association of miscreants. Every time we come in contact with it—by using any of its devices, consuming the least of its commodities, or doing whatever job we do for it—we make ourselves its accomplices, we contract a little of the vice on which it is based: that of exploiting, wrecking, undermining the very conditions of every earthly existence. There's no longer any place for innocence in this world. We only have the choice between two crimes: taking part in it or deserting it in order to bring it down. If the stalking of criminals and the orgy of judgment and punishment are so popular nowadays, it's because they provide a momentary ersatz innocence to the spectators. But since the relief doesn't last, it's necessary to blame, punish, and accuse over and over again—to maintain the illusion. Kafka explained the success of the detective story in this way:

Detective stories are always concerned with the solution of mysteries that are hidden behind extraordinary occurrences. But in real life its absolutely the opposite. The mystery isn't hidden in the background. On the contrary! It stares one in the face. It's what is obvious. So we do not see it. Everyday life is the greatest detective story ever written. Every second, without noticing we pass by thousands of corpses and crimes. That's the routine of our lives. But if, in spite of habit, something does succeed in surprising us, we have a marvelous sedative in the detective story, which presents every mystery of life as a legally punishable exception. It is a pillar of society, a starched shirt covering the heartless immorality which nevertheless claims to be bourgeois civilization.

tolerate a political hegemony, even a partisan one of the sort that Pablo Iglesias or Chantal Mouffe fantasize. What they don't see is that in a time of general horizontality, *horizontality itself is the verticality*. No one can expect to organize the autonomy of others any longer. The only verticality still possible *is that of the situation*, which commands all of its components because it exceeds them, because the sum of forces in presence is greater than each one of them. The only thing capable of transversally uniting all the elements deserting this society into a historical party is an *intelligence of the situation*. It is everything that makes the situation gradually understandable, everything that tracks the movements of the adversary, everything that identifies the usable paths and the obstacles—the systematic character of the obstacles. Based on that intelligence, an occasional vertical expedient needed to tilt certain situations in the desired direction can well be improvised.

A strategic verticality of this kind can only emerge from a constant, generous discussion, undertaken in good faith. In this epoch, the means of communication are the forms of organization. It's our weakness, for the means aren't in our hands, and those who control them are not our friends. So there's no other choice but to deploy an art of conversation between worlds that is cruelly deficient, but from which, in contact with the situation, the right decision must emanate. Such a discussion can gain the center, from the periphery where it is currently contained, only through an offensive from the domain of sensibility, on the plane of perceptions, and not of discourse. We're talking about addressing bodies and not just the head.

down to us by ancient psychology and Christian theology. We are no longer nihilistic enough to think that inside us there is something like a stable psychic organ—a will, let's say—that directs our other faculties. This neat invention of the theologians, much more political than it appears, had a dual purpose: first, to make man, newly provided with a “free will,” into a moral subject and to deliver him over in this way to the Last Judgment and the century's punishments; second, based on the theological idea of a God having “freely” created the world and essentially standing apart from his action, to institute a formal separation between being and acting. For centuries, this separation, which was to mark Western political ideas in a durable way, made ethical realities illegible—the plane of forms-of-life being precisely that of a nondifferentiation between what one is and what one does. So “the question of organization” exists since those Bolsheviks of Late Antiquity, the Church Fathers. It was the instrument of legitimation of the Church just as it would later be that of the legitimation of the Party. Against this opportunistic question, against the postulated existence of the “will,” it's necessary to emphasize that what “wants” within us, what inclines us, is *never the same thing*. That it is a simple *outcome*, crucial at certain moments, of the combat waged within and outside us by a tangled network of forces, affects, and inclinations, resulting in a temporary assemblage in which some force has just as temporarily subdued other forces. That the sequence of these assemblages produces a kind of coherence that may culminate in a form is a fact. But to always label *with the same noun* something that in a contingent way finds itself in a position to dominate or give the decisive impetus, to convince oneself that it's always a matter of *the same authority*, to convince oneself finally that every form and every decision are dependent on a decision organ, is to perform quite a trick, but one that's been repeated all too long. By believing in such an organ for such a long time, by stimulating that imaginary muscle over and over again, one ends up in a fatal aboulia that seems nowadays to be afflicting the late offspring of the Christian Empire that we happen to be. In opposition to that, we propose paying careful attention to situations and to the forces that inhabit and traverse beings, in conjunction with an art of *decisive assemblages*.

Faced with capitalist organization, a destituent potential cannot confine itself to its own immanence, to all that grows under the ice in the absence of sunshine, to all the attempts at local construction, to a series of punctual attacks, even if this whole little world were to regularly find itself caught up in great turbulent demonstrations. And the insurrection will definitely not wait for everyone to become insurrectionary. The mistake of the Leninists, Trotskyists, Negriists, and other subpoliticians, a telling one fortunately, is to believe that a period that sees all the hegemonies lying broken on the ground could still

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So it's a matter of jumping outside the circle of killers.

Few questions have been as poorly formulated as the question of communism. And that's not yesterday's failure; it goes far back to ancient times. Open the *Book of Psalms* and you'll see. The class struggle dates back at least to the prophets of Jewish Antiquity. What is utopian in communism is already found in the apocrypha of that age:

And equal land for all, divided not/By walls or fences, [...] and
the course/Of life be common and wealth unapportioned./

For there no longer will be poor nor rich,/ Tyrant nor slave, nor
any great nor small,/Nor kings nor leaders; all alike in common/

The communist question was badly formulated because, to start with, it was framed as a social question, that is, as a *strictly human* question. Despite that,

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it has never ceased to trouble the world. If it continues to haunt it, that's because it doesn't stem from an ideological fixation but from a basic, immemorial, lived experience: that of *community*—which nullifies all the axioms of economy and all the fine constructions of civilization. There is never community as an entity, but always as an experience of *continuity* between beings and with the world. In love, in friendship, we have the experience of that continuity. In my calm presence, here, now, in this familiar town, in front of this old sequoia sempervirens whose branches are stirred by the wind, I experience that continuity. In this riot where we all stick to the plan we've decided on, where the chants of the comrades give us courage, where a street medic delivers aid and comfort to an unknown person with a head injury, I experience this continuity. In this print shop dominated by an antique Heidelberg 4 Color which a friend ministers to while I prepare the pages,

another friend glues, and a third one trims, to put together this little samizdat that we've all conceived, in this fervor and enthusiasm, I experience that continuity. There is no myself and the world, myself and the others, there is me and my kindred, directly in touch with this little piece of the world that I love, irreducibly. There is ample beauty in the fact of being here and nowhere else. It's not the least sign of the times that a German forester, and not a hippy, scores a best-seller by revealing that trees “talk to each other,” “love one another,” “look after each other,” and are able to “remember” what they've gone through. He calls that *The Hidden Life of Trees*. Which is to say, there's even an anthropologist who sincerely wonders *how forests think*. An anthropologist, not a botanist. By considering the human subject in isolation from its world, by detaching living beings from all that lives around them, modernity could not help but engender

a communism destined to eradicate: a *socialism*. And that socialism could only encounter peasants, nomads, and “savages” as an obstacle to be shoved aside, as an unpleasant residue at the bottom of the national scale of importance. It couldn’t even see the communism of which they were the bearers. If modern “communism” was able to imagine itself as a universal brotherhood, as a realized equality, this was only through a cavalier extrapolation from the lived experience of fraternity in combat, of friendship. For what is friendship if not equality between friends?

Without at least the occasional experience of community, we die inside, we dry out, become cynical, harsh, desert-like. Life becomes that ghost city peopled by smiling mannequins, which functions. Our need for community is so pressing that after having ravaged all the existing bonds, capitalism is running on nothing but the promise of “community.” What are the social networks, the dating apps, if not that promise perpetually disappointed? What are all the modes, all the technologies of communication, all the love songs, if not a way to maintain the dream of a continuity between beings where in the end every contact melts away? Opportunely, this frustrated promise intensifies the need, making it hysterical even, and accelerates the great cash machine of those who exploit it. Maintaining misery while dangling the possibility of escape is capitalism’s great stratagem. In 2015, a single website of pornographic videos called Pornhub was visited for 4,392,486,580 hours, which amounts to two and a half times the hours spent on Earth by *Homo sapiens*. Even this epoch’s obsession with sexuality and its hyper-indulgence in pornography attests to the need for community, in the very extremeness of the latter’s deprivation.

When Milton Friedman says that the market is the magic mechanism enabling “millions of individuals to come together on a daily basis without any need to love one another or even to speak to one another,” he’s describing the end result while carefully redacting the process that has brought so many people into the market, the thing that keeps them there, which is not just hunger, threat, or the lure of profit. He also spares himself from having to admit the devastations of *all sorts* which make it possible to establish something like “a market,” and to present it as natural. The same is true when a Marxist pontificate that “disease, death, love’s sorrow, and assholes will continue to take their toll after capitalism, but there will be no longer any massive paradoxical poverty, resulting from an abstract production of wealth. One will no longer see an autonomous fetishistic system or a dogmatic social form.” (Robert Kurz) In reality, the question of communism is also raised in each of our tiny and unique existences in response to what is making us sick. In response to what is slowly killing us, to our failures in love, to what makes us such strangers to each other that by way of an explanation for all the world’s ills, we’re satisfied with the foolish idea that “People are assholes.” Refusing to see this amounts to wearing one’s insensitivity like a tattoo. It’s well suited to the kind of pale, myopic virility that’s required for becoming an economist.

ing better illustrates the illusion of the stable and individual Self than the belief that “I” have ideas, since it is abundantly clear that ideas *come to me*, even without my knowing from where, from neuronal, muscular, and symbolic processes so opaque that they pour in naturally while I’m walking, or when I’m falling asleep and the boundaries of the Self are giving way. An occurring idea is a good example of form: there enters into its realization, in a language environment, something that’s infra-individual—an intuition, a splinter of experience, a bit of affect—in a constellation with something that’s supra-individual. A form is a mobile configuration that holds together, in a tense and dynamic unity, heterogeneous elements of the Self and the world. “The essence of form,” said the young Lukacs in his idealist jargon, “has always resided in the process by which two principles that absolutely exclude each other become form without mutually abolishing each other. Form is the paradox that has materialized, the reality of lived experience, the true life of the impossible. For form is not reconciliation but the war of conflicting principles, transposed into eternity.” Form is born of the encounter between a situation and a necessity. Once born, it affects things far beyond itself. In the conflict of the spring of 2016, one could have seen the birth of a form from a perfectly singular, perfectly identifiable point. On the Austerlitz Bridge, a courageous little group forced the riot police to pull back. There was a first line of masked people sporting gas masks and holding a reinforced banner, other masked ones backing them in case of attempted arrests and making up a bloc behind the first line, and behind that bunch and on the sides, baton-wielding masked folk who whacked on the cops. Once this little form had appeared, the video of its exploit circulated on the social media. And kept making babies in the weeks that followed, up to the acme of June 14, 2016 when its offspring could no longer be counted. Because that’s how it is with every form, with life even, the real communist question is not “how to produce,” but “how to live.” Communism is the centrality of the old ethical question, the very one that historical socialism had always judged to be “metaphysical,” “premature,” or “petty-bourgeois”—and not the question of labor. Communism is a general detotalization, and not the socialization of everything.

For us, therefore, communism is not a finality. There is no “transition” towards it. It *is* transition entirely: it is *en chemin*, in transit. The different ways of living will never cease to chafe and move against each other, to clash with and occasionally combat each other. Everything will always have to be rethought. There are bound to be the usual Leninists who will reject an immanent conception of communism such as this, by citing the necessity of a vertical, strategic articulation of the struggle, and an instant later we’re sure to hear the lumbering “question of organization.” The “question of organization” is still and always the Leviathan. In a time when the apparent unity of the Self can no longer mask the chaos of forces, attachments, and participations that we are, how could we still believe in the fable of organic unity? The myth of “organization” owes everything to the depictions of the hierarchy of natural faculties that were handed

there was struggle, that different determinations were clashing, that forces were joining, allying, separating, that strategies were called into play, and that all this was manifesting in the streets and not just on television, there was a *situation*. The real was returning, something was taking place. One could disagree about what was happening, one could read it in contradictory ways, but at least there was a legibility of the present. As for knowing which readings were correct and which mistaken, the course of events would sooner or later decide; and then it would no longer be a matter of interpretation. If our perceptions were not adjusted, that would be paid for in baton blows. Our errors would no longer be a question of “point of view”; they would be measured in suture points or swollen body parts.

Deleuze said of 1968 that it was a “phenomenon of clairvoyance: a society suddenly saw what it contained that was intolerable and also saw the possibility of something else.” To which Benjamin adds: “Clairvoyance is the vision of that which is taking form. [...] Perceiving exactly what is taking place is more decisive than knowing the distant future in advance.” In ordinary circumstances most people do end up seeing, but when it is *much too late*—when it’s become impossible not to see and, quite often, seeing no longer serves any purpose. This aptitude owes nothing to any great body of knowledge, which often serves for overlooking what’s essential. Conversely, ignorance can crown the most banal insistence on not seeing. Let’s say that social life demands of everyone that they not see, or at least act *as if* they didn’t see anything.

It makes no sense to share things if one doesn’t begin by communizing the ability to see. Without that, living the communist way is like a wild dance in utter darkness; one crashes against the others, one gets hurt, one inflicts bruises on the body and the soul without meaning to and without even knowing exactly who to be angry with. Compounding everyone’s capacity for seeing in every domain, composing new perceptions and endlessly refining them, resulting in an immediate increase of potential, must be the central object of any communist development. Those who don’t want to see anything cannot help but produce collective disasters. We must become seers, for ourselves as much as for others.

Seeing means being able to *apprehend forms*. Contrary to what a bad philosophical legacy has taught us, form does not pertain to visible appearance but to dynamic principle. The real individuation is not that of bodies, but of forms. One only has to reflect on the process of ideation to be convinced of this: noth-

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To this the Marxists, or many of them at least, add a certain cowardice in the face of life’s smallest problems, which was also the mark of the Bearded One. There are even those who organize symposia around the “idea of communism” which seem expressly designed to make sure that communism remains an idea, and doesn’t meddle too much in the business of living. Not to mention the conventicles where one presumes to decree what is and what isn’t communism.

With the breakdown of European social democracy faced with World War One, Lenin decides to restyle the façade of the crumbling old socialism by painting the pretty word “communism” on it. Rather comically, he borrows it from anarchists who have already made it their banner. This convenient confusion between socialism and communism contributed a good deal, in the last century, to making this word synonymous with catastrophe, massacre, dictatorship, and genocide. Since then, anarchists and Marxists have been playing ping pong around the couple individual/society, without being concerned that this false antinomy was shaped by economic thought. Rebellious against society

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on behalf of the individual or against individualism on behalf of socialism is to head down a dead end street. Society is always a society *of individuals*. Individual and society have not ceased being affirmed, each at the others expense, for three centuries, and this is the reliable oscillating mechanism which keeps the charming wheel called “economy” turning round, year after year. Against what economy wants us to imagine, what there is in life are not individuals endowed with all kinds of properties which they can make use of or part with. What there is in life are *attachments*, assemblages [agencements], situated beings that move within a whole ensemble of ties. By adopting the liberal fiction of the individual, modern “communism” was bound to conflate property

and attachment, and carry the confusion to the very arena where it believed it was attacking private property. It was helped in that by a grammar in which property and attachment have become indistinguishable. What grammatical difference is there when I speak of “my brother” or “my part of town,” and when Warren Buffet says “my holding” or “my shares”? None. And yet one is speaking of an attachment in the first instance and of an ownership in the second, of something that constitutes me in the one case and of an object I own in the other. Only by means of this type of confusion did it become possible to imagine that a subject like “Humanity” could exist. Humanity—that is, all human beings, stripped of what weaves together their concrete situated existence, and gathered up phantasmally into one great something-or-other, nowhere to be found. By wiping out all the attachments that make up the specific texture of worlds, on the pretext of abolishing private ownership of the means of production, modern “communism” has effectively made a tabula rasa—of everything.

That's what happens to those who practice economy, even by criticizing it. As Lyotard reportedly said: "Economy—a thing we needed to *find a way out of*, not criticize!" Communism is not a "superior economic organization of society" but the *destitution of economy*.

Economy rests on a pair of fictions, therefore, that of society and that of the individual. Destituting it involves *situating* this false antinomy and bringing to light that which it means to cover up. What these fictions have in common is making us see entities, closed units and their relations, whereas what there is in fact are ties. Society presents itself as the superior entity that aggregates all the individual entities. Since Hobbes and the frontispiece of *Leviathan*, it's always the same image: the great body of the sovereign, composed of all the minuscule, homogenized, serialized bodies of his subjects. The operation which the social fiction depends on consists in trampling on everything that forms the situated existence of each singular human being, in wiping out the ties that constitute us, in denying the assemblages we enter into, and then forcing the depleted atoms thus obtained into a completely fictitious, spectral association known as the "social bond." So that to think of oneself as a social being is always to apprehend oneself *from the exterior*, to relate to oneself *as an abstraction*. It's the peculiar mark of the economic perception of the world to grasp nothing except externally. That Jansenist scumbag, Pierre Nicole, who exerted such a large influence on the founders of political economy, provided the recipe already in 1671: "However corrupt any society might be *within*, and in the eyes of God, there would be nothing *on the outside* that would be better regulated, more civil, more just, more peaceful, more decent, more generous. And the most admirable thing would be that, being animated and moved only by self-love, self-love would not appear there, and being a thing completely devoid of charity, one would only see the form and signs of charity everywhere." No logical question can be raised, let alone resolved, on this basis. Everything becomes a question of management. It's not surprising that *societe* is synonymous with *entreprise* in France. This was already the case, moreover, in ancient Rome. If one started a business, under Tiberius, one started a *societas*. A *societas*, a society, is always an alliance, a voluntary association that one joins or withdraws from according to one's interests. So all in all it's a relationship, an external "bond," a "bond" that doesn't touch anything inside us and that one can walk away from without prejudice, a "bond" with no contact—and hence not a bond at all.

The characteristic texture of any society results from the way humans are pulled into it, *by the very thing that separates them*: self-interest. Given that they participate as individuals, as closed entities, and thus always provisionally, they come together *as separate*. Schopenhauer offered an arresting image of the consistency peculiar to *social* relations, of their inimitable pleasures and of the "unsociable human sociability": "On a cold winters day, a group of porcupines huddled together to stay warm and keep from freezing. But soon they felt one another's quills and moved apart. When the need for warmth brought them

nonsense as a collective can be.

One thinks of those who say "France," "the proletariat," "society" or "the collective" without blinking an eye. Anyone with a good ear can't help but hear them saying "Me! Me! Me!" underneath those other words. In order to construct something collectively powerful, we should abandon the idea of "collective" and all the disastrous exteriority to oneself and to others that it conveys. Heiner Muller went further:

"What capitalism offers is aimed at collective groupings but its formulated in such a manner that it makes them break apart. What communism offers, by contrast, is utter solitude. Capitalism never offers solitude but always just a placing in common. McDonalds is the absolute offer of collectivity. One is seated in the same space everywhere in the world; one eats the same shit and everybody's content. Because at McDonald's they are a collective. Even the faces in McDonald's restaurants resemble each other more and more. [...] There's the cliché about communism as collectivization. Not at all. Capitalism is collectivization [...] Communism is the abandonment of man to his solitude. In front of your mirror communism gives you nothing. That is its superiority. The individual is reduced to his own existence. Capitalism can always give you something, insofar as it distances people from themselves." (Fautes d'impression)

Feeling, hearing, thinking are not politically neutral faculties, nor are they fairly distributed among contemporaries. And the spectrum of what the latter perceive is variable. Besides, in contemporary social relations one is one's own troubled introspection. If the whole social circus endures it's because everyone is straining to keep their head above water when they should rather assent to going deeply enough into themselves to finally touch something solid. During the conflict against the loi Travail, the emergence of what became the "cortege de tete," the lead contingent in marches, was the result of a *vision*. A few hundred "young people" *saw*, as early as the first demonstrations, that the union groups were marching like zombies, that they didn't believe a word of the slogans they were mouthing, that their security marshals were clubbing the high-school students, that there was no way to follow that big cadaver, and so it was necessary to claim the front of the demonstration at all costs. Which is what was done. And done again. And again. Until a limit was reached where, with the "cortege de tete" repeating itself, it was no longer a gesture in a situation, but a subject mirrored back in the media, the alternative media in particular. So it was time to desert that desertion, which was congealing and becoming a parody of itself. And to keep moving. That being said, for the whole time it was vibrant, the "cortege de tete" was the locus from which things became clear, the site of a contagion in the ability to see what was going down. From the simple fact that

of form, is only a mask for it or a ruse, and generally temporary. It's enough to apply for membership and be accepted in order to belong just like anyone else. The postulated equality and horizontality basically make any asserted singularity scandalous or meaningless, and enable a diffuse jealousy to set its prevailing mood. The average members find an opium there which allows them to forget their feelings of inadequacy. The tyranny peculiar to collectives is that of an absence of structure. That is why they have a tendency to spread everywhere. Thus nowadays when one is really cool, one doesn't just form a "music group," one establishes a "musicians collective." Ditto for contemporary artists and their "artist collectives." And since the sphere of art so often anticipates what will be generalized as the economic condition of everyone, one won't be surprised to hear a management researcher and "specialist in collective activity" note this development: "Before, one considered the team as a static entity in which everybody had their role and their objective. One spoke then about a production team, an intervention team, a decision-making team. Now however, the team is an entity in motion because the individuals composing it change roles to adapt to their environment, which also is changing. Today the team is regarded as a dynamic process." What salaried employee in one of the "innovative professions" still doesn't know what the "tyranny of the absence of structure" means? In this way the perfect fusion of exploitation and self-exploitation is brought about. While every business is not yet a collective, collectives are now already businesses—businesses that for the most part don't produce anything, anything other than themselves. Just as a batch of collectives could very well take over from the old society, it is to be feared that socialism will survive only as a socialism of collectives, of little groups of people who force themselves to "live together," that is, to *be social*. Nowhere is "living together" talked about more than where everyone basically hates everyone else. A journalist recently titled his piece, "Against the Uberization of Life, the Collectives." Self-entrepreneurs also need an oasis against the neoliberal desert. But the oases are annihilated in their turn: those seeking refuge there bring the desert sands in with them.

The more "society" falls apart the more the attraction of collectives will grow. They will project a false escape. This scam works all the better as the atomized individual becomes painfully aware of the freakishness and misery of their existence. Collectives are designed to reintegrate those whom this world rejects, and who reject it. They may even promise a parody of "communism," which inevitably yields disappointment and swells the mass of those disgusted with everything. The false antinomy formed by individual and collective together is not hard to unmask, however. All the defects which the collective is in the habit of lending so generously to the individual—selfishness, narcissism, mythomania, pride, jealousy, possessiveness, calculation, the fantasy of omnipotence, self-interest, mendacity—are found in worse measure, more caricatured and unassailable, in collectives. No individual will ever be as possessive, narcissistic, self-centered, full of bad faith, and determined to believe in their own

together again, their quills again forced them apart. They were driven back and forth at the mercy of their discomforts until they found the distance from one another that provided both a maximum of warmth and a minimum of pain. In human beings, the emptiness and monotony of the isolated self produces a need for society. This brings people together, but their many offensive qualities and intolerable faults drive them apart again. The optimal distance that they finally find that permits them to coexist is embodied in politeness and good manners."

The genius of the economic operation is to conceal the plane on which it commits its misdeeds, the one on which it conducts its veritable war: the plane of bonds. In this way it confounds its potential adversaries, and is able to present itself as totally positive whereas it is quite evidently motivated by a fierce appetite for destruction. It has to be said that the bonds readily lend themselves to this. What is more immaterial, subtle, intangible than a bond? What's less visible, less opposable but more sensitive than a bond that's been destroyed? The contemporary numbing of sensibilities, their systematic fragmentation, is not just the result of survival within capitalism, it's the precondition for survival. We don't suffer from being individuals, we suffer from trying to be that. Since the individual entity exists, fictitiously, only *from the outside*, "being an individual" requires remaining outside oneself, strangers to ourselves, forgoing any contact with oneself as well as with the world and others. Obviously everyone is free to take everything from the outside. One only has to keep from feeling, hence from being present, hence from living. We prefer the opposite mode—the communist mode. It consists in apprehending things and beings *from the inside*, grasping them *by the middle*. What comes of grasping the individual by the middle or from the inside? Nowadays it yields a chaos. An unorganized chaos of forces, bits of experience, scraps of childhood, fragments of meaning, and more often than not, without any communication between them. Saying that this epoch has produced a human material in very poor condition is to say little. It is in great need of repair. We're all aware of this. The fragmentation of the world finds a faithful reflection in the shattered mirror of subjectivities.

That what appears externally as a person is really only a complex of heterogeneous forces is not a new idea. The Tzeltal Maya of Chiapas have a theory of the person in which everyone's sentiments, emotions, dreams, health, and temperament are governed by the adventures and misadventures of a whole host of spirits who reside and move about at the same time in our hearts and inside the mountains. We are not a fine collection of egoic completenesses, of perfectly unified Selves. We are composed of fragments, we teem with minor lives. The word "life" in Hebrew is a plural and so is the word "face." Because in a life there are many lives and in a face there are many faces. The ties between beings are not formed from entity to entity. Every tie goes from fragment of being to fragment of being, from fragment of being to fragment of world, and from fragment of world to fragment of world. It is established below and beyond the individual scale. It brings into immediate play parts of beings that discover themselves

to be on the same level, that are felt as continuous. This continuity between fragments is what is experienced as “community.” An *assemblage* is produced. It’s what we experience in every real encounter. Every encounter carves out a specific domain within us where elements of the world, the other, and oneself are mingled indistinctly. Love does not bring individuals into relation, it cuts through them as if they were suddenly on a special plane where they were making their way together amid a certain foliation of the world. To love is never to be together but to become together. If loving did not undo the fictitious unity of being, the “other” would not be capable of making us suffer to such a degree. If, in love, a piece of the other did not end up being a part of us, we wouldn’t have to mourn it when separation time rolled around. If there were nothing but *relations*, nobody would understand one another. Everything would be awash with misunderstanding. So there is no subject or object of love, there is an *experience* of love.

The fragments that constitute us, the forces inhabiting us, the assemblages we enter into don’t have any reason to compose a harmonious whole, a fluid set, a movable articulation. The banal experience of life in our time is characterized rather by a succession of encounters that undo us little by little, dismember us, gradually deprive us of any sure bearings. If communism has to do with the fact of organizing ourselves—collectively, materially, politically—this is insofar as it also means organizing ourselves singularly, existentially, and in terms of our sensibility. Or else we must consent to falling back into politics or into economy. If communism has a goal, it is the great health of forms of life. This great health is obtained through a patient re-articulation of the disjoined members of our being, in touch with life. One can live a whole life without experiencing anything, by being very careful not to think and feel. Existence is then reduced to a slow process of degradation. It wears down and ruins, instead of giving form. After the miracle of the encounter, relations can only go from wound to wound towards their consumption. Life, on the contrary, gradually gives form to whoever refuses to live beside themselves, to whoever allows themselves to experience. They become a *form of life* in the full sense of the term.

In sharp contrast to that, there are the inherited methods of activist construction, so grossly defective, so exhausting, so destructive, when they are so focused on building. Communism does not hinge on self-renunciation but on the attention given to the smallest action. It’s a question of our plane of perception and hence of our way of doing things. A practical matter. What the perception of entities—individual or collective—bars our access to is the plane where things really happen, where the collective potentials form and fall apart, gain strength or dissipate. It’s on that plane and only there that the real, including the political real, becomes legible and makes sense. To live communism is not to work to ensure the existence of the entity we belong to, but to deploy and deepen an ensemble of ties, which sometimes means cutting certain ones. What

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is essential occurs at the level of the smallest things. For the communist, the world of important facts extends as far as the eye can see. Perception in terms of bonds dismisses the whole alternative between individual and collective, and does so *positively*. In a real situation, an “I” that says what needs to be said can be a “we” of extraordinary power. And so, the particular happiness of any “commune” reflects the plenitude of its singularities, a certain quality of ties, the radiant energy of each fragment of world that it harbors—good-bye to entities, to their protrusiveness, good-bye to individual and collective confinement, adios to the reign of narcissism. “The one and only progress,” wrote the poet Franco Fortini, “consists and will consist in reaching a higher level, one that is visible and visionary, where the powers and qualities of every singular existence can be promoted.” What is to be deserted is not “society,” or “individual life,” but the dyad they compose. We must learn to move *on a different plane*.

There’s a flagrant disintegration of “society,” certainly, but there’s also a move aimed at recomposing it. As often happens, to see what lies in store for us we must turn our gaze to the other side of the Channel. What the conservative governments of Great Britain have already been implementing since 2010 is the so-called “Big Society.” As its name doesn’t indicate, the “Great Society” of which it is a question here consists in a final dismantling of the last institutions vaguely recalling the “welfare state.” What’s curious is the list of priorities that this purely neoliberal reform sets out: “give more power to ‘communities’ (localism and decentralization), encourage individuals to engage actively in their ‘community’ (volunteer work), transfer responsibilities from the central government to local authorities, support cooperatives, mutual societies, charitable associations and social enterprises, publish public data (open government).” Liberal society’s maneuver, at the moment when it can no longer hide its implosion, is to try and save the particular and particularly unappealing nature of the relations that constitute it by replicating itself in a proliferation of little societies or *collectives*. Work-based, neighborhood-based collectives, collectives of citizens, of activists, of associations, of artists, etc., collectives of every sort are the future of the social. There again, one joins as an individual, on an egalitarian basis, around an interest, and one is free to leave when one chooses. So they share society’s loose and ectoplasmic texture. They appear to be simply a blurry reality, but that vagueness *is their distinguishing trait*. On the other hand, the theater troupe, the seminar, the rock group, the rugby team, are collective *forms*. They are assemblages composed of multiple heterogeneous elements. They contain humans allotted different positions, different tasks, who make up a particular configuration, with its distances, its spacings, its *rhythm*. And they also contain all kinds of non-humans—places, equipment and materials, rituals, cries, and refrains. This is what makes them forms, *specific* forms. But what characterizes “the collective” as such is precisely that it is formless. Even in its very formalism. The formalism, which claims to be a remedy for its absence