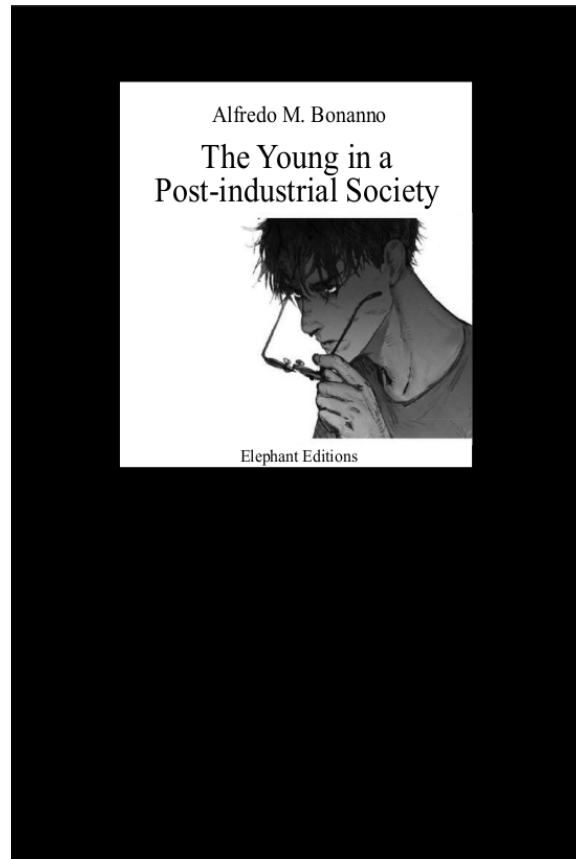


The young in a post-industrial society

Alfredo M. Bonanno



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In every young person lies the future of the world. One sole grain of sand in the repressive machine and everything could stop. We are not fleas jumping at the behest of the tamer, least of all should we be if it affects our future.

Can we awaken in ourselves a whole sense which lies dormant? A sensitivity far darker and more dangerous than the overstimulated antennae which splinter presence in a thousand banal directions? The observance of more than one screen at a time is only a relatively trivial symptom of a broader process when we consider how our desires and thinking have been rationalised by occupying urgencies to keep pace with precisely the rhythms that power, through the speed of technology, has imposed everywhere.

To grasp what is at stake in this little text requires putting forward receptors of subversion, the sense that can feel the weight of life in my hands.

In postindustrial society, 'life' is an object for power like never before, it seeks to provide 'good lives', and its institutions concern themselves as much with 'free time' as with work. Within these bounds, life is something to exchange. Life's time can be divided up into deadlines, guidelines, elements to be organised piece by piece to try to secure a better future. To train and retrain, to work and quit, to consume a kaleidoscopic diversity of media, to study and drop-out, to "get divorced however many times we like, so sacred is marriage".

But power has still not completely evaporated the other *sense* of the word 'life': life taken as a totality. Life no longer conceived as discreet moments in time offered up in the hope of something, but as a whole. This is something which cannot be exchanged, which singularly and uniquely belongs to *me*, whether I want it or not. For many its stubborn outrage is simply an inconvenience, for this reason the menu of stupors to suppress its sensitivity grows every day.

The kind of revolt which comes from the will to live rather than sell time to institutional, spiritual or political bidders is not a metaphysical galloping into the stars. It is the ferocious desire to get some of the energy, thoughts, capacities, which are handed over to dead routines back, to put them instead at the disposal of the individual-as-totality. This entity, newly acquainted with what its hands can do, its eyes can see and what its imagination and will can really create, cannot help but come into bitter confrontation with everything which has put forward these little roles in which all that vitality would otherwise be spent and wasted.

A demon of revolt once made reference to an economic rationality which is quite capable of governing the daily existence of the human at the individual or societal level were it for the persistence of "two precious faculties — *the power to think* and *the desire to rebel*." We can see that it is precisely these two faculties which are under such profound attack today. That the reduction of this human creature into a blunt instrument who is skeptical about thought and action, especially their own, is a project which has reached new intensities in the technological restructuring of the past ten years.

If all these restructurings are continuations in precisely the direction that the comrade who wrote this text anticipates, they have indeed granted a slavish freedom to masses of people and a freedom in slavery. But why should we be overwhelmed and listless in front of this development?

After all, is this not where the idea of *social revolution* came from in the first place? From the context which faced the novelty of capitalist command and discipline, expressing itself in the formally *voluntary* servitude of the wage which had replaced the 'arbitrary' command of the old despotic regimes?

The *social* idea of revolution has always put forward the perspective that power has granted a 'freedom' and yet that nothing has changed, because the ancient habits of obedience, drilled and refined on each successive generation, must be broken by conscious and willful rebellion that can *generalise* rather than homogenise: a possibility granted neither by the natural decomposition of power, nor by the egalitarian decrees of an aspirant one.

And so, every incendiary dream which took as its basis the destruction of those relations and everything which justified them, has always had to take aim first of all at the *formal freedom* granted by the enemies of freedom.

Today there is ubiquitous freedom pushed from every direction by the programmed culture of this society: the freedom to 'be yourself', and to 'live the life you want to lead'. And of course for those who have forgotten how to experience disgust, there can be every reason to join in with things today, making sure that my vain identity is reflected back at me by the hall of mirrors, and that the nuisance of the individual thirst for the conquest of life doesn't disturb the sleep too often.

But if, rather than follow this logic into oblivion, someone still feels that dull obedience is charmless and that the intricacy of its disguises are without interest, then the words in this text could be an invaluable accomplice.

Because the perspective the comrade offers is one which clears the way for putting intention and deliberateness into the orbit of impatient desires. Desires which are fast becoming taboos, almost unspeakable. Everything in this managed world is aligned to invalidate them and above all their incalculable consequences.

If nothing in this perspective will help us to climb the dazzling mountain of garbage erected in front of us, it could steady our aim into the elsewhere. If, that is, we still have the courage to live up to the depth of our rage instead.

A youth in postindustrial society

Introduction to the Italian edition

The conditions surrounding what remains of the human being are far more bewildering for the young, those still looking towards the future not having on their back the abyss waiting to open and swallow up an old man.

I am well aware that the following considerations might move some to laughter, and I'd like to see that in young readers. What to do with an old man's words? What can they mean to those looking wide-eyed at the wonders that await them far away from cataloguing a life that has seen everything?

After all, youthful hopes and strength are precisely there, almost made to be squandered when confronted with others' advice and experience.

That is the way of the world, and as I am now playing the role of talking gibberish, I might as well go the whole hog.

The text I am proposing here is an attempt to clarify the conditions I mentioned earlier, post-industrial society and its foolish servants on the one hand, young people with their still unexpressed potential on the other.

It is not a given that everything will go as it is threatening to. There is still an area of shadow, a chaotic amalgam that could always bring forth the unexpected. This unexpected thing should always be ready to spring forth, especially in the heart of a young person not atrophied before their time. I delude myself that they are not, I dream that their pulsations are strong and sure, could accelerate in the face of humiliation and abuse and the rules that society imposes on us, with which it seeks to shape and coerce our lives.

After all, the world's future is within every young person. A single grain of sand in the repressive machinery and everything could jam. We are not fleas jumping at the tamer's commands, even less should we be such concerning the future, our future and the way we decide to live it.

Whoever bows their head and consents in the face of the abuses that keep them in line is the lowest form of person, the last reject of an aching humanity, heir of millennia of slavery. I hope that this legacy has not been received by the young to whom I am talking, ideally, and I trust they don't want to take it right now and cash it in. Other should be the proceeds of their years to come.

Desire, creation, dreams, the remote incomprehensible stars, even this now small agonizing planet that hosts us. Inventing happiness. Here's a fine task, refusing to accept levelling, not even that which helps pass the time by trivializing meaning, banalising taste. Every moment of life—a young person barely understands the importance of living this moment—is worthy of being lived, not wasted in feeling sorry for oneself in the smallness of the needs of an administered reduction to living with moral prejudices and economic downturns.

Living a life of little insects hopping in baroque attempts at survival means not looking ahead, it means always putting your hands in your pockets to count the pennies, avoiding danger and suffering, accepting the rules of a hedonism of sad, well-fed clowns, content with the piece of bread the boss throws you from time to time. There is nothing sadder and more demeaning than a young person who lives like the last man on earth. The same goes for an old man, but at least the latter has some excuses which, even if they don't absolve him, cover him with the cloak of pity, a blanket of shame that conceals the remaining strength that could still give him inspiration for a final whim, a proud outburst. But let's leave the old to their thoughts, the young, no. Strewth, no! A young reject is either a freak of nature or an idiot.

Careful. I am not interested in orthopaedics. I don't want to straighten the dog's legs, I don't want to build the new individual. I am referring to what is standing there in front of me before my very eyes, the potential that cannot fail to be found in the heart of a young person often discovering a thousand muddy rivulets into which to channel an outlet that would make them explode otherwise.

Forget all guarantees! A guarantee is a ball and chain. A safe future, a guaranteed future, is a heavy anchor entangled in the shallows. And forget meagre daily happiness too, keeping others happy, one's creditors, one's parents with their behaviour models. The only answer to their expectations is to go beyond them. What they want of you can only be a

tiny crumb of your dream—after all what they want is easily satisfied—their goals should be no more than minute steps in the long journey you have ahead of you. What worth is riotousness, small-time rebellion? What matters is the great refusal, leading to the inversion of your essence as human beings, young people (men and women, for those who still have these distinguishing concerns). Young crazy people, drunk on their own life, who don't yet want to determine themselves in this or that social manifestation but are open to every experience of the senses, every achievement not yet established or even thought or considered to exist.

Throw your ability to go beyond at the whole world. Spit on all the accommodating winks coming from all sides. School, no content. Culture, managed ridiculously by sycophants. Politics, in the hands of clowns. Society, organized by police go-betweens. Fun, codified by economics graduates. You can't baptize your future in the name of appearance, exteriority, representation, the uniform of the latest fashion.

If you want to live you have to fight against this continuous festering, rotting passed off as something flowering and joyful. And may this fight be to the death, merciless, a spit in the face of the constructors of compliance, the manufacturers of death in the name of everlasting peace, the paid fabricators of opinions, the weavers of tawdry cheating and tricks. And may this spit not be that of some superior wisdom claiming to teach something to the teachers by trade, but sarcastic contempt for all compromise, falsity, legalities that heal and illegalities that claim to confer a status of diversity based on the penal code. Not a sideways position I suggest, but a head-on collision.

And prepare yourselves, prepare yourselves for revenge. Accumulate your anger day by day—this yes—and make it explode at the right moment. Facing you stands the most shameful, vile garbage heap in history, sum of the sums of every wickedness. No danger of making mistakes about where to strike, the target is so vast that even if you were blind from birth you would still be able to centre it.

Trieste, 29 November 2008
Alfredo M. Bonanno

*We can destroy everything because we can build it
all again as we are the ones who made everything.*
(Words attributed to Buenaventura Durruti)

*We must destroy everything because we could never use
what the bosses are building today to guarantee their
domination in a liberatory way, which we will never know
if we remain within a class dimension like the present.*
(Updated motto)

Today's restructuring of capital and the State is redefining class relations through new perspectives. Those who have the technological instruments today and even more so in the future, will also have power and be able to manage consensus. They will be the 'included' in a reality of dominion. The rest will be 'excluded', condemned to a 'passive' use of technology. The perfectionment of this process passes through the reduction of what the class of excluded possess: in the first place their own culture. Young people are the group that suffers most from this pressure. It is here that the future included and excluded are to be found. Certainly the selection is still based on belonging, but new elements are appearing on the horizon. The following piece is an attempt to look at these new elements of class selection a little more closely.

Class modifications

The readjusting of dominion in a society undergoing violent restructuring such as the present one is producing a new definition of class relations.

New contrasts are superimposed on the rigid and rigidly interpreted old contrasts of the past. The panorama is shattered but not for this is it losing its vision of confrontation. On the one hand there are the privileged, on the other, those who have nothing.

A lot could be said about the nature of these privileges. We can no longer speak simply in terms of lack, so much as of the possession of something *different*. That's it, the privileged of today possess something, or at least the hope of something that the disinherited not only do not possess, but do not even *understand*, because they are unaware of it or about to lose what little knowledge they do have.

In my opinion, there needs to be a redefining of class relations through this progressive process of loss of knowledge, of the mastery of something that was once also indispensable to the exploiters themselves. The latter are now at the point of reconstructing a different set-up of social conditions, so different as to no longer require the exploited to have what they once possessed (in the first place labour power). That is why, far more than in the past, the new class set-up is based on innovative processes of technology in a radically different way.

The new revolutionary motto, "if we destroy we are also capable of building. We built the palaces and the cities. The workers can build them again, and better ones; we are not afraid of ruins, we have a new world here in our hearts", attributed to Durruti, but which however circulated (and still circulates) within the traditional working class (which still persists as a class in some ways, even if only in the defence of wages) is no longer correct. Today we could substitute it with another such as: "We must destroy everything because we will never be able to use in a libertarian way what the bosses are building to guarantee their dominion, as it would be something we could never know from within the class dimension of today."

In the past, destruction might have been an 'accident', nothing serious in any case, because we could have built a world of freedom from the ruins. Today it becomes a must, because only through the destruction of everything that the bosses are building, at least from the use of the post-industrial technologies onwards, will we be able to build the free society of tomorrow.

Loss of meaning of the old repartitions

The violent and rapid processes of transformation of the social set-up have reduced the importance and meaning of the old class manifestations. In the narrow sense, it is now extremely reductive to speak of 'proletariat' and 'lumpen-proletariat'. The same could be said of the term 'working class', all of which bears considerable weight in revolutionary

decisions. Similarly, new problems have appeared concerning definitions of the dominant class: capitalists, politicians, rentiers, employees, cadres, managers, etc. The old concept of 'bourgeoisie' has been shattered for ever.

In order to better orientate oneself I think we need to be more concrete and avoid banally substituting new ideological formulae in place of the old ones. I realise that many comrades are often careful to avoid pronouncing and referring to concepts such as 'proletariat' and 'bourgeoisie', and from their embarrassment I am aware of the profound changes we have been living through over the past few years. But simply banning a word is not enough. It is necessary to go into the thing if one wants to avoid running the risk of a new word eventually taking place of the old, allowing us to continue 'dreaming' the thing undisturbed instead of taking possession of it.

Excluded and included

Some time ago I proposed a distinction based on these two concepts. On the one hand the *included*, closed up inside their teutonic castle, possessors of the new technology so for this reason, dominators; on the other hand the *excluded*, destined to a passive use of the technology, dispossessed of something that will never again be their tool of 'work' and, for this very reason, dominated.

I have explained as best I can that this distinction adapts itself well (as a model of reasoning) to post-industrial reality. Today's technology is *wealth*, far beyond simple 'financial capital', which will continue to diminish. It will be impossible for this technology to be shared by all. Many will only have the skills for a passive use of it and will not understand anything beyond simply pressing buttons. The few (the included) will carry out research and manage power through *possession*, which is exclusive to them.

To guarantee the net and final separation and prevent the excluded from being able to take possession of this technology, a precise wall needs to be built, a far more efficient one than the old walls of the past, safes, prisons and asylums: this will be the wall of *lack of interest*. One cannot be interested in what one doesn't know, one cannot struggle to have what is 'other' than oneself, that we have no desire to possess, because we do not know it. And the more we are cut out from technology, the more we will end up losing interest (also, and mainly, in the destructive sense), and this process of disinterest will run parallel to the growth in our ignorance, our progressive distancing, the lowering of our intellectual capacity.

The logic of things

The lowering of content that the life of the excluded will undergo is not the result of an operation programmed by the included. The process of class resystematization is in the logic of things i.e. in the logic of the restructuring of production.

Passing from an industrial structure based on huge fixed investments and programming to the post-industrial structure—brought about through the intervention of the State in the economic process itself—a structure based on the *flexibility* of production consented by the new technologies, the problem of a *reduction* of some capacities of the individual and the *increase* of others had to be faced.

That has led to profound modifications brought about by school, the media, the spectacle, free time, etc. In this way a new person is being built, one that is easily able to adapt. A malleable being, with modest capabilities, neither too low nor too high, with a tendency towards group work, without a broad culture and with no prospects of a career or social mobility. Almost all the young are being addressed towards these perspectives gradually. On average they are smarter, more dexterous (up to a point), educationally inferior, with wider, more superficial knowledge in the various sectors. They know less in depth, but know more things.

For a class analysis

To go over all the elements of a class analysis today would require the reassembling of all the pieces of a panorama that has been upturned by the acceleration of the normal processes of the restructuring of capital by the new technologies.

From there, the phase in which capital brought the State into the rescue project, let's say around the beginning of the 80s, we have seen how legitimization no longer passes through control and repression, but primarily through consensus.

Once the phase of adjustment was over after the State transformed itself from capital's cashier into its banker, one realised that there was not all that much difference between capital and the State and that the socialisation of capital was going hand in hand with the upturned mercantilization of so-called State capitalism. With the fading of the supporting ideologies the two great historically opposed sides are coming closer on the practical level. The management of public affairs now differs less and less from that of the private.

We cannot identify the exact confine of the class clash with mathematical precision. But that was not possible before either, so we need to go looking for them, by trial and error.

We see it as the reduction of what the class of excluded possess. The reduction no longer passes through the classical appropriation [by the bosses] of what this class produces. From primitive to advanced, capitalist accumulation has always been based on extortion. Following a period of 'participation' we are now moving backwards towards exclusion. Technology is increasingly guaranteeing a productive system to which the excluded will only contribute marginally, through simplified procedures that will not allow for a reconstitution of the productive situation beyond the universe of the included. Technology will belong exclusively to the latter, the former will only be allowed a passive utilisation. This use will not allow technological mastery and, given the way things and projects of 'reduction' are being set out, not even a desire or need for this mastery.

The place where this process of reduction is most visible is among the young. This social area constitutes the reservoir for the identification of the included and excluded of the future. The selection is still based on the original conditions of belonging, but these conditions are matched by a more accentuated social capillarity. Every now and again one individual's exceptional ability and intelligence might emerge, giving them an entrance ticket. The needs of the included will always be dictated by those of a restricted number of technocrats and in the future these will not necessarily correspond to the present day holders of economic fortunes.

Far from objective security

A perspective of production based on flexibility requires an ideological support that proposes behaviour models that are far from stability, certainty and security.

Rather than a discourse on 'secure' employment, now almost mythical and archeological anyway, the young are being told about opportunity which, in fact, has increased. There are more possibilities for experience, various (limited) kinds of knowledge, fluidity of values, disengagement, individualism. The young person is urged to build a flexible life model capable of adapting to the changed conditions of not only the labour market, but reality as a whole.

This is the consequence of a certain failure (in terms of the change in productive relationships), but it has also contributed to this failure. Young people's move away from public and political interests is certainly a failure, but only of a way of seeing politics in authoritarian terms (the political party). In this sense, the collapse of traditional values (the family) has included that of traditional political values. It could not be otherwise.

To propose a "traditional" discourse to young people, let's say that of the "revolutionary" union, would be quite out of this world.

Young people have certainly not been diverted away from the myth of security (work, career, stability, family, party) in order to turn them into revolutionaries, so we should not believe that capital is working against itself. If anything, it is the other way round. This is why in the past our criticism of the party always went right to the end, to the very party within us, not be confused with the new State's (apparent) criticism that wants to offer a new order, given the apparent lack of order that exists at the present time. In fact, their lack of security (flexibility) is nothing but the search (already realized in some ways) for greater security (therefore, control).

Life

This is at the centre of young people's interests. Living an acceptable life. It involves moving future objectives into the precarious and uncertain present. Yesterday's certainties are disappearing to make way for fashions and fluctuations passed off as "opportunities", whereas they are mere illusions, just as in another way yesterday's certainties were also also illusions when placed in the optic of the party or the workers' State.

And, as is easy to forget, young people do not take this into account, even to criticise it. All that simply does not exist. The daily sphere, personal relationships, day to day opportunities, experimentation, the (uncritical) rejection of politics, has subconsciously taken the place of the paraphernalia of the past.

The everyday has become banal and repetitive, personal relationships drown in boredom, opportunities turn out to be nonexistent, experimentation is just fashion and the refusal of politics is just due to ignorance and not a result of critical reflection, and for the time being all this cannot undergo deeper analysis.

Often the response to processes of reduction is to look back and compare them to how things were in the past. For example, capital is pushing towards flexibility, but those who get this message transform it into adaptability and rediscover the value of bricolage, the misery of small needs satisfied through fake autonomy, the renunciation of desires that becomes habit, sacrifice, almost an ascetic abstraction of need. So, alongside the behaviour dictated by modernization (rejection of work, a career, social gratification, stability) the substitute of making do, illegal work, the pseudo-freedom of doing-nothing (which often corresponds to not-knowing-what-do) is resurrected almost as if by magic in young people's lives. The aggressiveness of the past or at least the desire to move up in society, is now being substituted with renunciation, permissiveness, horizontality in a far more permeable context. It turns out that the chances of the average individual being able to provide themselves with a few opportunities at the start of their social life were greater in a context where these opportunities were less available. Today, where there are more actual opportunities, there is less subjective disposition, reflecting unconscious renunciation and abandonment to a rhythm of life believed to be chosen at will, whereas it is being programmed in the great laboratories of capital.

Precariousness as a choice of life

Seen in abstract there can be little doubt that the rejection of social status, rigidity, a career, etc., is something positive. So much of the anarchist critique of the family, school, institutions, the State was aimed at the dismantling of fixed roles. But the precariousness deriving from this, its provisional nature, must be accompanied by an inner strength, an element of the individual's consciousness capable of transforming this unstable situation into something more stable and ordered, far from the provisional prison-like order imposed by the institutions.

This is all fine. But, in practice, how much of it is actually achieved? The strange encounter of our critical project aimed at the destruction of stability, with the State's project aimed at creating a situation of instability because that is the best way to reorganize the processes of exploitation, is certainly a fatal one. The two seem similar, but are actually profoundly different.

Capital (and along with it, the State) has widened possibilities to a maximum, proposing a horizontal scenario that once resembled a pyramid. But it is also possible to insert an insurmountable limit within the horizontal line, all the more insidious the less visible and comprehensible it is. The fascination for precariousness involves nearly all young people now, but it is very different from the choice of precariousness that some of us made in our lives in other times. Compulsory precariousness is as rigid a status as what existed before.

The swindle concealed behind this propaganda of the widening of possibilities provided by post-industrial society is better understood by looking at the comparison often made with a bohemian way of life. Precariousness as an artistic or intellectual choice. Now, is it possible to imagine such a mindset reaching mass level, at the level of every possible job? Of course not. At least, not in terms of creativity. Because the equation 'precariousness equals creativity' is incorrect when it is imposed by a routine that, rightly or wrongly, is always the same (a few buttons, more or less, all that changes is just the time and place for pressing them). Creativity lacking—and this is missing by definition, as everyone can see—the possibility of upsetting the routine is also lacking, so the possibility of upsetting status which crystallizes itself in this way is also lacking.

Creativity cannot exist in the absence of a consolidated identity, in the absence of a strong freewilled personality. We need an inner sense of security that allows us to move at ease within ourselves, despite all the sometimes excruciating contradictions of such a journey, or in conditions of absolute precariousness and extreme difficulty at the very level of survival. In fact, a lot could be said about creativity in coercive conditions, such as those of the situation that is now widespread among young people. Stimuli for sociality, horizontality of decision-making, the collectivity of experiences can also be positive elements, but first they need to be filtered in order to become elements of the individual's consciousness to then emerge as enticements for creativity. As long as the stimuli of the general conditions of the system, processes of fashion and unconditional acceptance remain as they are now generally, the moment for their transformation into creative elements is still far off.

Adaptation

Young people adapt. That is reality. And the interests and strategies of the ruling class are pushing in that direction. At the moment it cannot be said that there are precise programs in this sense, i.e., of a clear reduction of young people's abilities in terms of time and means employed, but there is a trend in the interests of production (first of all, the labour market) and a general rejection that has affected the very ability to orientate oneself autonomously.

Induced precarity is making young people avoid making any effort to transform this into chosen precarity. Moreover, after a while even the capacity to distinguish between the two is lost. You are in a precarious situation and try to get by. The loss of consolidated points of reference (something to be desired as a level of the social ladder), which once led to struggle, and when revolutionary awareness was acquired also to increment the class struggle in terms of direct action and attack, is now pushing—we are still thinking in general terms—towards find a solution for the problems of everyday life. And this solution can only be sought at a lower level. One looks around and accepts the seemingly inevitable models of compromise in the short term in the optic of an individual or, at most, a ghetto vision. Potentials are immersed in the vast sea of possibilities and end up drowning in the glass of water of compromise with oneself and the environment.

Lost identity is no longer sought in terms of conflict and personal suffering—something that once pushed towards research and, why not, utopia—but is sought in a generalized indecisiveness. One finds uncertainty, partiality, what's available, the tangible. The amount of "common sense" to be found in youth circles is disconcerting: low-end pragmatism (which has been exchanged, think! for nihilism) that completely cuts off relations with medium and long-term projectuality, the big questions of life, the social upheavals that could come about, voluntarism if not revolutionary, at least radical.

Precisely at a time when power is speaking of expanding to infinite possibilities, by grasping the profound meaning of this response, young people are closing themselves up in minimal satisfaction, fatalism, daily realism, reduced and half-reduced tension in the ghetto where it is possible to get by.

The weak part

Most belong to the weak part, that which has problems of realization. In a situation of a generalized depreciation of school both in content and at the level of access to the labour market, only a small minority, economically stronger and socially closer to the centres of power management, can, within certain limits, programme themselves and gain access to superior education levels, the only ones that guarantee entry into the world of the included.

For the weak part there are substitutes that have deliberately been cut out of the old values "against" once supported by revolutionaries. Do you remember "quality of life"? This example suffices to see what we are talking about.

The new ghetto

The young person, cut off from the start (apart from the due exceptions), no longer goes towards educational content, the only thing that could guarantee them access to the world of the included, but towards the vast field of appearances. The ghetto closes in around the weak side with the seal of dispossession. Slowly the substantial elements that once led to the use of cultural tools (also in a revolutionary sense, after becoming aware of one's class situation), are replaced by relational, inter-relational elements, contacts, the people one knows, opportunities, possibilities. Everything moves into the field of leisure, emotional relationships, friendships, everyday life practices, hobbies, a reflux of religious, mystery, esoteric, astrological, ascetic practices. Even "political" commitment, when it re-emerges through the swindle of a rejection of ideologies—imposed by the administration of power itself—political commitment is directed towards pacifist and non-violent sweetening, the a priori condition of dissociative (in the sense of separate) practices and sectorial interventions.

The new ghetto is therefore closed within the walls of getting along, daily life, escape into mystery, reduced commitment in this or that sector. The rest, society, revolutionary action, the dream of a better world is forgotten, indeed it has been forgotten at the express order of the objective reasonableness of things.

The function of affectivity

Affectivity becomes particularly important in a situation centred on compromise and accommodation when faced with the problem of the impossibility of building a correct personal identity but seeing oneself forced to go back to minimal positions, the only ones that can guarantee a certain equilibrium.

Friendship, peer relationships, the love affair, frequentation of the same places, codification of gestures, attitudes, words, etc. Little by little, one gets attached to the same people, the same things, the same words, the same gestures and, even while constantly changing, even the same clothes. Everything changes so that nothing changes. Affection replaces what no longer exists: ideology, organized labour, violent social differences, a pyramidal structure of society.

A vortex is created within which the enclosure of the ghetto solidifies. Reality proposes the same experiences to the subject who cannot manage to live it differently, even in some hypothetical maximum potential. So the nature of experiences between external reality and individual is postponed. This one is modeled on that one and that one reproduces the patterns of this one.

External reality is experienced as something distant and incomprehensible, anyway, not all that interesting. What we perceive are the limiting elements of this reality: everyday life with its myths, common sense, commonplaces, sport, music, fashion, the symbols of beauty, possession, strength, etc. The rest, the ultimate causes of these symbols that are on our skin in everyday life, are considered—and in fact are—far away, of little import and therefore, in essence, non-existent. And as life is still always action, not simply expectation, here it is transformed into a spectacle. In this area, greatly enriched by power, young people can still have some influence, say what they like, find their own way, their individuality.

In the field in which they feel more “themselves”, laws reign that, taken in themselves, are the realization of the old utopia: equality, fraternity, friendship, affection, love, peace, nonviolence. All cows are grey in the realm of the fictitious.

Lack of identity

We have seen that all this makes the construction of the personality difficult or at least favours conditions of adaptation that produce flexible personalities with little identity of their own.

Things could not be otherwise. In a situation in which potential opportunities are increasing, to avoid absolute frustration one must necessarily fall back on opportunistic, pragmatic choices (escape into illusion: drugs, religion, various mysteries, physical bodybuilding, etc.). But identity is not built on such weak foundations.

Of course, even the old careerist with a “strong” identity proved himself in opportunism and a certain flexibility. But his was a process of decisions, a strategy, ridiculous and Machiavellian if you like, but still a strategy. The opportunism we are talking about is substance, not strategy, content, not the outer skin. This opportunism is devoid of identity (any identity, even that of the exploiter, which is still identity).

And, being devoid of identity, he goes into the fray.

So we have it that young people can look for work but live their situation (of unemployed, illegal workers, workers) as “externals”, as a transitory situation. Today here, tomorrow there, the day after tomorrow, nowhere. The same for the family: they can live in it but do not share its values, as they can abandon it, but not for this acquire or rationalize the reasons for the abandonment. The same for a group: young people can belong to a group but still maintain other kinds of relationship, and this surprises us compared to the strong selectivity of what it once meant to belong to the groups of political and revolutionary commitment.

It follows that young people find it difficult to see any scale of values in their social relationships. They no longer know what matters more, work or family, associative activity in a group or cultural engagement in another, concrete support of an institution or free choice far from political party organizations.

We can—as everyone has surely experienced—see young people, even comrades, carry out a struggle with certain means, counter-information, direct action, etc., then suddenly propose to agree with anyone at all, the local council for example, to get some concession. This is not about contradictions or bad faith, it is a question of lack of identity.

Lack of identity leads to indeterminate, unpredictable behaviour.

Unpredictability

We need to stop and think about this for a moment. The formation of the personality is not only subjective, it is also objective. The environment concurs and, certain physical components prevailing over others, leads to a certain construction of consciousness and of the individual.

A flexible set-up with no long-term projects, reduced reactions and impoverished content, inevitably leads to a state of flimsiness in young people. It also affects their ability to be constant in their orientation in the sphere of everyday life. The lack of, or strong reduction in ideals, utopias, radical ideas, engagement also leads to unpredictability in minimal behaviour. Fed up one day, hyperactive the next. Romantic one minute, then becoming sceptical. Going from feeling insecure to showing off ostentatious independence, from tolerance to intolerance.

Unpredictability is also mirrored in other ways during the restructuring of the social formation. Productive processes are undergoing such a profound and “revolutionary” transformation that this is causing an equally violent transformation of values and behaviour patterns, as well as of social conditions and desires.

Young people are suffering from their unpredictability. There can be no doubt about that. In the present state of affairs they seem to be overwhelmed by a process that leaves them no alternative. They do have certain interests, of course, but these always seem to be blurred by other possible choices that could satisfy diametrically opposed equally valid needs.

Levels of tension

The individual is pathologically contradictory and needs to find an outlet, if not exactly unitary, at least one that unifies momentarily. One cannot remain stuck between several choices for ever. You must decide at some point. Of course, even absence of choice can be a choice, or, if you like, being put in a situation where it is impossible to choose is a choice. Moving towards one at least, as it would only become irreversible beyond a certain point.

We can carry on living in flimsy conditions of survival for long periods, but the consequences of uncertainty accumulate and wear the individual down. In a horizontal orientation, without any model of constructive values, we either address ourselves—and fast—towards awareness, or we can easily get burnt.

And young people certainly run such a risk. Becoming aware of one’s condition of belonging to the excluded can occur in many ways, even to the point of reaching how this used to happen in the past (through alienation). However it cannot be said that this awareness alone, especially in embryonic forms, although sufficient to trigger a sense of discomfort serious enough to push one to seek an outlet, would actually lead to a project.

This is different to when change in personality was once reflected in quite a tangible practice, a materializable need visible for all to see. And from there it was a short step to the violent desire for reappropriation. One was also affected by lack of dignity and could fight, even die, because of it. But today it is no longer a question of need.

When confronted with a contradictory situation open to a number of possibilities, the individual intimately becomes aware of their own contradictoriness. They realise that they lack a project, desire, will, and this can lead to unthinkable consequences. The unpredictable behaviour doesn’t change.

The violence that surges from this accumulation of contradictions cannot immediately be translated into our code based on the production relations of the past.

Dominion’s project

This is not well defined, however, it is based on the indispensable criterion of flexibility as we have seen. This involves risks. In the first place the unpredictability of potential class conflict. Over the last hundred years, capital and the State had convinced themselves, together or separately, that everything could be recuperated but, after all, they never illuded themselves concerning the utopia of capital, that everyone, both exploiters and exploited, could be satisfied.

Now, with the radical changes that have taken place over the past decade, expectations are still cautious, although we would also tend to agree that the possibility of this holy alliance is greater than before. Yet these people are moving cautiously. They know that there are spaces where social conflictuality could emerge due to the impossibility of an overall social project on the one hand and the young’s inability to realize projects of individual satisfaction on the other. But the dominators want to delude themselves yet again, arguing that anyway there is space for personal fulfilment and contradictions can always be overcome with pragmatic attitudes.

Each deluding themselves in their own way. Even among those fighting dominion, illusions of equal scale and gravity exist.

Going beyond the old class struggle projects

Regardless of the different ideological and practical connotations, forms of aggregation (the political party, the union, the group, federation, etc.) objectives and utopian elements were born according to the visible need to adjust worker resistance to the excessive power of the bosses. Faced with the monolithic nature of capital, the exploited were fragmented. Hence the primary indispensable action of uniting to defend one's rights (survival at least, which was also threatened under certain conditions) then to attack in order to make other conquests.

The monolithic nature of capital was not only visible as financial force and ownership of the means of production, but also as a physical place: the factory. It was never accidental that factories were built along the same architectural models as prisons and barracks, just as it was never accidental that the old barracks were later transformed into factories, prisons or schools (as also happened for convents).

Total institutions all had the same aim, so the buildings were interchangeable. In order to fight under such conditions it was necessary to unite. From uniting strategies and outcomes "counter-power" emerged, i.e., the substitution of the old power with a new one. Here is not the place to go into the tragic outcome of such perspectives. Instead, what I am interested in looking at is the change in the monolithic condition of capital and the State.

Let's hasten to say that there is no longer a "heart" of capital today, just as there is no longer a "heart" of the State.

The big industrial centres are spreading over the whole international territory and becoming increasingly fragmented thanks to the programming possibilities offered by electronics operating in real time. For example, already the great storage depots of the big industries no longer exist. The various materials are distributed throughout the territory, even at great distances, without any real logic.

When you need to find a part anywhere in the globe, you look in the computer, find the nearest place that stocks it and get it sent by plane. The system is less expensive than it might seem as there are no longer the excessive costs of warehousing large quantities, of managing a few warehouses containing thousands of pieces and the relative risks involved, etc. The same goes for assembly lines which, robotized, can easily be reduced in size as partly-assembled products can now be transported vast distances. In any case, the monolithic nature of big industry is tending to disappear and the number of workers inside factories is being drastically reduced along with it.

As for the structure of the State, the "heart" has not existed for a long time. No component of the State mechanism is essential, all are easily replaceable at both the political and the administrative level. From this we can see the limitation of the actions of authoritarian marxists such as the Red Brigades and so on, which chose their action on outdated analyses, expecting impossible results. The decision-making powers of the State are being spread throughout the territory, distributing themselves horizontally, the most suitable way for the post-industrial economic situation.

We must therefore consider the old models of organisation of the exploited to be unsuited to the current situation.

What to suggest: what we have been doing for some time, summarized here in a few lines: autonomous base entities, self-managed structures developed according to the situation, making reference to permanent conflict, self-management and attack.

For the specific organization we suggest informal groups that recognize themselves in the insurrectional methodology, i.e., in the constant practice of sensitizing the exploited to transform their instincts of rebellion and tendencies to riot, as far as possible into insurrectional forms dotted with a minimum of self-organization and political analysis.

For attack, now, not planned for a future when "the time is ripe", we are for interventions addressed at destroying capital's and the State's realisations throughout the territory. Minimal structures should be preferred, as we see it, as the spread of those of capital (and also, though a little less, those of the State) throughout the territory is based precisely on such structures.

The large centres, those that persist, are now mere symbols of something that no longer exists or if it does it needs to be assisted by a myriad of terminal connections (cables, wires, underground pipes, pipes, telephone lines, antennas, pylons, poles, sorting centres, research centres, etc.), without which these complexes would be unusable.

For these reasons, with all due respect to the deaf who insist on not hearing, we argue that the traditional aggregative structures (political parties and trade unions of any kind) and specific structures (groups and federations of synthesis) belong to the past and are no longer up to the occurrences and ongoing modifications of reality.

Revolutionary presence

Although the moment is one of reflux and the interests of capital and the State in generalised disengagement are about to coincide with a lack of interest of young people who are rejecting the ideological adventures of the past, I still believe it is possible to rebuild a revolutionary presence.

I am basing this hypothesis on two arguments. First, the far from optimal situation in which great masses of young people now find themselves and will do increasingly. Contradictoriness and lack of identity will end up leading to (in fact are already leading to) explosions of violence that are not easy to understand and even less easy to manage. Secondly, it is possible to address the mistakes of the past critically without turning them into a funereal lament for a lost revolution.

It is necessary to be present in a way that is appropriate to the new situation, i.e., with instruments that can become an element of and not an obstacle to these outbursts of violence, channeling them from discontinuity and confusion into continuity and class awareness. In other words, to transform spontaneous riots into conscious insurrections.

Will such a thing be possible? We believe so and for this to happen we indicate as indispensable: the courage to face situations that we are unaccustomed to, the ability to understand motivations that are beyond one's own experiences in the past, clarity of propositions against all mystification, isolation of those who just chatter, and the preparation of minoritarian actions.

All this, with due respect to the embalmers of corpses, we are prepared to do, in fact are doing.

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