Jacques Camatte And the New Politics of Liberation

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Contents

The Despotism of Capital 7
The Domestication of Humanity 15
Paradise Now! 17
The Revolt of Humanity Against Capital 20
Editors' Note 24

During the final decade of the 20th century and into the early years of the 21st, the nature of radical politics fundamentally changed. The hegemonic currents, Marxist-Leninism and social democracy, suffered from the sea-change of neo-liberalism, and had difficulty grappling with the new currents of opposition embodied in such things as the Zapatista Uprising, radical ecology and the anti-summit movements. On a deeper level many of the fundamentals of traditional Leftism had been unsettled intellectually by post-modernism and by the changes of social organization that accompanied the growth of post-Fordist capitalism, not to mention the fall of the USSR and the regimes of Eastern Europe. This crisis of the Left was quickly interpreted as the universal victory of Liberal Democracy. However it is now clear that social antagonism, often of a revolutionary anti-capitalist nature, has not departed; rather it is re-asserting itself in ways that seem unintelligible to traditional political analysis.

One of these new currents is green anarchy/anarcho-primitivism (GA/AP). Consciously anti-ideological, it is rather a broad church of numerous tendencies and trajectories united by an anarchic politics that details a critique that goes beyond opposition to the state and market to a larger critique of civilization and its totality. Its roots are also broad, coming out of elements of radical ecological politics (especially around groups like Earth First! UK and the Animal Liberation Front), various counter-cultures and the ultra-left. It is the purpose of this essay to investigate one of the ultra-left authors that GA/AP has been deeply influenced by, yet who remains largely ignored by wider audiences: Jacques Camatte.

Camatte is a difficult figure for English speaking readers. His political origins are deeply immersed in the ultra-left, yet his political trajectory goes beyond them. The ultra-left is largely ignored in English speaking countries except as a foil to Lenin's polemics or as a European curiosity. Camatte comes out of the Italian Communist Left (though he is French) and

like them shares a deep engagement with Marx at the level of high theory that can be bewildering to the uninitiated. Whilst he was an essayist for nearly 40 years (mostly published in the journal Invariance) there exists only one English-language collection of his essays: This World We Must Leave & Other Essays, published by the eclectic label Autonomedia (home of many of the more serious works of contemporary radicalism.)

Camatte, however, has had some strong influences amongst (GA/AP). Later issues of Do or Die, the pre-eminent theoretical journal of GA/AP in the UK, with a wide readership in the broader ecology movement, cite him on a number of occasions. David Watson, prominent theoretician of Fifth Estate, the publication that in many ways was the first to articulate a thorough GA/AP praxis in the USA, shows an engagement with Camatte. Camatte's writings on organization profoundly influenced the development of the publication Green Anarchist. More broadly though, Camatte charts the same political territory as GA/AP in a sophisticated way. He carries many of the same strengths and weaknesses of the broader current(s) and is thus useful for constructing a (post)-modern anarchic practice.

However, Camatte is no anarchist himself. Like the ultra-left his vision is communist and maintains a deep engagement with Marx. He is (like Marx maybe?) not, though, a "Marxist". Camatte writes, "We (the journal Invariance) integrate Marx's work (since he especially is concerned) but we do not pose a Marxist theory nor our own theory". This is not merely semantics but rather evidence of Camatte's attempts to build praxis through the refusal of ideology a tendency he shares with many radicals that emerged out of the near-revolution of May 68. However, his reliance on Marx would make him unacceptable for many anarchists for whom Marx is anathema. Camatte's vision of communism has, of course, nothing to do with the statist regimes of the USSR et al. Indeed, Camatte affirms a vision of communism that is not only anti-statist but one that connects with deeper associations of gemeinwesen. To quote:

> "Communism puts an end to castes, classes and the division of labor (onto which was grafted the movement of value, which in turn animates and exalts this division). Communism is first of all union. It is not domination of nature but reconciliation, and thus regeneration of nature: human beings no longer treat nature simply as an object for their development, as a useful thing, but as a subject (not in the philosophic sense) not separate from them if only because nature is in them. The naturalization of man and the humanization of nature (Marx) are realized: the dialectic of subject and object ends."

This vision of communism is obviously libertarian, and one could argue goes beyond many anarchist visions such as anarcho-syndicalism, which only poses the self-management of the division of labor as an alternative, and glorifies production and work.

This essay will grapple with two of Camatte's key theoretical themes: the despotism of capital and the domestication of humanity. Both arguably chart the course of social relations under the conditions of the real subsumption of society by capital and are key themes (even if they are not expressed in the same language) of much of the GA/AP critique.

The Despotism of Capital

Camatte asserts that we have entered a particular period of capitalism, which he calls the "Despotism of Capital". This is a situation in which capital has created and forms a "material community" and a "human community": in other words it is the condition of real subsumption: a situation where human activity takes place in the interior of capital. Previously we could typify capitalism as a "nomadic war machine" (Deuleze & Guattari). That is, an expansive apparatus or an ensemble(s) of appa-

ratuses, that attempts to de/reterritorialise, reform and capture people, space and activity. This war machine had a combative frontier and thus there is something beyond it: an exterior. Different discourses place radical potential in this exterior, seeing in it both a boundary and a negating force to capital. This exterior was conceptualized as a number of social forces: the industrial proletariat (Marxism); the third world peasantry (Maoism); or students and marginal groups (the New Left), for example.

Camatte theorizes a different situation, one in which no substantial boundaries none that can not be overcome to capital exist. Indeed, it is not the case that capital dominates society, as some kind of lording power, but rather that it itself constitutes the entire community. This situation of the Despotism of Capital is typified by a number of conditions. One is that is has undergone a process of "autonomization." This is a situation in which the various elements of capital production, exchange, rent, the state etc., increasingly fuse together and escape any previous human constrictions on their development. The second process is one of anthropomorphosis. Here capital transforms itself into nothing more than human behavior and human behavior into nothing more than capital. This happens through capital's tendency to ultimately head towards a state of representation and thus able to mediate all human interactions, and comprise all of humanity's relationships within its terrain.

Almost intuitively it is possible to see the merit in Camatte's assertions. Human life seems to have taken on an increasingly massified form as it is constructed from cradle to grave within the dominant institutions of capital. Lived experience takes place on the terrain of school, hospital, work place, Internet, shopping center, movie theatre etc, i.e. within all the realms of the many hierarchies of capital, so much so that life becomes defined within the terms of these hierarchies. The institutions themselves become increasingly fused and unified

into a whole. Moments of production and consumption, of work and leisure, of public and private seem to move to a more or less undifferentiated experience. Especially if we consider the advent and application of various digital and cybernetic technologies, we see a tendency toward the blending and standardization of daily life. (Note: Interestingly, part of this process is the invention of consumer difference. Niche markets are marshaled out of the memory of uniqueness or the cultural singularity of a previous time, what Camatte calls "Echoes of the Past", that both feeds a desire for otherness yet negates its possibility). Subjectivity, whether it be as a student, mother, worker (all three at the same time?) or whatever, seems to be nothing more than a deeply personalized fetishization of the imagery of capital. For Camatte, capital reintroduces subjectivity. For it is through the production of individual identities that are understandable only through the framework of capital, that the entirety of human activity can be subsumed within exploitative relationships.

Continuing on the theme of fetishism and representation, it is now commonplace to talk of the total mediation of life through the representations of capital. Surely this is Baudrillard's simulacrum or Debord's spectacle! All of them allude to the situation of total commodity fetishism, where the fetishism has totally outstripped the realness of any use-value the commodity once possessed. It seems these observations are so obvious to be almost banal. It is worth stressing, though, what this means for the formation of social relationships. The situation of (almost) total domination of representation/fetishism is one where there is a disappearing ability to have an unmediated relationship with anything. All relationships tend towards their conception, formation and end within the realm of capital. To quote:

> "As a result of this process of anthro-pomorphosis, capital becomes in turn a spectacle. It assimilates

> to itself and incorporates in itself all qualities of men, all their activities, without ever being one of them, otherwise it would deny itself by substantialization, inhibition of its life process."

The Despotism of Capital has not emerged out of nowhere. Camatte cites two major reasons for its trajectory: the massive growth in productive forces and the effect of various pre-capitalist presuppositions of capital. Classical Marxism believed that whilst capitalism would bring into being immense productive forces, it would at one point reach "decadence" and become a hindrance to their development. It would be up to socialism and then communism to continue the development of productive forces. Camatte thoroughly rejects this, arguing that the development of productive forces has been crucial in establishing the despotism of capital and the removal of barriers and resistance to its power. It is this that has allowed capital to constitute itself as a community. As Camatte writes " What he (Marx) presented as the project of communism was realized by capital". Camatte rejects this, seeing that since capital and the productive forces have grown together smoothly, the social relationships and the productive forces are united in a singular "totality". Since capital enforces its despotism by means of "objects and things that are invested with new modes of being," the expansion of productive forces is the expansion of the prison in which the human finds himself or herself individually and collectively. If we take into account the division of labor and hierarchy that are inherent in industrial (and now cybernetic/digital) production, expansion of the productive forces across the social terrain to the extent that they constitute in entirety the social terrain, means vast expansion of atomization, massification and submission.

The expansion of productive forces has led to the dominance of ideologies that further deepen the despotism of capital. One of these is science. Camatte rejects the standard

conception of science being a positive revolutionary force, decrying it as the "goddess and servant of capital". For Camatte, science is nothing more than a "study of mechanism of adaptation that will assimilate human beings and nature into the structure of capital". This is obviously quite a break from traditional Marxism, and more broadly, standard leftist thought which sides with the entire project of modernity (of which science is a part) against pre-existing religious/mystic consciousness. Whilst Camatte (unlike many who critique science) has no time for the revival of new-age mysticism, he maintains a particular vitriol for orthodox Marxism's celebration of science and technology.

For Camatte, Marxism is a "repressive consciousness". Rather than being a key to revolutionary praxis it "seems to be the authentic consciousness of the capitalist mode of production." This is because Marxism has always posited the development of productive forces as the sine qua non of liberation, yet it has been the development of productive forces that has rendered powerless the rebellion of the classical proletariat. Marxism has thus functioned as an intellectual justification for the development of techno-scientific rationality and the massive expansion of industrialization. Indeed, the history of labor movements and national liberation struggles is one in which the struggle against the political control of the bourgeoisie has worked often to actually create and extend the despotism of capital.

Camatte not only sees the power of capital extend across the social body but back and forth in time as well. He emphasizes the continuing importance of the "presuppositions of capital": the vast inheritance of the trajectory of class society that allows capital to develop. For Camatte "[c]apital is therefore the endpoint of the phenomena of democratization, individualization, and massification, all of which had begun to emerge well before capital had become a determinant element in the society". To go further:

> "These presuppositions are: production and autonomization of the individual, together with a related movement production of private property; production of the state and its autonomization; production of exchange value, which can assume highly developed forms. These elements of presuppositions, which appeared at the time of the Greek polis, are bound up with a representation that justifies the rupture with nature and with the community, the domination of men over animals and plants, and the domination of men over women."

Whilst Camatte here dates many of these developments with the arrival of the Greek polis (and hence, in a sense, of the 'West'), his investigation makes him look even further back. Camatte questions Neolithic developments of animal husbandry and the rise of agriculture. He sees in them the rise of the original conception of property and patriarchy and the original rifts in the pre-existing geimenwessen. Classically, critiques of technology start with the Industrial Revolution. Here Camatte is beginning to develop the critique of capitalism, and thus the emergence of communism as a revolt against civilization.

It must be made clear, however, that Camatte does not see the Despotism of Capital as the triumph of either bourgeois society or of the capitalist ruling class. Indeed, he argues that capital, through its constant need to revolutionize itself, both destroys bourgeois society and all classes including the ruling class, reducing us all to a general universalized proletarianized mass. Camatte argues that both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat emerged with capitalism, but their struggle with each other, carried out on the presuppositions of capital and the unquestioning of productive forces, led to their abolition and the domination of society by capital. It was since proletarian strug-

gle was successfully "mystified" by the categories of capital, when proletarian identity was built around the celebration of its role of "productive laborer", that proletarian struggles advanced the domination of society by capital.

We can see this in the struggles and demands of the classic labor movements. As opposed to the very earliest movements of the proletarianized (such as the Luddites), which rejected the idea of wage-labor, the classical labor movement celebrated it. Classical labor movements fought for the right to workfor the protection of their role within capitalism. This may have seemed justifiable considering the brutality of laisse-faire capitalism. The effect though of mass movements of both left and right (the popular front, fascism, liberal/social democracy, etc) was to add to the creation of the conditions of real subsumption.

The effect of the creation of the community of capital (by, in part, proletarian struggle) was simultaneously the generalization of the proletarian condition and the destruction of the revolutionary specificity of the proletariat. Of course, the universalization of wage-labor/proletarianisation has not meant an equalization of wealth or power under the despotism of capital. Indeed, the current global order has created a proletarianized multitude that is riddled by division. Capital maintains its rule through the imposition of opposed roles (the cop vs. the student, for example) up and down its pyramidal structure.

How true are these claims? If we look back over the history of the labor movement, the proletariat has tended to move further and further towards the interior of capital, and all labor moves towards a condition of proletarianisation. More and more of life takes the appearance of work, and work takes the appearance of life. We have the situation where the condition of wage-labor swells, but labor as a specific antagonistic class disappears. This does not mean the end of struggle it is now conceived on a different basis. Indeed, the simultaneous absorption and generalization of the proletariat leads to the transfor-

mation of all into potential antagonists: "because it (communist revolution) won't be the activity of one class only but of humanity rising up against capital".

The other side to this claim is that the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, ceases to exist. Capital dismantles bourgeois society with its clear restrictions and norms, because it appears in the way of capital's total subsumption of daily life. The cultural conflicts of the last 20-something years, the debates on public morality and censorship, etc, have not been between a liberating social force and class society, but rather between capital's desire for increasing social commodification, and the social structures from whence it emerged. Fixed rigid structures (schools, etc) that were essential to the emergence of capital become interferences in movements and flows that must be (and are) overcome. The neo-liberal offensive has been just this, the transformation of traditional refuges of bourgeois society into the circuitry of capital.

Is this the same as the disappearance of the ruling class? It seems obvious that there exist strata that populate the commanding heights of the global order. But do they truly rule? Are these sections any less dominated and alienated by capital? Whilst ideologically, certain individuals do take on the appearance of feudal Sun Kings depending on the fluctuations of various social discourses their personal existences are not crucial to the continuation of the social order, in the same way a king's or Pharaoh's is. Those who are at the top of the ziggurat of capitalism exist totally within social structures and discourses, and are coded by them. Whilst they are in the control tower of society, it is the concretized and embodied mechanism that provides the only possible courses of action. To quote David Watson, "only the circuitry acts".

Camatte, writing in the 70's, foresaw the revolution as a looming possibility and the end of capital close at hand. Obviously that was not the case. The neo-liberal offensive that arose as a counter-revolution to the social ferment that

Camatte wrote about was an active process that involved planning and coordination. The top stratas of society were increasingly galvanized into acting in a dynamic fashion. Neoliberalism made the various corporate executives, ideologies, politicians, party leaders, communist party commissars, etc, act like a ruling class even though objectively there may not have actually been one.

The existence of hostile classes is a useful tool to explain various social phenomena. A conscious and coordinated ruling class, enriched with its own autonomy and with the ability to dole out privilege, helps explain why an exploitative society would survive: oppressed peoples would be deliberately held down through repressive mechanisms. The model of the class society is thus that of the conqueror: the rule through force of the core over the periphery. Yet, if we now exist in the community of capital where all human behavior is part of a social wide machinery, a social factory, (Negri, Tronti, et al.) where we are slaves not to people but to the social relationships and discourses that we make up, how does the system survive? If we are our (and each other's) own manifestation of oppression, why do we not just stop it? How can you explain the continuation of oppression/exploitation once clear, separate classes stop existing?

Camatte explains this phenomena as "domestication". Indeed, the domestication of humanity and the rise of the despotism of capital are impossible without each other: their existences allow the other to function.

The Domestication of Humanity

Domestication — the reduction/destruction of humanity's wild and autonomous subjectivity — rises with the earliest Neolithic origins of civilization. It reaches new heights with the origins of the despotism of industrial capital. The

domestication of humanity is the Social/psychological State of the processes mentioned above. The human being undergoes "analyzing-dissecting-fragmenting" and then "capital reconstructs the human being as a function of its process". The effect of this is that capital captures and transforms the fundamental critical facilities of humanity, the ability to think, conceive, communicate and wires them as part of the broader social circuitry. Camatte writes that "precisely because of their mental capacities, human beings are not only enslaved, but turned into willing slaves of capital". The (re)production and circulation of life-as-capital require a huge amount of deep personal investment in all of capital's processes. Hence, the post-modern economy is a vast libidinal economy gripping in constant agitation and anguish. The process of domestication involves the recuperation of the desires for community and individuality of gemeinwesen: "communal being comes in the form of collective worker, individuality in the form of consumer capital". We see a recurrence of a central point of Camatte's thinking: that the despotism of capital is the achievement of the premises of "communism" but in negative.

What has allowed this domestication are previous presuppositions of capital that structure the behavior of humanity in certain ways: "[t]he rupture of the body from the mind made possible the transformation of the mind into a computer which can be programmed by the laws of capital." This is critique then of the project of rationality: the celebration of thought above and outside the body, and the broad instrumentalization of life that accompanies it. The inheritance of rationality is the extension of the binary of mind/body into the irrational as well. Part of the condition of domestication is the reduction of human experience to a seemingly inert and scopohilic state. Camatte states that "man (sic) becomes a sensual and passive voyeur, capital a sensual and suprasensual being". Again, only a cursory view over the representations of mass society is enough to give some validity to this perspective. For

example, think of the explosion of Reality TV, where countless thousands are desperate for a chance to move up a notch in the Panopticon in an attempt to infuse their lives with action and meaning.

Interestingly enough, Reality TV helps give weight to Camatte's view in other ways as well. Witness how, when on air, people are quick to behave in ways that are already scripted, to faithfully act out all they have been taught. Here we see people, as they are everywhere: "reflections of capital." Yet this does not quite allow us to explain the lack of revolt. We must go a little further. The effect of domestication is a difficulty in the ability to begin to act autonomously. The rise of the ideologies of new social movements is for Camatte not the arrival of new rebellious social actors but a product of the "disintegration of consciousness". The project of self-activity by conscious human beings against the totality of capital recedes to the support of reified actors against sectional challenges. This is a condition of the Right as well as the Left. For Camatte, the disappearance of class and the arrival of the despotism of capital means all politics has been reduced to a competition of various "gangs", none of which just embodies the fractured modes of being.

Trapped in such a huge mass, imprisoned in a global and seemingly infinite division of labor, engaged in endless activity, overwhelmed with ideology, is this the end for our protagonist humanity? For Camatte "this is nothing other than the reign of death". Can we begin to image lines of escape?

Paradise Now!

Camatte remains a revolutionary and, as mentioned previously, was optimistic about a revolution against capital erupting in the mid 1970s. To understand this we have to see his theorizations as theorizations of process. What he is writing about are unfolding social tendencies that are in motion. Camatte does foresee a time when domestication will be so pro-

lific that the nature of humanity will be fundamentally different, just "accessories of an automated system". But not quite yet.

There are two currents in Camatte that work to explain the potential for revolution: one implicit in his writing and the other explicit. The former is the concept of species-being. This concept has fallen in ill repute with radicals due to the ascendancy of the ultra-conservative ideology of sociobiology; something that Camatte rejects. Camatte writes that capital "having de-subtantialized everything, it simultaneously becomes charged with a substance that inhabits it." In other words, even as capital captures, and recreates as its self all human social life, there continues on, even in a fractured and alienated state, some kind of essence of human inter-relationship. Alienated and repressed as it is, it provides an antagonist kernel in the heart of capital.

The second current is that the activity of capital creates revolution itself. As seen above, capital constantly revolutionizes social processes. Camatte argues that this constant change creates instability, a permanent sense of crisis and a fear of the future that compels people to rebel.

It is here we can locate a major flaw in the writings of Camatte and the broader theorization of GA/AP. The flaw is that all activity is prescribed to capital — humanity appears to be a passive victim. If we take on Camatte's arguments about the presuppositions of capital, then we construct a 10,000-year meta-narrative of constant oppression. Indeed, GA/AP writer Zerzan describes the history of civilization as a "horror show or death trip". David Watson talks of the dominance of capital as a "mega-machine" and compares it to a "hydra". Both authors then paint a picture of total dominance and inescapability: a non-dialectic view of history. There is some justification for this. The collapse of all serious revolutionary challenge and the horrors of "real existing socialism" are testament to the continual power of Power. The daily-lived experience within the

despotism of capital is one of hopelessness: the cultural climate being a mixture of inertia and anxiety.

This problem seems to be almost epidemic to those who analyze the conditions of real subsumption (Frankfurt School, etc). By its nature, they assume the end of an exterior to capital and thus the end of the space from which resistance arises. However, there is one tendency that escapes this quagmire: a current we can call Autonomist Marxism (AM). It is the suggestion of this essay that Camatte and GA/AP more broadly would benefit from a reading in combination with AM (and vice versa).

In some ways GA/AP and AM are polar opposites. A crude reading of both sees the former as an image of the constant power of capital, the latter as the constant power of labor. Maybe something fertile can arise from thesis and anti-thesis?

What we can take from AM is the conception of the constant antagonism of those caught up within capital as our theoretical starting point, and that the conditions of real subsumption don't signal the end of struggle but new and shifting battle grounds. Crucial to this understanding is to see capital not as a state of "fetishism" but of "fetishisation" — a distinction between the concrete of domination and its concretization. The former assumes the end point is here, that latter sees a constant struggle that capital can never win: history is not just 10,000 years of domination, but also 10,000 of resistance both within and without domination.

Reading Camatte through this lens, we reach an interesting insight. Capital's condition of anthropomorphis is the transformation of everything into a state of tension. We are caught up in a social relationship that is itself a permanent crisis, the tussle between fetishization and anti-fetishization. Read this way, the formation of material human community by capital, is the formation of every aspect of life as struggle: the generalization of revolt as the sine qua non of existence.

The Revolt of Humanity Against Capital

> "Revolutionary struggle is struggle against domination as it appears in all times and places, and in all the different aspects of life" — J. Holloway
>
> "In the Beginning Was the Scream" in Revolutionary Writing: Common Sense Essays in Post-Political Politics

How can Camatte inform the creation of a viable and dynamic anarchic praxis? And is the struggle already throwing up forms and gestures that share a commonality with Camatte?

To begin with a radical politics informed by Camatte signals the end of the politics of the guillotine. The image of the revolt against capital being a war between two separate and distinguishable classes now finds little relevance. Instead we are presented with a revolt of humanity against capital: against a social relationship that is constructed out of the reification of our own activity. Revolution is reaffirmed as self-abolition: as the liberating destruction of the roles and behavior that make us up and force us to remake the conditions of our own enslavement. As Camatte writes: "each individual must be violent with him/herself in order to reject, as outside themselves, the domestication of capital and all its comfortable, self-validating 'explanations'". If we consider the global dimensions of the material community of capital, revolution grows from the self-abolition of the proletariat, to the self-abolition of a planetary work machine — the complete and total remaking of daily life. This concept of revolution goes beyond the standard ideas of both the Left and ultra-left: of the seizing of the infrastructure of capital and applying it to new management (whether that is of the party or councils).

Camatte is scornful of demands to occupy the factories: "so all the prisoners of the system are supposed to take over their prisons and begin the self-management of their own impris-

onment". The revolt against the despotism of capital, a situation predicated on the development of production forces, and historical presuppositions, is a revolt against the entirety of capital. It is a revolt against the nature and trajectory of civilization: against both the original ruptures of the gather/hunter gemeinwesen and its latest developments. This revolt has primitive and Luddite dimensions. But Camatte doesn't turn this into an ideology, he doesn't believe in a simple return to a perfect primitive stage (as some GA/AP proponents do); this kind of thinking is just another "echo of the past" — a product of a domesticated humanity.

Camatte argues that we must reject a mythology of class. He writes: "We are all slaves of capital. Liberation begins with the refusal to perceive oneself in terms of the categories of capital, namely as a proletarian, as member of the new middle class, as capitalist etc. Thus we also stop perceiving the Other — in his [sic] movement toward liberation — in those same categories." I would also suggest that here we find a momentary link between Camatte and the kind of popular global Zapatismo that is found in many anarchic circles. The first global encounters that the EZLN hosted were for "Humanity against Neo-liberalism". The rejection of the roles capital has created for us allows us to see the lines of connection we share with everyone. It also is crucial in the creation of praxis that does not reify particular social struggles as the determining element of general revolution. Thus we can move to construct the networks/ rhizomes/webs of resistance that can celebrate the difference, singularity and validity of each of its participants, whilst not collapsing into a politics of fracture. The transformation from a proletarian project to a human one means that new methods of struggle are needed. It could be argued that the massive mobilization of civil society that opposed the latest chapter of war in the Persian Gulf, is testament to the living death and impotence of that standard praxis of both the Left and liberalism. Camatte

argues that to be successful, a liberating revolution must take place on its own "terrain". But if there is no exterior to capital where can this terrain be? Camatte is somewhat infuriating in not helping to identify this new terrain: he only identifies what it is not. For example: "Today humanity can launch its battle against capital not in the city, nor in the country side but outside of both: hence the necessity for communist forms to appear that will be truly antagonistic to capital, and also rallying points for the forces of revolution". Where could this be? It is possible that this terrain to launch struggle from only comes into existence with struggle. One could think of the global movements that aim to redefine space such as squatted social centers in Europe, community gardens in New York, the autonomous municipalities of Chiapas, for example, as these new spaces. If one thinks of the latter then we can see how it is both rural yet global — space where various communities live daily agrarian lives, yet also a sort of planetary epicenter taking on people and meaning much broader than its physical borders. A host of other rebellious gestures both constructive and destructive — graffiti, rioting, crossing borders, Reclaim the Streets parties, the Temporary Autonomous Zone, communes, dumpster diving, voluntary homelessness — could all be seen as ways that this new terrain is created.

These kinds of activities invariably bring people into conflict with the state, as they disrupt the smooth flows of capital and transgress laws of property. This means the issue of violence must be confronted. Yet the rejection of the black and white of class war means we are pushed up against those who are just ourselves: humans playing roles assigned by capital. Camatte, while not sympathizing with the state, argued that many student clashes with the riot cops in the early 1970s worked to reinforce the roles capital uses to pit humanity against each other, not diminish them. Camatte doesn't preach non-violence but rather that revolution must deal with a contradiction of violence: that it exists in social conflicts, that

violence against capital is to be celebrated as essential, yet violence against capital often means violence against people, which can swamp the revolution and crush its liberating nature. This has a number of implications. For Camatte, since communist revolution is about the reaffirmation of life, the representation of revolution as war, with its focus on death and martyrdom, works only to project repressive notion of humanity into the core of the revolt against domination — "this would be putting itself (revolution) once more on the terrain of class society".

Again he is vague about an alternative, suggesting "we have got to find new methods, such as treating all institutions with contempt and ridicule by leaving them trapped and isolated in their own concerns". This perspective may have been viable in the early 1970s, when capital seemed to have lost any innovative qualities. However, facing the active project of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism, maybe a more insurrectionary approach is needed.

But if we look at the trajectory of the revolts against neo-liberal institutions that manifested in anti-summit struggles, we see some validity in Camatte's concerns. The more 'successful' insurrections appear to be ones that were both festivals and insurrections: that participate in the creating of new modes of being as they jam the functioning of capital. Sometimes that smashing of the London stock exchange and the torching of police cars will be a central part of the destruction of domestication, other times it will be part of its reinforcement by brutalizing revolutionaries, and reducing everything to thuggery.

But can we even challenge domestication personally in the hope of challenging it socially? It is unclear. It is possible that a wide range of social deviance, of politics of the body, of culture, of irrational ecology concerns, of sexual liberation, contain within them wild feral qualities that offer at least the chance of rebellion. Humanity is not yet totally roboticised.

So let us finish off on Camatte's most optimistic note: "Living is not submission, but reinvention, creation!"

Editors' Note

Throughout this series the author uses the term "communist" to describe a desirable society or goal. For those unfamiliar with this particular usage, (we assume) he is using it in the pre-Marxist (and therefore, pre-Leninist-Stalinist-Maoist) context, common for various anti-state communists. This generally means a classless and property-less society based on cooperation. It is important to point this out, since most people are only aware of communism's "popular" connotations and context — state communism and authoritarianism. While we understand how the author uses the term, many of us find it dubious and feel it to be confusing to use a term with such overt baggage. The term "anarchy" already encompasses the positive aspects of communism, but also explicitly makes clear anti-authoritarianism and the autonomy of the individual as integral components.

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Dave Antagonism
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2004–2005

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