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Generic-world

Resources for a time of decomposition

Global scale. Work on scales emancipation.

Local emergence / global reach. Tension of universality

Singularity (universalizable) vs. particularity (identity-based). Shared subjectivity

Confidence in humanity

Orientation/Disorientation

Affirmation/Acceptance

Determination/Lamentation

Hope/Expectation

Revolutionizing the idea of communist revolution. What cultural revolution means.

Three revolutionary figures:

abandonment-displacement, destruction-reconstruction addition-extension

communist innovations in Chinese People's Communes

Intellectuality

task edge of emptiness compose resources, design orientation, open breach victory over ourselves courage fruitfulness thought points held anxious future challenged by singular long walks

Emancipation as a conquest, not a promise.

The decomposition of the world. Paranoid delusions, clowning around, gestural fascism, radicalized bombings, triumphant impunity, impotent proclamations.

Placidity in China.

A noisy trailer for a world war.

EDITORIAL

-1-

Tired of closing all hope to Humanity, the contemporary capitalist world, left to its own devices, sinks into the grotesque before descending into chaos. The corollary is that humanity has entered an era of subjective glaciation, dominated by the paralyzing effects of unreason, dread and anguish.

-2-

That may well be, but no one is condemned to the passive nihilism of overwhelmed complaint and assumed disorientation.

-3-

Away from the turmoil of negative feelings, we need to renew communist perspectives of justice and equality for our time, by means of an indispensable intellectuality.

A text by the Communist Circle *Longues Marches* in this issue sets out the central theme: revolutionizing communist culture in the face of the implosion of the communist project of the 20th century. It explains the issues involved and points the way forward.

-4-

The review also makes room for affirmative positions, emancipatory gaps offered by subjectively held "points" in our life, work, activities and relationships with others. These points do exist, materializing our confidence in Humanity and embodying the vital, contemporary confrontation between emancipatory orientation and nihilistic disorientation.

-5-

In this issue, for example, Sol V. Steiner takes a new stand on Jewish singularity.

-6-

Longues Marches Review combines long, argumentative texts with shorter intervention pieces. The ways in which they are read are obviously different. The former require study, a prerequisite for discussion. The latter offer a more direct entry into the debate.

-7-

Seeking to open the doors to a new emancipatory direction, the articles explore theoretical and empirical questions, hazard hypotheses and put forward positions. They do not seek to form a sterile chorus of deplorations with our readers.

-8-

The Revue is keen to broaden its scope by diversifying its sections. In this issue, we open an "Investigations" section with an account and commentary on a singular concept developed by a Picardy farmer of his agricultural work.

A Press Review has also been created to highlight interesting issues of reviews.

-9-

Diogo Faia Fagundes provides an analysis of the movement ideology that guided the major social movements in Latin America in the early 2000s. The meetings of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre were the global echo. He shows the contrast between the radical critique of capitalism carried out by these movements and the modesty of their political achievements, to the point where they can no longer offer a counterweight to the current rise of the far right.

-10-

Éric Brunier pursues his approach to pictorial modernity conceived as *CouleurS*, drawing on paintings presented at a recent exhibition at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, devoted to the resonances between *L'Âge atomique* (from radioactivity to the bomb) and modern painting.

-11-

Choses Vues features two films (*No Other Land* and *Les Feux Sauvages*) and the exhibition *Apocalypse. Hier et aujourd'hui* organized at the Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand in Paris from February 4 to June 8, 2025. Éric Brunier offers a critical analysis, based on an interpretation of *The Apocalypse* of Saint John.

-12-

In *Choses Lues*, Francis Anclois offers a brief critical note on Pierre Charbonnier's recent book on "War Ecology", which argues for the relationship between peace and fossil exploitation in the post-World War II era, before calling for the possibility of reducing carbon emissions in the current geopolitical context of war.

-13-

In his study of the relationship between town and country, its foundations and its topicality, Alain Rallet distinguishes between a classist approach dominant in the Marxist tradition, which has failed to reduce the differences between town and country, and a political approach based directly on the reduction of these differences as a communist effectuation of the transformation of social relations. In the second part, he explores the forms in which the town/country relationship is presented today, and the possible angles from which it can be transformed.

-14-

Among the resources offered by mathematics, François Nicolas returns in a short note to the notion of Emergence (presented in issue no. 3), then distinguishes, on the basis of developments in analysis in modern mathematics, three types of revolution characterized by three couples: Abandonment-Displacement, Destruction-Reconstruction, Addition-Extension. He specifies the characteristics of the last pair, making it a way of reading the experience of the People's Commune as a new type of revolution.

-15-

Finally, the announcement of two publications: *La question Sartre* by Alain Badiou and Pascale Fautrier, and *Pierre Boulez aujourd'hui* by Laurent Bayle.

[COMMUNIST CIRCLE *LONG WALKS*]

Here's a report from the new Communist circle *Long walks*, which aims to reconstitute **militant** communist activity.

So *Revue* and *Cercle* communistes *Longues marches* complement each other.

FOR BETTER ORIENTATION, REVOLUTIONIZE COMMUNIST CULTURE

Prerequisites

A "Circle

Our Circle is the invention of an organizational form that lies between two traditional forms of collective: the Salon and the Group.

- In a **Salon**, people come to freely exchange points of view on a given topic (for example, literary and artistic, social and political, scientific or other...). Strictly speaking, these exchanges are not binding, either individually or collectively, and everyone is free to participate as they see fit.
- In a **Group**, each member takes ownership of THE POINT constituting the Group in question (political *line*, artistic *manifesto*, scientific *program*...). Hence a collective discipline of the consequences of *this* point: its examination, the actions it commits, the assessment of the effects of its implementation...

The idea of a **Circle** is rather that of a collective based neither on the absence of any point (*Salon*), nor on the existence of a single common point, constitutive of the collective in question (*Group*). Rather, it's a matter of **bringing different points into a circle**, individually held but likely to share not their respective statements (their particular *motives*) but a common subjectivation and a similar enunciation (their *motive*). In other words, it's about making a circle of different points, sharing the same subjective relationship to the following common center: *how to reactivate a new kind of communist politics in the contemporary world?*

Remember that geometry teaches us that three non-aligned points are enough to form a circle.

Our three overriding points - our three perspectives on our central question - might be as follows:

- 1) the ecological question,
- 2) the subjective challenge of war,
- 3) the question of a renewed communist culture.

So, our Communist Circle sees itself as a Communist Circle (through its common center) of Communists (through the diversity of points of view held on this center and making up its circumference).

General arguments

Humanity's very serious crisis of confidence

a crisis that takes the triple subjective form of **ecological** anguish, the onslaught of **nihilistic** influences and the unleashing of unjust **wars**, all of which stun rather than stimulate our

consciences.¹

is that, fifty years on, it still hasn't come to terms with the political betrayal of the Chinese Communist Revolution [CCR: 1958-1976] **by the CCP**, the very party that claimed to lead it.

Today's anguish is not simply due to a **lack of** Communist policy, for want of a new strategy following **the failure of** the old one (which relied on Communist parties building socialist states, the better to direct their subsequent decline).

Of course, the CCR's **extrinsic defeat** was based on its **intrinsic failure**, but this failure was not simply the result of stumbling over an insurmountable obstacle. The failure in question was not limited to passivity in the face of a wall of impossibility; it was accompanied by an activity of its own: the self-destruction of the CCP, its scuttling, indeed its political **betrayal** (since it has become the organizer of a new type of authoritarian state capitalism and, from now on, a world imperialist rival to American imperialism).

This betrayal was made possible by the (intrinsic) **implosion of** the communist political project, as its organizing core ("the proletariat") gradually proved to be politically **empty**, and thus politically hollowed out in the course of the CCR itself.

"You're nothing more than an onion to be peeled. And I'm going to peel you, Peer Gynt, my beautiful friend. First a peel, in shreds that I peel off. Then another, shabby and pitiful-looking. The onion shrinks, disappears, melts, and I see no core, no bottom. Well, it doesn't have one! No! nothing but those naughty leaves that get smaller and smaller. Ibsen

All the same, the communist project now appears to be not that of a peach or a cherry, but of an onion without a substantial generating core. In other words, it's built around a central void of tangled peels: free political decisions and their consequences.

Note that this emptiness is not extrinsic (it does not result from the removal of a primordial nucleus). Strictly speaking, it is not an absence (the onion is not a handicapped cherry). Let's say that **this emptiness is intrinsic** and not circumstantial.²

So that Humanity can courageously overcome its mourning by deciding to commit itself to a new communism.

new communism, which we'll call **modern** to differentiate it from the **classical** communism that prevailed in the 19th and 20th centuries

it's up to today's communists to assume the central void

that the implosion of the political category of **proletariat** bequeaths them³

to circumscribe it and build a new network of emancipatory political decisions on the edges of this void.

Here we find that to think such a void is to extract oneself from a void of thought...

Hence the considerations that follow to initiate this work, **our** work.

¹ Lesson: beware of speeches that merely exacerbate anxieties on the pretext that this of itself would stimulate conscious activity...

² All the same, true secrets are not constituted by concealment (like a child playing hide-and-seek). They're intrinsic, and that's why (Lacan) a confession doesn't resolve them.

³ This void is politically decisive, because it means that political strategy no longer has **socially-assured** forces at its disposal, and that its effective implementation is no longer **guaranteed** by the historical and social existence of an inexhaustible proletarian reserve army...

Issues

Period change

"We must have confidence in the masses; we must have confidence in the Party. These are two fundamental principles. If we have the slightest doubt in this regard, we will be unable to accomplish anything."

Mao, July 31, 1955 (*On the problem of agricultural cooperation*)

For two centuries, the communist political project has been based on a triple trust:

- 1) confidence in **history**, understood as the history of class struggles ,⁴
- 2) confidence in **the Communist Party** of the Proletariat,
- 3) confidence in **the masses**.

Backed by this confidence, this project founded **the hope** of a Humanity emancipating itself from its antagonistic division into classes, and reducing its major social divisions between manual and intellectual work, design and execution work, production and reproduction work (essentially female), cities and countryside, civil societies and states...

"The mass creation of communist consciousness can only take place through revolution."

Marx and Engels (1845-1846, *German Ideology*)

"It is our duty to make the revolution permanent."

Marx (1850, *Address of the Central Committee to the League of Communists*)

Communist policies, organized on an international scale through the coordination of different Communist Parties, focused on an **uninterrupted, step-by-step revolution** (democratic/socialist/communist) designed to lead humanity out of its Neolithic prehistory into a society free of exploitation and class, free of states and war.

As we all know, this grandiose project collapsed in China at the end of the Chinese Communist Revolution [CCR], a period (1958-1976) during which the fate of the whole of humanity was at stake.

Today, the 21st century is helplessly witnessing the unleashing (with apocalyptic overtones) of the enemies of this collective project of emancipation, ferocious enemies who now have free hands and free minds to over-exploit man by man, over-oppress peoples and their feminine hearts, overdominate small countries, leaving them to the shameless plundering of their human and natural resources, and over-devastate mankind's natural environment in order to install separate development across the globe (global apartheid), guaranteeing the dominators tranquil breeding grounds away from natural devastation and protected from environmental catastrophes.

A strategic page in the history of Humanity has thus been turned after the implosion, failure and defeat⁵ of the CCR and, correlatively, of the immense communist project.

Let's not forget that, from 1848 onwards, this political project took over from a multi-millennial history in which *communism* was not so much a policy as an idea, whose broad outlines Alain Badiou has described as "*communist invariants*"⁶.

•

⁴ In other words, the "historical materialism" at the heart of Marxist communism: "The history of all societies up to the present day has been nothing but the history of class struggles. Marx (1848, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*)

⁵ In this order: it was the CCR's internal *implosion* that led to its *failure* and inevitable *defeat*.

⁶ See his *De l'idéologie*

"Commitment means not taking failure as an acceptable reason for disengagement. And, conversely, not to consider success as an obligatory condition for commitment."

Alain Badiou⁷

Humanity is at a strategic crossroads in its destiny.

Two paths are currently vying for its future:

- rushing into the self-destruction of its emancipatory prospects and the unleashing of its internal divisions - the **active** nihilistic path of neoliberal, warlike capitalism;
- to sit back and beg some transcendent power (God or the supranational state) to regulate the all-consuming, destructive passions of humanity's enemies - the **passive** nihilistic path of state socialized capitalism.

Let's not count here as an overall orientation the communitarian perspective (that of a **degree-zero** nihilism) where restricted collectives, abandoning Humanity to its sad fate, withdraw to a few reclusive places, preserved (we don't really know how...) from the human and natural cataclysms that are piling up on the horizon, to live there the *"ascetic communism modelled on Sparta"* that Engels was already mocking in 1878 in *Anti-Dühring*.

In this situation, it's up to us to open up the possibility of another overall perspective, not by relaunching a communist policy for our times - something we are unfortunately incapable of doing today - but by contributing to a strategic reconstitution of the communist political project.

Rigor

Let's make sure we do it rigorously, the only way to ensure that we have an intellectual foundation that can stand up to the materialistic confrontation of minds.

A brief historiographical note. In France, in the mid-1960s, interest in Maoist politics was strengthened by Althusser's work (*Pour Marx*), which enhanced the rigor of Marxist thought, allowing political discourse to unfold under the sign of a firmness and precision that took scientific discourse as a reference.

So let us strive to think through our contemporary political issues with all the rigor we are capable of, so as to rationally inform the decisions of orientation and direction that fall to us.

Revolutionize...

"Between capitalist society and communist society lies the period of revolutionary transformation of the former into the latter. To this corresponds a period of political transition in which the state can be nothing other than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat".

Marx (1875, *Critique of the Gotha Program*)

Let's face it: if the communist project is indeed a revolutionary project, this implies **revolutionizing this revolutionary project**.

In so doing, we maintain the **revolutionary** perspective of communism. In the 1980s, the UCF(ml) and then the O.P. paid dearly for the idea that the theme of *revolution* had become politically saturated: to liquidate this theme was to liquidate, purely and simply, the communist project and, correlatively, any political project.

In this respect, let's be clear: what's important here is the verb *revolution* rather than the noun *revolution*, if it's true that the term *revolution* tends to target the state (a revolution is usually understood as an action revolutionizing the state), whereas the Marxist and Maoist orientation favors revolutionizing social relations (revolution being understood here as a radical, global transformation).

This is also where Maoists part company with Stalin, who declared in 1928 that "the revolution is over", i.e., at the precise moment when the Soviet state had been definitively consolidated, the revolution of social relations of production in the countryside was beginning. On the

⁷ Sartre and commitment (2013)

contrary, in the Maoist view, revolutionizing the state is a prerequisite (necessary, but by no means sufficient) for revolutionizing class society and all its social relations (of production, housing, settlement and organization).

"Dictatorship of the proletariat"

Revolutionizing the revolutionary project is particularly at stake today in the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat [DoP] bequeathed to us by the Maoist testament of the CCR⁸.

Let's face it: fifty years on, this legacy can no longer be ours, since the implosion-failure-defeat of the CCR invalidated the DoP hypothesis (invalidating both the "proletariat" and the "dictatorship" hypotheses).

It's true that the DoP hypothesis was backed by the prior assumption of historical materialism (i.e., the idea of a necessary progression of History understood as the history of class struggles). Let's recall, then, how the hypothesis of an international proletariat, the guarantor of the effectiveness of historical materialism, irretrievably stumbled (in China from 1958 onwards) on the properly communist stage of uninterrupted revolution within socialism.

"Proletariat"

If by *proletariat* we mean a class made up of all the proletarians⁹, characterized as those who have only their arms and no particular interests to defend, then we have to admit that such a *social* base did not form the basis of a *political* class - the *proletariat* - capable of politically directing Humanity beyond socialism, which soon became indistinguishable from state capitalism.

There are two interrelated reasons for this:

- 1) not having one's own interests in no way implies ipso facto embracing the interests of humanity as a whole: the **double negation** ("no private interests") is not the same as **asserting** a generic common cause;
- 2) the uninterrupted, step-by-step political revolution - fortunately! - to provide those who had nothing with a stable job and profession, a home and a family, an education and a culture, so that they now have something to reproduce, to maintain, to defend and therefore "to lose".¹⁰ In other words, proletarians have become... workers.

But without the *proletariat* hypothesis, and without the correlative prospect of a socialist dictatorial state (led by a proletariat with its own Communist Party), the gap between communist hope and confidence widens, and has now become an unbridgeable chasm: what can we hope for if confidence in the very possibility of a Communist Party (solidly backed by the guarantee of really existing proletarian social forces) has entirely vanished?

"Dictatorship"

The "DoP" hypothesis also stumbled over the very idea of a (state-political) dictatorship capable of containing (channelling, restricting, encircling or even wiping out) political forces antagonistic to communist perspectives.

Indeed, it became clear that the CCR's bourgeois enemy was installed at the very heart of the CP and the socialist state, and was even camped at its head (rather than trying to infiltrate its margins under some false guise). This "discovery", which came to light at the Lushan conference in the summer of 1959, took on an entirely new dimension: while previous revolutions (democratic and socialist) had confronted pre-existing, well-identified enemies, the Chinese Communist Revolution from 1958 onwards had to confront new, hitherto unknown enemies, and even more so, **enemies of a new type**,

⁸ See Cécile Winter's reworking of this legacy in her book on the Cultural Revolution.

⁹ We thus give the term *proletariat* an objective social basis and are not content to characterize it subjectively as a group of *communists* or *revolutionaries* (understood as those who espouse the revolutionary cause) because, in that case, what's the point of this additional term?

¹⁰ This was evident right from the start of the CCR in the reluctance of state factory workers (*Danwei*) to share the guarantees of their status with the common women creating in the cities of the Urban People's Communes.

generated by the revolution they were fighting rather than pre-existing .¹¹

This distinctive feature of the communist revolution - its most determined enemies do not pre-exist it, but it is it that engenders them - is intricate with its singular character as a revolution by addition-extension and no longer by destruction-reconstruction: in 1958, the CCR **added** the People's Communes [CPs] **to the socialist revolution** begun in 1953 and accelerated at the same time by a state-planned Great Leap Forward [GBA].

"For us, communism is not a state of affairs to be established, an ideal to which reality must conform. We call communism the real movement that abolishes the present state of things."

Marx and Engels (1845-1846, *German Ideology*)

This first intrinsic singularity of the communist revolution (it adds in order to extend, rather than destroys in order to rebuild) is reinforced by a second: this *communist* addition is that of **mass political movements** - that of peasants in the countryside (rural CPs¹²), that of common women in the cities (urban CPs¹³) - and in so doing, it differs from the concomitant *socialist* addition of **state-planned measures** (those of the GBA brutally accelerating the Second Socialist Five-Year Plan). In other words, this Communist addition is itself of a new type!

All in all, the communist revolution *reduces* its new type: newness of statement (it's an addition rather than a construction) and newness of enunciation, since this addition is conceived in a new way as the addition of mass political movements - "*without a communist movement, there can be no communism*" (Mao) - rather than programmed constructions.

Let's rephrase that.

- Synthetically: if socialism is constructed (it builds itself), communism is cultivated (it germinates and grows).
- Mathematically: during the CCR, the difference between the socialist adjunction of the GBA and the communist adjunction of the CPs echoes in politics the mathematical-logical difference between Galois's *modern* algebraic adjunction (1830) and Cohen's *contemporary* adjunction by forcing¹⁴ (1963).

Without dwelling on this mathematical distinction, let's retain this important result for our purposes: in Cohen's adjunction, while affirmative work (extension by adding affirmations) is indeed "forcable" (i.e., the extension generated is rationally controllable), negative work (extension by adding negations) cannot be¹⁵, which can be interpreted politically as follows: if we can rationally control (anticipate, project) the revolutionary effects of the new communist affirmations added to the building of socialism, **we cannot rationally control** (anticipate, foresee, measure, channel) **the counter-revolutionary work** that the adversaries and enemies aroused by these new affirmations will engage in!

Consequence: since **no one is forced to remain a communist beyond socialism**, it is intrinsically

¹¹ In the summer of 1959, the paradigm will be *Peng Dehuai* and soon "the revisionists", starting with those of Lenin's CPSU. The very term *revisionist* would suffice to indicate that these new enemies are of a new type, as they are intrinsically **generated** by the new revolutionary sequence.

¹² From April 27, 1958. This is a very important point, and one that should never be forgotten: with the Rural People's Communes, the peasants organized a **communist overhaul of the socialist cooperatives**, and in so doing invented a new (and unplanned) path away from both simple state control (such as the Bolshevik transformation of sovkhozes into kolkhozes or **state farms** in the 1930s) and Yugoslav-style **self-management**. Hence the understandable opposition of a section of the Party-State, represented in the summer of 1959 by Peng Dehuai.

¹³ From August 18, 1958 - see Fabio Lanza's work, discussed in detail in our next issue.

¹⁴ Let's simply understand *forcing* here as a *new type of implication*: "The name *forcing* was chosen to suggest analogy with the usual concept of implication, but in a new sense." (Cohen)

¹⁵ On this point, see Alain Badiou's remarks in *L'être et l'événement* (p. 454): the forcing procedure, unable to control negations as it controls affirmations, will consider that "*it is possible to negate as soon as one is not forced to affirm*". In this way, the forcing procedure replaces "*the necessity of negation by the non-necessity of affirmation*".

possible *within socialism to become* anti-communist¹⁶.

In 1970s France, Foucault and the new philosophers drew the following lessons from this point: any revolution, however well-intentioned, can only produce new evils (new conflicts, new divisions...) whose price will be deemed too high to continue justifying the desire for revolution ("*the very desirability of revolution is now a problem.*"¹⁷), so that we should resign ourselves to the parliamentary policy of the lesser evil...

In this respect, where **the dictatorship of the socialist state** over its old class enemies made political sense, it's hard to see how a political dictatorship over the new adversities generated by mass communist movements could make any real communist sense - adversities which Mao never ceased to treat as non-antagonistic contradictions, precisely to prevent them from becoming contradictions with enemies.

Mao clearly took the political measure of all this by launching the *Socialist Education Movement* in 1963, followed by the *Proletarian Cultural Revolution* in 1966¹⁸, all of which were ways of countering the anti-communist reaction (which had built up from within the CCR itself) with new mass ideological-political movements, rather than simple Party discipline and pure state dictatorship. But these revivals¹⁹ came up against their "proletarian" character in early 1967, when the only attempt at a "Workers' Commune" (Shanghai) failed to extend to factories the People's Communes invented ten years earlier by peasants in the countryside and by common women in the cities.

Affirmation and working with the negative

From all this, let's remember two points:

- 1) Communist politics can rationally anticipate the revolutionary effects of the **assertions** that mass communist movements implement, but it cannot rationally anticipate the counter-revolutionary effects of the reactive forces that this process makes possible;
- 2) on the other hand, once these counter-revolutionary forces have actively entered the scene (hence the importance of giving everyone the time and opportunity to make an informed decision and declare themselves²⁰), communist politics can face up to this new adversity.

In this way, communist politics puts revolutionary **affirmation** in the driver's seat, but secondarily attaches to it its own **work of the negative** (centered on the treatment of inescapable antagonistic contradictions).

¹⁶ There's no need, therefore, to resort to the imaginary of an original betrayal, which would have been hidden for a long time (see Peng Dehuai's trial in Lushan, which, against Mao's own wishes, often went awry...): while the primary aim was to understand politically why Peng had decided in the summer of 1959 to criticize the new GBA and CP, the militant investigation sometimes took on a police-like quality, as if Peng had merely made public very old reactionary tendencies that had been hypocritically concealed until then). The deleterious effect: the subjective turning point of 1958 is thus denied and politically treated as if it were a simple extension of the socialist project.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault: "The return of revolution is our problem. [...] It's the very desirability of revolution that's the problem today... [...] To do politics in a way that's different from politics, is to try to find out as honestly as possible whether revolution is desirable." (March 1977, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, interview with BHL; *Dits et écrits II*, p. 266-267)

¹⁸ Note the triple shift: movement → revolution, education → culture, socialist → proletarian (as much as communist).

¹⁹ Which we can then associate with the work of a *double negation*, since it's a question of combating a reaction - or even better, with the work of a *doubled negation*, if by this we mean that the "negation of the negation" here mobilizes negations of two different types ("type 2 negation of a first type 1 negation"), since it's a question here of denying a *reactionary* negation as *communist*, and thus denying it differently than it denies communism.

²⁰ We know the importance Mao gave to this "democratic" dimension, as opposed to the blind discipline of militants advocated by Liu Shaoqi in *To Be a Good Communist*.

What to do?

"To wage an arduous struggle over several decades, as if on a single day, and always in the interests of the broad masses, the young and the revolution, that's the hardest part!"

Mao (January 15, 1940)

With all this in mind, what else can the small handful of communists scattered across the planet do, inescapably attached to their current place of work and residence as well as to the narrow window of time²¹ that the hazards of existence have given them?

While the task of reconstituting strategic perspectives (for a new kind of communist politics on the scale of the whole of Humanity) is beyond their current possibilities, they still have the possibility (as much as the subjective necessity²²) of anchoring themselves²³ to the contemporary world at certain political points, so as to act effectively there.

Let's formalize this docking as a two-pronged clamp:

- on the one hand, we need to rebuild communist **confidence** and **hope** in Humanity ;
- on the other, it's a question of revitalizing the prospect of a communist policy here and now, in a few judiciously held **points**.

This clamp could be summed up as articulating a new kind of communist **culture**²⁴ and a communist policy of militant **acupuncture**.

The remainder of this text will detail the first of these two branches, the proposal for militant acupuncture (and its doctrine of meridian points and lines²⁵) having already been put forward in various articles in the magazine.

Note: in place of the threefold confidence of communists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (in History, in the Party and in the masses), we are replacing the last two with confidence in the communist orientation and in Humanité, and abandoning the first to replace the **hope** that History was intended to guarantee with a **hope** that no longer makes any allowance for the hypothesis of historical totalization.

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Let's break it down into three parts:

- I. In what properly communist sense can we speak of **Humanity**?
- II. What do we mean by renewed *Communist* **confidence** in Humanity?
- III. What is meant by a *communist* **expectation** in Humanity that raises its former **hope**?

²¹ A militant's life is at best sixty years of daily sustained activity.

²² at least for those who decide to take on the legacy of this long and grandiose communist history

²³ to engage, to "pad" as Lacan would say...

²⁴ Mao constantly emphasized the politically decisive nature of the *ideological* struggle and the *cultural* front.

²⁵ Here, too, we see the need for a revolution in communist culture: to think less in terms of political **lines** and more in terms of political **points** that activate lines of force (the equivalent of acupuncture's "meridians").

I. "Humanity"

"Free competition, the struggle for life celebrated by economists as the highest conquest in history, is the normal state of the animal kingdom."

Engels (1883, Introduction to *Dialectics of Nature*)

"Communism represents the cause of all humanity, not just the workers."

Engels (1845, *The Situation of the Working Class in England*)

First of all, let's be clear about the political (and by no means "humanitarian") sense in which we are speaking here as *Humanity* communist.

The Idea of *Humanity*

"What is there to worry about, when it comes to a species (and therefore what par excellence is domesticated), if not its survival?"

Alain Badiou (*Le Siècle*)

Theorizing communism as the "**cause of all humanity**" is an old Marxist tradition. The word *Humanity* then designates an Idea of humanity²⁶, not its simple empirical reality as the totality of human beings, past, present and future²⁷. It's the Idea that the human race - an animal race among many others - is **collectively** capable of emancipating itself²⁸ and adding to its animal and vital existence a *collective* (subjective) ek-existence that goes beyond its own existence to the political *justice*, artistic *beauties*, scientific *truths* and amorous *happiness*²⁹ that it is capable of producing.

This Idea of a Humanity with the collective capacity for emancipation operates at the heart of all communist determination, even before its political constitution in the 19th century: let's posit that all communist determination is based on such an Idea. So it's the relationship to such an Idea that we need to reconstitute today, in an era that is directly and massively opposed to it.

Three comments

- By "Idea" of Humanity, we mean that which gives it form (that which *formulates* and/or *formalizes* it).
- In so doing, Humanity is seen as a **constituent of** the individuals (human beings) who make it up, rather than as the sum of them.³⁰

"The essence of man is not an abstraction inherent in the isolated individual. In its reality, it is the totality of social relationships."

Marx (1845, sixth thesis on Feuerbach)

- We're talking here about *Humanity* in a very specific sense, in addition to its three classically listed meanings: 1) human **nature** (humanity as a property of what is *human*), 2) sensitive **goodness**

²⁶ After all, isn't a country first and foremost an idea, a constituent principle rather than a constituted agglomerate? See, for example, de Gaulle: "*All my life, I've had a certain idea of France*", in contrast to the Petainist conception of France as a corporation of the French. And for him, this idea was, of course, intrinsically state-based: "*Monsieur le ministre de l'Agriculture, you are not the minister of farmers*" (to Edgar Pisani, March 25, 1964).

²⁷ It should be remembered that the number of human beings who have existed on Earth is estimated at around 80 billion, 1/10th of whom are alive today. Of these 80 billion, half existed before Christ and the other half in the last two millennia.

²⁸ In other words, to take oneself by the hand so as no longer to be the plaything of animal instincts and vegetative survival, which in no way implies denying them or aiming to get rid of them: to emancipate oneself is to stand up, to see far, without leaving the ground; it's to **stand upright**, not **overhanging**.

²⁹ See the ancient aptitude for the *Just* (politics), the *Beautiful* (the arts), the *True* (the sciences) and the *Good* (love).

³⁰ This point comes from classical materialism: each individual is produced as a speaking social being by the prior collective existence of societies and their languages...

("acting humanely"), 3) the **gathering of people**³¹.

Our understanding differs specifically from this third meaning in that, for us, Humanity produces human beings (rather than human beings generating a humanity by summation).

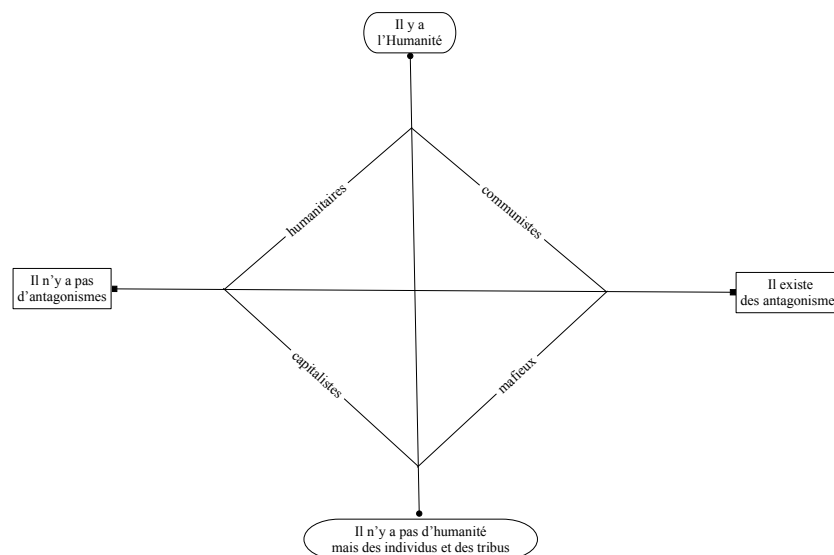
Antagonisms

It has to be said, then, that the Idea of such a Humanity (with a collective capacity for emancipation) has always divided concrete humanity³² and that, far from being the subject of consensus, this idea is opposed by an innumerable gallery³³ of enemies, enlisted under a few indefatigable philosophical banners (sophistry, cynicism, skepticism, pragmatism...) and repeating *ad nauseam* the indestructible maxims of resignation ("enjoy the present", "enjoy the things of life", "cultivate your garden" and "be content".) and repeating *ad nauseam* the indefatigable maxims of resignation ("enjoy the present", "enjoy the things in life", "cultivate your garden" and "be content with the lesser evil").

Four formal camps

From this point of view, we can formally distinguish four camps, depending on whether or not we believe that Humanity exists and whether or not there are antagonisms:

- that of **mafiosi**, bandits and crooks of all kinds, for whom there is no Humanity, but rather a war of all against all, especially the predation of the weak by the strong;
- that of the **capitalists**, for whom there is, strictly speaking, neither Humanity nor political antagonism, since for them capitalism is a matter of simple human nature shared by all individuals;
- that of the **humanitarians**, for whom there is indeed a Humanity, without taking into account the existence of antagonism towards it;
- that of the **communists**, for whom there is both l'Humanity and antagonisms concerning it.



But this general form is not enough to account for the specificities of our times.

³¹ According to historian François Hartog (*Départager l'humanité. Humains, humanismes, inhumains*; p. 317), the latter meaning was added in the early 19th century.

³² In other words, since the emergence of this Idea, probably around the 5th century BC (with the birth of philosophy in Greece and the formulation of Judaism in Palestine).

³³ Let's not forget the harsh lesson of mathematician Paul Cohen: no one is forced to adopt this Idea, so we can't measure up to its adversities!

Three contemporary forms of antagonism

Today, antagonism to humanity's collective emancipation takes three forms.³⁴

- a) **"Elitist"** orientation: transhumanism splits the human collective in two, so that surpassing the animal destiny of human beings becomes the unequal affair of augmented men, supermen rid of their animal dimension and towering over a human mass condemned to mere survival.
- b) A **"desingularizing"** orientation: the human species' own capacity for self-destruction (see its capacity for Evil and for the self-destruction of its environment - "*Anthropocene*"). So we'd have to put away our old mythological chimeras and Promethean dreams of grandeur, and melt into the mass of animals on an equal footing, incorporating ourselves indistinctly into the multiplicity of "living beings" (including plants!), the "Earthlings" living on Mother Earth Gaia.
- c) **"Neutralizing"** orientation: if the two previous orientations answer the question of emancipation (the first by the independence of an elite, the second by the renunciation and submission of all to the natural order of living beings), a third rejects the very principle of the question and maintains that in truth the question of an emancipation of humanity does not even arise, since humanity as such does not exist: when it comes to human beings, "*there is only what there is*"³⁵ that is, there is only a mass of individuals grouped together in tribes, a mass vitally condemned to the exploitation of the weak by the strong, to the oppression of victims by executioners, to the domination of the powerful over the powerless.

Relaunch

Directly refuting these three orientations would have little subjective effect: in this case, as in nihilism, double negation is sterile, as it only rekindles the power of the negative, which is precisely what fuels opposing or enemy subjectivities.

It's a question, then, of moving from a "double negation" to a "doubled negation"³⁶, i.e. of "countering" nihilism using a different logic from the one it uses against the communist Idea. In other words, it's a question of opposing it by changing the terrain: by returning to the source of the Idea, to its buttresses and expectations.

The proposal is to relaunch the communist project for emancipation

- 1) by rebuilding **communist confidence** in Humanity ;
- 2) by basing this new kind of confidence on **materialistic reasons for hope**, no longer in the form of *hope* for a brighter tomorrow, but of *expectation* for a fruitful present that has already been fertilized in the here and now.

II. Communist "*trust*'

Rebuilding communist confidence in Humanity means rebuilding a double confidence: communist confidence in Humanity's emancipatory capacities, but also political confidence in the communist enunciation of these capacities, in other words, in the general communist orientation.

So this materialist type of confidence must be declared by subjective reduplication³⁷: confidence in the statement "*Humanity has the collective capacity to emancipate itself*" and confidence in the communist position of enunciation, i.e. in the properly communist capacity to integrate such confidence into an overall political orientation, not into a simple humanitarian or religious ideology.

³⁴ These three ways of "denying" humanity's capacity for self-emancipation are analogous to the three forms of nihilism identified since the 19th century: **active** nihilism ("*wanting nothing*"), **passive** nihilism ("*wanting nothing*"), **neutral** nihilism or **degree-zero** ("*wanting is nothing*").

³⁵ Margaret Thatcher (September 1987) clearly states the axiom of "democratic materialism, which knows only individuals and communities" (Logiques des mondes): "What is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women, and there are families."

³⁶ See previous considerations. For a rigorous mathematical formalization of all this, see the *mamuphi* work of Martin Gonzalez and the article (F. Nicolas; 2022): *Modern algebraization of three logical negations*.

³⁷ Reduplication is only one particular modality of this self-application or introjection (*confidence in confidence, negation of negation, decision to decide, other of other...*), which intrinsically seals the *autonomy* of a notion.

Confidence in humanity's collective capacities

Communist confidence in Humanity is projected in **four dimensions**, in other words, in four interrelated capacities³⁸³⁹ of this Humanity: the capacities of each human being, of each male-female couple, of the different types of human groups and finally of peoples.

Let's take a closer look at these four projections of communist confidence in Humanity, before examining their interrelationship in terms of communist orientation.

A. Every human being's capacity for brotherhood

First of all, there is confidence in the ability of each human being to fraternize with his or her fellow human beings, on the assumption that everyone shares the same human condition: fraternities of condition, of struggle, of work...

This **fraternization under the sign of equality** is not Sartre's "fraternité-terreure"⁴⁰ : firstly, in that it does not operate on the principle of a grouping⁴¹ ; secondly, in its communist sense, it declares a common that is individualized (humanity understood as an egalitarian shared human condition) rather than an individuation that is shared⁴² . Let's assume, then, that this is a *fraternity-camaraderie* in equality of situation.

This capacity for camaraderie is abundantly highlighted by the Russian novelist Vassili Grossman under the sign of fraternal **kindness**, freely and generously dispensed as an unexpected supplement to many of the situations experienced by the Soviet people during the Second World War:

"It's the kindness of an old woman on the side of the road who gives a piece of bread to a passing convict; it's the kindness of a soldier who holds out his flask to a wounded enemy [...] The secret of the immortality of kindness lies in its powerlessness. [...] The secret of kindness's immortality lies in its powerlessness. It is invincible. The more senseless, the more absurd, the more impotent, the greater". (Life and Destiny).

B. Male-female couples' capacity for happiness

Then there's confidence in the ability of male-female loving **couples** to achieve happiness, an ability whose importance today is considerably heightened by the omnipresence (in the capitalist West) of a public discourse that theorizes, a contrario, that humanity's division into two sexes ("*the male-female contradiction*") constitutes its misfortune and condemns it to an unsurpassable war between the sexes (in which women are massively the victims of male-brothers).

Happiness in love must of course be understood here as the radiant constitution of a Two intervening and investigating the world, as opposed to a hedonistic withdrawal into oneself and egoism consummated for two.

"Women hold up half the sky

Mao

This **specific capacity of heterosexual love** thus inscribes the division of Humanity into two sexes as an affirmative power of that happiness which Saint-Just argued was "a new idea", and not as a collective powerlessness to make a people.

C. Group capacity for collective intelligence

There is also confidence in the capacity for **collective intelligence** of human groups of all species: scientific collaborations, musical ensembles, political organizations, associations of all kinds (right

³⁸ A *capacity* is an aptitude, a potentiality, not a *faculty* (a human or animal psychology faculty).

³⁹ Mathematically speaking, it's a *product* (a limit in *projection* capacity), not a *sum* (a colimit generated by *injections*).

⁴⁰ Correlative of "the common individual (i.e. whose praxis is common)". Critique of Dialectical Reason (p. 410)

⁴¹ "Sartre's "group in fusion"

⁴² Here we find the intellectual dilemma again: is the collective-Humanity **constituted** by its elements or, conversely, is it **constituted** by individuals who agglomerate? Constituent fraternity (fraternities of work, of combat...) or constituted fraternity (fraternity of solitudes...).

down to the intelligence of collective bodies in sports teams)...

Human intelligence is essentially a collective affair, and, once again, not so much in the form of a **sum** of individual intelligences as of a collective **product** projected onto such and such: no genius invents mathematics, music or politics from scratch, which are rather collective data, "there is" that everyone (genius included) can then take advantage of (or not).

D. People's capacity for justice

"In any case, I've never heard anyone say otherwise.

*Samuel Beckett (1976, *How It Is*)*

Finally, there is confidence in **people's** capacity for justice.

For a political characterization of the notion of Justice, see the article on ecology in issue no. 2 (pp. 59-61).

Let's just remember that, politically speaking, this notion is based on the postulate of equality, in order to inscribe it in a given situation as a concrete point of transformation.

This capacity of peoples to dynamically constitute themselves in order to assert the points of justice that impose themselves in their eyes in a given situation is too abundantly attested in the history of humanity for it to be necessary here to justify it further.

Example of Longues marches Group surveys

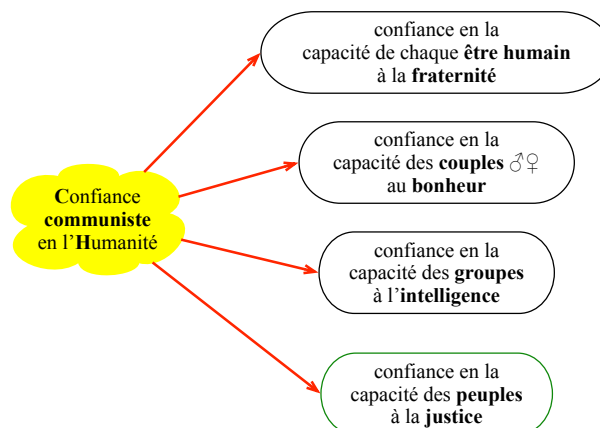
Let's recall here that the militant work of the *Longues marches* group was aimed precisely at reconstituting these different types of confidence in our contemporary world, and more specifically a **triple confidence**: in the capacities of mass militant liaison, in the resources of thought among the masses populating the shantytowns (singularly among the common women who organize these places) and among the workers employed in the large factories of capitalist globalization.

Five years of work (2019-2023) have amply consolidated this confidence.⁴³

Our first contacts in a Moroccan shantytown were with a couple who we later discovered had come to take refuge in the shantytown... to live out their love, condemned by one of the two families.

All in all, a synthetic Confidence...

All in all, the four confidence levels combine to form a **Communist** Confidence in Humanity, as shown in the following diagram:



Note: this synthetic Confidence is not the simple sum of the four particular Confiances. It is not the pure addition of them, like a recapitulative list, but an entanglement that can then be projected in four different directions, and thus radiate, resonate and resound in four different ways.

The synthesis of this Confidence is achieved by integrating it with a fifth confidence: that in the

⁴³ To find out more, see <http://www.longues-marches.fr/2018-2023/> for the many documents and reports drawn up during our investigations in a Moroccan shantytown and a large Czech factory.

communist orientation as such, which, like the thumb of a hand, enables it to close on its other four fingers, so as to firmly grasp and firmly hold what we call here "*Communist Confidence in Humanity*"⁴⁴

It is on this basis that the **synthetic** Confidence will be specifically called *communist* (when, strictly speaking, each of the four **analytical** Confidences cannot yet be so qualified): it is the communist entanglement of the four (according to the communist orientation) that allows us to qualify the synthetic **Confidence** that communists have in Humanity as **Communist Confidence**.

Confidence in communist orientation

In this way, *Communist Confidence in Humanity* is synthetically recaptured within the general framework of Communist orientation, because Communist orientation is here and now.

Today, there is an essential stake in maintaining that, in a humanity collectively disoriented since the failure of its immense mass uprisings in the 1960s⁴⁵, communists are not disoriented⁴⁶ and can therefore integrate their confidence in Humanity into an overall politico-ideological vision.⁴⁷

As such, this communist orientation supports the following points:

- 1) Humanity is **antagonistically** divided over this Trust and its 4+1 components;
- 2) contradictions concerning humanity's relationship with its environment are **overdetermined** by humanity's internal contradictions concerning its own capacities;
- 3) it is possible for humanity to revolutionize itself, which implies politically **revolutionizing** its internal social relations, shaping its collective ways of working, living, populating and organizing;
- 4) this revolution, uninterrupted and in stages, dialecticizes **production** ("development of productive forces") and the **reproduction** of human and natural resources (see here the "ecological" question⁴⁸, launched in the CCR).⁴⁹

That's why our Trust declares itself to be materialistic, and as such the most immediately adjusted to the actual content of its various dimensions.

⁴⁴ The capital C here distinguishes **Synthetic** Confidence from the more **analytical** 4(+1) Confidences.

⁴⁵ It should be noted that these emancipatory uprisings of humanity in the 1960s were indeed **political** in nature (CCR; national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, Latin America ...), but also scientific; youth uprisings in Europe and North America), but also **scientific** (the contemporary impetus of mathematics, re-launching its modernity established since 1830, began at this time, exemplified by the miraculous Cohen-Grothendieck-Lawvere conjunction from 1963 onwards), **artistic** (mutations in contemporary music and other arts in these same years) and **amorous** (reconfiguration of heterosexual love based on gender equality, with the legitimate recognition of homosexual love magnifying rather than contradicting the specific greatness of the former)...

⁴⁶ which in no way implies that they are in a position to **govern** the contemporary world politically.

Remember: orientation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for direction. Deciding on a direction implies not only **orienting oneself**, but also **situating oneself** precisely and, on this basis, **directing oneself**, i.e. deciding which way to go here and now.

Metaphorizations: in a given situation, deciding on a route means using a compass and a map to find your bearings and decide on the best direction of travel, which must take into account the obstacles identified (to reach a place in the north, for example, you may first need to head east to get around a certain relief...).

⁴⁷ Today, a one-sided thematization of the politico-ideological disorientation of the contemporary world only serves to cover it with a **tragic** blanket (which sterilizes any emancipatory perspective, leaving it with no other way out than the artistic cult of an aestheticized spectacle). In truth, our world is **dramatically** confronted not by the inescapable effects of some fatality, but by the rational consequences of the strategic failures mentioned above. So it's up to us to re-energize it by relaunching the communist project.

⁴⁸ The ecological question specifically concerns **reproduction**. But just as *living* cannot be reduced to *surviving*, *existing* cannot be reduced to *reproducing*.

⁴⁹ In retrospect, it's striking how much the CCR confronted the ecological issue of natural resource reproduction from the outset (1958): in the form of policies to combat human waste and natural damage (sometimes clumsy policies: for example, the fight against harmful insects at the end of 1958 aggravated the famine caused by converging natural calamities and the sabotage of the Chinese economy by the Soviet state following the political bifurcation of the socialist project). Here again, the CCR proved to be the great strategic turning point for mankind, including in its confrontation with major changes in its natural environment.

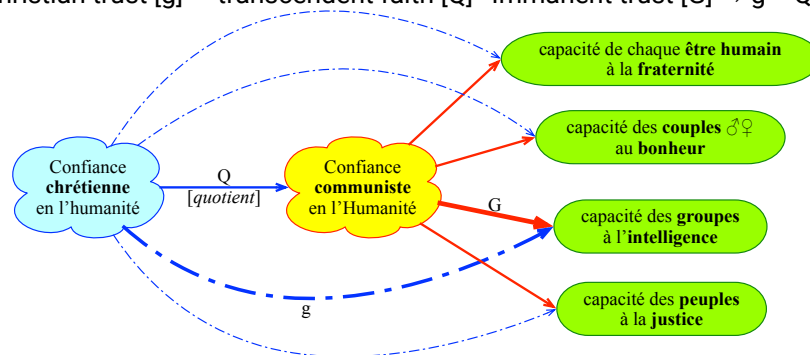
All in all, materialist confidence in a "borderline" position

In fact, Communist Confidence in Humanity is not the only synthetic Confidence of this type: there is no rivalry on this point with the capitalist orientation that denies all confidence (and this, as we have seen, in three ways, analogous to the three modalities of nihilism⁵⁰) but rather with the humanitarian orientations of the religious type⁵¹.

The relationship of these other synthetic Confiances to the Communist Confidence can be formalized mathematically as follows: the synthetic Communist Confidence, which produces the four types of analytical Confiances detailed above, is in a **limiting position** in relation to other synthetic types of Confidence: the Communist Confidence in Humanity is the "projective limit" of the various synthetic Confiances in humanity.

This means precisely this: any other type of synthetic Confidence - take, for example, Christian Confidence in humanity, which itself is projected according to the same four components⁵² - will be decomposable via a **single global correspondence** with Communist Confidence, a global correspondence that we'll interpret as follows: concerning, for example, confidence in the collective intelligence of this or that human group, it matters little to *Communists* whether or not this confidence is based on faith in some divine transcendence⁵³ since they will appreciate it as materialists, i.e. from the sole point of view of actual practices, so that Christian confidence can be synthetically broken down as follows:

$$\text{Christian trust } [g] = \text{transcendent faith } [Q] \circ \text{Immanent trust } [G] \Rightarrow g = Q \circ G^{54}$$



All in all, Communist Confidence is the most directly adjusted to its various projective dimensions: in terms of overall Confidence in Humanity, it is the most immediate "projector", the one that holds it best in hand.

But this Confidence, which is the foundation of the Communist project, needs to be reaffirmed in today's world, particularly in its ability to turn the old Communist *hope* into a new *hope*.

⁵⁰ Capitalist political and nihilist ideological orientations are closely intertwined.

⁵¹ Here we find the interplay of the three orientations of ontological thought that Alain Badiou uncovered in *L'être et l'événement*: *constructivist* (capitalist politics), *transcendent* (humanitarian-religious politics), *generic* (communist politics).

It is important here to remember the possibilities of alliance offered to the latter two by their common opposition to the constructivist orientation and their common assertion: "there is not only what there is".

⁵² Christian confidence in individuals, in couples, in Christian groups (see the various religious orders, monasteries and parishes, militant "Catholic action" groups...) and in the Church (understood as the "invisible Church" of the "People of God" and the "Communion of Saints").

⁵³ As Aragon wrote, in collective action, for communists, the difference between believers and atheists doesn't matter: "He who believed in heaven / He who didn't / What does it matter what's called / This clarity on their steps / ... / Both were faithful / ... / A rebel is a rebel / Two sobs make a single knell."

⁵⁴ Technically speaking, the communist orientation here "quotients" Christian Confidence (based on divine transcendence) into "equivalence classes" according to its relationship to immanence.

III. Communist “*expectation*”

Ancient hopes and current despair

Former Communist *hope*

"We fight better than our fathers. Our children will fight even better, and they will win."
 Lenin (1913, *The Working Class and Neo-Malthusianism*)

The former communist *hope* was for a victorious future that was thought to be doubly assured:

- assured in its statement: the **future** classless communist society would be the necessary outcome of the history of class struggle;
- assured in its enunciation: this future was **here and now** the business of a politically effective international proletariat.

Today widespread despair

The failure of this hope has given rise to widespread despair: not just a generalized mistrust of what humanity is really capable of, but despair in the face of the disasters that are piling up on its destiny (the over-exploitation of man by man, the unbridled plundering of the countries of the South, epidemics and ecological disasters, famines and climatic cataclysms...).

Hence the urgent need to resurrect a communist vision of the future under the banner of hope.

Building communist expectation

"All creative action is fruitful, and this fruitfulness is not limited to an instant; it has a timeless quality."
 Alexandre Grothendieck (1987)

Let's start again from this dialectical point: *to hope* is said in two opposite senses, because the relationship to the future that the verb *to hope* denotes is the dialectical unity of the opposites *hope & expectation*; both designate a subjectivation of the future, but whereas hope subjectivates victories to come⁵⁵ while a present accumulates defeats, expectation on the other hand subjectivates the future fecundity of victories already won but remaining at present in the state of buried seeds.

As such, it is up to us to deploy a communist expectation that :

- is based on victories already achieved,
- victories won by people over themselves rather than over their enemies,⁵⁶
- victories with a generic fruitfulness that exceeds on all sides the native limits of their singular constitutions.

To give just one example of communist hope in the **generic fruitfulness of victories already won by resolving contradictions within the people**, let's take the unexpected discovery, in a recent comic strip (*Champs de bataille - Histoire enfouie du remembrement*) devoted to the Breton land consolidation violently imposed on the peasant world by the V° Republic, of the role accorded to the triple union created by the UCF-ml in the 1970s between peasants, students and militants.

⁵⁵ This is why hope is at the heart of insurrectionary revolutions (*"The greatest force of revolution is hope."* Malraux, *L'espoir*). Malraux, *L'espoir*), just as it is the mainspring of many wars, especially wars of resistance, which have yet to win victories that could provide a basis for hope.

⁵⁶ victories, then, in resolving contradictions within the people, rather than victories over the enemy (antagonistic contradictions), which, as we have seen, are rarely definitive.



We can see that, from this battle definitively lost by the peasants, there remains a victory in the making thanks to this "unprecedented alliance" (**triple alliance of** peasants, students and communists) whose fertility, fifty years on, remains a materialist promise.

This is where we realize that the victory that really counts, the one that remains and constitutes the foundation of an expectation *that does not deceive*, lies in the emancipation of the people's camp rather than in this or that enemy's retreat, always liable to be challenged later by that same enemy or by a new one.

The point that constitutes communist expectation as such is the materialist conviction that such an alliance, albeit extraordinarily limited in scope⁵⁷, remains more fertile than ever, and that the seed planted by the UCF in the 1970s remains fertile.

But what then of the properly "generic" dimension of such fecundity, in other words, of its

⁵⁷ Two mathematical insights are worth calling upon here to consolidate hope in this type of victory, which is very small in scale:

- the global scope given by complex analysis (Cauchy) to "restricted action" (Mallarmé) insofar as this action constitutes some region connecting two different points (in this case, the farmers and the students), and this region can then remain of spatial dimensions, however restricted they may be;
- the universal scope given to the algebraic singularity (Hironaka): a simple point (such as the tip of a cone phenomenally embodying the global contradiction that structures the cone as a non-cylinder), or a simple ridge line...

inconstructible character? Indeed, it is because this fecundity is generic that both 1) enemies and sceptics can legitimately object to its objective non-existence, and 2) Communists can just as legitimately⁵⁸ support its latent subjective ek-sistence.

Generic "Long Walk"

"The road to organization is a long one."
Lenin (1918)

In what way does such a communist conviction actually turn out to be materialist (and not ghostly)?

We need to turn once again to the light of mathematics, because the most contemporary mathematics (Paul Cohen's 1963 "forcing" mathematics⁵⁹) provides us with the fundamental rationality of *what generic* means.

Generic can be said negatively: as indistinguishable, inconstructible, incalculable, indeterminable. But *generic* can above all be said affirmatively, as a capacity of a new kind: to fecundity and fertility (see in mathematics the fertilization extending a given domain by a well-targeted addition).

The reality of such generic fruitfulness lies in the fact that we'll be able to make truthful predictions about its effects, in line with what Gödel wrote in 1975: *it's possible (by the method of forcing) to establish true propositions about something we know nothing about*⁶⁰

Twenty-first-century communists need to take political hold of these contemporary notions of *generics* and *forcing* in order to **resurrect the old hope in a materialistic expectation** (i.e. *one that "doesn't deceive"*⁶¹), bearing in mind this decisive point: as much as forcing allows us to hope⁶² in the fecundity of victories already won, forcing does not allow us to anticipate the future work of the negative (i.e. that of our enemies).

This point is politically decisive: within the peoples that make up humanity, **the fruitfulness of victories acquired** can be anticipated, but their capacity to restrict enemy action cannot! Which brings us back to this point (more dramatic than tragic, strictly speaking⁶³): any emancipatory advance by Humanity inevitably gives rise to new generations of enemies (and this, without even the definitive extinction of previously vanquished enemies being guaranteed).

But the **inevitable emergence of new enemies** standing in the way of humanity's emancipation in no way implies that humanity's long march towards emancipation is inevitably and definitively blocked: it's one thing not to be able to anticipate the new obstacles that new enemies will inevitably erect in the way of humanity's long march towards emancipation; it's quite another to consider that this endless series of hurdles to overcome should discourage humanity from emancipating itself.

"We don't have to build utopian systems for the organization of future society."
Engels (1872, *The Housing Question*)

In other words, Humanity's long march may well prove to be without a really definable end, strewn with

⁵⁸ This shows that what really exists, what there is, is by no means a consensual starting point for the struggle between two paths, which, on the contrary, is essentially about what "there is" and "there is" mean.

In *Logiques des mondes*, for example, see the opposition between two materialist legitimacies that Alain Badiou calls "democratic materialism" and "materialist dialectics" respectively.

⁵⁹ Note the unexpected synchronization in 1963 between Cohen's logical-mathematical invention of forcing and Mao's ideological-political invention of the *Socialist Education Movement* (1963-1965).

⁶⁰ "Forcing is a method to make true statements about something of which we know nothing."

⁶¹ Saint Paul, *Epistle to the Romans* (5, 5): Paul, who was not a former disciple of Jesus (he had not known him), is indeed **the first Christian** in that, unencumbered by those false hopes in Jesus that disappointed the Apostles, he based his hope on the improbable "victory" of Christ at Easter.

⁶² In the future past tense, not in the future simple tense of hope (see *Being and the event*).

⁶³ This distinction is all the more important today: the present era is, oh so, dramatic for Humanity, as it pays dearly for its failures, its inability to overcome its internal obstructions and thus the external obstacles erected by its enemies. On principle, a drama is about something that has happened, not a timeless fate or destiny: a **drama** is about "what happens", a **tragedy** about "what is".

A drama can be overcome, while a tragedy, independent of any specific event, is unresolvable and therefore unsurpassable. So let us beware of "complacency towards the tragic" (*L'espoir*, Malraux). Let's be **politically** wary of the aesthetic seductions offered by today's staged tragedies!

unforeseeable pitfalls and obstacles, but the essential point lies in its Confidence, step by step, stage by stage, point by point, in overcoming the obstructions it intrinsically engenders, confidence (as we've seen) in the interwoven capacities of individuals, couples, groups, peoples and the communist orientation.

Our prospects

How can we restore a Communist Confidence in Humanity that can give rise to a properly Communist hope?

This involves ideological and cultural tasks⁶⁴ which we can combine (see previous image of the **culture/acupuncture** pincer), in certain well-chosen situations, with more properly political and organizational interventions on specific points.

Let's remember: this text is an **orientation** report, not a direction report: the aim here is to update our communist compass (or sextant), and then to mobilize it in a given **situation** to decide on a **direction** for communist intervention.

All in all, it's a question of revolutionizing communist **consciousness** and, more precisely, *communist culture*.⁶⁵

To revolutionize communist culture is, of course, to revolutionize (*upstream*) its resources.

Longues marches draws on three vast intellectual resources:

- 1) Communist history, particularly the history of the CCR (1958-1976);
- 2) contemporary philosophy of truth subjects ;
- 3) modern mathematics (since 1830) and contemporary mathematics (since the 1960s).

But it also means (*downstream*) projecting this communist culture in different dimensions: political and social, historical (Humanity) and geographical (Earth), economic (social relations of **production**) and ecological (social relations of **reproduction**), scientific and technical, artistic and literary, philosophical and psychoanalytical, educational⁶⁶ and linguistic⁶⁷.

The task is immense and overwhelms our very limited capacities.

So it's up to us to decide what of all this is actually within our grasp, on the sole condition that we get down to it, collectively and sustainably.

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⁶⁴ Let's distinguish between a worldview (ideology) and the cultural terrain on which such an ideology can emerge. For this, let's call **culture** (see issue 3 of *Longues marches*, page 17) a foundation that interweaves **collective** ways of *feeling, speaking and thinking*, and that interweaves the **daily** activities of *working, living, populating and organizing*.

⁶⁵ When Alessandro Russo describes the Cultural Revolution as a transformation of *revolutionary* culture, it's because Mao, at the time, believed that the *communist* culture he had inherited and bequeathed guaranteed him a solid foundation. In the mid-1970s, it became clear to him that this might no longer be the case, particularly as regards the "dictatorship of the proletariat". For us, it's now the whole of communist culture that we need to revolutionize.

⁶⁶ Working hypothesis: proper Soviet (and therefore **socialist**) education sought to create a "new man" - see, for example:

- Anton Makarenko: *Le chemin de la vie* (Delga, 2022) or Educational poem
- Svetlana Alexievitch: *La Fin de l'homme rouge, ou le temps du désenchantement* (Actes Sud, 2013).

Conversely, a **communist** education should focus on the social relationships that collectively emancipate humanity (and hence the human beings that populate it), rather than on individuals. In so doing, such an education would carefully distinguish between **constitution** (ek-sistential) and **institution** (existential), without limiting itself to the *sociological* problems of so-called *institutional* pedagogy/psychiatry/analysis...

⁶⁷ Where modern mathematics attaches particular importance to the rigorous (literal) **formalization** of its thought, communist politics must attach particular importance to the rigorous (linguistic) **formulation** of its thought.

[CHINESE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION]

The magazine will extend its publications to various **Cahiers** (without regular periodicity) of two types:

- **booklets summarizing** articles previously published in instalments on the same theme;
- **original studies**, too long to fit into the pages of the magazine.

We are pleased to announce our first issue (to be published in April 2025), which will present a wide-ranging, highly detailed study of the Chinese Lushan Conference (July-August 1959).

The following short text introduces the communist issues at stake in this first turning point in the CCR.

NOTEBOOK *LONG WALKS: ON THE LUSHAN CONFERENCE (SUMMER 1959)*

Let's put this Lushan conference in fifteen points.

- 1) The Communes populaires [CP] were an **event**.
- 2) This event **doubled** in size: at the end of April 1958, the **rural** communes populaires [CPR] of peasants, and in mid-August 1958, the **urban** communes populaires [CPU] of women.
- 3) This event took place **within the framework of the Great Leap Forward** [GBA], which, being a state-political program, was not strictly speaking an *event*.
- 4) This event brought to the fore the question of **communist succession** from within the socialist revolution in progress.

In a certain sense, this event revealed the **socialist obstruction of communism** by self-organized mass movements (peasants, then urban women), formulated as follows: *how can we make the socialist state wither away if the necessary socialist construction never ceases to strengthen it?*

Thus, the CPR peasants **had** no intention of setting up **state farms** (like the Soviet sovkhozes that succeeded the kolkhozes or state cooperatives in the 1930s), of which they would then have become salaried employees, nor did the CPU women aim to set up **state factories** (like the *Danwei*).

- 5) In so doing, this event confronted every member of the Communist Party with a **new type of decision**: how to relate politically to this unforeseen succession, event-driven by these mass movements?

The result was a series of decisions that were all the more freely unpredictable in that they did not follow mechanically from previous political choices.

- 6) It's only logical, then, that this 1958 event deeply **divided the CCP**.

This division emerged in the summer of 1959 with **Peng Dehuai** simultaneously criticizing the GBA and the CPs: the GBA as an adventurist acceleration of socialist construction, and the CPs as leftist thrusts within this acceleration.

- 7) **The Lushan conference** (July-August 1959) was devoted to a collective examination of this unexpected political division (the first major political division since 1949 and the construction of socialism in China).

The CCP was divided not only over its criticism of Peng Dehuai (a criticism which led to the isolation of the Peng-Huang-Zhang-Zhou "military club"), but more profoundly over the very way in which he was to be criticized: in the name of Marxist-Leninist disciplinary orthodoxy (as regards the construction of socialism) or in the name of a genuinely communist political novelty (within

the very construction of socialism)?

In this way, the ideological-political divide has interwoven a divide over critical **statements** and a divide over critical **enunciation** positions.

- 8) By the end of the Lushan conference, the general agreement on *critical* statements (isolation of the "military club" and Peng's dismissal) masked a deeper, subterranean division over the specificities of a *communist* (and no longer just *socialist*) enunciation.

Thus, from Lushan onwards, *Peng Dehuai's own critique* was divided into **two enunciatory positions**: that of the communist left (Mao and Ke Quinshi) and that of the socialist right (Liu Shaoqi and Teng Xiaoping).

- 9) This new division (between different *ideological* types of *political* criticism) was all the more difficult to unravel in the summer of 1959, as it was then closely interwoven with the various **criticisms of a GBA** that was presumptuous (unrealistic growth rates), adventurous (ecological calamities) and ultimately disorienting (it reinforced socialist obstruction of communism by subordinating the expected revolution in the social relations of production to a precipitous development of the productive forces).
- 10) The result was a long period (1959-1961) **of building up the Right**, taking the reins of the socialist state (Liu) and isolating Mao within the Communist Party (Teng), which finally led, in early 1962, to the 7,000 Conference, stifling the CP's properly communist dimension.
- 11) Faced with this obstruction revealed by the first moment (1958-1962) of the Chinese Communist Revolution [CCR], Mao launched the **Socialist Education Movement** [SEM] (1963-1965) to try to overcome it/subsume it ideologically.
- 12) At the end of 1965 (see the "theatrical" episode pitting Yao Wenyan against Wu Han¹), the question of a **properly communist critique of Peng** was reopened, this time from the explicit angle of clarifying his singular position of enunciation.
- 13) In 1966, Mao launched the **Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution** [GPCR] to overcome **the Liu-Teng obstacle** (which stood in the way of any mass communist movement of the MES type) and thus *effectively* engage in the ideological-political work needed to overcome **socialist obstruction**, in the knowledge that the key point of such properly communist work lay in its mass scale: only mass communist movements could unblock the socialist policies of the Party-State.
- 14) All in all, the **periodization of the CCR (1958-1976)** is thus presented in four moments grouped into two stages:
- I - **First stage 1958-1965**: CP and MES
- I.1 1958-1961: GBA and CP (rural and urban)
- I.2 1962-1965: 7,000 Conference, then MES
- II - **Second phase 1966-1976**: GPCR
- II.1 1966-1968: GPCR until the end of the Shanghai Workers' Commune, Revolutionary Committees and Red Guards
- II.2 1968-1976: the second phase of the GPCR
- 15) In this respect, the **Lushan Conference** (summer 1959) was the tipping point for the first moment (1958-1961) of the first stage of the CCR (1958-1965).

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¹ See *Longues marches*, n°2, p. 8

[LETTERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD]

DIOGO FAIA FAGUNDES: *THE IDEOLOGY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA*

Our last texts briefly pointed to "movementism" as one of the most striking ideological indicators of contemporary politics. In this article, we develop this idea, starting from the premise that the ideology of social movements constitutes **an epistemological obstacle** to the refoundation of a communist politics worthy of the name. The term "epistemological obstacle" is inspired here by the sense that philosopher Gaston Bachelard gave to ideological complexes that are detrimental to the emergence and development of the sciences in his classic *The Formation of the Scientific Mind* (1938), with the difference that we export the concept to another type of rationality: politics.

While the last decade has been marked by historic movements on a massive scale, starting with the so-called "Arab Spring", it has also seen these insurgencies subdued or neutralized due to their inability to formulate and achieve victorious goals. This inability stems in large part from the spontaneous ideology that guided these movements, which we refer to here as "social movement ideology" or simply "**movementism**".

This ideological complex was reinforced by the end of the great communist parties that marked the Cold War. Even before the events of the last decade, it shaped a large part of the convictions of a left that had rejected the hypothesis of avant-garde parties in favor of decentralized and varied "social movements", supposedly capable of constituting a more effective counterpoint to the capitalism of a post-Fordist and transnational era, organized in "networks" - this is Antonio Negri's argument in a nutshell. Its "institutional" heyday was probably marked by **the meetings of the World Social Forum in the early 2000s**, in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre. It is perhaps today that its decline is most evident, with the inability of recent popular rebellions - such as the popular explosions in Chile in 2019 and 2020 - to go beyond exchanging a neoliberal framework for a more social-liberal one.

Brazil and Latin America therefore play a major role in this story.

I - The Latin American experience as a renewal of the left

There's a common view that hails Latin America for having avoided the dismal state of the "post-political" world of the order crystallized by the end of the Soviet Union and the crisis of Marxism. Indeed, while Western Europe saw "left-wing" governments such as François Mitterrand and Tony Blair following a path not far removed from hard-line liberalism, Latin America was the scene of ideological struggles, the rise of urban and rural labor movements and electoral victories for organizations less suited to the new consensus.

Make no mistake: this Latin American left is highly varied. It includes the revival of the most mobilizing elements of Peronist "populism" (which inspired theorists such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe), the national-popular tradition of the most advanced sectors of the armed forces (Venezuelan Bolivarianism), the formation of a classic workers' party out of trade unionism (the Workers' Party in Brazil) and the aggiornamento of ex-guerrillas in electoral politics.

In any case, this umbrella has been catalogued as a "red wave" or even post-neoliberal, offering an alternative in times of conservatism. While it is questionable to what extent this "wave" has actually succeeded in overcoming neoliberalism, it has nonetheless provided **ideological inspiration** for European organizations seeking to renew social democracy, already worn down after years of adapting to privatizations and pro-market reforms. The leaders of Syriza, Podemos and Mélenchon were directly inspired by these Latin American governments and movements.

The main inspiration came from the idea that the Latin American left had an organic relationship with so-called "social movements" that set it apart from its European counterparts. A more dynamic left, capable of progressive reforms, articulating "social struggle" and electoral victories, seemed a powerful antidote to the stagnation of the restoration years that began in the 1980s.

The problem is that not only have these new European **organizations** generally foundered, but **the original inspiration itself is in crisis**. Economic and political crises have brought fascist adventurers to power (Javier Milei, Bolsonaro, Bukele) and even where there has been a return of the left, as in the case of **Brazil**, there is a rather timid and mediocre government, with low popularity ratings, in a situation where the far right remains very strong, being the most dynamic and vibrant force in the country. **Venezuela** is no longer the great source of inspiration it was under Chávez, and is increasingly the target of criticism and doubt. In **Bolivia**, fratricidal conflict has broken out within the MAS between supporters of Evo Morales and the current president, Luis Arce. Gustavo Petro, despite his immense personal merits, governs in an unstable situation in **Colombia**, while Gabriel Boric has suffered a heavy defeat by failing to implement a new constitution to definitively overcome the legacy of Pinochet in **Chile**. Only **Mexico** seems to be an exception in this panorama.

However, the clearest sign of the problems is probably crystallized in the outcome of the immense social protests that swept Chile from 2019 to 2020. How could such a strong mobilization, marked by an acerbic critique of the neoliberalism inherited from Pinochet in education, labor and social security, only result in a weak government like Gabriel Boric's? **There is a clear discrepancy** between, on the one hand, revolutionary methods (including open confrontation with the police) and the radicality of the critique (questioning the whole recent history of capitalism in the country, marked by privatizations, austerity and the destruction of public services) and, on the other hand, the tactical objective of electing a slightly better (but not much better) government, whose main banner has not even been achieved: changing the Constitution.

This experience forces us to question the limits of today's movements. What is the ideology of social movements?

II - The ideology of social movements

Although it has left its mark on the panorama of the Latin American left, this ideology has European origins.

Remember that **"social movements" are not part of the traditional Leninist lexicon**.

There is, of course, the essential difference between economic struggle (led by the unions) and political struggle (led by the Party and mass organizations such as the soviets), shaping a conception of politics irreducible to the spontaneity of immediate struggles. Politics *as such* is the privileged domain of the Party and mass democratic movements. Popular organizations with a specific vocation - such as women's, youth, black or cultural struggles - are not separate from the Party: they are the Party's means of reaching the masses on the basis of its own themes, and they have only relative autonomy because they are fundamentally subordinate to the Party's centralist political line. This is precisely why they have always been reduced to mere "transmission belts" by their detractors.

In the post-May 1968 conjuncture, there was no shortage of intellectuals who saw the presence of **new alternative protagonists** to the traditional working class (such as student youth) as the great novelty of the movement, a sociological consequence of "neo-capitalism". Later, this view was accentuated when it was adopted by many activists of this new historical moment, who saw in the pulverization of fragmented struggles around their own identities a new political paradigm, marked by the absence of centralism and a unified strategic vision.

This political assessment of the novelty of post-68 policies is the true origin of social movement ideology. **The "political" work of Deleuze and Guattari** in the 1970s is a case in point. It has established itself as the hegemonic vision, eclipsing the different interpretations of the same phenomenon (for many, May 1968 represented the possibility of a new communist politics, founded on the massive liaison of intellectuals with proletarians and enlightened by the novelties of Maoism) and setting the tone for the memory of the event. In this spirit, there would be direct continuity between May 1968 and Hillary Clinton: the ideology of "minorities" and the identity politics of the American left would be the natural corollary of the novelty of the "new left".

It was this specific assessment of May 1968 in France that strongly influenced political and ideological trends in Latin America.

So, when the Brazilian military dictatorship began its process of decomposition with the eruption of

popular and workers' struggles (which led to the formation of the Workers' Party) from 1978 onwards, a theoretical framework was already available to frame these movements in the perspective of a "new social subject" made up of a multiplicity of sectoral demands and movements.

A typical example is the work of PT activist **Éder Sader**. An intellectual known for his revolutionary activism around the ideas of Mao Zedong (about whom he wrote a book), he had been a revolutionary MIR activist in Salvador Allende's Chile, returning to Brazil after a period of exile in France. His new concept is documented in *"Quando novos personagens entram em cena"* (1988) [*When new characters enter the scene*], which recounts the various urban social movements that emerged in the wake of the military dictatorship.

Although the analysis is marked by a certain ambiguity (since Sader acknowledges that movements demanding reform are marked by their dependence on the state), Sader sees in the autonomy of social movements a new strategic path for the Brazilian left after the defeat of the armed struggle. This vision marks a first variant of ideology, which we'll call **"autonomist"** (as Sader himself called his group): social movements are sovereign, and the party is merely an electoral and parliamentary appendage of their will. But **how can we achieve a synthesis that is not simply the "convergent" sum of multiple struggles?** Is it possible to conceive of a strategy of real transformation based on the simple addition of several distinct immediate struggles?

It was this variant that predominated in the recent process in Chile, as Gabriel Boric's own "party", "Social Convergence", saw itself as a mere institutional expression of the struggle of the various movements.

Another, much more traditional, variant has come to dominate the PT's history. In its most concentrated programmatic and strategic moment, crystallized at its fifth national meeting (1987) - which served as the basis for Lula's first presidential campaign in 1989, which he almost won - the party adopted what has conventionally been called a "popular democracy strategy", based on three pillars: the social struggle, the institutional struggle and the cultural struggle. This vision is closer to classical social democracy or post-war reformist communism.

In this strategy, the leading role of social movements is recognized, including their autonomy (against the "apparatchik" conceptions associated with the history of communism), but they are not the alpha and omega of politics: the party must **subordinate** these movements to its strategy of building the party and fighting for power.

*"Indeed, if we (Workers' Party) are fighting for a party capable of being a real instrument in the struggle for socialism, that party must be capable of leading that struggle, of pointing the way. It must become the political leader of the workers. For us, this means respecting the democracy of movements, their bodies and their characteristics, challenging their orientation with proposals previously debated in PT bodies, linking our work in the trade union and popular struggle with the construction of the party and our strategy for the struggle for power. Otherwise, we will fall into spontaneity, dispersed sectoral struggles on the one hand, and parliamentary activism on the other. We risk witnessing disorganized social explosions, difficult to channel towards revolutionary social transformation."*¹

Here we find the classic tone: movements do social struggle, parties do politics. In reality, it's nothing more than **a mechanized, de-dialectized Leninism**: whereas Lenin focused on trade unionism as a vector of economic struggle, separate from politics, the PT broadens the field to include any "social movement" in this spontaneous, demand-driven, apolitical quadrant. The concept emphasizes "social struggle", but subordinates it to the struggle for electoral victory and the growth of forces in the state apparatus.

Over time, we have seen this strategy increasingly adapted to devalue any independent perspective in relation to the state, rendering social movements themselves secondary, mere "pressure groups" at

¹ These are points 209 and 210 of the political resolution of the fifth national meeting of the Workers' Party (PT), which can be consulted here :

best.

This explains why the ideology of social movements is **an eternal critical element**: against this institutional and bureaucratic adaptation, the main resource is always a renewed appeal to the dynamism of social movements.

The first variant of the ideology then comes back as a complement, to avoid the stagnation and loosen the spiral. This is what we saw with the strength of the **Landless Movement (MST)**, a peasant organization that appeared in 1984, still strongly linked to the PT, but which became known for its more radical and ideological strike force during the 1990s, when it carried out land occupations (often in the face of armed violence from the latifundia) and adopted a more combative opposition to the governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994-2000) than that of the party.

It was the strength and renown of the MST that was one of the main inspirations for the emergence of the World Social Forum and its first successful editions, which relied on the path of social movements as a solution to the domesticating impasse that the institutional-electoral path imposed on left-wing parties. Other social movements that subsequently gained national prominence, such as the *Movimento Passe Livre* (MPL) [**Free Passage Movement**] - the struggle for free public transport, which was behind the major demonstrations of 2013 - and the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra* (MTST) [**Landless Workers Movement**] were all inspired by the MST.

But even taking into account its immense merits, has the MST really succeeded in becoming a *political* alternative to the PT? History suggests not. The movement has never managed to break out of its narrow thematic framework: the struggle for the democratization of the land. To achieve this goal, it has alternated positions, from rallying to the PT at election time to moments of greater criticism and "distancing". It elects its parliamentarians on the PT side and exerts a certain pressure on its administrations, but it cannot go beyond this, i.e. it cannot elaborate a new policy, because **the division of labor is imposed**: the movements do "social struggle" and the parties do politics.

When internal leaders create dissent from subordination to the PT and write stronger critiques, they manage at best to return to the inspiration of the first variant of movementism, "autonomism", which is also incapable of going beyond "social struggle" around its specific, local interests.

This was also the fate of the MTST. To break out of the strictly corporate framework of the struggle for urban housing, the movement had to develop an electoral arm, materialized by parliamentary candidacies and a presence in electoral parties, in the case of deputy Guilherme Boulos, the movement's main social leader.

What this somewhat brutal summary of the history of the Brazilian movement aims to underline is the following point: whether in the first variant (autonomist) or in the second (that of the division of labor: movements lead social struggles, but parties have primacy in politics), **it has not been possible to sketch out a conception of politics of its own**, capable of formulating and implementing an overall strategy. Localism, fragmentation, sectorialism (even when combined with combative and radical methods of struggle) and, finally, the resigned option of the "least worst" (the traditional left) at election time are the lot of all social movements. **In the absence of a real policy** - not to be confused with social demands - **all that remains is a mixture of resignation and complaints**. It may be possible to exert a little "social pressure" on tired electoral parties, but no independent political solution can be built.

III- Is there another way?

Is it possible to be disenchanted with this situation and still make politics out of popular movements? We think so, if we interpret these movements not as "social movements" in opposition to political parties - giving the latter a monopoly on politics - but rather as **the source that radiates the energy** capable of giving life to a new political organization not subordinate to the state and its elections.

In our view, this was the path taken by the *Union des communistes de France marxiste-léniniste* (UCFml) in the wake of May 1968. The study of this organization interests us because it was an attempt to do politics away from the classic "apparatuses" of traditional communist parties, without falling into the opposite trap of the experience of contemporary "social movements", which ultimately lead only to adaptation to order. The idea of building a new kind of party out of mass movements - a

party that should then be seen in a global perspective, in which the local gives way to the global - implies a **diagonal exit from** both dilemmas.

To do this, we need a different assessment of May '68, centered on the idea of a "new type of party" built around mass organizations, and not on the self-serving fragmentation of different identities.

Contrary to a certain reception of Alain Badiou's philosophy in Latin America, which brings it closer to other critics of the party-form, such as Antonio Negri and Guattari, on the basis of common themes (critique of class representation, abandonment of traditional Marxism-Leninism), we believe that there is great contemporary interest in her polemical texts, considered more dated and unreasonable, such as those that took part in the polemic against "anarcho-desirants" in the 1970s, e.g. "Potato Fascism" and "Flow and Party".²

In these texts, we read a **devastating critique** of the fundamental pillars of social movement ideology: impotent federalism, egocentric and particularistic egoism (whose most frightening corollary is American identity movements), the apology of the spontaneous in place of the collective project and discipline, the Manichean dualism (pure, undivided masses versus the evil state) in the midst of which the central theme of political organization is elided, and, finally, the disappointing result: resigned electoralism.

These characteristics dominate the contemporary political landscape, forming a kind of hostility to politics that can be found in the most recent historical movements, and which is expressed by numerous symptoms, such as the rejection of political leaders (according to which, after all, all leadership is bad) and the cult of ultra-horizontalism.

More importantly, the forgotten texts of the 1970s highlight a curious and ironic consequence of the **ideologues of movementism**: they are **profoundly structuralist**! The dualistic division between movements and the state is a static contradiction with no future: there is a systemic mirror in which movements are the "other side" of order, as seen in the work of Antonio Negri.

At a time when there's so much talk of "revolt", "resistance" and "convergence of struggles", it's important to go back to the inspiration against the anarcho-wannabes and remember that **movement is not synonymous with politics**. In May 1968, there was a lot of ideology and mass movements with historical power, but no politics - and those who realized this lack were in the best position to draw the necessary consequences from the event.

To underline the importance of politics, Badiou and his comrades said to Deleuze and Guattari: "Remember Chile! Indeed, the PT and its satellites in the "camp of popular democracy" (the set of social movements that follow it) dreamed of a Salvador Allende Chile with a happy ending: socialism achieved by democratic means. In the end, the goal became increasingly distant and intangible, and today, few still honestly believe that this is the strategic path followed by Lula's party.

We should always **remember the two Chilis**: the real one, in 1973 (but also with the disappointment after 2019-2020), and the one imagined by the PT and the recent Latin American left, in order to abandon once and for all hope in both "democratic socialism" and the accompanying social movement ideology roughly sketched out here.

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² See Yenan no.° 4: *La Situation actuelle sur le front philosophique* (François Maspéro, 1977).

[SURVEYS]

This issue sees the launch of our "Investigations" section.

It will combine factual elements, as close as possible to a meticulous description of the experience recounted, with a point subjectively held by the interviewee in the situation described, a point that makes it a singular experience with a global scope and as such offering itself to the sharing of a collective intelligence.

This first article is dedicated to a farmer's singular conception of his agricultural work.

MEETING WITH DOMINIQUE, A PICARDY FARMER

A meeting

At a market in Amiens, we met a shopkeeper named Dominique, who turned out to be a farmer with a highly original and highly motivated vision of farming today.

On two occasions (December 11, 2024 and January 22, 2025), we went to his home (near Abbeville) to talk with him.

Dominique and Catherine

Dominique is 62 years old. He lives with his wife Catherine, a little younger, in a small village (150 inhabitants) in Picardy.



Their professional activity is twofold: **farmer** on the one hand (his farm now covers 42 ha), and **merchant** on the other (they sell produce from surrounding farms at local markets).

Dominique has been wearing a prosthesis since a serious accident at work two years ago, when he lost his leg. As a result, he has had to give up his previous dairy farming activity (limiting his herd of 80 dairy cows to around 20 that he no longer milks) and close his processing workshop (where he and his wife used to transform their milk into butter, cream and cheese, which they marketed directly).

Dominique is descended from farmers, through his father and two grandfathers. Catherine, on the

other hand, doesn't come from a farming background, and consequently declares: *"I don't have the earthy fiber like Dominique; I'm not attached to the land like he is, but I love this work, particularly the transformation of milk into cheese."*

Dominique's story

Born at the end of 1962, Dominique started work in 1983 as a milk inspector at the cooperative's depots.

From 1986 onwards, he moved into self-employed trading, selling mineral feed to local farms, while at the same time starting farming on his father's farm.

In 1996, he gave up the fertilizer business to devote himself to agricultural production on the farm he had inherited from his father.

To do so,

- he has gradually extended his land from 27 to 42 ha, which in Picardy is a minimum threshold (his farm is surrounded by much larger farms of at least 200 ha);
- he expanded his herd to 180 cows;

Today, he feels there were too many animals for so little land.

In 2006, he set up his own processing plant, enabling him to make direct use of his milk production. He then stopped his commercial work (minerals) and started selling processed dairy products at markets with Catherine (between them, they made around five markets a week).

Since his accident, he has had to cut back drastically on his activities (reducing his herd and abandoning his processing workshop), and now lives on limited production (of corn and wheat on the one hand, and selling cows on the other) and, above all, his small commercial activity.

All in all, since 1986, he has been proud to *"work 80 hours a week, with no vacations"*. His hands, real beaters of impressive thickness, would suffice to attest to this. But he and his wife deplore the fact that they *"can't make a decent living from this superb profession"*.

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The report of this meeting¹ will successively present :

- I. Dominique and Catherine's **situation**;
- II. Dominique's declared and actual **point** about farm work.

I. Situation

Their farm

Their farm covers 42 ha divided into 6 separate plots.

Dominique inherited 12 ha from his father, then bought a further 15 ha from former farmers who had given up their work. He also rents 15 ha under his father's old leases (€300 per ha per year).

Today, the couple's business is twofold:

- As **farmers**, they cultivate wheat and corn on most of their 42 ha, the rest being used as pasture for their 20 cows - all their agricultural production is sold to the cooperative;
- as **merchants**, they act as intermediaries between local agricultural production (cheese and other dairy products) and Picardy markets (mainly Abbeville and Amiens).

¹ A meeting rather than an interview, a survey rather than a collection of words. This is why we are also committed to **reformulating** as a communist what Dominique **formulates** as a peasant: the challenge is to make his words resonate with our communist orientation.

Their transformation workshop

Since Dominique's accident, this workshop is no longer in use. Previously (when their herd numbered around 80 cows), it enabled them to produce butter, cream and rollot (a soft Picardy cheese²), which the couple then sold directly on regional markets.

Their apprenticeship in **cheese** production was trial and error. To better understand how to produce a good cheese, they had to spend three days in the Alps with farmers producing their own Savoyard cheeses (reblochon, abundance...) who advised them to feed their cows grass rather than corn or alfalfa to improve the quality of their cheese crusts.

Their peasant incomes

Before the accident...

From 2006 onwards, their revenues broke down as follows

- market sales of processed dairy products ;
- meat sales at the abattoir: €4 per kilo (over €1,000 per animal);
- sales of strawberries (produced on 3 ha at the time): this production involved a great deal of painstaking work, but for them it was a good value because they sold them directly from the farm, without going through the cooperative (run, like all the others, "by the big guys");
- sale of corn and wheat (which they produced on the remaining land, excluding pasture and strawberries) to the cooperative;
- small personal trade in produce from other farms in the area.

Today...

Today, they derive most of their income from their trading activities, as their farming activities no longer generate much income.

Division of labor

The division of labor within the couple takes the following form:

- Dominique takes care of the fields;
- Catherine was in charge of the production workshop and continues to look after compatibility; she never looks after the fields any more than Dominique looks after administrative tasks;
- the two of them work together on market sales.

Accounting

The accounting of their corn or wheat production is currently as follows:

- **Expenses** (per year and per hectare) :
 - Seeds: €250
 - Seed drill depreciation: €80
 - Fertilizers (strictly limited): €200
 - Land rental: €300
 - Herbicides: €50
 - Machine hire for harvesting: €200

TOTAL cost: €1,080
- **Revenue** (per year and per hectare) :

² [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rollet_\(cheese\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rollet_(cheese))

- Sales to the cooperative: €935
- Premiums (PAC): €165

TOTAL cost: €1,100

- **Balance** (per year and per hectare): €20, even though their work is unpaid!

To which should be added, concerning their agricultural activity :

- for professional expenses, mutual insurance (MSA): €280 per year;
- revenues from the sale of a few cows.

Most of their income therefore comes from their complementary trading activity (which is more profitable, as Dominique and Catherine control their margins).

A central question

Of course, the point then becomes: but **why continue** such a farming activity at their age if the hard work it requires is unpaid and therefore virtually free?

Dominique's answer is: "**so that the land is not lost**" - which can be understood in two ways: so that the land of his father and grandparents is not lost, and so that the land is not lost through sterilization³

As it turns out, for Dominique, "land" here refers to **a social relationship of peasant work** that goes far beyond mere soil, negotiable and marketable: for him, "*not to lose the land*" means above all *not to lose the peasant relationship to the land, not to lose the invention of working with the land*, so that his decision to continue his peasant activity is not so much the result of economic necessity as of an existential, quasi-militant orientation: to use his own strength (manual and intellectual) to create **a new logic of peasant work** that could be passed on to his son, and foreshadow a peasant future for mankind.

Complementary employment?

Naturally, we asked Dominique why he hadn't resorted to hiring farm workers to prolong or even extend the work he could no longer physically do himself.

His answer was threefold.

- 1) He could have considered hiring a salaried employee, but that would have required finding someone sufficiently motivated not to lock their relationship into a salaried/boss relationship, which would have made their collaboration difficult to sustain over the long term, since the peasant work required here is very demanding: getting up at 5 a.m., highly variable working hours, incessant hazards in the various tasks, etc. And all this for a mere minimum wage. And all this for a mere minimum wage...

It's worth noting that Dominique couldn't establish a relationship equivalent to that found in **the craft industry** between a boss and his apprentice, the latter being there to learn the trade before becoming a self-employed craftsman himself. In the case of a farm, however, the employee found himself locked into his status as a farm employee, with no real prospect of becoming a farmer in his own right.

- 2) From this point of view, it would have been more conceivable to hire an employee not for field work, but for the processing workshop or the shop. But, at the scale at which the couple work, they would hardly have been able to pay the employee in question!

And besides, what's the point of hiring a salaried employee if everything he or she produces and sells only generates income from his or her salary? Why, in that case, risk upsetting the long-established balance between the couple?

- 3) Dominique's alternative would have been to grow the business by taking on more employees. He could then have got away with it, but, as he says, "*that's a mindset we don't have*".

³ By answering our question in this way, Dominique implicitly endorses the gratuitous nature of his work. This is, of course, a sign of the militant nature of his peasant activity, but it is also a sign that, for him, peasant work stems from an existential need, from that "first vital need" that, according to Marx, work would have become for an emancipated humanity.

Indeed, Dominique would have become an **entrepreneur**, which he rejects, not only because of the social labor relations that would have implied, but also because, as we'll come back to, **he rejects the "farm" approach**: he sees his work as a farmer as working **with** the land, not as a way of holding it to ransom.

"Exploit"?

Let's clarify a point that is important in Dominique's formulations: the verb "to exploit" can be divided into two opposite meanings (unity of opposites).

- On the one hand, an intrinsic (meliorative) meaning: to exploit something is to **take advantage of** it (we exploit an idea by taking advantage of it, i.e. by developing it **endogenously**);
- On the other hand, an extrinsic (pejorative) meaning: to exploit something is to take **advantage of** it (we exploit another man's work by taking advantage of it, i.e. by taking an **exogenous** usufruct).

On the one hand, to take advantage of an existence by prolonging it through the organization of its consequences; on the other, to plunder an existence by exhausting it through the extraction of its benefits, like a lemon thrown away after squeezing.

Dominique uses the term in its second, pejorative sense, to indicate that he refuses to plunder the earth and be its predator, as it is his responsibility to produce with it by ensuring its reproduction.

II. Dominique's point of view

Dominique's singularity is concentrated in one point: in the acute awareness that his new orientation as a farmer represents a **fork in the road between two strategically incompatible paths**.

Let's take a look at its strategic turning point, its mutation, its *conversion*.⁴

A stop

A few years after taking over from his father and continuing his traditional farming methods (deep ploughing, fertilizers and pesticides...), Dominique realized that his land was hardening and compacting, losing its humus...), Dominique realized that his land was hardening and compacting, losing its humus, that the soil was no longer being worked and aerated by earthworms, that as a result, birds were no longer coming to feed and that, for lack of vegetation, the small game he liked to hunt were disappearing, that the rains were no longer able to infiltrate, so that the village was regularly flooded, and that he himself was now trapped in a vicious circle (to pay off his debts, he had to intensify his productivity at the cost of new fertilizers, chemicals and mechanical means... all of which added to the debts he had to pay off). Dominique calls this **path "farming"**.

Dominique's stumbling block can be summed up in three points:

- the earth trickled down the fields on rainy days;
- the use of pesticides to control thistles (an invasive plant in fertile soils⁵) tended to reduce the fertility of meadows;
- his son had little interest in taking over this type of farm.

In other words, for him, the **reproduction** of the land and peasant work came up against the fact that 1) the land was running away, 2) its fertility was being exhausted and 3) its transmission was no longer mobilizing.

All in all, the point is that Dominique wants to be **a farmer, not a farmer, and not an entrepreneur either**.

He discussed his difficulties with his father, who replied in substance: *"There's no choice, it's either that or sell the land."*

⁴ Think also of the *conversion* gesture of skiers who turn their skis over at the end of the traverse...

⁵ The saying *"land of thistles, land of millions"* indicates that thistles are a natural sign of soil fertility that can bring in a lot of money.

The alternative was unacceptable to Dominique.

In particular, there was no question - and still is no question - of him selling his land to fall back on the 2 ha that the state would allow him as a "subsistence plot"⁶ : *"my grandparents worked for this farm, my parents worked here too; it won't go away and I'm working to pass it on to my son!"*

But how can we move from these **two double negations** (refusal of exploitation and renunciation) to a peasant **affirmation**?

An extended study

Aware of the obstacle, Dominique began to study: reading books, at first selected at random, then, as he exchanged ideas with other farmers in France (via internet searches), better chosen according to his concerns.

It's worth noting that, by embarking on this research, Dominique has **isolated** himself from his immediate farming environment, which is made up of farms much larger than his own that adopt, without discussion or reflection, the "exploitation" model advocated by the big agricultural "exploitants" of the FNSEA - in this way, farmers are instructed daily on their smartphones which products to spread on the soil to counter such and such a new bacterial threat, which sowings or harvests to start immediately to prevent such and such a meteorological development, etc. (hence, as Dominique ironically points out, that all of a sudden all the tractors leave the village simultaneously to carry out the tasks transmitted on the apps. (which is why, as Dominique ironically points out, all the tractors suddenly leave the village at once to carry out the tasks transmitted on the applications...)).

Dominique accepted the fact that he was considered a happy-go-lucky oddball by these wealthier farmers. So he went looking for allies beyond his natural geographical environment - fortunately, he had the resources of the Internet at his disposal.

Studying on his own ("*10 years of reading*", he tells us), exchanging ideas with other farmers who have emancipated themselves from the FNSEA model, Dominique has understood this: the decisive point is **ploughing**, understood (in its modern post-World War II form) as turning the soil over in depth (over 30 centimetres) with the new machines that make it possible.

Traditional ploughing, with oxen pulling the plough, only turned the soil less than 10 centimetres.

The "qualitative" leap (corresponding to the quantitative transformation from ≤ 10 cm to ≥ 30 cm) began in France following the **Marshall Plan**, under which the United States "helped" European countries by granting them loans... intended to buy the new American tractors (Massey-Ferguson, Mac-Cormick...).⁷

Ploughing (at depth) destroys humus and the soil's biological diversity by tearing up fungal filaments and shredding earthworms (those "*soil engineers*"⁸); it oxidizes the soil by exposing it to the sun; by breaking up the roots, ploughing divides and pulverizes the soil, stripping it of its consistency and its ability to withstand bad weather - which is why the soil accumulates along the slopes, where erosion prevails.

An alternative

"It's not the harshness of a situation or the suffering it imposes that motivates us to conceive of another state of affairs where things would be better for everyone; on the contrary, it's from the day we can conceive of another state of affairs that a new light falls on our pains and sufferings and we decide that they are unbearable."

Sartre (*Being and Nothingness*)

⁶ Let's not forget that the State strictly controls the ownership of agricultural land: it must be cultivated (directly or by lease) and must not be abandoned by its owners.

⁷ See, for example:

- <https://www.lefigaro.fr/bordeaux/que-viennent-faire-huit-tracteurs-du-plan-marshall-a-bordeaux-ce-lundi-20240603>

- https://actu.fr/pays-de-la-loire/mayet_72191/video-son-tracteur-a-traverse-latlantique-en-1945_10855570.html

⁸ See the recent issue of La Recherche magazine: Les sols. A complex and vital ecosystem.

<https://www.larecherche.fr/parution/trimestriel-580>

In truth, Dominique says he understood all this when he realized that **there was an alternative** to ploughing: "**conservation agriculture**".

It's important to note that Dominique doesn't claim to be an *organic* farmer; he's very keen to state that he's not extremist, dogmatic or one-sided (for example, he accepts the reasonable use of fertilizers).

In this respect, **conservation** agriculture (which refuses ploughing but may use pesticides)⁹ differs from **organic** agriculture (which refuses all pesticides but may use ploughing).

Dominique gradually adopted this conservation agriculture approach, combining it with intensive hedge-planting on his farmland¹⁰.

For him, **the idea** is as follows: **working with the earth also means working with the trees** that the earth nourishes and which, in turn, plough and work it with their roots. The principle is to regularly prune these trees once they have extended their root network (to over 5 meters): the pruned tree then separates itself from its distant roots (whose decomposition and rotting will fertilize the soil) to grow new ones that will come back to plough and aerate the surrounding soil.

In so doing, **the farmer treats the tree as a collaborator** in his work with the land, just as he does with his cows, whose roaming pastures contribute to the circulation of bacteriological life through their muzzles and hooves.

Hence the great importance Dominique attaches to **planting hedges** in a dense network (25 meters separating the different rows¹¹), which self-fertilizes the land. This practice, denigrated or even derided by his colleagues, also has the advantage for Dominique of being a future investment (he expects, in a few years' time, to be able to benefit financially from the marketing of the wood thus produced).

"There are Nobel Prizes in physics, chemistry, biology and even peace. Why aren't there any for agriculture, this activity so essential to humanity?"

Alexandre Grothendieck (1971)¹²

The principle of no-till farming is to cover the soil with the waste from the previous harvest¹³ which fertilizes it¹⁴ while protecting it from wind and other bad weather. Here again, working *with* the soil (and not *on* it, or even *against* it) implies conceiving it in a broader sense than a simple material that can be worked at will (such as a mineral or metallic material): what Dominique calls "soil" is in fact the interweaving of a soil, all that lives in it deep down (earthworms, fungi, bacteria and other micro-organisms) and superficially (birds and local fauna). It is this interwoven whole that makes soil a living material, a "living" means of agricultural production.¹⁵

This conception of farming also implies a **whole new understanding of crop rotation** (crops are grown in rotation on the same soil), of crops that can plough the land by themselves, of sowing (seeds are no longer buried after ploughing, but deposited so that they bury themselves), of harvesting methods, etc. The new conception of farming also implies a **whole new understanding of crop rotation** (crops are grown in rotation on the same soil), of crops that can plough the land by themselves, of sowing (seeds are no longer buried after ploughing, but deposited so that they bury themselves), of harvesting methods, etc.

Added benefits

⁹ "Soil conservation agriculture consists in no longer ploughing, covering the soil and diversifying crops to maintain soil fertility and biodiversity. This concept, which promotes soil functioning and biological regulation, reduces dependence on fungicides and insecticides." (Wikipedia)

¹⁰ A practice akin to *agro-forestry*

¹¹ Which leaves plenty of room for machine intervention

¹² Interview by Michel Lefebvre: <https://>

¹³ Dominique showed us in his fields how, at the end of the season, corn waste fertilizes the soil he has sown with wheat grains (not buried!). Which is why the other farmers disparage the untidy appearance of his fields (theirs being all the more impeccable for their still-life-like appearance).

¹⁴ At the same time, we save on various pesticides (herbicides against unwanted plants, fungicides against fungi or insecticides against unwanted insects).

¹⁵ For farmers, land is both a material to be worked and a tool to be used. What's more, being "alive" in both cases (and not an inert material or mechanical tool), land cannot be considered by peasant labor as a mere subordinate means to production ends.

Dominique also points out that **the healthier the soil**, the healthier the farmer, if it's true that mistreating the soil ipso facto means mistreating the farmer who mistreats it: this is how Dominique's father fell ill from breathing in the lime and chemicals he spread on his fields!

One villager told Dominique that he was astonished that a particular street in the village no longer flooded during the autumn rains, without realizing that this was due to the new direction Dominique had given to his work, enabling the farmland to absorb most of the water that fell from the sky. ¹⁶

A matter of "aesthetics"

What is subjectively striking about Dominique and Catherine's way of talking about their farm work is that they speak of it almost "aesthetically", so much so that their new intelligence of a living earth, closely intertwining soil and surface, insects and beetles, flora and fauna, production and reproduction, discerns **new sensitive properties**: the beauty of a lump of fertile soil, the beauty of the dynamics of dairy fermentation, the beauty of a field backed by hedges, where birds, seagulls and deer return to find nourishment, the beauty of a soil on which "you can walk as if in snow", because the ground is soft and supple, the beauty of a "soil that rises" instead of eroding and piling up against the shoulders. All this leads Dominique to confess to us: "I'm a proud hunter, but I hardly ever take out my rifle any more, because I'd rather see than shoot!"

A global perspective

It's these new practices and the new intelligence they mobilize that have convinced Dominique's son to take over from his father in a few years' time, and it's this of which Dominique is visibly most justifiably proud: **a path has been opened up** that incorporates a global perspective into his new working strategy. For Dominique, this path is the only one likely to save mankind from the inevitable sterilization of the soil: "Look at how erosion is ravaging the soil, how entire regions of the globe have become deserted! If we do nothing, by losing biodiversity, humanity will be lost!"

Courage

"Courage is something that can be organized. Malraux (Hope)

Dominique's work is subjectively rooted **in the farmers' networks**¹⁷ which, on a large scale, organize a collective intelligence that encourages everyone to persevere in their own corner of the countryside.

Because courage is what French farmers need these days!

Dominique insists on two points:

- **The transition** from ploughing to conservation agriculture is a long (ten years?) and delicate process: soils are not a material that can be worked at will, and it takes time to convert them from passive to actively living material.
- Once conservation agriculture has been implemented, **its benefits** are also a long-term affair (it takes over ten years for hedgerows to do their job, for local fauna to return to do theirs, for micro-organisms and worms to colonize the soil, etc.).

For the moment, Dominique finds himself quite alone in his corner of Picardy - it has to be said that the land here is particularly rich, which makes its sterilization and erosion less obvious, and delays the farmers' awareness all the more.

But "in France, 30% of farmers now think like me!" he proudly declares.

For him, this new, large-scale farmers' collective has replaced the small-scale collective of farmers in his village who used to harvest maize collectively (6 or 7 farmers) to make their machines and working time more profitable. But Dominique confesses: "I hated doing that; I was the smallest of the bunch because I only had 20 ha of maize; I already had my own ideas, which I never talked about: we weren't on the same wavelength!"

¹⁶ This brings us to an interesting feature of the land worked by the peasant: it combines the dimension of work with that of habitat and settlement, for the land in question is indissolubly a space, a surface, a soil, a depth and an elevation. In other words, this land, both worked and working, is endowed with the power of collective organization.

¹⁷ For example, the *Vers de terre* association *Production*: <https://www.versdeterre.org/>

All in all...

This small survey was intended to be "**monographic**"¹⁸ rather than organizational: strictly speaking, our aim was not to investigate the possibility of organizing, socially and politically, a people's camp in the Picardy countryside, but simply to investigate the point made by this peasant.

What's more, this survey did not clearly identify any political antagonism at work: there is certainly a sharp contradiction between two paths - between two incompatible ways of conceiving peasant work (incompatibility here takes the following precise form: continuing to work the land by ploughing, or deciding to stop ploughing in order to work better *with* the land?) - but in Dominique's case, **this contradiction does not take on an overtly antagonistic form**, with a clash of enemies hindering or even forbidding his new orientation.

Our investigation focused on Dominique's "road to Damascus" on a path he is striving to build against all odds, with the main idea of passing on this peasant cause to his son.

Dominique explains that her son plans to continue farming *in* the same way (which also has the distinct advantage of saving human labor time), but without prolonging dairy farming (because "*this work is too restrictive and would put his household at risk*") and while continuing his part-time work as a midwife (in much the same way as his parents now combine their business with farming).

Let's summarize Dominique's **subjective journey** as we understand it.

- His relationship as a peasant to his land, analogous to that of a musician to his musical instrument (violin, flute, piano...) or that of a sailor to his ship, is one of **partnership**, not mere tooling. In this peasant **culture**, agricultural work is conceived as an interweaving of the land, living things (from earthworms to game and cows - Dominique asserts that a farm could not exist without the presence of livestock) and man (the latter being the one who decides - no idea here of merging the human being with the living beings inhabiting Gaia).
- According to this general principle, the earth-partner (a living interweaving of soil-surface, soil-humus, soil-support...) organizes **a tangle of collective (social) relationships** in terms of work, habitat and settlement.
- Dominique has patiently learned to **situate himself** within this overall **orientation**, and has courageously decided on his own working **direction**¹⁹, conservation agriculture, which he adopts by flying the flag for hedges in his region: Dominique likes to present himself as a militant for the cause of hedges, which local farmers regard as mere obstacles to the rectilinear progress of their big mechanical machines.
- The whole issue is de facto tied up with strategic optimism: Dominique likes to say that **he's fifteen years ahead of the game**, and that "we'll get there", this "we" referring as much to the peasant class as to humanity as a whole. De facto, Dominique has positioned himself as a kind of peasant avant-garde.

Of course, broader questions remain:

- If we adopt Dominique's orientation and culture, what is the overall significance of his direction for peasant work in France?
- Can this direction be generalized if one of its conditions of possibility turns out to be a significant gratuity for peasant labor?
- And what about its productivity, i.e. its actual capacity to feed the country and, more generally, the whole of humanity?

¹⁸ It would be interesting for a filmmaker to consider making a documentary on this original peasant figure: *bon entendeur salut!*

¹⁹ Remember: it's in an oriented situation that you decide where you're going (so **orienting yourself isn't** enough to **get where you're going**).

Attempting to answer them would be the work of another investigation, on a completely different scale from this "monograph": one thing is a **point** (made and courageously held); another thing is the **line** that this point activates; a third thing is the capacity of this line to irrigate the whole of the **situation** concerned.

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[ARTS]

ÉRIC BRUNIER: *A TOMS OF COLOR*

This article marks a break from the first three, whose ambition was to think afresh about modern painting. Let me reiterate my thesis: the discourse of the modern painting (François Wahl) is based on what I call "*ColorS*". This is in contrast to the discourse of the classical painting, whose drawing subjects the entire composition to a narrative. For me, ***CouleurS*** refers to the idea that **a color never stands alone. It's always in relation to others**, and it's on this dynamic that modern painting develops. Of course, this does not preclude the use of strokes, the presence of a drawing and figures. It's all a question of hierarchy.

The first articles, Nos. 1 and 2, enabled me to restore Romanticism to the emergence of modernity, and to develop a concept of the gaze immanent in the painting (No. 3). Following on from these first articles, I shall now develop **the division of colors** (i.e., the principle known as *CouleurS*) in Cézanne and Van Gogh, in opposition to the optical division of colors of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. If ***CouleurS* is not a matter of optics** for them, it's because it's a "coloring sensation" for the former, and a manual and intellectual task of execution and design for the latter.



Fig.1 Kandinsky, *Jüngerster Tag*, 1912 (© Centre Pompidou, Paris)

These articles, which aim to show that **modern painting constitutes a new way of looking at things**, were also looking for **a language capable of restoring the very constitution of this way of looking at things**. This will not be the case here, as this new article is less about entering into the singular logic of a *CouleurS* than about taking bearings in order to **map the situation**. This text is based on an exhibition that had the merit of bringing together works spanning from the early 20th century to the present day. Its most important point, independently of the exhibition, is to give materiality to the notion of *CouleurS*.

An exhibition



"The atomic age is our present" write the organizers of an exhibition¹. But what are they saying? According to the exhibition, an age of terror, stupor, nihilistic messianism and ecological awareness of earthly peril. I won't go into detail about the works on display, nor the stages of the exhibition discourse. On the other hand, and in stark contrast, the way in which modern art of 1910 had, on the contrary, renewed its plastic discourse through contact with scientific discoveries concerning the atom. **Morality** as the dominant discourse of our time, **science** one hundred and fifty years ago.

This **moral torsion of art** is achieved through formal comparisons stripped of all subjectivity. A number of period documents suggested similarities, such as Loïe Fuller's *Danse du radium* (1904), created after her meeting with the Curie couple and premiered in Paris, but of which virtually no trace remains, and the photograms of a performance organized by Pierre Huyghe in 2014 entitled *Dance for radium* and inspired by Loïe Fuller's dances. Whereas the moderns are all about inventing new formal content, recent works appear to be **postmodern repetitions whose content is repetition** and which invent no form. Nevertheless, for those who know how to look, it was quite clear that, subject to the title of the exhibition, at the same event, painting had opened up several avenues, some bringing new art (in Kandinsky, Larionov, Hilma of Klimt), others destruction.

The weakness of the exhibition, in terms of its overall purpose and coherence, lay in its failure to distinguish between the "atomic age": art of the age of atomic science in its experimental emergence between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and art in the age of atomic technologies, i.e. the age of disasters, from 1945 onwards with the atomic bomb and nuclear power plants. Without really arguing its choice, **the exhibition gave precedence to technology**, in line with the theses of Gunther Anders, whose quotation welcomed visitors:

"August 6, 1945 was Day Zero. The day when it was demonstrated that universal history might not continue, that we were in any case capable of cutting its thread, that day inaugurated a new world age. [...] We live in the year 13 of disaster. I was born 43 years ago. My father, whom I

¹ The exhibition *The Atomic Age. Les artistes à l'épreuve de l'histoire* was held at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris from October 11, 2024 to February 9, 2025. It's important to me because it clarifies pictorial modernity and its legacy.

*buried in 1938, died in year 7 before. In another age of time.*²

This kind of discourse turns historical modernity into unconsciousness, and suggests that art since the 1950s has been art of consciousness. This totally erroneous Manichaeism interests me because it forces us to reconsider modernity and our relationship to it³, because it indicates **two levers** for thinking about the situation of painting: on the one hand, the relationship between modernity and postmodernity, and on the other, the new type of materialism that was modernity.

Modernity/postmodernity: diffuse influence vs. explosive dialectic

Let's posit that the exhibition (whose works range from 1911 to the present day) is less a chronology than it is a **polarization of** the situation of the visual arts, and painting in particular, around three points (three emblematic works): a photographic print of uranium made by Polke in 1992 (Fig.2), Newman's 1946 canvas *Pagan Void* (Fig.3) and Kandinsky's 1912 *Last Judgment* (Fig.1).

The last two paintings, if we accept the hypothesis of their thematic rapprochement⁴, are diametrically opposed: **Kandinsky** sees in radioactivity a new world opening up, as John's *Apocalypse* announces, whereas **Newman** makes the atomic bomb the starting point for the separation of humans from the gods, an absolute point of departure, separate even from history. The abstraction of the one is a dawn already underway, where colors explode, where the eye snakes and leaps in an incessant ballet, while that of the other seems to hem the eye in at the center of a nervous, empty network. The playful mood of one, the cosmic night of the other.

Nevertheless, these two paintings are opposed as painting activity to the first work in the series, Polke's photographs, which simply record the radioactivity of uranium and tint it pink. All that remains is a diffuse, seductive paleness. Polke plays both on the fascination of uranium's destructive power and on coloring as corruption. The sensitive process of color has its seeds in that which destroys it. With this apparent colored syrup, the work plays on the duplicity of poisoning and attraction, of corruption. This photographic series is both a moral statement and an absence of enunciation, since from one photo to the next there is nothing but varied shifts and elusive nuances. It's a pink cameo, something Delacroix detested, **a way of avoiding confrontation with color**.

² Quote from *L'homme sur le pont. Diary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (1959). The exhibition showed the inanity of Anders' main thesis. According to him, what marks our era is that humanity is capable of manufacturing technological objects without being able to imagine the consequences. Rather than encouraging visitors to imagine the consequences of such objects, the exhibition featured objects that illustrated the catastrophe, such as Bruce Conner's film *Crossroads* (1976), the emblem of the exhibition: a slow-motion montage of waste filmed from multiple viewpoints of the explosion of an atomic bomb during a 1946 test entitled *Operation Crossroad*. The destructive explosion becomes a lullaby. Morbidity becomes delight.

³ An example of the effects of this discourse on modernity: **Kandinsky**, who is known to have written *Du spirituel dans l'art, et dans la peinture en particulier* (1912), is said to be a painter of a reality (which the entire exhibition urges us to understand as *nature*) that is "spiritual, relational and alive". Kandinsky's painting is thus stripped of all material and dialectical aspects; it is an above-ground, spiritualist point of view on the world, among others.

⁴ This is not self-evident. Kandinsky painted in resonance with the discovery of radioactivity, and Newman with the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



Fig.2, S. Polke: *Uranium (Rose)*, 1992,
London Tate modern



Fig.3: B. Newman: *Pagan Void*, 1946
(© NGA Washington)

In this way, these three works polarize pictorial modernity by confronting us with different sensory experiences. These poles configure a temporal era, a historicity, but they do not exhaust⁵. They are difficult to characterize, but let's get started.

- **The Kandinsky pole** is essentially constituted by the question of contrast: contrast between colors, between spots and lines. He sought to create an internal dynamic within the painting, in which the experience of the painting is not resolved in any synthesis. This is what I call an **explosive dialectic**, or **color explosion**.
- **Newman's pole** is based on the difference between the internal space of the painting and the external, corporeal space that situates his experience. Whereas in Kandinsky's work, color is a vector of emancipation, here it is subject to spatial relations. Its stakes lie between the decorative (as in Matisse) and the sublime (as claimed by Newman).
- Finally, **Polke's work** is marked by an effusive (immersive?) approach to color. Its treatment is no longer exclusively pictorial. In this way, he participates in postmodernism, sharing some of its characteristics: no clear boundaries between genres, a tendency towards moralism (or its dual, subversion).

What can we learn from this polarization?

First of all, **there are three different uses for color**: explosive, spatial (architectural or decorative) and effusive. These differences can be traced back to the color revolution discussed in previous articles.

Which refer to **three subjects in painting**.

- For Kandinsky, the subject of painting is **the painting itself**, the internal relationships within the painting, first between colors, then between colors and strokes.
- In Newman's spatial color, the subject of painting is **space**, the relationship of the painting to its environment. The dynamic is more architectural than pictorial, mobilizing the body in space.
- Finally, for Polke, the subject of painting is **the relationship with the gaze**. The gaze exists as an external, prior entity that the color experience seeks to capture. This pole is basically an extension of the Duchampian principle that the gaze makes the work.

⁵ *The Atomic Age* exhibition included all the works presented in the same era, but with Newman's *Pagan Void* as the zero point. What had gone before was therefore a kind of non-historical golden age, now out of date. This way of looking at history was already at the heart of the *Year Zero* exhibition, whose point of departure was not the atomic bomb but the extermination of the Jews of Europe. Beyond the nuances, we have one thing in common: we are no longer modern. On the contrary, it's important to remember that **we are still modern**, and in particular contemporary with its emancipation policy.

A new kind of materialism

The hypothesis here is that radioactivity and the development of atomic science in the late 19th and early 20th centuries created the conditions for a new kind of materialism in painting (and the visual arts). This new type of materialism is the possibility of **painting without the referential figure**, in other words, abstract painting.

The exhibition showed the three poles I outlined above in their relationship to radioactivity: Kandinsky, Hilma of Klimt (for the Newman pole) and Duchamp. I'll leave aside the second to compare the other two.

Duchamp

Let's start with Duchamp.

Historians tell us that he read Jean Perrin's book *Les Atomes* (1913). The concept of the *infra-thin*, which he elaborated in his notes and put into practice, is said to derive in part from this reading. Infra-thin is both the minimal gap and the contingent (like dust, air, belly noises or farts). It's what signals an animated, ghostly presence. Above all, it's what eludes the canons of art. It is, potentially, "a work that is not art".⁶

In relation to the atomic physics described by Perrin, infra-thinness translates the gap that has arisen in atomistics between the continuous and the discontinuous, between the full and the empty. Atomic physics, Perrin tells us, tackles the representation of the discontinuous by the continuous (the derivative of a function). Where classical physics postulated that for every body there was a derivative that expressed it continuously, atomic physics tells us that parts escape representation. Perrin writes of atomic physics: "the function that represents the physical property under study [...] will form in the intermaterial vacuum a continuum presenting an infinity of singular points."⁷

In taking up his image, the question is whether the tin foil enveloping a sponge is an accurate representation of it or not. Duchamp operates within this gap, on the one hand internalizing it in his work, and on the other mirroring this hiatus back to the art establishment. Duchamp's work, which is not art, only functions within art as a representation, smoothly derived from a world that appears as granular as a sponge. **Duchamp's ruse, the ruse of a casuist**, is to prevent any decision being taken from within the institution. Far from being a critique of the art *institution*, Duchamp's works padlock it.

Duchamp's reading of Perrin and atomic physics is, in the final analysis, fairly classical: atomic physics subverts the way we used to represent the world. It proves the institutional nature of all representation.

Kandinsky

Kandinsky's report is far more interesting.

Little is known about Kandinsky's interest in radioactivity. It's not even certain that he ever heard of it. However, the passage in *Regards sur le passé* where Kandinsky talks about atomism is quite significant, as it is the event he cites as having given him confidence in his own abilities and those of painting. It is the last term in a three-term sequence that will lead to objectless painting (in which reference to the object is secondary).

- The first term is the discovery of a painting of a haystack by Monet, with the result that "the painting received a fabulous force and brilliance. But unconsciously, too, the object was discredited."⁸
- The second element is hearing Wagner's *Lohengrin*. It is the musical realization of visual impressions. **Wagner's music presents the colors** and lines of an imaginary painting. "It became very clear to me that art in general possessed a much greater power than had first seemed to me, that on the other hand painting could deploy the same forces as music." (p.98) Wagner's music arouses the desire for a painting that is the equivalent of this music, of its power to make a

⁶ Duchamp: "What is a work that is not art?"

⁷ Jean Perrin, *Les Atomes* (1913), Paris, Champs Flammarion, 1991, p. 31.

⁸ Kandinsky, *Regards sur le passé* (1913-1918), French translation Paris, Hermann, 2014, p. 97.

sensitive impression.

- Finally, the last term is

*"a scientific event [that] removed one of the most important obstacles on this path. It was the pushed splitting of the atom. The disintegration of the atom was the same thing, in my soul, as **the disintegration of the whole world**. [...] Science seemed to me annihilated: its most solid foundations were nothing but a delusion, an error of scientists who did not build their divine edifice stone by stone, with a quiet hand, in a transfigured light, but groped in the dark, at random, in search of truths, and in their blindness mistook one object for another.*

Even as a child, I knew the hours of torment and joy of the inner tension that is the promise of incarnation.

*Those hours of inner trembling, of confused nostalgia that demands something incomprehensible of you, that by day oppresses the heart, fills the soul with anxiety, and by night brings to life fantastic dreams, full of terror and joy. [...] I still remember that drawing put an end to this state of affairs, in other words, it made me live outside time and space, so that I also lost my sense of self. My father noticed my love of drawing early on, and made me take lessons while I was still in high school. I remember how much **I loved the material itself**, how I found the colors and pencils particularly attractive, beautiful and lively. From the mistakes I made, I drew lessons that, to this day, almost all act within me with their original force." (p.99-100)*

Of course, this reconstruction of the past must be seen as an affabulation. But this very dimension is important, as Kandinsky is explaining **his transition to abstraction**. The disintegration of the atom (which is not nuclear fission) describes the quest that physics embarked upon at the end of the 19th century: physics towards the infinitely small of matter. What the painter retains is the groping, the blind, unconscious advance of the physicist, which in no way prevents him from continuing. The fact that there is something even smaller than what is visible in no way erases science. If science is destroyed, it is not in its method, but in its positivism and objective constructions. **It is the scientific representation of the world that has been erased.**

But it's like a child trying, groping, failing and trying again. It's possible to continue painting, even after trial and error, and to revolutionize painting, as long as one is inwardly committed to it. This is indicated by **the painter's leitmotiv of "inner necessity"**. This is not a psychological or expressive necessity; it is the painter's necessary interiority to his painting, and it begins with the materiality of the sheet, the pencil, the brush and the colors.

If we summarize this path to abstraction, we see that **Monet's** millstones indicate a path to abstraction, **Wagner** a desire for strength and brilliance, and **physical science** a method made up of failures and victories, a confidence and hope in materialism. Kandinsky draws an analogy between his own practice as a painter, shaped by his childhood, where the physicist's groping corresponds to the painter's *work in progress*.

Empties

With atomic physics, **the real vacuum, the material vacuum, is a matter of discontinuity**. The vacuum between atoms makes atomic reactions possible, the event within matter. As Jean Perrin writes: *"Rutherford then admitted that the radioactivity of an element does not signal the presence of atoms, but signals their disappearance, their transformation into atoms of another kind."* He continues: *"These transmutations are discontinuous. [...] Transmutations must take place atom by atom, abruptly, explosively, and it is precisely during these explosions that the rays burst forth."*⁹

It is on this point of emptiness that Kandinsky's and Newman's paintings divide.

- The latter's concept is classic: emptiness **is an absence that must be filled**, a call to action. In an ink drawing from 1946 (cf. Fig.4), part of a series that invented the famous zip, the vertical bar that interrupts the surface and the paint, we perceive an analogy between the eye and the paint: the pupil is empty in the center of the iris. However, its immaculate, luminous character creates a hole into which the gaze plunges. The eye cannot both detail, or be sensitive to, the surface of the

⁹ Respectively p. 263 and 264.

circumscribed disk on the sheet and focus on the tactile perimeter in black ink. The empty center is a virgin land that needs to be filled, and by which the eye is almost drawn.

- The situation is quite different in a watercolor by Kandinsky entitled *En cercle* (Fig.5). Here, too, a circular form is circumscribed by a discontinuous outline. This does not detach a disc; on the contrary, its discontinuity ensures the link between each colored spot, between colored spots and linear lines, a disordered, eruptive link. The brown surface of the sheet is thus strewn with a sequence of events between which there is nothing, neither figurative configuration nor geometric construction. **The void becomes what makes these purely material encounters possible.** The analogy is that of a restless core, a world of circularity and radiation. **The void is also of the order of the interruption, the interval, this time with an internal, expansive dynamic.** For Kandinsky, emptiness allows colors to relate to each other in a non-standardized way. By abstracting from the figurative world, the painter's work also abstracts from theories of color contrast.

Radioactivity was understood by some painters as **a creative impulse towards abstraction.** Analogously, this did not result in the pulverization of colors into a mass of atoms, but in the destruction of the figurative object in favor of the material object that is *ColorS*.

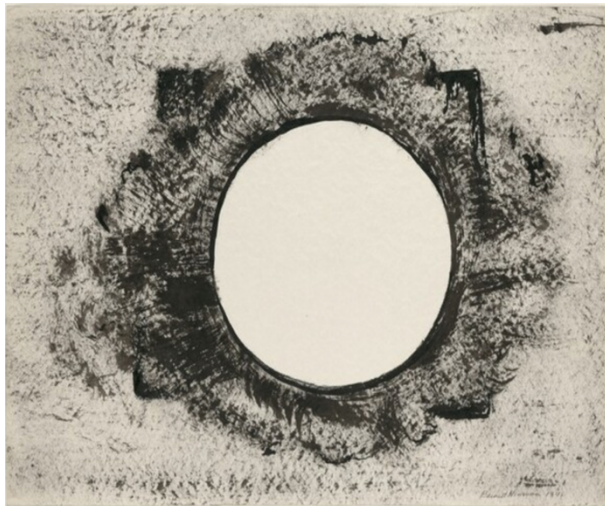


Fig.4: B. Newman, Untitled, 1946
(© NGA Washington)



Fig.5: W. Kandinsky, *In a circle*, 1912
(© Paris, Centre Pompidou)

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[THINGS SEEN]

The documentary *No other Land* was of particular interest to us.
Hence these two readings, in fraternal counterpoint.

DOCUMENTARY FILM: *NO OTHER LAND*

Documentary film by Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor



For over 5 years, Basel Adra, a Palestinian activist in the West Bank, has been filming the expulsion of his community by the Israeli occupation, which is gradually destroying villages and driving out their inhabitants. He meets Yuval, an Israeli journalist, who supports him in his efforts. An unexpected friendship is born. This film, produced by a Palestinian-Israeli collective of four young activists, was made as an act of creative resistance on the road to greater justice.

Serge Peker

They are two friends, Basel the Palestinian and Yuval the Israeli. Basel has been filming **the savage destruction by the State of Israel** of all the West Bank villages in the Masafer Yatta region for over five years. Yuval, a journalist from Beer-Sheva, uses his articles to raise Israeli awareness of the tragic annexation of Palestinian land. Once the villages have been declared military zones by the army, the settlers rush to build mushrooming housing estates.

Basel, a shepherd's son, takes over from his father, who filmed the destruction of villages when he was a child. This father, a Palestinian activist like his son, spent many years in Israeli jails.

To be a Palestinian activist must be understood as a militant for **the right to live on the land on which one was born and where one has lived**. Far more than their property, this land is part of their being, it is a continuity of it. Taking it away from them is far worse than stealing it from them; it's amputating the essential part of what constitutes their being. They exist only through this land, and without it, they

are nothing.

The powerlessness of the villagers is that of **a people powerless** in the face of an army enriched with the latest avatars of technology. Powerless is the young villager who has become a quadriplegic after being shot by a soldier, and who is dying in a tent without any medical care. His mother, standing in front of the tent, weeps unceasingly for her son's misfortune. This physical powerlessness is matched by **the assertive power of the villagers** demanding their right to exist, a right they demonstrate to the army with slogans and placards demanding the return of all Masafer Yatta villages.

The villagers' refusal to leave is not so much an act of resistance as an affirmation of their right to live on their own land. **They assert themselves by asserting their presence.** They are asserting themselves in the face of the army, they are asserting themselves in the face of courts that are foreign to them, and they are asserting themselves through their courage in rebuilding by night what the State of Israel is rushing to destroy by day. But, faced with settlers masked as Ku Klux Klan men, their only right, for those who refuse to leave, is to die on their land.

You're an enthusiast," Basel tells his friend Yuval. *I'm patient.*" If Yuval's enthusiasm is based, as Basel says, on his belief that he himself can stop the destruction of villages and impose peace, Basel's patience can only be based on his confidence in a humanity capable of imposing on the world a peace valid for all. Confidence that is not a belief, but **a principle for action.**

The astonishing thing about this film is that **the camera itself is an integral part of the destruction of the villages.** In this sense, the camera is to Basel what the land is to the villagers. The film gives the impression that the long columns of bulldozers are disintegrating the camera, that they are entering the images, destroying and crushing them to the point of destroying every possible image.

In 2023, the film comes to an abrupt halt. **This stop is** not a freeze frame, but **an annihilation.** There are no more villages, and therefore no more images. The paraplegic is dead: *No other picture / No other land*, except for the importance of the brotherly bond between Basel and Yuval.

When a soldier apostrophizes Yuval with: *"I'm here so that you don't do what you do in my name"*, Yuval replies. So, **for Yuval, the name is important.** The question, then, is what the name is. This name can only be that of an Israeli, stripped of that of a Jew. The reason is simple: Jew in the State of Israel has the sole function of uniting a people fallaciously fabricated with the help of the biblical fable, for the sole purpose of excluding from the country any citizen who does not correspond to this name. A name which is the exact opposite of the **name Jew**, insofar as the latter includes **a principle of universality conceived outside any state.** In its references to the Bible, the State of Israel never mentions the Jew Abraham, who left his family and homeland to wander the world. To borrow an old revolutionary maxim, **the Zionist state of Israel only uses the word Jew to combat the name Jew.** As someone who opposes colonization and supports the struggle of the Palestinians, Yuval can only refer to those soldiers who have resigned from the army and, in order not to be complicit in the ongoing genocide, have joined forces under the label *"Not in our name"*.

Like Basel, let's put our trust in humanity and posit that Yuval, by referring to *"Not in my name"*, is merely joining forces with all those in Israel who, fighting colonization, are seeking to form a group in opposition to Zionist policy. If such a group manages to organize and **ally itself fraternally with the Palestinians**, like Yuval and Basel's fraternal bond, then no army, no matter how powerful, will ever be able to undo what has taken place and will always persist as an eternal truth. This truth is the indestructible nucleus on which can germinate a political force of national liberation unbound by any religious connection and alone capable of making Palestine a true country for all. This core allows us to join Basel in maintaining that the Israelis *"can have all the weapons in the world, they will lose."*

Sol V. Steiner

I had a hard time going to see the documentary *No Other Land* and, once in the cinema, staying until the end of the film. The negative form of the title already raised questions in my mind.

1 - Why?

The fascist impunity of Israeli expansion (since 1948) and the "defeated" resistance of the inhabitants of Palestinian villages **have** a saturating effect.

A mirrored observation that juxtaposes the resistance and its enemy: the resistance confirms, once again, its heroic courage, but also its political weakness, i.e. the inability of the villagers to organize beyond the resistance itself.

No Other Land is one of a long line of courageous documentaries made by Palestinian and Israeli filmmakers in the face of the army and settlers. From this point of view, the existence of these documentaries, their making on the ground of the conflict, is the affirmation in situ of the creation engaged by an "Israeli-Palestinian two".

I'm thinking of the **2013** Oscar-nominated documentary *Five Broken Cameras*, directed by Emad Burmat, the self-taught Palestinian cameraman, and Guy Davidi, the Israeli director.

This highly publicized documentary tells the story of resistance in the West Bank village of Bil'in during the construction of the wall and the violent expropriation of land.

Its title tells the story of its odyssey: begun in **2005**, resumed in **2009** and completed in **2011**, the documentary, screened at numerous festivals, was a victorious marker of this unshakeable determination to bear witness, through images, to the reality of colonization and its correlates, imprisonment and death.

Witnessing together. The gesture is significant, even if the consequences are not the same for the Israeli and the Palestinian.

From this point of view, *No Other Land* follows the same pattern. For five years, Basel Adra, a Palestinian from the West Bank, has been filming the expulsion and destruction of villages by the Israeli army. He meets an Israeli journalist, Yval, who supports him.

2 - The limits of the exercise. Face to face

The shoulder-mounted camera records, with all the attendant risks, the violence of colonial confrontation, by definition unequal and unjust. It bears physical witness to the bloody face-off, to the violence of the systemic destruction of Palestinian existence by settlers and the Israeli army. It is therefore the only medium that shows the state of affairs, i.e. Zionism in its application and its consequences: the pain, expropriation and annihilation of the Palestinians.

The viewer is caught in the middle. He salutes the immeasurable courage of the Palestinian peasants, who know that resistance alone will not win the day.

As far as I'm concerned, the **unease** is setting in. I want to extricate myself from this face-to-face confrontation, whose grim repetition - the victors and the vanquished - tends to present the situation as a binary inevitability outside the process. I want to use my words, my weapons, to continue to think and to say, with those who are organizing to do so, that another way is possible, that a possible tomorrow is to be built.

3 - The new. So that you don't do what you do in my name

Does *No Other Land*, filmed in **2024**, bring anything new this situation?

The "handheld camera" formalism, the only way of filming in these circumstances to make face-to-face contact, remains unchanged. What's new is the content.

It may seem a small point, but in the end it's gigantic. And it comes from the Israeli. The documentary focuses on the friendship between the two men. But friendship is insufficient in the context of unbearable colonial violence. We need to go further, to give a point of view.

Israeli journalist Yuval's line "*So that you don't do what you're doing in my name!*" in response to a soldier's question "*You Israeli, what are you doing here?*" suggests what this new possibility might be.

In this dialogue, it is not the *Jewish* name that is insidiously included in Yuval's response, as Serge seems to emphasize in his text. Quite the contrary. The *Jewish* name is absent. **It's the word *Israeli* that's on the agenda.**

And that's a good thing.

The soldier's apostrophe is from the Israeli point of view: "*You Israeli, what are you doing here?*" For the soldier, it's as an Israeli and not as a Jew that he's questioning him; and the filmmaker's response "*what you're doing in my name*" is questioned from the point of view of the *Israeli* name. The point of this interpellation **is to declare aloud the cleavage** between the Israeli Yuval and the Israeli occupying forces. It is from this void, this declared separation, that a new relationship between Israelis and Palestinians can be built.

For something like a country possible for all to happen, **Israelis must be separated from the Israeli state.**

The Israeli filmmaker's response to the Israeli soldier's apostrophe is the only promise to be heard.

The friendship between Yuval and Basel Adra is only possible under this condition, which restores the trust that has been forfeited.

For in Israel, it bears repeating, there are no longer any Jews, from the point of view of the historical Jew, as I wrote in my last column. In Israel, there are Hebrews, Sabras and now Israelis.

The Zionist state was built **AGAINST** the historical Jew, and if it appeals to the "*Jewish name*", it is from the point of **identity victimization necessary to its messianic narrative.**

Elsewhere, I'll develop the crime of Zionism, which is to have eradicated and wiped off the world map the singularity of the *Jewish* name from the point of view of its universal emancipation. Today's identitarian, supremacist and colonial name has absolutely nothing to do with the *Jewish* name.

If Jeff Halpern, Israeli anthropologist and co-founder of the *One Democratic State campaign*, sees Palestine as a laboratory (ideological, political and military) for the Western world, then the disappearance of the notion of the universal in favor of that of identity, which characterizes, among other things, "*the disorientation of the contemporary world*" as A. Badiou would say, owes a great deal to the Zionists and their state. Badiou owes a debt of gratitude to the Zionists and their state. Hence the importance of considering Zionism as an enemy to be fought from the point of view of restoring an emancipatory universal.

In this sense, we said back in 2016 in our brochure:

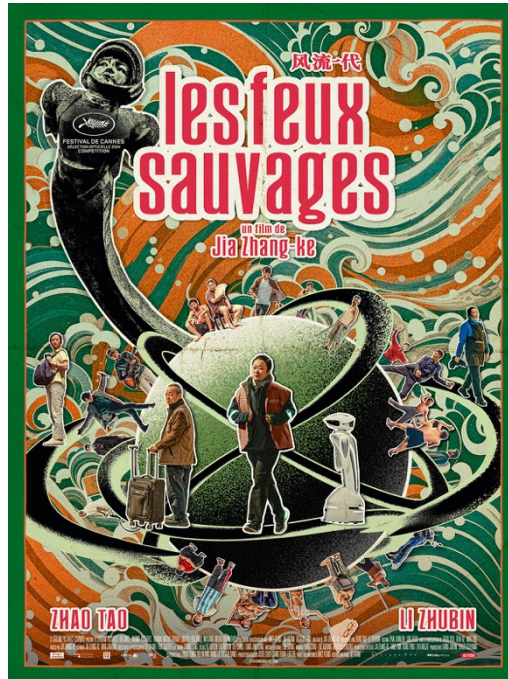
- "*Israelis Palestinians, one country with one state*";
- there is no conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine-Israel.

This **assertion** needs to be repeated, reiterated and explained, as the confusion between Jew and Israeli is so skilfully maintained, not only in many mainstream newspapers but also in many texts in support of the Palestinians posted with the obsolete, outdated slogan "*Free Palestine*", from which there is no reference to **a possible common future.**

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SERGE PEKER: *COLD SORES*

Film by Jia Zangke (2025)



It is the art of cinema to **make us see what the eye alone cannot see**. It's a kind of journey beyond seeing by seeing. Jia Zangke invites us on a **double journey**: one to his own work, in that three-quarters of his film is made up of rushes recovered over the last twenty years from his various film shoots; the other, spatio-temporal, to China in the first quarter of the twenty-first century.

The film's narrative is minimalist: Bin (Li Zhubin) leaves Southern China and abandons Qiao (Zhao Tao), with the aim of getting rich in Northern China, where opportunities seem to be opening up with the construction of the great Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River. Bin and Qiao are both in their early thirties. Neither has a steady job. Qiao takes advantage of her youth and graceful figure to make money as a model or dancer.

The journey begins in 2001 in a city in southern China, where a public monument features the long diagonal of a rocket pointing the helmeted head of a cosmonaut skywards. This representation of a country conquering the Universe is also that of a China now focused on conquering the great global market.

Zank-Ke's long journey through the China of the first quarter of the century takes the form of **a kind of accordion**, whose patchwork of rushes is like so many bellows expanding and contracting into different sequences united by the same music. These same bellows sometimes unite in a superimposition of images concentrating the explosive intensity of a country and a working class ravaged by the savagery of destructive capitalism. A long shot of a group of workers seated on steps shows us the effects of this capitalism on the faces of these downcast men, bent as if under an invisible férule. All these wrinkled, weary, weathered **faces** are as if **gnawed and hollowed by the harshness of exploitation**. The camera then moves from face to face, as if to give each of them an individuality specific to their common condition. But what is the foundation on which this new capitalist China of the first year of the twenty-first century rests?

One of the first scenes in the film is of a group of women workers gathered in a hut, each taking a turn at singing a song of their choice. What they all have in common is that they can only remember the first few verses. Forgetting is internal to these *Feux sauvages*. It is the essential element of Chinese capitalism.

If the workers sitting on the steps have only known post-communist China, others, the pensioners,

have lived through the Maoist period. These retirees find themselves in a former cultural venue abandoned to decay by the state and revived thanks to the initiative of a man who finds his interest in taking his share of the earnings of the opera singers who entertain the retirees. The profit comes from a banknote taken out of the pensioners' pockets when one of the singers takes up the collection. So we see **a China where everyone has to fend for themselves to subsist as best they can**. Among the remains of the abandoned hall, the owner has unearthed an old portrait of Mao, burnt on its edges. The pensioners object to its restoration and ask to display it as it is on the wall behind the singers' stage. Withdrawn into themselves, these pensioners can relive through memory their own history as workers in Communist China. As they themselves were the actors, **lack acts as a dynamic element here**. In all the sequences, money circulates from hand to hand, and always under the table, as in this gambling joint where the card players have all their banknotes under the mat.

Qiao gives in neither on her love nor on her determination not to join in her lover's dubious schemes. Unaware of Bin's whereabouts, she searches for him tirelessly for many years, from the north to the south of China. This search is not that of a woman who wants to win back her man, but that of a woman in love who seeks to trace with Bin the path of a love free of all corruption and capable of mutually enriching their lives. In this sense, the scene in which the two of them meet in a bus-caravan that seems to be their home is exemplary. Qiao, wanting to get away from Bin, moves towards the door to get out, but Bin violently pushes her back towards the bench. Qiao withdraws for a moment, but then stands up again to go to the door, only to be pushed back towards the bench by Bin. Another attempt, another retreat and so on, until Bin finally lets her go. What we're seeing here may give the impression of a banal couple's scene, but what we need to see is Qiao's multiple attempts to get out and her many withdrawals from the bench. Qiao's withdrawal into herself should be seen in parallel with the exhausted, withdrawn workers. **Her exit is a real opening, and should be seen as a victory** for Qiao. Not a victory over Bin, but a victory **over herself**, in that Qiao refuses to ally herself with the corrupt China of which Bin would like to be one of the profiteering agents. Qiao, unlike Bin, "*stands upright on the ground*". Standing upright, she frees herself from the inward-looking attitude that enslaves her to the dominant. This **deliverance** is a real unfolding of this inward-looking attitude. It is through these folds and unfolds that Jia Zangke shows us what the eye alone cannot see, but only the idea can present.

The same is true in Northern China, where, in 2011, Qiao takes us on a quest to find Bin, and where the workers are paid by mafia-style contractors. Like gang leaders, these contractors refer to their workers as "*our men*", as they demolish the shores of the beautiful banks of the Yangtze River to build the Three Gorges Dam, a project that is as devastated by the demolition work as the faces of the group of workers seen in the opening sequences. Museums, historic sites, villages, the magnificence of the landscape - nothing escapes this savage capitalism, which excludes the people from any participation in decision-making. Qiao, who like a silent actress doesn't say a word, shows us through her eyes **a country totally ravaged** by this new China. Bin, whom Qiao continues to seek out, has himself become one of these mafia entrepreneurs. He works for a financier who abandons him to the police when he runs off with the cash.

2024, back in Southern China where Qiao, now a cashier in a department store, finds Bin taking his purchases out of his shopping cart. Both are marked by the passage of more than twenty years, but Bin is far more marked than Qiao. Ruined, lame and walking with the aid of a cane, Bin is desperate to join forces with young, wolf-toothed financiers investing in A.I. **The emptiness that underlies the lives of the Chinese people** at the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century is pathetically highlighted in a scene where Qiao, turning away from the face of her former lover, plunges her gaze into the emptiness of a dark, isolated street before tearfully returning to Bin's face. These tears are not shed over herself, but over a Bin who has destroyed himself by allying himself with China's destroyers.

This China of 2024, filmed digitally, shows images that are smoother and flatter than in the previous two-thirds. **This flatness reflects a country ravaged** by the domination of financial powers. New buildings rise from the ruins heaped upon the forgotten history of China and its Maoist period. Lost in the night of this defeated China, young people's only lights are the spotlights of dance parties.

Entering a shopping mall, Qiao is greeted by a robot, who asks her what she would like to please her. This A.I. presence has a triple effect on the company: the staff, replaced by robots; the possibility of a ubiquitous gaze for both bosses and customers, who, seen through the robot's eye, lose their reality. **The fires of unbridled capitalism have burnt away every trace of the Chinese people's emancipatory creativity**, leaving only the emptiness of an a-substantial world capable of enriching a minority of barbarians.

The last images of the film return to the diagonal of the stone statue of the rocket cosmonaut, oriented towards the conquest of the Universe. This image is followed by Jia Zanke's final injunction to "*stand straight on the ground*". How else are we to understand this injunction if not as a diagonal quite different from that of the monument, and which implies living in relation to the history of China and its Maoist period. **Qiao**, who was not involved in any corruption, **stood upright on the ground**. So, by retying one of Bin's laces, which keeps untying and which he himself is unable to untie, she traces another diagonal. This shoelace-tying scene is paradigmatic of Qiao's ability to **reconnect with a China other** than that of the financial powers. She has the strength and courage to escape the closed totality of men bent under the domination of Capital.

Zangke's accordion film folds and unfolds its bellows for a soundtrack in which "*standing upright on the ground*" is the keynote.

The lack (the missing words of the workers, or the missing parts of Mao's portrait) has a double face: one, as an effect, is that of the suffering of a people; the other, as a dynamic consequence, is that of an open door. The other, as a dynamic consequence, is that of an **open door**, through which the desire to break out of this inward-looking stance and unfold a policy capable of extinguishing the wildfires of a minority of arsonists can be engulfed.

Just as desire has two sides, Qiao is **two characters in one**. The first is the woman involved in the narrative, the second is the instrumentalist in this accordion film. By being this instrumentalist, Qiao lets us hear the diagonal score of folds and unfolds. Through this score, the workers gathered in the hut could take up the song of a people who have not forgotten the rest of the verses of a history to be taken up again and reinvented on the basis of its past greatness.

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ÉRIC BRUNIER: *SEEING ACCORDING TO THE APOCALYPSE*

An exhibition



From February 4 to June 8, 2025 at the Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand - Quai François Mauriac, 75013.Paris

<https://www.bnf.fr/fr/agenda/apocalypse>

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An exhibition such as *Apocalypse. Hier et aujourd'hui (Apocalypse. Yesterday and Today)* is bound to interest the communist, because it speaks of today from the perspective of the past, putting apocalyptic discourse at a distance and thus creating the conditions for hope to be heard. That's on paper.

The term and the theme

As the press release indicates, the term **apocalypse** is ambivalent. Today, it is associated with catastrophes, essentially as an adjective - an *apocalyptic* day or event - whereas its etymology means *unveiling, revelation*. This is the meaning given to it by John when he wrote *The Apocalypse*, speaking of a veil being lifted over a new world. And it is to this origin and the history of this term, in the medieval as well as the modern and contemporary imagination, that the exhibition wishes to return. It is to this theme, essentially pictorial via illuminations and tapestries, then engraving and painting, that the exhibition is dedicated. While **the term** "revelation" means *revelation, prophecy or clairvoyance*, what does **the theme** say?

Here, we need to distinguish between what Jean writes, how it can be interpreted, what the artists do with it in this or that work, and what the exhibition "says".

The exhibition features works, most of them medieval, that illustrate John's text. Images, as tradition dictates, help tell the story. Through these works, **the etymological meaning of** the word is illustrated:

revelation, not *tragic end*. Except that this revelation of a new world is full of noise and fury, with good and evil battling it out. What's more, by including works from the modern and contemporary periods in this medieval narrative, the meaning of the revelation is lost. In the exhibition, the theme of the apocalypse tends to merge with an apocalyptic discourse on the present.

For, when artists take up the theme of the apocalypse and John's text, they multiply fantastic images, in a vocabulary that is both magnificent and naïve for the Middle Ages (I'll come back to this later), through the struggle between formlessness and the figure for modernity, and through "clichés" for the contemporary period. I left the exhibition thinking that medieval art is a treasure trove compared to the art of our time, because it manages to detach the revelation of a new world from its procession of deluges, monstrous beasts and calamities.

John writes in his text of what he has "seen", the victory of good over evil revealed to him, not as it will take place in an uncertain future, but as it has already taken place. This victory was accomplished in Christ's resurrection on Holy Saturday. We must assume that the battle John describes is the one Jesus fought between Friday evening, when he was locked in the tomb, and Sunday morning, when he rose from the dead. Christ appeared to John and said, "*Begin, then, to write what you have seen and what is and what is to come after.*"¹ John is a prophet, not because he predicts the future, but because he tells of the victory that *has taken place*. *Revelation* ends thus: "*The breath and the bride say, 'Come.' He who hears, let him say, 'Come.' Let the thirsty come; he who wills, let him take the water of life, freely.*" (21.17). I hear this "Come" as a "*Participate!*" "*Take your share in the victory!*" and not as what happens. "*Come, now come to the victory that is here!*"²

The exhibition says nothing about this reading. Nor does it present any paleo-Christian works (apart from the oldest manuscript of the *Apocalypse*). On the contrary, it blurs the announcement of the end of times and the promise of a new world, rendering it illegible. We need to fight against this blurring, and to do so we need to bring out the victories of the past and extend them.

Redoing the exhibition

Three ideas emerge from the exhibition itself, but which it was unable (or unwilling) to address. The first is that of a fairly clear historical sequence, from which the entire classical age is absent. The second revolves around the figure of the angel. And the third revolves around the question of clairvoyance.

Depicting the *Apocalypse* through history

While not organized historically (apart from a final, uniquely contemporary section entitled "*The Day After*"), the exhibition clearly shows historical variations in the way John's text is depicted.

The first phase is the medieval period, which extends all the way back to Dürer. This period is marked by illustrative cycles, as seen, for example, in the hangings in Angers (a few "pieces" of which are presented here) and, of course, in medieval illuminated manuscripts. What's striking here, however, is the closed, autonomous nature of the illustrations: even though they take up pieces of text, the pages are organized in such a way as to be sufficient in themselves. The bright, decorative flat tints have the effect of locating the figures on the page alone, not in the world. The battle between good and evil witnessed by John takes place in a world normalized only by the appearance of the figures, their relationships and their presence here on the page or tapestry (see Fig.1 & 2). This relative autonomy of the page from the text allows for the invention of new, monstrous and fanciful figures.

¹ Jean, *Dévoilement (Apocalypse)*, 1-19, translation by Brault and Prévost, Paris, Bayard.

² In his book *L'Apocalypse maintenant* (Paris, Seuil, 1984), E. Corsini argues that this reading of John's text was abandoned by Christians from the 4th century onwards, i.e. from the conversion of Emperor Constantine. From this point onwards, the eschatological reading became hegemonic: the end would be in front of the Christians who were waiting for it.



Fig.1 Beatus de Saint Sever, f108v-109r, circa 1060 (© Bnf)



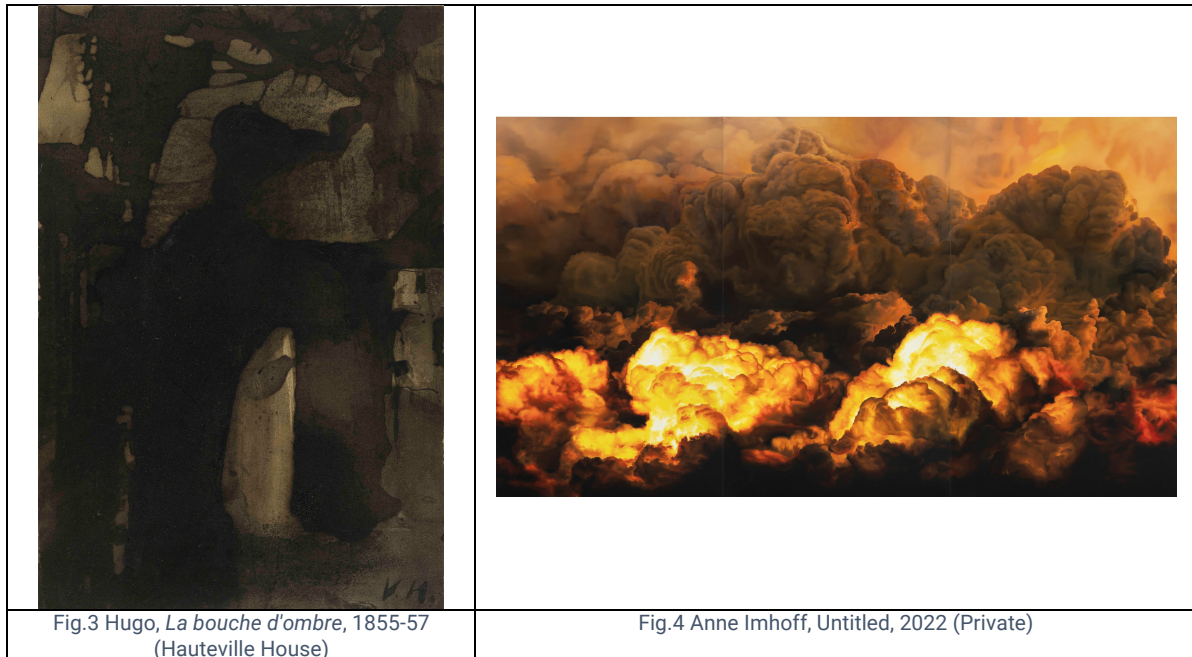
Fig.2 Liber Floridus, La bête de l'Apocalypse, f39, after 1275 (© Bnf)

The second moment is from Romanticism to Modernism (before the Second World War), from Romanticism to Surrealism. What defines this moment is the struggle within painting or drawing between formlessness and the figure. Hugo (Fig.3) and Michaux are emblems of this. We need to understand that the apocalypse, the revelation - albeit in part far removed from John's text - is the outcome of an internal struggle within the work, of which we have traces. The figure then emerges, almost as a fragment of this struggle in the material of the ink. These works are about materializing the supernatural. This term should be understood in the way Heine and Baudelaire used it: what is supernatural is not the image before our eyes, but the power it gives the imagination to be carried beyond itself. Supernatural is the desire that the work arouses.

The third moment is ours. It is characterized by art's willingness to intervene, either in its own field or in fields that are not its own. Its capacity for invention is much less in the modern period. I distinguish two types of intervention.

- 1) One that is directed towards the **field of art** and gives it an institutional value. Kiki Smith's works, for example, take up the emblems of the Middle Ages (angels' wings, shooting stars, the eagle) and give them a technical treatment: a return to craft techniques such as tapestry and goldsmithing (Fig.8). The theme of the Apocalypse is simply a means of asserting the artisanal nature of the art. This is clearly an intervention in the world of contemporary art, normalized by Duchamp's rejection of the "handmade", a kind of dual that reinforces institutionalization.
- 2) The second approach is more directly linked to **ecological and climatic issues**. It involves using art to intervene in a debate by reducing it to an image, in other words, by devitalizing it. Imhoff's work (Fig.4) is a symptom of this. These clouds of catastrophe are anonymous, unsituated. They float and threaten, obscuring any real struggle. We are living in a time when institutions are no longer bound by the principles that gave rise to them.

So we're a long way from the Apocalypse. It has become nothing more than a fantastic image that threatens and perhaps frightens us. And yet, as the Middle Ages and Romanticism showed, it has the capacity to mobilize us creatively.



The angel

In the images taken from the *Apocalypse*, the angel's wings are spread and colored. Even if the body is in profile, the wings open the angel to the surface of the page or fabric, creating the feeling of flight (Fig.5). The man with open angel wings will not fall: the angel has become the man. This indicates that, although earthly, man has the ability to soar.

Later, in paintings and engravings, as well as in Baudelaire's poetry, the angel is often portrayed as the abandoned one who has fallen into disaster, whose very wings entangle him. He is **a figure of renunciation**. In contrast, the angel of the *Apocalypse* is a fighter, as is John in G. Moreau's watercolor, and as is the eagle (Fig.6).

Where is my angel today? He's no longer a Christian angel. In a world without God, *Revelation* reveals that **the angel is on earth**, that his presence renders all prayer vain, and that the emanations of his enchanted body arouse desire.³

The angel is the double figure of the tireless fighter, whose prostrate body reflects the light of a deprived world. We need to see the angel inhabited by desire, whose feathers have the incarnation of flesh and flutter in the wind. We must see the angel, wandering among humanity and capable of flight.

³ "But from you I implore, angel, only your prayers, // Angel full of happiness, joy and lights!" Baudelaire, "Reversibilité", *Les Fleurs du mal*, 1865. Baudelaire's prayers to the angel are not addressed to God, but to himself: they attest to the reversibility of desire.



Fig.5 Angel (fragment), 1373-87 (© Musée d'Angers)



Fig.6 G. Moreau, Saint John of the Apocalypse, 1896 (© Musée G. Moreau)

But if modernity has been able to find the means for a new mediation where matter and ideas mingle, where testimony leads to action, the latter seems to have been exhausted, institutionalized. On the one hand, materialism is fossilizing and becoming too heavy, and on the other, forms are evanescent ghosts. The world's heavy cloak must be fractured for unexpected angels to emerge.

Clairvoyance

The exhibition begins with the eye, as Jean bears witness to what he has seen. But to see here, as with Rimbaud, **is to be clairvoyant**. In some works from the Middle Ages, the eye appears on the feathers of the eagle, Jean's animal emblem, almost clothed in the finery of a peacock. I see this eye as a sensitivity to surfaces and an invitation to explore them, to let the eye move. But this eye is also capable of visions, as in the engravings of Goya's *Disasters of War* (Fig.7). It's not just a question of documenting. You need to have observed to show and situate. You also need to know how to show by selection, so that the imagination can work. In this way, the eye becomes a clairvoyant, an intermediary between what exists and what is possible, while the imagination knows how to decipher and interpret reality. In this way, we can see that the document, like some of Brassai's abstract photographs, can also be faithful to the revelation, that reality produces hieroglyphs that the eye can capture, that intelligence can analyze.

Art today seems to have abandoned this interest in the sensitive eye, to have deserted **confidence in the** imagination. Its invention is sometimes limited to displacing techniques (Fig.8). The document no longer represents anything other than its materiality. A shooting star shines because it's shiny silver.

John's text, as I have interpreted it, takes us beyond the end. It makes the present and the earth the site of a struggle not to bring about a future, but to extend happiness to all. When art becomes attached to this text, its inventions must be as unheard-of as John's visions. To achieve this, the art of our time must rediscover the path of an imagination that is boundless and correlated with reality, an imagination that is on the lookout for what is dawning and begging to be revealed.



Fig.7 Goya, *What courage, The Disasters of War*, 1810-15 (© INHA)



Fig.8 Kiki Smith, *Shooting star*, 2015 (Private)

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[THINGS READ]

FRANCIS ANCLOIS: *TOWARDS THE ECOLOGY OF WAR* (P. CHARBONNIER)

Pierre Charbonnier:

Vers l'écologie de guerre (Une histoire environnementale de la paix) (La Découverte, 2024)



The strange hypothesis underlying this book is that the only thing more dangerous than war for nature and climate is peace. We are the heirs of an intellectual and political history that has constantly repeated the axiom that creating the conditions for peace between men requires exploiting nature, exchanging resources and providing sufficient prosperity for all. In this logic, for jealousy, conflict and the desire for war to disappear, it was first necessary to fight against the scarcity of natural resources. We also needed a universal language for mankind, which would be the language of science, technology and development.

These ideas, which can be traced back to the 18th century, found a striking expression in the mid-20th century. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the development of fossil fuel infrastructures was coupled with a pacifist and universalist discourse designed to undermine the causes of war by unleashing productivity. Thus, peace, or the balance of great powers established by the United States, is in large part a gift of fossils, particularly oil.

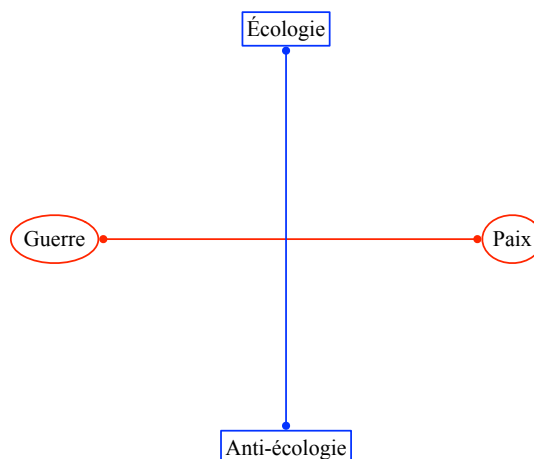
In the 21st century, this paradigm has become obsolete, as we must both guarantee peace and security and integrate planetary limits: in other words, learn to make peace without destroying the planet. It is in this context that the possibility of the ecology of war emerges, according to which sustainability and security must now be aligned to steer us towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This book is an appeal to ecologists to learn to speak the language of geopolitics.

Let's spare ourselves a detailed account of a work that is sometimes difficult to grasp, and content ourselves with a very brief note 1) tracing a **diagonal** interpreting its main thesis: "the only thing more dangerous than war for nature and the climate is peace", and 2) leading to a **question**.

Diagonal

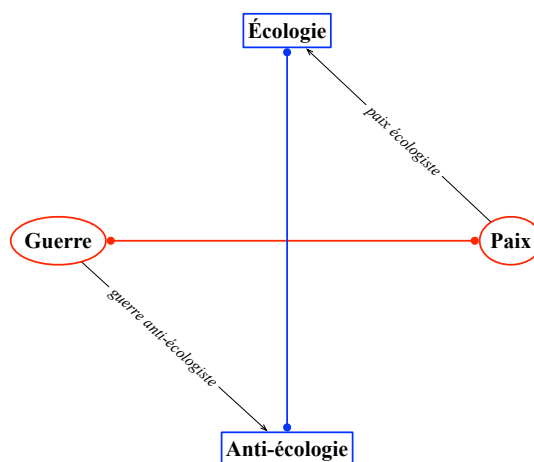
The point of the book's thesis can be restated as follows: there are two (strong or antagonistic) contradictions, on the one hand between **war** and **peace**, and on the other between **ecology** and **anti-ecology**.

Let's formalize the first horizontally and the second vertically so that their orthogonality represents their non-alignment.



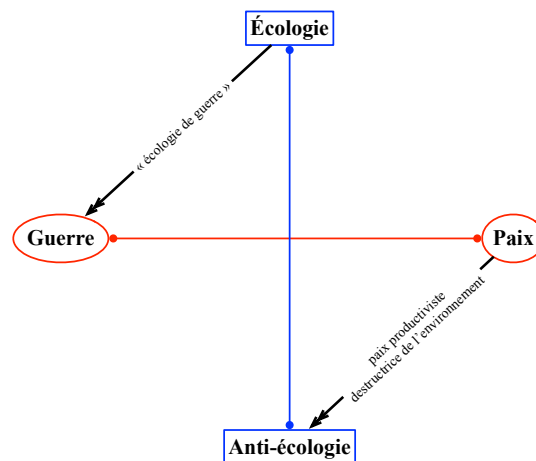
The usual view (according to the author) is then to oppose two sides:

- the "good" side, which correlates peace and ecology, with peace promoting ecology: **peace** → **ecology** ;
- the "bad", which correlates war and anti-ecology, with war leading to anti-ecological destruction: **war** → **anti-ecology**.



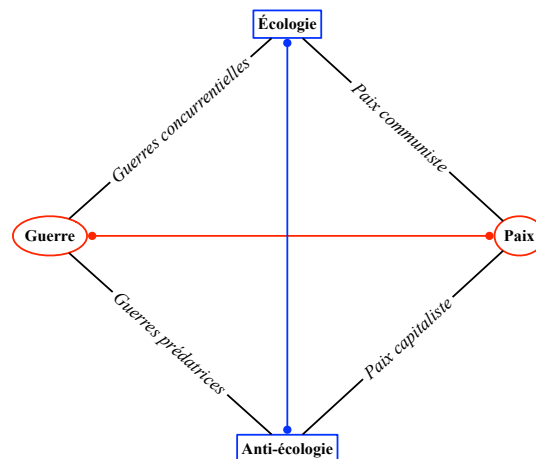
For Charbonnier, the characterization of the world since 2020 is that the real opposition is now between the other two sides of the quadrilateral:

- the side that acknowledges that productivist peace has led to ecological destruction: **peace** → **anti-ecology** ;
- the opposite side, where the ecological cause becomes mobilized by states for the sake of war (particularly trade war, with European states protesting against unfair competition from products from countries with no environmental regulations, such as those in Latin America), or what he calls *the ecology of war*: **ecology** → **war**.



Nothing to object to.

Let's simply note that the quadrilateral can inscribe (prescription more than description, which in truth divides each vertex: what does *peace* mean? what does *ecology* mean? etc.) **four types of political orientation** according to the following diagram:



Question

The more confusing point is: what political and activist conclusions (subjectively decided prescriptions, not just objectively induced consequences) does he draw from all this?

More specifically, what is meant by his denunciation of a "**war on climate**"¹, the principle of which seems as preposterous as the tartarinade "*war on Covid*" once declared by Macron?

As is only right and proper, it's a matter of formulating the antagonisms generated by the different environmental policies of states on five continents.

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¹ p. 259...

[POSITION STATEMENTS]

Sol V. STEINER: A JEWISH SINGULARITY...**A JEWISH SINGULARITY WITH NO TIES, NO RELIGION AND NO TERRITORY****Opening**

What we're talking about here is **the possibility of a Jewish singularity** stripped of all connection with Zionism and Judaism, i.e. a Jewish singularity freed from all religion, all belonging to a community and all messianic, national or cultural particularity. A Jewish singularity for what it is. **A declaration.** Like W. Jankélévitch's declaration of love: "*I love you. Because.*"

I'm Jewish because I think I am. Almost a tautology. A Jewish name among the multitude of Jewish names and the history that goes with that multitude. A concept in situation. In process.

1. Speak for yourself

On this point, it is only possible to speak in his name. And of its place. For me, that of Europe, a paradoxical site where the history of the destruction of twentieth-century European Jewry, the tradition of great intellectuals and thinkers, most of them Jewish, from Spinoza to Marx via Kafka and Freud, and communist emancipation for revolutionary Jews (from Eastern Europe) are intertwined. A complex and brilliant trilogy.

Of these great thinkers, *there is something, to be remembered, that exists in front of them*: the Yiddish language for Kafka in his *Letters to My Father*; Spinoza's "herem", the violent excommunication of his community; Freud's declaration as a Jew in a conversation with Gilles de la Tourette in Paris, neither a religious man nor a believer, who throughout his life and work would try to define, as he put it, "*that thing which has hitherto remained inaccessible to any analysis, which is the peculiarity of the Jew*".

What these Jewish thinkers had in common was not thinking as Jews. There was no meta noun, **no capitalization of the word Jewish**. As if their Jewish singularity was precisely that: **a singular universal**.

- Here, the universalism of thought and concept in a singular history assumed, even from the point of its rejection like that of Spinoza.
- There, a universal of emancipation in the sense that their works translated it into their respective fields.

Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (whose declared aim was to destroy the prejudices of theologians that prevent philosophizing, and to introduce an immanent reading of the Bible) produced an unprecedented scandal in the Republic of Letters, not least because of its biblical exegesis. It's hard to imagine the ire and fury this work unleashed in its day.

Leibnitz considered it "*an intolerably licentious book*" written by "*an arrogant individual*".

Death threats and assassination attempts. Only Spinoza's coat was torn by the blade of a dagger.

As for the discovery of Freudian psychoanalysis and the role of the spoken word in the cure, it is still today the object of suspicion and mistrust, even of the desire to cancel it out by the cognitive sciences. Tests are reassuring. They tick boxes. It's objectivism. Speaking out is dangerous. A Subject can emerge.

2. A triple heritage

"Our heritage is not preceded by a will. René Char

Inheritance is seen here as a **triple transmission**:

- a legacy of belief in **the power of the concept and the idea** - Spinoza again: *"the conatus or persevering in being"*;
- legacy of a history of **exile**, work on **the gap and emptiness**, contingent existential conditions, openness to the world, infinite process to the Other¹ ;
- political legacy of **struggles for emancipation** and revolutionary internationalism

Language symbolism: Yiddish, the language of the diasporic Jew, of whom Begin, Israel's prime minister, rightly said that with this language he could command neither army nor state. Notions absent from exilic Jewry.

It's easy to understand why so many of these Jews turned to Marxism: firstly, out of a universal thirst for justice, including justice for the Palestinians against occupying colonialism; and secondly - let's remind those with short memories - because Marxism advocated, in its *Communist Manifesto*, the demise of the State and the International. Notions familiar to the historical Jew.

History, politics and concept articulate this precious heritage of a Jewish singularity for what it is. **A Jewishness without attributes**. Without reference other than its creations, its intellectual and political commitments situated in a moment of history.

This heritage was hijacked, stolen and massacred by the Western world after the Second World War. The creation of the State of Israel was the embodiment of this spoliation, the catastrophic consequences of which we can now measure on a global scale: the disappearance and erasure of the notion of the universal in favor of identities of all ; the claim of identity to be a "Jewish state" and to derive from this claim incessant privileges, including the unlimited war with the Palestinians; the misappropriation of the truth of anti-Semitism: *any anti-Zionist word is anti-Semitic*, i.e. any word in favor of justice and equality with the Palestinians. The conclusion is clear: any introduction of predicates of identity or community into the ideological, political and state sphere exposes us to the worst, whatever the reasons.

Any Jewish singularity outside Zionism is attacked and branded anti-Semitic. A long time ago, when I was distributing leaflets on the forecourt of Jussieu University for a secular and democratic Palestine, I replied to young members of the *Jewish Defense League*, an extreme right-wing Zionist organization, calling me a *"fifth column, a traitor, worse than the Arabs"*, that any anti-Semitic insult uttered by one of their number was an honor for me, the gesture of the raised middle finger added to the word. And it's still true.

Today, the crisis of Zionism opened up by October 7, 2023, and the existence of another possible path, a country for Palestine-Israel, calls for the promotion of a Jewish singularity stripped of any link with the Israeli state, any assimilation between Jew and Israeli, any confusion between Judaism and Jewishness. This **Jewish singularity of the Diaspora** supports the voice of emancipation from within.

■

We'll be looking at the sacralization of the word *Jew*, correlated with that of *Victim*, a major element of the Zionist narrative that legitimizes and gives source to the militant return of Judaism, against the "political vision of the world" of Benny Lévy and the "new philosophers" who have largely fuelled the confusion between Jewishness and Judaism, and between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism²

It's a question of the history of thought and the universal, re-establishing the definition of anti-Semitism, of the Jewish word with that of communism, if not of reinventing both in a new articulation.

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¹ I dealt with this point in the second forum on *Zionism in question*.

² I also dealt with this disconnect between Jew and Israeli in the same second column.

[STUDIES]

ALAIN RALLET: *THE CITY/COUNTRYSIDE*

RELATIONSHIP: ITS FOUNDATIONS AND CURRENT ISSUES

Introduction :

The contradiction between town and country has always been a very important element in Marxist analysis and communist politics.

It was a central element in the formulation of historical materialism by Marx and Engels [M&E thereafter] in *The German Ideology* (1844) [AI thereafter].

Communist politics, since the need to reduce the difference between town and country was explicitly stated as one of the conditions for the advent of an egalitarian society, and enshrined as such in the *Manifesto* (1848).

At the same time, the town/country contradiction is dissonant in that it does not represent or oppose classes or political subjects as such. If we take it literally, it is first and foremost a spatial differentiation, a form of spatial organization.

How does the organization of space play a role in revolutionary politics, other than as a mere backdrop against which human actions are projected? What role does it play in its own right? What is its nature? Why do we want to reduce this differentiation, and how? What does it mean today?

1

The first part of the article looks at how M&E introduce and install it in their formulation of historical materialism. The opposition between town and country is the way in which social differentiation is materially rooted in space and, in so doing, plays in turn on the consciousness of being in this world and on subjectivity.

Their argument can be broken down into two parts.

- **The first stage organically links the town/country relationship to the division of labor.** This link is the materialist foundation of the town/country relationship as a singular social construction: that of inhabiting space. Hence, the difference between town and country cannot be reduced without touching on the division of labor.
- **The second stage makes both types of place - town and country - the site of class formation,** and thus of a class struggle based on the division of labor that initially underpins the town/country relationship. The transition from division of labor to class is achieved by **linking the division of labor to forms of property.** The result is a class interpretation of the town/country relationship.

This opens the door to **a classist approach to the town/country contradiction**, and ultimately to a progressive erasure of the singularity of this relationship in the construction of a communist policy. The search for an alliance between workers and peasants tended to overlay the town/country relationship to the point of taking up all its space. Workers are identified with the city and peasants with the countryside, each class having its own economic base (industry for the city, agriculture for the countryside).

The town/country relationship can be read as a class relationship in search of alliances (workers/peasants) for the conquest of power.

This classist reading tends more to reconcile the difference between town and country than to reduce it. The town/country relationship in fact refers to a class heterogeneity that is inherently difficult to reduce since it refers to distinct interests that alliance strategies aim to mobilize rather than converge.

2

The second part proposes a change of foot.

It consists in approaching the difference between town and country from what it is: **a differential relationship to space, to the way of inhabiting it** according to the position occupied in the social relations of production. Communist policy then seeks to produce a form of spatial organization that is **a lever** for transforming these relations.

This is followed by a discussion of **the current state of** the town/country relationship and the prospects it opens up.

Why the town/country contradiction? What is its status and role?

M&E were quick to place the town/country relationship at the heart of the development of their materialist approach to history, both in the AI and in the *Gundrisse* (1857). Their developments do not take the form of a finished theory, but of elements taken from the study of historical sequences, the place of town and country in each sequence being identified by comparison.

Their aim is to **link three terms**: the town/country relationship, the division of labor, class contradictions and hence class struggle.

We'll start with the relationship between the first two terms, then introduce that between the last two.

Spatial division (town/country) as the first form of division of labor

Their thesis is well known: the separation of town and country is the first great division of labor.

The town/country relationship is thus an integral part of the division of labor. It appears with it, and is supposed to disappear with it.

The division of labor, of which the town/country relationship is one form, even the first, is the **material basis** of social division into interest groups. Both objectively and subjectively.

The division of labor as a source of conflicting interests and different representations of the world

On the one hand, the division of labor distributes individuals among different interest groups. Depending on their position in the social division of labor, they do not share the same interests.

On the other hand, they don't have the same vision of the world.

"This subordination of the individual to the division of labor makes one an urban animal and the other a rural animal, both equally narrow-minded, and gives rise to a new opposition of interests between the two parties every day" (IA, p 81).

The division of labor thus **generates alienation**: by separating town and country, it projects urban and rural dwellers into limited representations of themselves, others and the world. That's why we need to reduce it, not just because it creates different interests, but because it revives these interests based on different representations of the world - **the urban** versus **the rural**.

This shows that the alienation generated by the division of labor is not simply the product of the social positions occupied by individuals.

Let's take the example of the **division of labor between manual and intellectual work**, and make the (schoolboy) hypothesis of individuals, some performing manual tasks, others intellectual tasks, but occupying the same hierarchical position in the factory. The opposing representations generated by the division between manual and intellectual work (contempt for manual workers by intellectuals, and vice versa) create a conflictual basis between groups of individuals, and exert pressure for task differentiation/hierarchization. Hence the need to mix manual and intellectual work, because in this division of labor, there's something that inherently recreates social differentiation of a hierarchical nature, i.e. domination.

The same mechanism exists for that other form of division of labor, the relationship between town and country. Imagine a city worker and a country worker, a worker from a metropolis and a worker from a medium-sized town. They don't have the same representation of the world.

The geographical dimensions (concentration/dispersion) of the town/country divide

This raises a question: what is it about the separation between town and country that cannot be attributed solely or exclusively to differences in social position, and what are the specific characteristics of spatial differentiation that influence representations, factors of alienation?

In IA, immediately after writing that the separation of town and country is the first form of division of labor, M&E tell us that *"the opposition of town and country makes its appearance with the passage from barbarism to civilization, from tribal organization to the state, from provincialism to the nation"* (IA, 82).

What explains this civilizational emancipation when moving from the countryside to the city? Quote:

"The city is the concentration of population, instruments of production, capital, pleasures and needs, while the countryside highlights the opposite, isolation and scattering" (IA, 82).

Two opposing geographical characteristics are at the heart of the town/country relationship: **the town is the place of concentration, the countryside the place of scattering and isolation**. Such is the spatial differentiation that explains the civilizational role of the city (a place of human sociability, of urbanity) versus the narrow, limited horizon of the peasant, defined by his relationship with nature, attached to the soil, enclosed in his individual production process, isolated from one another.

The ambivalence of the town/country relationship in the Marxist tradition

This differentiation, which is initially geographical in nature, has led to an ambivalent vision of the town/country relationship in M&E and, beyond, in the Marxist tradition.

On the one **hand, the emancipatory role of cities** as places of social relations, collective production, science and technology, the arts, and everything else that has lifted humanity out of barbaric times.

On the other, **the countryside and its peasants were assigned to dispersion, submission and lack of culture**. An assignment that was certainly broken periodically by the existence of great revolutionary impulses in the countryside, but which were inevitably defeated by their fragmentation, their lack of organization, and their inability to achieve strategic victories over their class enemies .¹

"The great uprisings of the Middle Ages all originated in the countryside, but they were also doomed to failure because of the scattered nature of the peasants and their consequent lack of culture" (M&E, IA, 86).

Engels' *Peasants' War* (1850) illustrates this **ambivalence**, hailing the peasant uprisings in Germany in the early 16th century as a genuine revolutionary movement, but incapable of organizing a political bloc capable of undermining that of the princes, nobility and bourgeoisie. So much so, in fact, that their movements were wiped out despite having armed forces ten times greater than those of the opposing bloc.

There is, of course, **an objective basis** for this hierarchical opposition between town and country (the superiority of the urban concentration of population over the isolation and scattering of peasants in the countryside) and for the peasant political incapacity that follows from it. But this very real basis has fed into a highly devalued representation of peasants and the countryside, even in revolutionary political experiments, and in the attitudes and positions taken by communist parties towards the peasantry, its actual role in the revolution and its place in the building of socialism.

This representation is fuelled by the fact **that, from the outset, the separation of town and country was carried out under the auspices of civilization and barbarism** (the state of nature, animality). These markers have deeply imbued representations of the countryside and peasants in revolutionary politics.

¹ Just as, on the other hand, Engels attenuated the civilizational significance of the city by emphasizing the sordid aspects of the working-class urban concentrations that served as the backdrop to industrial capitalism in the 19th century.

The case of the Russian Revolution

Such was the case with the Russian Revolution. There was certainly an objective basis for the devaluation of peasants, but nothing that politics could transform. The Bolsheviks had very little presence in the countryside, even though the majority of Russia was made up of peasants. **The 1917 revolution was an urban revolution.**

On his return from exile in 1917, Lenin attempted to introduce the peasant question into the Bolshevik program (*April Theses*). He supported the major peasant land seizure movement of autumn 17, following the collapse of the big landowners' power, while the Russian socialist elite cried anarchy.

But these attempts were interrupted in 1918 by a coercive policy of grain requisitioning, made necessary by the famine following the war with Germany and the civil war. The imposition of supplies from the cities to the countryside led to a break with the peasantry.

But beyond these historical contingencies, **the devaluing representation of the countryside** played its own role in the chronic failure of the Bolsheviks to tackle the town/country contradiction and deal with the peasant question in an emancipatory way.

In his book *Lenin, the Peasants and Taylor* (Seuil, 1976), Robert Linhart recalls the anti-peasant hatred among intellectuals and city dwellers². He devotes an entire chapter (Chapter 3: *Hatred*) to this hostility to the peasantry, which he attributes to an atavistic fear of Russia's "immense peasant mystery", coming from afar and leaving a lasting impression on Party and State cadres. "Civilization" versus "barbarism".

Mao's report on the Hunan peasant movement

It wasn't until Mao's **Report on the Hunan Survey of the Peasant Movement** (March 1927) that the anti-peasant ideology was reversed in the revolutionary political movement³. This inversion was the result of Mao's own meticulous investigation of the peasant union movement in Hunan. As he would later say, he got off his horse and conducted the survey.

*"I have seen and heard many astonishing things of which I had never been aware until now... We must, as quickly as possible, put an end to all talk against the peasant movement and correct the erroneous measures taken by the revolutionary authorities with regard to this movement. Only in this way can we contribute to the future development of the revolution."*⁴

The Hunan Survey Report does not include the relationship between town and country, as it focuses on the revolutionary impetus in the countryside and what this opens up as political prospects for a China populated by 90% peasants. He mentions the town/country relationship only once, to indicate the political legitimacy of the needs expressed in the countryside. It's on the subject of education and schools:

*"It was only in 1925, after spending six months in the countryside - I was already a Communist and had adopted the Marxist point of view - that I realized I'd been mistaken and that the peasants were right. In rural elementary school, the textbooks we were using were entirely inspired by themes specific to the city and didn't meet the needs of the countryside."*⁵

Conclusion

The division of labor between town and country not only induces differences of interest between social groups, which are the basis for establishing or restoring relationships of domination and exploitation between town and country, but also representations of the world, and firmly rooted

² Gorky in *The Peasants* (1922): "The peasant leaves the confines of the village, looks at the emptiness around him and, some time later, feels that this emptiness has poured into his soul. Nowhere around are there any lasting traces of work and creation". Gorky had a particular grudge against the peasant masses who had defecated in the porcelain of the Tsars, a veritable barbaric attack on beauty and civilization. To be compared with the "excesses" of which the peasant movement in Hunan was accused in 1927, as Mao reminded us.

³ The report coincides with Mao's decision to base his revolutionary strategy on the encirclement of the cities by the countryside, following the failure of workers' uprisings in the cities in 1927, which followed the Marxist vulgate supported by Stalin and led to bloody massacres of Communists by Chiang Kai-shek's troops.

⁴ *Rapport sur l'enquête menée dans le Hunan à propos du mouvement paysan* (March 1927), Œuvres Choisies de Mao-Tse-Toung, Tome 1, Peking Edition, pp 21-22

⁵ Idem, p 56

ideologies that have powerful effects.

Town and country, division of labor and class

Up to now, we've been talking about the division of labor between town and country as the material basis for differences in interests and representations.

How do we move from town and country to class?

Classes: forms of property grafted onto the division of labor

For M&E, it's the **superimposition of forms of ownership on the division of labor** that makes it possible to move from the division of labor to classes.

These are almost identical expressions, they note, because "*in the first, we state in relation to activity (the division of labor as a mode of distributing labor among groups of individuals) what we state in the second (forms of property) in relation to the product of this activity*" (IA, 46). We would also add in relation to land, instruments of production and labor power.

The formation of class contradictions (and hence classes) is based on a division of labor, onto which are grafted relations of appropriation. **Forms of ownership lock groups separated by the division of labor** into relations of domination and exploitation, constituting them into classes through a (class) struggle to maintain or destroy these relations.

In *L'Idéologie Allemande et les Gundrisse*, M&E propose a detailed history of the town/country relationship in different societies (Asian, ancient, feudal, capitalist), based on **this matrix of division of labor and forms of property**.

I'm not going to go into it in detail here, but simply give you a key to understanding this story that may be of use to us.

In pre-capitalist societies, weak division of labor and community ownership: the town/country relationship as a confrontation of orders

In Asian, ancient and feudal societies, there is **little division of labor**, coupled with **rather communal forms of ownership**.

There is indeed a division of labor between what urban and rural people do, but a fairly weak division of labor between urban people (e.g. in the days of the guilds) and rural people (the work of peasants being fairly similar). On the other hand, there was a very marked **political division into orders** (under feudalism, masters/companions/apprentices in the city, princes/nobility/clergy/peasants in the countryside).

The weak division of labor went hand in hand with communal forms of ownership in both the countryside and the city (communal ownership in antiquity, hierarchical land ownership based on suzerainty and vassalage in feudalism, associative ownership of craft guilds in cities). Unlike capitalism, these are **worlds of communities** (peasant communities, artisan communities).

Community property is obviously not the property of the entire people. It is **communal private property**, limited to the dominant group in society, against which stand those who have no access to it, and who happen to be the productives (slaves in the ancient system, serfs in the feudal system, journeymen and apprentices in cities). Communal private property serves as an instrument for extorting the surplus created by the productive. It thus creates a hierarchical structure in society, based on the opposition between the productive and non-productive classes. The property regime transforms the division of labor into a certain class structure of society.

Cities and countryside are thus each divided by class oppositions, but the communitarian form of property **coagulates** these oppositions in the form of a city **order** and a countryside order, because it means that "*it is collectively that citizens exercise their powers over their working slaves (and I would add feudatories over their serfs)*" (IA, 28). Class opposition is thus transmuted into a hierarchical order, albeit one that appears natural.

Cities and the countryside appear as opposing orders in the localized production and circulation of wealth. They are portrayed as subjects of history that confront each other through relationships of domination. Sometimes the city dominates the countryside politically, but is dominated economically

by it, as in Antiquity; sometimes the countryside dominates the city because it is not only the place of production (peasantry), but also the seat of power of the landed nobility, as in feudal times, before the cities emancipated themselves from this power (revolution of the communes and the urban bourgeoisie).

Aligning rural/urban relations with class relations in capitalism

These configurations explode with capitalism.

On the one hand, the division of labor is much more accentuated, being the basis of capital accumulation and the development of productive forces. On the other hand, private ownership (of land and the means of production) implodes urban and rural orders, establishing the reign of competition of all against all.

So there's still a town/country opposition, but class contradictions take precedence over **the orders** that constituted towns and countryside as active subjects of history.

Cities and countryside are completely redefined by the clashes and class alliances that take place there, to the point where it is no longer possible to distinguish spatial differentiation from its class content.

- **The city** is restructured around a strong socio-spatial segregation, in which the capital/labor relationship is clearly visible. In his work *The Situation of the Working Class in England* (1844), Engels painstakingly describes the urban chaos, both grandiose and terrible, created by the concentration of capital and working-class population in large cities. He would extend this analysis thirty years later in his *Question du Logement* (1872).
- **The countryside** is returned to its class content, i.e. to the distinctions between poor, middle-income and rich peasants, the fine analysis of which will delight Marxist intervention texts devoted to the peasant question, with the relationship to land ownership replacing the capital/labor relationship dividing the city.
- **The town/country relationship** is identified with its **economic content** (the relationship between industry and agriculture) and its **class expression** (the alliance between poor peasants and workers).

In economic terms, after an initial phase of rural industrialization due to the specific location of natural resources, but also to the freedom that nascent industry (factories, weaving) found to develop in the countryside away from the blockages operated by craft guilds in the towns, industry established itself in the towns, which provided it with capital, manpower and markets, or which grew up around it. Agriculture, on the other hand, was concentrated exclusively in the countryside, as urban forms of agriculture were gradually expelled from the cities due to the cost of land.

The industry/agriculture pair has thus come to squat on the town/country relationship. It's a form of division of labor through sectoral specialization.

The class expression of this sector-based division of labor is the distinction between workers and farmers.

The result is **a chain of relations** that resembles a nesting doll: the **town/country** relationship envelops the economic relationship between **industry and agriculture**, which in turn envelops the class relationship between **workers and peasants**. At the end of the chain is revolutionary politics, defined in terms of the strategy for conquering power: the need for a class alliance between workers and (poor) peasants, under the leadership of the proletariat.

Conclusion

In capitalism, the nature of the town/country contradiction changes. It no longer opposes urban and rural orders acting as historical subjects, but provides **the backdrop for** the class confrontations and alliances that constitute its content.

This is the basis of the classist approach to the town/country contradiction, an approach defined by a **transitive linkage** between the **spatial relationship** (town/country) and the **class relationship** (workers/peasants), via the **economic relationship between** industry and agriculture, a linkage that structures the power strategy of revolutionary politics.

The town/country contradiction is thus assigned its class content: the relationship between workers and peasants, with peasants themselves divided into poor peasants, average peasants and rich peasants.

From the town/country contradiction to the Communist policy of reducing differences

In this second part, I'd like to take another look at the town/country contradiction.

It mobilizes the same objective foundations of the town/country contradiction (division of labor and forms of property) as the classist approach, but takes them from a different point of view: that of the **political need to reduce the town/country differentiation**, and no longer the univocal one of a strategy of class alliances.

The need to reduce major differences

The need to reduce the differences between town and country appeared simultaneously with M&E's class analysis of the town/country contradiction, as it is its **emancipatory side, its positive affirmation**. Humanity can only emancipate itself by transforming the spatial division of labor that is the town/country relationship, and finding new socio-spatial forms for it.

"The abolition of the opposition between town and country is one of the first conditions of community." (M&E, IA, 83)

The town/country relationship is one of the three major differences, along with the separation of manual and intellectual labor, of execution and design, that a communist policy aims to reduce. **It is the very substance of the transformation of social relations of production.** Communism is thus closely associated with the reduction of these three major differences.⁶

In the *Manifesto*, M&E make it one of the ten measures of the communist revolution:

"Combination of agricultural and industrial work, measures to gradually eliminate antagonism between town and country" (The Communist Party Manifesto, p. 59, Peking ed.).

This was at the heart of the Chinese Communist Revolution, from the People's Communes to the Cultural Revolution, as the Communist revolution consisted not only in establishing a new property regime marked by the introduction of **whole-people (state) ownership** and **collective ownership** (cooperatives and then people's communes), but also in transforming the relations of production of which the division of labor is the material and ideological basis.

The maintenance of **these three major differences** is what explains the perpetuation of a struggle between the two paths, and the possibility of a restoration of capitalism after the conquest of power and the change in the property regime.

The last two pamphlets published in 1975 by Tchang Tchouen-kiao⁷ and Yao Wen-yuan⁸, just before their political elimination after Mao's death in 1976, are entirely devoted to this question. The factories are formally under workers' management," they write, "but not really, as they are run by elements separate from the masses and are subject to a division of labor similar to that of a capitalist enterprise (hierarchical system of labor remuneration, material incentives, strong division between manual and intellectual labor).

Two feedback effects

The following passage from Chiang Chouen-kiao condenses the argument. I quote it, underlining in italics the elements that seem important to me:

⁶ To this must be added the transformation of distribution relationships (distribution of the products of labor) according to Marx's formula in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875): "From each according to his abilities to each according to his needs".

⁷ De la dictature intégrale de la bourgeoisie, Peking Publishing House, 1975

⁸ On the social base of Lin Piao's anti-Party clique, Peking Publishing, 1975

"It would be wrong not to observe with due attention whether the problem of property has been solved effectively or only in appearance; it *would be wrong to neglect the feedback on property of the other two elements of the relations of production* - the relations between men and the form of distribution - *and the feedback of the superstructure on the economic infrastructure*, for these two elements and the superstructure play a decisive role under given conditions. *Politics is the concentrated expression of economics. The ideological and political line, and the class that exercises leadership, are the factors that determine which class these factories actually belong to.*"

I draw two propositions (the two **feedback** effects):

- The nature of the relations of production (the differences in which the division of labor is embodied) is what qualifies the political nature of the property regime, its reality beyond its legal nature.
- The superstructure (the political line) plays a decisive role in the economic infrastructure (the relations of production). Tell me what political direction (communist or not) you follow, and I'll tell you what infrastructure is implemented.

The result is a very different **interlocking** of the division of labor, forms of property and classes from that established by M&E in their construction of the historical materialism dissected in Part 1.

The result is a virtual **inversion of the sequence** of terms: politics (the decision to follow a communist or bourgeois orientation) dictates the nature of the relations of production in place (the division of labor), which themselves determine the political reality of the property regime. Whereas, in M&E's historical materialism, the property system articulated to the division of labor distributes individuals into classes opposing each other for the conquest of power identified with politics (class alliance).

The problem we've outlined doesn't only arise once power has been conquered. It is posed here and now, because it qualifies **the orientation of the politics** being pursued in the countryside, the towns and the factories: is the communist transformation of the relations of production, i.e. the reduction of the division of labor on which it is based, inscribed in militant thought and action seeking new forms of organization of space, i.e. of inhabiting the world?

For a political approach to the town/country relationship

We can think of the town/country contradiction as a **box** (containing the social relations of production, i.e. the major differences) with two entrances and two exits.

- Through **the classist entrance**, we enter the town/country box, hoping to borrow the doctrinally defined communist exit (not as a movement but as a two-stage program, socialism then communism, under the effect of an evolution in the property regime).
- **Communist political entry** means entering the box as a concrete moment in the transformation of social relations, which traces out class-based **political** oppositions, understood this time as divisions in Humanity's self-representation (around the justice/equality pair).
- When you enter through **the classist approach**, you can never be sure of finding an effective political way out towards the communist path. You can get stuck in the box, which eventually becomes a springboard for going back the way you came in: class differentiation, oppression and alienation, albeit in new forms (new bourgeoisie).
- Entering the box through **communist politics** forces us to find the concrete forms (the political inventions of the reduction of differences) of a "class political" exit, i.e. a militant expression of this politics. Unless we go back to where we came from, towards a purely ideological affirmation of the reduction of differences, i.e. towards communism as a social utopia.

I'll use three examples to illustrate how difficult it is for the classist approach to lead to a communist policy for dealing with the difference between town and country.

1. The Soviet experience in the 1920s

The Soviet example of the 1930s is well known. I've already touched on it above with Robert Linhart's book. We can also refer to Bettelheim's book on class struggles in the USSR between 1923 and 1930⁹. What makes this volume so interesting is that, informed by the Cultural Revolution, Bettelheim focuses his historical analysis on **the transformation of relations of production**.

Doctrinally considered from a classist angle, the town/country relationship was in fact dictated by economic considerations. First, **with the NEP**, which ensured urban supplies through concessions to wealthy peasants. Then came Stalin's decisions in **1929** (forced collectivization and the primacy of heavy industry), which definitively removed any prospect of a workers' and peasants' alliance and committed the country to a capitalist-style development model (massive rural exodus, formation of large cities around industrial complexes).

This policy has widened the gap between town and country, to the point where today we have two different countries: one poor and rural, steeped in secular stagnation and tradition, the other urban, buoyed by a dynamic middle class that is partly integrated into globalization, two countries with little in common.

2. UCF's work with poor farmers in the 1970s

The work carried out by the UCF among poor peasants in the 1970s¹⁰ is interesting because it offers a **mix of a classist approach and an approach based on communist politics** (real attention is paid in militant work to reducing the town/country contradiction) but, in my view, this is its limit, going back exclusively from the classist approach to the communist approach. The classist approach, under the influence of the Marxist tradition, is to enter the town/country relationship through the poor peasants.

However, as the book that reviews this work itself points out, the poor peasants who are in the process of immediate elimination do not have the political (and economic) capacity to carry out projects to overcome the town/country opposition, in particular a popular cooperative project based on direct exchanges between workers and inhabitants of a working-class district of the nearby town (UCFML 1977, pp. 210-215). The farmers only grow potatoes, whereas the needs of the local inhabitants are diversified, and the poor peasants are unable to take up market gardening and provide additional work. **An approach based on communist policy** (to carry out an urban-rural project on the grounds of the gradual erasing of the town/country opposition) would have made it possible to define a wider target group of farmers **politically mobilized** by the project and with the economic capacity to support it.

3. The opposition between the two paths in late 1950s China, the People's Communes

The last example is taken from the town/country relationship at the end of the 1950s in China, i.e. in 1958 at the time of the Great Leap Forward and the emergence of the People's Communes. This **was a pivotal period**, when two opposing conceptions emerged on the question of peasant political capacity, and therefore of the town/country relationship.¹¹

The **first** is the classist approach, which subordinates the role of the countryside and agriculture to the development of heavy industry and cities. Peasants are seen not as an emancipating force, but as a mass condemned to rural exodus under the spur of authoritarian land collectivization.

We recognize **the Soviet pattern** that inspired China's first five-year plan, with the city/countryside relationship thus instituted aiming to make the economy competitive with that of capitalist countries to the point of resembling it. The approach is **classist**, based as it is on the class analysis that (poor) peasants have no political capacity of their own.

This is the paradox of this approach: targeting revolutionary politics in the countryside at poor peasants, while in fact denying them any real political capacity. Their role is to support the working class, which has a political capacity of its own, and to fuel industrial development by increasing productivity in the countryside, all under the control of the Party-State, which

⁹ Bettelheim Charles (1977), *Les luttes de classes en URSS, 2^{ème} période 1923-1930*, Seuil/Maspero

¹⁰ UCFML (1976), *Le livre des paysans pauvres*, Coll. Yenan, Maspero

¹¹ Cf Étude des Communes Populaires, *Revue Longues Marches*, n°3, pp 3-17

embodies the political legitimacy of this system.

In this approach, the town/country contradiction is resolved by the absorption of the countryside by the town, with the countryside becoming a vast social desert populated by mechanized farmland.

The second, on the contrary, looks at the town/country relationship from the angle of the peasants' own political capacity, presented as an instrument for effectively reducing the difference between town and country, and thus as a bulwark against the restoration of a bourgeois class.

Alessandro Russo's interpretation of the Great Leap Forward and the People's Communes in his book on the Cultural Revolution¹² is very interesting in this respect. The national liberation stage had already deployed the political capacity of the peasants in the liberated zones, with the Red Army taking part in agricultural work. After victory, the CCP was not starting from scratch, as in the Soviet Union, but from a long experience of revolutionary mobilization of the peasants.

But a new **peasant political capacity** had to be reinvented after 1949, under the conditions of socialism. Russo calls political capacity "*the experimentation of egalitarian political inventions directly supported by the peasants*" (p. 26). The creation of People's Communes by the peasants themselves, and their spread throughout the country in 1958, is part of such experimentation with "egalitarian political inventions".

In the Communes populaires, many of these inventions were aimed at reducing the differences between town and country: small rural industrial enterprises, creation of collective services (sales and purchasing cooperatives, canteens, schools, medical services, kindergartens, laundries...), self-organization with a global vocation (the commune populaire as the basic organization of political power, economic power with collective property, military power...).

These egalitarian political inventions were opposed by those in the Party who defended "revolutionary classicism", as Russo put it, i.e., the priority given to transforming the countryside, focusing not on the peasants' political capacity, but on their ability to produce more in the service of a national development centered on heavy industry and the cities, under the exclusive planning control of the Party-State. In this revolutionary classicism, the countryside has no future of its own, which is reflected in particular by the fact that peasant self-organization and peasant political subjectivity have no place in it.

Conclusion

- Confirming M&E's initial intuition, **reducing the difference between town and country** is central to a communist policy, as this difference reflects a division of labor that generates or regenerates relations of domination and exploitation.
- **A significant political test of** the city/countryside divide is what happens to the countryside. Generally speaking, this difference cannot be reduced by losing the substance of one of the two terms and absorbing the other.
- This requires **political inventions** driven by a political subjectivity - that of communism - and mass movements. A "mass political laboratory" in which to experiment with these inventions, which cannot be the result of state planning.

Good.

A few ideas for today

What does it mean to pursue a policy of reducing the urban-rural divide in today's very different conditions?

Let's start by taking an objective look at the relationship between town and country at different spatial scales.

¹² Russo Alessandro (2020), *Cultural Revolution and Revolutionary Culture*, Duke University Press

Contemporary picture of the town/country relationship

- There are still many farmers around the world (Africa, India, China...), but very few in France. **In France**, 760,000 people work permanently on a farm (440,000 farmers, 318,000 salaried employees), i.e. 1.5% of the working population (forecast for 1% in 2030). Although the average farm size has increased (70 ha), many small and medium-sized farmers subsist solely on their spouse's wages (45% of farm household income). For these farmers, agriculture is no longer their sole occupation, due to a lack of viability.
- **On a global scale**, the same process of peasant exclusion is at work. Capitalist globalization is driving peasants out of the countryside and into the metropolises of their own countries or those of developed capitalist countries. Environmental destruction is accelerating this mass migration.
- **As far as cities are concerned, metropolization** has become the dominant phenomenon. Population, infrastructure, jobs and services are concentrated there¹³. The UN lists 2,000 metropolises in the world with more than 300,000 inhabitants, home to 60% of the urban population and 1/3 of the world's population (compared with 300 metropolises and 40% of the urban population in 1950). 1 billion more people are expected to live in them by 2035. This is the flip side of the desertification of other areas, whether rural or urban (medium-sized towns).
- At this scale, the town/country relationship no longer opposes urban and rural areas as such, but metropolises and other areas, including **medium-sized towns**, which **are the backbone of the countryside**. The city/countryside relationship refers to a more complex organization of space: medium-sized towns located in regions not under the direct influence of metropolises can be classified as "Countryside", while rural areas in the direct orbit of metropolises can be classified as "City". This is particularly true of the "rurbains" who live in the country but work in the city. So it's hard to divide the population between the narrow-minded animals of the cities and the narrow-minded animals of the countryside, as M&E used to do!
- The INSEE has redefined the statistical concepts of town and country. Towns used to "begin" with a population of 2,000 or more, the countryside with fewer. Towns are now defined by **a criterion of density per km²** deemed more significant for access to urban services and urbanity than size. Rural communes are defined by a low or very low density. Part of the urban population - those living in towns of at least 2,000 inhabitants but in sparsely populated areas - is then transferred to the rural population. Whereas the rural population represented a quarter of the total population under the old criterion, it now accounts for a third of the population under the new one.
- INSEE also divides rural areas according to their degree of attraction by cities (with populations of over 50,000), using the **criterion of employment**. They are said to be "under the influence" of these towns if at least 30% of their population work there, "under weak influence" if less than 30% work there, and "autonomous" if there is no relationship. 14% of the total population live in "autonomous rural areas, 9% in rural areas under weak influence and 10% under strong influence (peri-urban areas in fact). We can thus define the degree of isolation of the population living in rural areas. Of the 33% of the total population living the countryside, almost half (14% of the total population) live in rural areas considered isolated. This is no small number.
- This isolation provides an opportunity to revisit the nature of the relationship between town and country. In capitalism, **the city is a suction pump for rural resources** (labor, materials, food, etc.). In return, it provides the countryside with a number of resources: dispersed housing due to the cost of urban land, access to goods and services, certain facilities, etc. However, it is acknowledged that **the relationship is asymmetrical**: the city sucks in more rural resources than it redistributes to the countryside. This relationship is conceptualized as a predatory center/periphery relationship, which can be found at all spatial scales (between countries, between regions, between cities and the countryside, between cities and their suburbs...). However, the center/periphery relationship that was at the heart of the city/countryside relationship is tending to disappear, at least partially, in favor of another urban dynamic that feeds on the relationship between major cities located in different territories. **These cities have more relationships with each other than with their traditional hinterland**. They substitute network effects for the predatory center-periphery relationship. The problem for a peripheral space is no longer that of being in the aspirational orbit of a center, but of no longer having a relationship with

¹³ Industry is mostly relocated to other areas (medium-sized towns, rural areas, free trade zones).

it, of being on the sidelines. Domination is achieved through non-relationship, non-complementarity. The economy has become **an economy of archipelagos**¹⁴. There is undoubtedly much to be said for the way in which the relationship between town and country now blends complementarity with non-complementarity.

- The identification of the town/country relationship with the worker/peasant social relationship is singularly **blurred**. Workers are the most numerous social group in the countryside, while a large proportion of peasant-owners live in towns. Agricultural workers themselves belong to urban agricultural enterprises and urban service providers, etc. The spatial relationship between industry and agriculture is just as **blurred**. Industry has massively deserted urban areas as a result of relocations that have left vast industrial wastelands and land plagued by chemical pollution within cities. Current attempts at "reindustrialization" are focusing on rural areas and medium-sized towns with an industrial past. At the same time, the development of urban agriculture and the necessary greening of cities in the face of climate change are on the agenda.

These **blurs** prompt us to reframe the relationship between town and country.

Towards a spatio-functional interpenetration of town and country

Capitalist logic dictates that the space assigned to individuals is defined by the place they occupy in the social relations of production. The exploited and oppressed are assigned a space determined by the need to reproduce their labor power.

The organization of space, the way it is distributed to individuals, can be analyzed as **a spatial relationship of social reproduction**. This includes housing, its location and form, the workplace (distance from home, concentrated/dispersed location), places for the supply of goods and distribution of private or public services (concentration/dispersion), places for leisure...

These spatial dimensions (location, concentration/dispersion of places) are closely linked to the functions they play in the broader reproduction of the workforce: peripheral location and concentration of working-class housing, longer commuting distances, dependence on areas of commercial concentration, geographical inequalities in access to public services, constrained mobility paths....

They are induced by **a functional specialization** of reproduction areas (housing here, work there, shops elsewhere, services further away...) due to economies of scale and land prices.

The capitalist division of labor is transformed into a **spatial division** marked by a growing functional **disjunction** between places, which increases with precariousness and poverty. The result is **desocialization**, confinement and isolation. The recluses of the countryside are matched by the recluses of the suburbs.

The difference between town and country today needs to be reinterpreted as a symptom of the monofunctional specialization of space, of which it is one aspect.

Reducing this difference means escaping this specialization, **re-establishing a functional versatility of space** that is today the prerogative of bourgeois neighborhoods¹⁵, and interpenetrating spaces that are today disjointed. This is why, today, reducing the difference between town and country is not a question of **abolishing** this difference, but of **interpenetrating** its terms.

From this perspective, space is no longer simply the projection of a class content, such as the constrained and dislocated space of reproduction of labor power, but **a lever** for designing an emancipated way of living according to the stated needs of its inhabitants.

A few final remarks

Overcoming the town/country divide as a communist imaginary

Overcoming the opposition between town and country is part of the communist imagination. It is part of the **desire for communism**. The development of this imaginary is a possible means of escaping the classist approach and making egalitarian politics the point of entry to the town/country contradiction.

¹⁴ Pierre Veltz (2005), *Mondialisation, villes et territoires*. L'économie d'archipel, PUF

¹⁵ in very different ways in different countries (city centers in Europe, *gated communities* in the United States or in developing countries....)

In his book *La pensée marxiste et la ville* (Chap. IV, *Engels et l'utopie*), **Henri Lefebvre** recalls that in his *Question du Logement*, Engels draws on the utopians Owen and Fourier (whose theoretical constructs do away with the opposition between town and country) to criticize the reformism of the Proudhonians, who advocate improvements to the system of cottages and workers' barracks. In their defense, he argues that the only way out of the capitalist system is to overcome the opposition between town and country.

In *Anti-Dühring*, Engels opposes Dühring on this very question, who sees the town/country opposition as a permanent structure of society. Engels sees revolutionary utopia as a "practical requirement" and a "wonderfully practical basis" for tackling problems that cannot be solved within the existing capitalist system.

It remains a utopia because the conditions for its realization have not yet been met, **but it mobilizes an imaginary** world that opens up the prospect of a possible overcoming of the town/country divide, and hence of political action along these lines.

What does it mean to gradually abolish the division of labor between town and country?

Formally, it means bringing the city into the countryside and the countryside into the city, and on this basis developing new relationships between town and country.

On the campaign front

The "urban transformation of the countryside" has been the subject of more discussion and more achievements, however limited.

Thus, **the development of rural industries** to support agriculture while reducing the traditional spatial division between agriculture in the countryside and industry in the city was the subject of debate in the **Soviet Union in the 1920s**, before priority was given to heavy industry and they disappeared. But **in China**, it was at the heart of the experience of the People's Communes, of their political inventions with the development of collective services in the economic, social and cultural life of the countryside. The transformation of social relations in the countryside was all the more necessary as the control of migration to the cities (the complex *hukou* system¹⁶) de facto increased the differences between town and country. After the abandonment of the People's Communes, China returned to the classic pairing of capitalist development: **the rural exodus/industrial city boom**, with the *hukou* system controlling urbanization and preventing the anarchic formation of gigantic shantytowns.

In France, what can an internal transformation of the countryside mean in terms of reducing the difference between town and country in a country that has eliminated most of its peasants, desertified the countryside and built it around a dual configuration with, on the one hand, large-scale capitalist farms based on mechanization and chemistry and, on the other, reserves needed for the tourist industry?

It seems to me that there are two interesting avenues within the countryside that directly address the relationship between town and country: food and ecology.

- For **ecology**, see my last comment below.
- **Food** explicitly raises the question of the relationship between town and country: it's a question of finding forms of organization that bring together city dwellers and peasants, overcoming the opposition between town and country by putting in place other relations of production in the country and distribution in the city. More generally, l'Atelier Paysan's¹⁷ position on the need for political and popular deliberation on food production, technological choices in agriculture and land distribution is interesting.

¹⁶ "The hukou is a legal document containing the personal details of each citizen, i.e. name, date of birth, parents' names and marital status. Established 60 years ago, the hukou system is a means of facilitating the identification of Chinese people, but also an important population management tool for the Government."

¹⁷ Atelier Paysan (2021), *Reprendre la terre aux machines*, Manifeste pour une autonomie paysanne et alimentaire, Seuil

On the city side

The transformation of social relations towards a narrowing of the town/country divide gave rise to less political debate and experimentation on this side, as the urban dynamic was very quickly sucked in by that of industrialization and the need to absorb the rural exodus by building metropolises where the question of housing became dominant.

There were some town-planning debates in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, and traces of the countryside in the city left by the greater weight given to nature in Soviet cities, but all this was swept away by the constraints of industrial development, for which the city was above all the backdrop. Historically, there is an unthought of the city as a "communist political invention".

The philosopher **Henri Lefebvre**, who is often quoted by architects and urban planners, is one of the few non-dogmatic Marxists to have attempted to elaborate a thought process, sometimes complex, on the city (*Le Droit à la ville*¹⁸, 1968, Anthropos) and the city/countryside relationship (*La pensée marxiste et la ville*, 1972, Casterman/poche).

My impression is of a **shift from the question of housing to the question of urbanity**, of the urban life that the working class must appropriate according to its perception and way of experiencing urban space, as opposed to that of engineers, property developers and political decision-makers. Lefebvre speaks of a work in progress, an "experimental unit". We move on from the issue of **housing** to that of **inhabiting** urban space.

What does it mean to live in the city? How can we develop a concrete form for it, based on popular aspirations against deportation to the periphery and socio-spatial segregation?

There is also another field of questions that is more difficult to handle politically, but which is also an urban component in the reduction of the town/country divide. This is the question of large cities and **the distribution of city sizes across the territory**. The gradual disappearance of the town/country opposition seems to imply the elimination of the big cities, the gigantic metropolises that the concentration of capital has created. M&E were torn between their fascination with the modernity of the big city, including its ability to foster the struggle of a proletariat thus brought together, and their denunciation of the turpitudes of big cities (insalubrious housing, chaotic urban life, anonymization and individualization of relationships).

Nevertheless, they concluded that it **was necessary to do away with the big cities** in the name of abolishing the differences between town and country, while avoiding a return to the "monastic economy".

This proposal was discussed in the Soviet Union, but only half-heartedly.

In his critique of the Soviet Manual, Mao notes that the Manual's statements are excellent "*but, since the aim is to eliminate the differences between town and country that the Manual itself declares to be fundamental, why is it expressly stated that this does not involve a 'diminution' of the role played by the big cities?*" In the future, cities should be smaller. We need to disperse the inhabitants of the big cities into the countryside and create lots of small towns." ¹⁹

This component of the urban/rural opposition reduction has been little practiced, as it implies an overall vision not only of cities but also of the countryside. It falls within the remit of a **land-use planning intervention** that balances the geographical distribution of cities²⁰. But it is a highly topical issue, and has a major impact on the countryside, with the question of medical deserts, the distance from schools and administrative services, etc., which is the effect of the growing metropolization of social life. The location and dynamism of medium-sized towns in particular are important aspects in the reduction of the town/country divide.

¹⁸ The expression "right to the city" is not a very happy one. For Lefebvre, it's the right to appropriate urban space and actively participate in its construction.

¹⁹ Mao Tse-tung (1960), Notes de lecture sur le Manuel d'économie politique de l'Union Soviétique, in Hu Chi-hsi (1975), Mao Tse-tung et la construction du socialisme, Seuil.

²⁰ What France's regional planning policy achieved in the 1960s when it moved from "Paris and the French desert" to an urban framework based on the reinforcement of ten major regional metropolises. It did so in favor of a policy of metropolization, accentuating urban-rural polarization. It should also be noted that the Chinese government under Xi Jinping is seeking to balance the development of inland and coastal cities, as well as drastically controlling the rural exodus to the cities, for fear of the chaotic consequences of the spatial imbalances engendered by capitalism.

The need to link the reduction of the division of labor to collective forms of ownership

I touched on this point in the first part of the text, pointing out that in M&E, the effects of the town/country divide on class structuring involved a crossover between the division of labor and forms of property. The division of labor does not bring about class differentiation unless ad hoc property relations crystallize differences of interest into class opposition. On the other hand, the introduction of forms of property generates opposition by grafting onto a division of labor.

We then saw that, with the experience of the People's Communes, **the division of labor/property forms couple** also worked in the other direction, so that, within the framework of a communist policy, the reduction of differences between town and country could be an instrument of human emancipation, by being the criterion of political truth of a legal form.

But it would be pointless to reduce this division of labor without supporting it with forms of collective, deliberative appropriation of decision-making at the level of work collectives. As a result, in the Communes populaires, a whole range of forms of ownership (private, collective below brigade level, collective above the brigade level, of the entire people) are finely matched to the transformations brought about in the division of labor.

The need to articulate proposed forms of reducing the division of labor between town and country with the emergence **of new forms of collective ownership** to truly transform social relations of production is also a question for us. As in the case of different forms of ownership in certain peasant farming associations, where the form of ownership (farmer's land, collective ownership of the harvest by members, local inter-association network) is associated with a diversity of tasks performed by the stakeholders. However, ownership dismemberment is not exclusive to these experiments. It is also a feature of contemporary capitalism, both between different types of capitalist and between consumers and companies. The point is to **link forms of ownership and the transformation of social relations**.

The capitalist reduction of city/countryside opposition through the prism of ecology

We've focused on the **communist overcoming** of the town/country contradiction, but it could be argued that **contemporary capitalism has also organized its own overcoming** of this contradiction (in the case of developed capitalist countries).

For strategic reasons linked to the power conferred by food sovereignty, it has not relocated agricultural production, as in industry²¹. **The constraint of food sovereignty** exposed to competition led it to develop agriculture along the lines of large-scale industry (creation of large estates, mechanization eliminating much of the labor force, transformation of the remaining peasants into pure productive force, i.e. farmers, chemical treatment of the soil). **The integration of agriculture into large-scale industry** was the means by which capitalism economically reduced the town/country divide, subjecting both to the same unlimited process of accumulation. Agriculture has become a branch of industry, both in terms of production and distribution of its products.

But this economic indifferentiation between town and country²² **has brought a third term** into the fold: **environmental degradation**. In both town and country, capitalism destroys the material environment in which humans live: wasting resources, destroying soil and the environment, widespread pollution, biodiversity at half-mast, etc. **The unity of town and country that capitalism achieves is thus a destructive unity of humanity's material environment**. In this way, **humanity is reunited**, beyond the separation between town and country, as a necessary political counterpoint to the economic unification of town and country achieved by capitalism in its most contemporary version. **Redefining a way of inhabiting the Earth** involves both town and country.

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²¹ except historically the UK, which sacrificed its agriculture on the altar of industrialization and colonialism.

²² This is obviously not true of social and cultural life, where the gap between town and country has actually widened (rural desertification on the one hand, metropolization on the other).

[MATHEMATICAL RESOURCES]

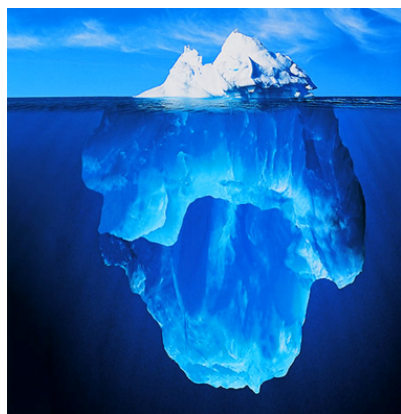
CLARIFICATION OF THE *INTRINSIC* NATURE OF EMERGENCE

The article *Le concept mathématique d'émergence* (issue 3, October 2024, pp. 101-107) raised a question: *why don't we find the usual dynamics of "what emerges"?* The answer is as follows.

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The mathematically-specified notion of emergence (capitalized *Emergence*) differs from the common notion of emergence (lower-case).

In common parlance, we speak of something emerging to indicate that something previously invisible is appearing, something that pre-existed this appearance - see, for example, the case of the iceberg:



We say: the iceberg emerges from the depths (under the effect of Archimedes' law, where the submerged part will correspond to up to 90% of the total mass).

In this case, it's clear that the emergent part is not **constituted** by the emergence process: the ice block has a structure of its own, and what we see appearing on the surface by outcrop is in no way **constituted** by the emergence in question; it is merely **revealed** by it.

In this case, the process of emergence does not affect the iceberg, its pre-existing shape, volume, etc. In other words, the dynamics of emergence are extrinsic to the iceberg. In other words, the dynamics of emergence here are **extrinsic to** the iceberg (they arise from the *plunging* of a solid into a liquid space), and the partial appearance of its top hardly changes the pre-existing overall structure.

In this emergence, the inapparent part is hidden - it constitutes a secret for the gaze that is a matter of simple concealment.

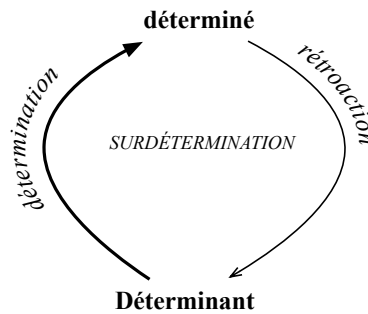
The **Emergence** referred to in Ehresmann's mathematical theorem is not of this order at all, for it is an **intrinsic** dynamic, **constituting** a new superstructure (its "canopy") remaining in a dialectical relationship ("unity of opposites") with its infrastructure (even if the theorem in question tells us nothing about this).

In this case, **Emergence** is the creation of a superstructure (which does not pre-exist it), whose new existence will dialecticize with the pre-existing existence of the infrastructure, creating a new, globally "over-determined" structure.

The Althusserian concept of **overdetermination**¹ aims to characterize a dialectical structure that interweaves feedback effects, where the determined, retroacting on the determining,

¹ See in *Pour Marx* (pp. 99-100): "Contradiction is determinant but also determined in one and the same movement: we could say it is *overdetermined in principle*" (Althusser adds a note here referring to Mao's *De la contradiction*).

determines it in return:



In this **Emergence**, the base, inapparent at the level of the "canopy", constitutes a secret of a completely different kind - the kind that Lacan said, "if confessed, remains secret" - because confessing that the canopy rests on its inapparent base is by no means enough to dispel the secret of this dialectic.

The mathematics presented here examines the conditions under which it will be possible to speak of **Emergence** in a given situation by formalizing that situation mathematically (mathematicians speak here of "theorizing a given model"), without having to examine how that situation - that "model" - was given to it.

In other words, mathematics can account for the conditions of possibility for such an **Emergence** structure to exist, but for all that it cannot account for the conditions of effectiveness of such and such a specific **Emergence** in a given type of world (particularly physical-natural).

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FRANÇOIS NICOLAS: *ADJUNCTION-EXTENSION*

REVOLUTIONS

Principles

Let's recall two principles of this section.

- 1) If mathematics can be a **resource** for the political intellectuality of communist militants, it's not that, strictly speaking, mathematics formulates lessons that can be applied in the political sphere: if there is already no transitivity between the **mathematical** laws of being, the **logical** laws of being-there in an objective situation and the **philosophical** principles of the subjects of truths, even less is there between mathematical **objectivity** and political **subjectivities**! It's rather that mathematics can suggest questions that, without it, we wouldn't have asked ourselves. In other words, these resources are not a matter of **application**, but of **questioning**, which we engage in on the assumption that it will be fruitful.
- 2) Since our aim is to politically relaunch a modern (Marxist) and contemporary (Maoist) communist orientation in the 21st century, we're focusing here on **modern** mathematics (begun in the 1830s by Gauss and Galois) and **contemporary** mathematics (begun in the 1960s by Cohen, Grothendieck and Lawvere) rather than **classical** mathematics (17th-18th centuries), let alone **pre-classical mathematics**.

Issues

Our starting point today will be the following imperative: 21st-century communists must not abandon the signifier *Revolution*. To abandon it would be to **depoliticize** the theme of communism (as the ideologies of the "common"², "community", "communion" and "communalism" abundantly attest).

Reactionary revolutions

In so doing, communists must continue to **compete** with reactionaries of all kinds, who have long made their own use of the term: see, in the 1920s, the Weimar German arch-reactionaries claiming to be part of a "*conservative revolution*"³ or, from 1929 onwards, the Mexican social democrats of the *Institutional Revolutionary Party* (PRI)⁴; see, a hundred years later, Macron (launching his election campaign at the end of 2016 under the banner of a revolution that he no longer even bothered to specify as "neoliberal") through to Donald Trump...



² See Alain Rallet's study in issue 3.

³ [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A9volution_conservatrice_\(Weimar\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A9volution_conservatrice_(Weimar))

⁴ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parti_r%C3%A9volutionnaire_institutionnel

"Revolution?"

Revolution is therefore a term that is eminently divisible, and in many ways:

- Geometrical or astronomical revolutions around an axis of rotation in a circular movement that inevitably leads back to the starting point, **versus** political revolutions that suddenly change an established social order without return.

Let's adopt this minimal characterization here: for us, *revolution* of a given situation means its **radical, global upheaval**.

- Political (emancipatory **versus** conservative) and cultural (Maoist **versus** Nazi⁵) revolutions.
- Revolutions in all fields of thought: artistic, scientific, technical, philosophical...

Revolutionizing the idea of revolution

Firstly, there are specifically communist revolutions (the contemporary paradigm is the Chinese communist revolution of 1958-1976); and secondly, reviving political communism in the 21st century implies **revolutionizing the very idea of communist revolution**.

To achieve this, three trips are necessary.

- **First of all**, we need to shift the **target** of communist revolutions: from the state to social relations of all kinds (production, housing, settlement, organization); indeed, taking power by revolutionizing the state is only the **condition** for revolutionizing these social relations, which constitute the real communist **challenge**.
- **Then** we need to shift their **center of gravity**: the fundamental issue of communist revolutions is the non-antagonistic resolution of contradictions within peoples - it is this resolution that ultimately commands the resolution of antagonistic contradictions with enemies, not the other way around.
- **Finally**, we need to identify a **new type of** revolution that meets the two previous requirements, i.e. one that can politically distinguish, since 1958, properly communist revolutions from the socialist and democratic revolutions that preceded them.

Three types of revolution

This last point is the specific focus of this study.

To do this, I'm going to mobilize the resources of *modern* (since the 1830s) and *contemporary* (since the 1960s) mathematics for two reasons: first, mathematical thought in general unfolds with a maximally transmissible **rigor** and **clarity**; second, modern and contemporary mathematical thought deploys the range of three intertwined types of revolution:

- an *ancient* or **pre-classical** type of revolution by **abandonment-displacement**;
- a **classic** type of **destruction-reconstruction** revolution;
- a specifically **modern** type of **addition-extension** revolution.

Let's identify each of these three types by capitalizing its affirmative side (Displacement, Reconstruction, Extension) so that, since modern revolutions (as we shall see) combine these three types, we can consider that from the 19th century onwards, revolutions (non-conservative or non-restorative) are... **R.E.D.**.... in other words, **red**!

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Let's proceed in three steps.

- I. Let's first introduce these three types of revolution in the specific context of communist politics.
- II. Next, let's look at how mathematics instructs these three types in their own realm of thought.

⁵ Johann Chapoutot: *The Nazi Cultural Revolution* (Gallimard, 2017)

- III. We can then return to questioning the Chinese Communist Revolution of the People's Communes in the light of these mathematical resources.

I. Political revolutions

The principle of *communist revolutions* cannot be limited to its usual two meanings:

- **pre-classical** meaning of *withdrawal, secession or separation* (a revolution that abandons a place of oppression in order to move): models are the anti-slavery revolutions, such as the flight from Egypt for the Hebrew people (before the 13th century BC), the withdrawal from Rome for the Spartakist slave uprising (in 73 BC) or, in the 17th century, the Brazilian Quilombos (pub.C.), the withdrawal from Rome for the Spartakist slave uprising (in 73 B.C.) or, in the 17th century, the Brazilian epic of the Quilombos⁶ (exemplified by the commune of Palmares⁷); but in the 20th century, this type of revolution was to be found again in the anti-colonial practice of the maquis and liberated zones;
- **classic** meaning of *insurrection* (destroying oppression in a given place in order to rebuild it⁸): the models are 1789 for the French Revolution and 1917 for the Bolshevik Revolution.

It must also be understood in a new, specifically **modern** sense of *addition-extension*: its model is to be found in the Chinese Communist Revolution, initiated in 1958 by the *People's Communes* (rural then urban), then relaunched in 1966 by the Cultural Revolution and in early 1967 by the Shanghai *Workers' Commune*. The aim was to add the People's Communes to the accelerated socialist revolution (Great Leap Forward), so as to extend the ongoing revolution to a specifically communist dimension.

So, where the *pre-Classical* revolution by **abandonment-displacement** moves to another place, where the *Classical* revolution by **destruction-reconstruction preserves** the place after wiping the slate clean, the *modern* revolution by **addition-extension preserves** its starting point by immersing it in a new, considerably extended place, so that the old place is maintained as a protected reserve.

Beware: while the idea of adjunction-extension is specifically modern, the practice is much older! Think of the way which the explicit formulation of **a grammar extends a long-existing language** (for me, the paradigm is the Persian *Sībawayhi*, which, at the end of the 8th century, constituted the first Arabic grammar⁹). In this case, the grammar in question interferes with the language in question and interweaves with all its dimensions (written, syntactic, lexical, rhetorical, discursive...).

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It's instructive to see how the Maoist communist orientation revolutionized the very idea of revolution¹⁰ throughout the three major stages of the Chinese revolution.

The example of the three Chinese revolutions (1927-1976)

At the risk of oversimplifying things for didactic purposes, we can distinguish **three main stages** in China's political revolution, which lasted for fifty years (from 1927 to 1976):

- I) following the failure of Bolshevik-style urban uprisings (1927), a **democratic** revolution (1928-1949): an antifeudal revolution of national liberation that left the cities to encircle them with the countryside, where a revolution of the (pre-classical) *abandonment-displacement* type was established;

⁶ [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quilombo_\(slavery\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quilombo_(slavery))

⁷ https://www.syllepse.net/la-commune-des-palmares-r_71_i_17.html

⁸ Here, the state becomes the paradigm of the oppressive locus in question.

⁹ Consider also the very late birth (in the first century BC) of the first Greek grammar: the *Technè Grammatikè* of Denys the Thracian - see Frédérique Ildefonse: *La naissance de la grammaire dans l'Antiquité grecque* (Vrin, 1997).

¹⁰ *Revolutionizing the idea of revolution?* An example in which the statement ("revolution") is "reduplicated" in its position of enunciation ("revolutionize"), so that its enunciation remains entangled with its statement: in other words, the generating subjectivation remains entangled with the subjective process engaged, or, in more Sartrean terms this time, so that *mobilization (upstream)* remains entangled with *motivation (downstream)*.

- II) following the political victory of this democratic revolution in 1949, a **socialist** revolution, explicitly undertaken from 1953 (first five-year plan): an anti-capitalist revolution building a socialist state, nationalized industries and cooperatives, a revolution of the (classic) *destruction-reconstruction* type;
- III) following the political setbacks of this socialist revolution (pointed out by Mao from 1956 onwards), a properly **communist** revolution began in 1958, of the (modern) *addition-extension* type.

Let's take a look at the main differences between this latest *communist* revolution and the two preceding ones.

- This communist revolution is not going to **abandon anything** (where the democratic revolution had abandoned the towns and moved into the countryside).
- Strictly speaking, this communist revolution will **destroy nothing** (whereas the socialist revolution destroyed the bourgeois state and private ownership of the major means of production, and rebuilt in their place a socialist state and public ownership through nationalization).
- This communist revolution will **join**¹¹ the socialist revolution (launched in 1953 and continuing into the 1960s), not replace it.
- In so doing, this communist revolution will **extend** what political revolution means, especially to the dimensions of a *cultural* revolution.

In China, however, the revolution was not thought of in these terms ("addition-extension"), which are suggested to us today by an intellectual consideration of modern mathematics. This intellectual revolution in the very idea of revolution, and its associated terms of *addition* and *extension*, comes from modern mathematics. So it's to this mathematics that we now turn to take the exact measure.

II. Mathematical revolutions

Modern mathematics provides us with numerous examples of our three types of **R.E.D.** revolutions.

Let's take a look at some of them, starting with the "pre-classical" modality (abandonment-displacement), then the "classical" modality (destruction-reconstruction), and finally the more specifically "modern" one that interests us most (addition-extension).

Revolution by abandonment and displacement: modern analysis

The best example of a revolution by abandonment-displacement can be found in **the analysis**¹², which was modernized by **Cauchy** at the beginning of the 19th century, abandoning the old problematic, introduced at the end of the 17th century by Newton and Leibniz, of infinitesimally small quantities called "**infinitesimals**", to reconstitute itself on the idea of **limit**, which now involves only **finite** quantities, as small as you like.

¹¹ As we'll come back to in a moment, **adjoining** is much more than just **adding**: adjoining doesn't just accrete or juxtapose, but makes what's being supplemented interact with all the elements of the initial situation.

¹² Analysis is the study of functions, focusing on their derivation and integration.

"Limit

The limit principle is as follows: there will be a limit L of $f(x)$ when x tends to a ($x \rightarrow a$) if it is possible to control the distance from $f(x)$ to L by the distance from x to a .

This **will be formulated** in the following dialectic of epsilon (ϵ) and delta (δ): when x tends towards a , $f(x)$ will have limit L if, for any number ϵ as *small as we like*, there exists a number δ such that, if x is close to a *by at most* δ , then we'll be sure that $f(x)$ will be close to L *by at most* ϵ .

This will enable us to control the approach to L by $f(x)$ as precisely as we like.

This formulation **is expressed as follows**:

$$[x \rightarrow a] \Rightarrow [f(x) \rightarrow L] \text{ if } \forall \epsilon > 0, \exists \delta > 0 \text{ such that } |x-a| \leq \delta \Rightarrow |f(x)-L| \leq \epsilon^{13}$$

In this way, Cauchy revolutionized modern analysis by **abandoning** the problem of *infinitesimals* (or *infinitesimally* small quantities) and **shifting** to that of *limits* (which now only involves *finite* quantities as small as you like).

Revolution by destruction-reconstruction: contemporary analysis

It wasn't until the second half of the 20th century that a contemporary problematic rebuilt the analysis on infinitesimals (infinitesimally small quantities), backed up by modern thinking on infinity (initiated by Cantor at the end of the 19th century), thinking that the classics Newton and Leibniz obviously didn't have.

This is the case in both Robinson's *non-standard analysis*¹⁴ and Lawvere's *synthetic differential geometry*.¹⁵

Thus, *classical* analysis (based on infinitesimals) has successively undergone two revolutions: the first (early 19th century) by **abandonment-displacement** (*modern* analysis by limits), the second (*contemporary* analysis late 20th century) by **destruction-reconstruction** of the classical problem of infinitesimals.

•

Let's turn now to our specifically modern type of revolution by addition-extension.

Adjunction-extension revolutions

This new type of revolution will be broken down into two subtypes: **object** additions (new type) and **operation** additions (new type).

It all began with Évariste Galois, who in 1830 invented the first form of adjunction, adding an *element* to a whole. As it is also possible to add a *part* to a whole (Cohen 1963), we will explore the modern panorama of adjunction-extension with five examples that can be summarized as follows:

Object additions		Operation additions
one <i>element</i> :	1. Galois 2. Gauss	Power cuts 4. Dedekind
<i>part</i> :	3. Cohen	5. Conway

1. Object adjunctions (new type)

As I said, the addition of an object (of a new type) is itself divided into two modalities, depending on whether it adds an element or a part to a given set.

¹³ If, moreover, $f(a)=L$, this means that the function $f(x)$ is **continuous** at a .

¹⁴ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analyse_non_standard

¹⁵ See the mamuphi presentation of November 5, 2022 in my article *Le romantisme révolutionnaire d'Henri Lefebvre*.

<http://www.entretiens.asso.fr/2022-2023/Lefebvre.pdf> and

1.a - A new type of element

Let's look at two prime examples of the addition of an element to a given set. The first (Galois, 1830) is the one that chronologically invented the very idea of addition.

A - Galois (1830)

"When we agree to regard certain quantities as known in this way, we will say that we are adding them to the equation to be solved. We will say that these quantities are added to the equation."

Évariste Galois (*Mémoire sur les conditions de résolubilité des équations par radicaux*, 1831)

The problem is as follows:

how do you solve a polynomial (algebraic) equation such as $x^2-2=0$?

Solving such an equation means finding the number x such that $x^2-2=0$.

Galois will point out that the possibility of such a resolution depends on the type of numbers accepted.

There are in fact **several types of numbers**: integers (a set that we'll note \mathbb{N} or \mathbb{Z} depending on whether we're talking only about *positive* integers or *relative* integers, i.e. positive and negative), rational numbers (\mathbb{Q} the set of fractions of integers), real numbers (\mathbb{R}) and soon complex numbers (\mathbb{C}).

For example, the equation $x^2-4=0$ can be solved in \mathbb{N} or \mathbb{Z} (with an integer) because $x=\pm 2$ verifies $x^2=4$. But the equation $9x^2-4=0$ cannot be solved in \mathbb{N} or \mathbb{Z} , whereas it can be solved in \mathbb{Q} since only $x=\pm 2/3$ (a non-integer rational number) verifies it.

All the same, our equation $x^2-2=0$ can't be solved in \mathbb{N} or \mathbb{Z} , nor in \mathbb{Q} , but it can be solved with an irrational real number (i.e., in \mathbb{R}), since its solution $x=\pm \sqrt{2}$, as the Greeks already knew, isn't rational (i.e., can't be written as a fraction of integers)¹⁶

Galois's idea was as follows: to solve the equation $x^2-2=0$ using rational numbers, rather than going in one fell swoop from the set \mathbb{Q} of rational numbers to the set \mathbb{R} of real numbers (which is a huge qualitative and quantitative leap, in fact immeasurable¹⁷), couldn't we extend the starting set of rational numbers (\mathbb{Q}) in a way suited to our algebraic problem?

We'll come back to this later, but it corresponds to the following idea: can we **reform** \mathbb{Q} as accurately as possible so that we can solve $x^2-2=0$ without having to **revolutionize** it in \mathbb{R} ?

Hence the idea of extending \mathbb{Q} by a single step, well calibrated to solving the equation $x^2-2=0$: by adding the quantity $\sqrt{2}$, unknowable in \mathbb{Q} .

Adding and adjoining

The important point here is to grasp the difference between **adding** and **adjoining**: it's not just a matter of adding a new element to a pre-existing set (like adding a marble to a bag of cherries, for example) - here, it's a matter of going from \mathbb{Q} to $\{\mathbb{Q}, \sqrt{2}\}$. Why? Because \mathbb{Q} isn't just an amorphous heap of elements (rational numbers); 's a set with a very specific intrinsic structure: the algebraic structure we call a **body**, which allows us to perform a whole series of internal operations between its elements (the rational numbers) while remaining within the set - in this case, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division: adding two rational numbers thus generates a rational number¹⁸. The set \mathbb{Q} thus forms a *body*, i.e. a set such that elementary arithmetic operations on its elements do not cause it to leave.

The idea of adding $\sqrt{2}$ to \mathbb{Q} is therefore to add to \mathbb{Q} not only the quantity $\sqrt{2}$ but also all the quantities

¹⁶ Let's recall the very simple demonstration of this point.

If $\sqrt{2}$ were rational, we'd have $\sqrt{2}=p/q$ with p and q integers, and, by fraction reduction, with one of the two even and the other odd. We would then have $2=p^2/q^2$ or $2q^2=p^2$. Since $p^{(2)}$ is even, p must itself be even (only the square of an even number can be even), so q is odd. But since p is even, we have $p=2n \Rightarrow p^2=4n^2 \Rightarrow 2q^2=4n^2 \Rightarrow q^2=2n^2$. So q would in fact be even and not odd (only the square of an even number can be even), which contradicts the starting hypothesis. So $\sqrt{2}$ cannot be p/q and therefore $\sqrt{2}$ is not rational.

¹⁷ Indeed, we leap from the countable to the continuous, and this leap turns out to be incommensurable (undecidability of the continuum hypothesis) - see the consequences for ontological orientations in Alain Badiou's *L'être et l'événement*.

¹⁸ For example $2/3+4/5=11/15$

that can be composed by arithmetic operations between the rational numbers of \mathbb{Q} and the new unknown quantity $\sqrt{2}$, i.e. all the new quantities ("numbers") that can be written as $p+q\sqrt{2}$ (with p and q rational)¹⁹

Note that there's no need to add multiplication $(p\sqrt{2}) \times (q\sqrt{2})$ since, by definition, $\sqrt{2} \times \sqrt{2} = 2$ is integer, so rational, so already in \mathbb{Q} .

The new body thus generated by adding $\sqrt{2}$ to \mathbb{Q} will be denoted $\mathbb{Q}[\sqrt{2}]$, which must be carefully distinguished from the extended set $\mathbb{Q}+\sqrt{2}$ or $\{\mathbb{Q}, \sqrt{2}\}$, which does not have the intrinsic structure of a body.

Hence the addition in question here is thematized as a **body extension** (and not a set extension).

The decisive point, then, is that the simple addition extends the whole, but by **subtracting** its body structure, whereas the addition extends the whole while **preserving** its intrinsic body structure.

This point will be of considerable importance in fields of thought other than mathematics: communist revolutions by addition-extension, for example, aim to revolutionize social relations by preserving the structure of society, rather than sowing chaos by dissolving or subtracting social cohesions!

Thus, in 1958, the addition of the People's Communes to the socialist revolution underway (since 1953, and accelerated since the end of 1957 by the Great Leap Forward) was aimed at a properly communist extension of Chinese society as a whole, not simply a local, circumscribed and containable addition (a right-wing vision), nor a general dismantling of the social structure under the guise of revolution (an ultra-left anarchist vision).

Our original equation $x^2-2=0$, which was irresolvable on \mathbb{Q} , now becomes solvable on our new body $\mathbb{Q}[\sqrt{2}]$ extended by a single step²⁰. The addition has thus made it possible to **measure as closely as possible** the extension needed to solve this particular equation (and not to stray into an inordinate and in truth immeasurable headlong rush).

Galois applied this method to any polynomial *equation* (the type we call *algebraic*), showing that solving it algebraically is equivalent to constructing progressive sequences of such adjunctions-extensions.

He went on to show (*Correspondence de Galois*) that constructing these sequences of adjunctions-extensions of bodies is equivalent to reducing the group that links the different roots of the same equation (*Groupe de symétries*), and demonstrated that from degree 5 onwards, the general type of these groups turns out to be irreducible, so that the general quintic equation²¹ is irresolvable²²

B - Gauss (1831)

This type of extension of bodies by the addition of a new type of quantity ("number") can be found in the theory of **complex quantities** initiated at the same time (1831) by Gauss.

This time, we need to solve the algebraic equation $x^2+1=0$ (or $x^2=-1$), which can't be done on the \mathbb{R} body of real numbers, since the square of any real number x (x^2) is a positive or zero number.

The process is similar: we add to the body \mathbb{R} of real numbers a quantity of a new type $\sqrt{-1}$ noted i (for *imaginary*) so as to extend \mathbb{R} to the new body $\mathbb{R}[i=\sqrt{-1}]$ which we'll call the body of complexes and which we'll note $\mathbb{C} = \mathbb{R}[i]$.

\mathbb{C} is therefore the body-structured set of all "numbers" $r+i.r'$ where r and r' are real numbers:

$$= \mathbb{C}[\mathbb{R}[i] = \{r+i.r'\} \text{ with } i^2 = -1$$

In so doing, the polynomial equation $x^2+1=0$ becomes solvable on $\mathbb{C} = \mathbb{R}[i]$ just as the equation $x^2-2=0$

¹⁹ To use a culinary metaphor, it's like distinguishing between the cherry *you add* to a cake and the spices *you add* to a dish.

²⁰ as it would of course be, this time in excess, in the immense new body of \mathbb{R} reals.

²¹ i.e. of order 5, of the general type $x^5+ax^4+bx^3+cx^2+dx+e=0$ (with a, b, c, d, e rational numbers).

²² For more details, please visit

see my third lesson in modern mathematics, on December 5, 2021 at the Théâtre La Commune in Aubervilliers: <http://www.entretiens.asso.fr/Nicolas/mathsmodernes/3-Galois.pdf> (text) and <https://youtu.be/5WE21SGaa4c> (video)

became solvable on $\mathbb{Q}[\sqrt{2}]$.

A tricky point: is the \mathbb{C} field of complexes still a field of *numbers*, or is it becoming a field of *magnitudes* (Gauss used to talk about "*complex magnitudes*"), because complexes are no longer neatly ordered (we can't tell whether one is larger or smaller than another²³), which is still very damaging for "numbers"? There is no consensus among mathematicians on this point.²⁴ But it's very important - and that's why I mention it here - because the **algebra** of complex magnitudes actually integrates the **geometry** of the (complex) plane with the **arithmetic** of real numbers.²⁵

All in all...

We have thus seen how five different algebraic equations are or are not solvable, by adjunction-extension, depending on the numerical body of solution adopted:

\mathbb{N} (integers), \mathbb{Z} (relative), \mathbb{Q} (rationals), \mathbb{R} (reals), \mathbb{C} (complexes) :

	\mathbb{N}	\mathbb{Z}	\mathbb{Q}	\mathbb{R}	\mathbb{C}
$x-1=0$	solvable				
$x+1=0$		solvable (also on $\mathbb{N}[-1]$)			
$2x-3=0$			solvable (also in $\mathbb{Z}[3/2]$)		
$x^2-2=0$				solvable (also on $\mathbb{Q}[\sqrt{2}]$)	
$x^2+1=0$					solvable since $\mathbb{R}[i] = \mathbb{C}$

1.b - A new type of game

In the early 1960s, Paul Cohen added another type of object (a "generic" part of a given set, no longer a simple element like $\sqrt{2}$ or i) to extend this given set by "forcing".

Without going into the details of this highly sophisticated construction²⁶, let us simply note the parallel with our two previous additions of simple elements:

ELEMENT		PART
Galois :	addition of $\sqrt{2}$ to the \mathbb{Q} body \Rightarrow extension $\mathbb{Q}[\sqrt{2}]$	Cohen: addition of G to situation S \Rightarrow extension $S[G]$
Gauss :	add i to body \mathbb{R} \Rightarrow extension $\mathbb{R}[i] = \mathbb{C}$	

•

Let's now look at the second type of addition-extension, in which an operation is added rather than an object (number, magnitude or part).

²³ For example, if $a < b$ and $c < d$, we'll no longer have $a+c < b+d$ (the order will no longer be compatible with addition, which is a real problem for a **numerical** order...).

²⁴ My position here (which differs slightly from Badiou's) is as follows: it's better not to conceive of complexes as **numbers**, but to do so, we need to consider them as **magnitudes** and not as **operations** (the operative nature of complexes derives from their specific type as magnitudes).

For more details, see my fourth modern mathematics lesson of January 9, 2022 (Théâtre La Commune, Aubervilliers): <http://www.entretiens.asso.fr/Nicolas/mathsmodernes/4-complexes.pdf> (text) and <https://youtu.be/YjBMyzBATus> (video)

²⁵ This point will be of great importance in complex analysis, which extends real analysis on the \mathbb{R} body and the real line to the \mathbb{C} body and the complex plane.

For more details, see my fifth modern mathematics lesson, on December 5, 2021 at the Théâtre La Commune in Aubervilliers: <http://www.entretiens.asso.fr/Nicolas/mathsmodernes/5-Cauchy.pdf> (text) and <https://youtu.be/jR2dkhDJSUs> (video)

²⁶ It is meticulously presented in Alain Badiou's *L'être et l'événement*.

I also explained it in detail in *Théorie du forcing* by Paul Cohen (mamuphi seminar May 27, 2017): <http://www.entretiens.asso.fr/Nicolas/2017/Forcing.pdf>

2. Operation adjnctions (new type)

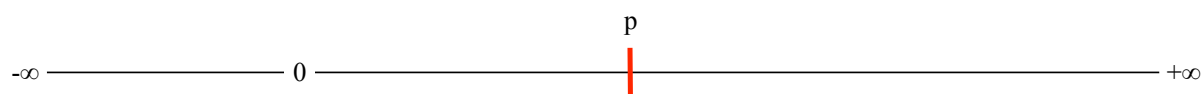
Let's take the example of a new type of operation on numbers: the **cut**.

This invention originated with Dedekind (1870s) and was taken up a century later (1970s) by Conway.

A - Dedekind (1870s)

Dedekind wondered how to extend the \mathbb{Q} body of rational numbers to the \mathbb{R} body of real numbers **in one fell swoop**: how, in one huge gesture, to extend the countable \mathbb{Q} body to the continuous \mathbb{R} body?

To do this, he starts from the following very simple observation: any rational number p divides the field \mathbb{Q} of rational numbers into two adjacent parts²⁷ such that any number in the first part (left in the image) is less than any number in the second (right):



Dedekind calls such a partition a "cut" and then notes that any rational number defines one such cut (and only one) of the set \mathbb{Q} .

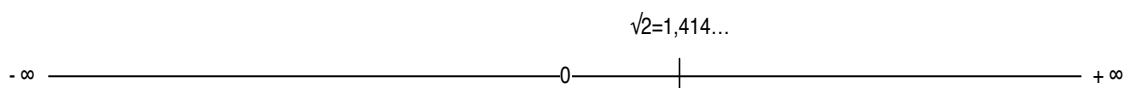
Dedekind's ingenious idea was to reverse the proposition and posit (as we shall see) that any cut (of a new type) in \mathbb{Q} could be associated with a number (of a new type: an irrational "real" number), so that in total, *any cut would define one number and one number only*.

In this way, we move from the **number-cut** (any rational number defines a cut) to the **number-cut** (any cut defines a number). In other words, we reverse the sequence **one number \Rightarrow one cut** to the retrograde sequence **one cut \Rightarrow one number**.

Example

We can thus "cut" the half-line of positive rational numbers into two parts depending on whether the square of the rational number is smaller or greater than 2.²⁸

Simply add all the negative numbers to the left of the half-right, and you've defined a "cut" of the whole right-hand side \mathbb{Q} (in effect, \mathbb{Q} is thus entirely divided into two disjoint, non-empty, adjacent parts, such that any number on the left is less than any number on the right).



This cut defines the "number" $\sqrt{2}$, i.e. the (irrational) number whose square is 2.²⁹

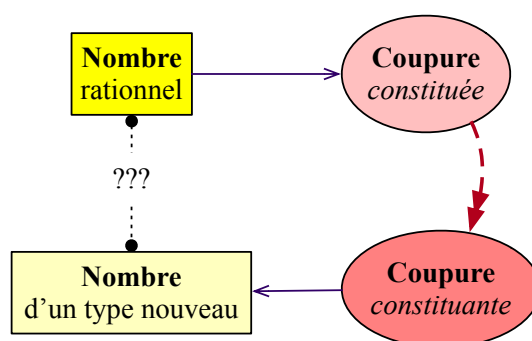
Dedekind will then posit that any cut of \mathbb{Q} defines a "number" (either rational or irrational) and that the set of these cuts will thus define the set \mathbb{R} of *real* numbers.

All in all, the reversal was as follows: we went from a cut **constituted** by a rational number to a cut (of a new type) **constituted** by a number (itself of a new type: irrational).

²⁷ *Adjacent* here means: there is no gap *between* the two parts of the cut. This means you can get as close as you like to the cut-off point, either to the left or to the right.

²⁸ We know that it cannot be equal to it since $\sqrt{2}$ is not rational (i.e. cannot be written as a division of two rational numbers) and there is therefore no number p on the rational line \mathbb{Q} such that $p^2=2$.

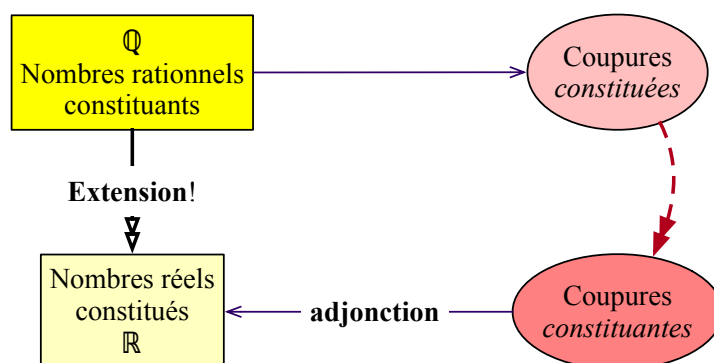
²⁹ Of course, we could just as easily have partitioned rational numbers according to whether their square is smaller or larger than 3 or 5, whether their cube is smaller or larger than 7 or 11...



Of course, this little didactic presentation raises many mathematical questions.

- So what exactly is the point of calling these constituent cuts "numbers", if it's true that *numbers* designate quantities that can be ordered, added and subtracted, multiplied and divided, and from which exponentials and roots can even be calculated?
- So can we add and subtract the cuts from each other, multiply and divide them, order and exponentiate them, so that the structure of the set of cuts composes a body structure that can be appropriated by the set of new numbers they define?
- Does this give us all the known real numbers, in particular transcendental numbers (such as π or e) and not just algebraic numbers like the one used in my example?
- If we repeat the cut operation on the set of numbers thus obtained, do we obtain numbers of a still new type, or do we fall back on the same real numbers, so that the new set \mathbb{R} obtained will indeed be *complete* for the cut operation?

Dedekind of course carries out these tasks in such a way that it will prove legitimate to posit that the numbers adjoined by cuts do indeed make up the \mathbb{R} body of real numbers, which extends the initial \mathbb{Q} body of rational numbers³⁰



Four general features

- 1) The new set \mathbb{R} of real numbers has been constructed from **intrinsic** operations (the cuts) to the starting set \mathbb{Q} of rational numbers.
- 2) In the new set \mathbb{R} , the starting set \mathbb{Q} remains **unchanged**: it becomes part of the new extended set ($\mathbb{Q} \subset \mathbb{R}$), a kind of preserved enclave.
- 3) The new real numbers thus generated are far more numerous than those of \mathbb{Q} (the size of \mathbb{Q} is said to be *countable*, whereas that of \mathbb{R} is *in the power of the continuous*³¹), and they are so here in a ratio without measure: \mathbb{Q} is literally **drowned** in a larger set whose size exceeds it at all points and in disproportionate proportions. The \mathbb{R} extension is **incommensurable** with the original \mathbb{Q} set.

³⁰ For more details, please visit

see my second lesson in modern mathematics, November 21, 2021 at the Théâtre *La Commune* in Aubervilliers:
<http://www.entretiens.asso.fr/Nicolas/mathsmodernes/2-Dedekind.pdf> (text)
 and <https://youtu.be/xhA74uQ8tSE> (video)

³¹ Paul Cohen demonstrated in 1963, precisely by the *forcing* method mentioned above, that the excess of the continuous over the countable is undecidable (i.e., the "quantity" - the *cardinality* - of the continuous exceeds that of the countable by as much as you like).

As such, we can hold that the adjunction-extension of \mathbb{Q} by cuts **revolutionizes** it when the adjunction-extension by $\sqrt{2}$ only **reformed** it.

- 4) In so doing, the new set \mathbb{R} has **lost** a structural property: the enumerability of the set \mathbb{Q} .

These features will be paradigmatic of the upheaval we're looking for.

- 1) Extension does not fall from the sky: it is **generated from within** the initial situation by intrinsic operations on its own materials, not by importing external materials or operations. It therefore remains intelligible to any "inhabitant" of the initial situation.
- 2) **The original situation** is not destroyed by the extension: it **remains** part of it. In other words, the extension has not wiped out the original world, but has overflowed it on all sides, endogenously.
- 3) **The new situation** is not a simple reform of the original one; it is not its redevelopment or simple extension. It **constitutes a structural recomposition**, a "revolution".
- 4) **This revolution comes at a price**: the loss of a structural property (in this case, countability, i.e. the ability of each number to have a predecessor and a successor).

So, with the cuts, \mathbb{R} revolutionizes the pre-existing \mathbb{Q} domain of rational numbers without destroying it, but by subsuming it from above into a now infinitely broader vision of what *number* means. We have thus conquered a whole new space of thought, not by a **horizontal** extension of the old \mathbb{Q} space, nor by a destruction **from below** that would have wiped the slate clean, but by a relief from **above** via the affirmation of a new operation - the "cut" - that overturns the old world by immersing it in a new, infinitely wider world.

If we call **reform** a horizontal extension of the initial situation (by simple additions or by a local or punctual addition such as that of $\sqrt{2}$) and **table rase** its destruction from below, we can call **cultural revolution** its overcoming from above: we will therefore say that Dedekind proceeded to a **cultural revolution of the notion of number**, extending it by the (affirmative) addition of a new operation.³²

B- Conway (1970s)

Just as Cohen, 140 years later, took up Galois' gesture, Conway, a century later, took up Dedekind's to extend the real numbers no longer (like Gauss) towards complex magnitudes, but into numbers of a new type that remain orderable on the same straight line.

This time, the adjoining operation consists in the constitution of a couple: the pairing of an ordinal and a part of this ordinal.

The idea is that such a pair, understood for transfinite ordinals (i.e. beyond the ordinal-limit \aleph_0), formalizes a new kind of number that we'll call a **surreal** number, which can then be located in the infinitesimally small interstices of the real straight line, thus constituting a surreal straight line of implausible density compared to the good old "continuous" real straight line.

To show this, we must of course demonstrate how the real numbers correspond to certain types of these pairs, and how such a general pair designates a surreal number that can be located on the line of the reals - and thus compared to any other number. We also need to show that we can operate on these surreal numbers in the same way as we operate on real numbers (addition, multiplication, exponentiation, etc.).

We'll leave it at that, and refer you Alain Badiou's remarkable book *Le Nombre et les nombres* for more details, particularly on the philosophical side.

³² All the same, Gauss had previously revolutionized the notion of numerical magnitude by adding a new type of magnitude $i = \sqrt{-1}$.

All in all...

Let's gather our five mathematical examples of adjunction-extensions in the following table:

	Initial situation	Initial objects	ADDITION		New items	Extended situation	EXTENSION new loss
Galois (1830)	body kit \mathbb{Q}	numbers rational p, q, \dots	a OBJECT	a number irrational such $\sqrt{2}$	numbers hybrids $p+q\sqrt{2}$	body kit $\mathbb{Q}[\sqrt{2}]$	resolubility
Gauss (1830)	body kit \mathbb{R}	numbers real x, y, \dots		a size imaginary $i=\sqrt{-1}$	"Numbers complexes $z=x+y.i$	body kit $= \mathbb{C}\mathbb{R}[i]$	resolubility good order
Cohen (1960)	situation S	parts buildable C, C', \dots		a part generic G	parts hybrids $C \cup (C' \cap G) \dots$	situation $S[G]$	genericity constructibility
Dedekind (1870)	body kit \mathbb{Q}	numbers rational	a OPE- RA- TION	a "break	numbers real	body kit \mathbb{R}	continuous enumerability
Conway (1970)	body kit \mathbb{R}	numbers real		a "match	numbers surreal	body kit surreal	incommensurability

All in all, **let's note** the articulation of three dimensions : the long march of the different modernities (since the 1830s³³ therefore for two centuries) articulates three operations, which we need to understand as intertwined rather than separate dimensions.

- 1) A **subtractive** dimension. The specific operation here is that of **abandonment** or **renunciation** - see abandonment :
 - solving polynomial equations with modern algebra ;
 - perspective in modern painting ;
 - of tone, metre and theme in modern music ;
 - etc...
- 2) A **refounding** dimension. The specific operation here is that of **reconstruction** or **refoundation** - see reconstruction :
 - of modern algebra on the new group structure ;
 - of modern painting on the coloured surface of the canvas;
 - modern music on the series;
 - etc...
- 3) An **extensive** dimension via the adjunction. The specific operation here is that of **extension** - see extension :
 - of modern algebra through the various Grothendickian additions of topos, schemas and motifs;
 - of modern music through the various additions of atonal harmony (Schoenberg), renewed modality (Debussy-Ravel), a new type of thematicism (Boulez), quarter tones and then micro-intervals (Vichnegranski...), new types of instruments and sonorities (Russolo-Varèse-Schaeffer), the spectrum (*L'itinéraire*), heterophony (in my own music)... ;
 - etc...

Subtractions, displacements and additions, as well as renunciations, recastings and extensions, are thus freely combined without a priori excluding each other.

³³ Around the 1830s, *mathematical* modernity (as we've seen), *political* modernity (socialism and Marxism) and *artistic modernity* (Romanticism, which also happens to magnify heterosexual love) engage in a striking synchronicity.

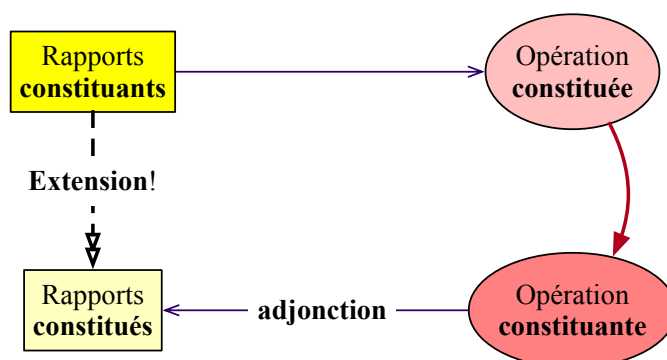
III. Mathematical resources for the People's Commune revolution?

Let's return to the subject of this column (the study of modern and contemporary mathematics as an intellectual resource for the orientation of communist politics) and ask ourselves how these mathematical revolutions by addition-extension can shed light on the Chinese Communist Revolution, launched in 1958 by the mass invention of the People's Communes.

Remember: the point here is not to **apply** mathematical results to political situations, but to **interrogate** these situations from an unexpected angle that mathematical thinking can provide.

Five features

's sketch the following features of mathematical addition-extension:



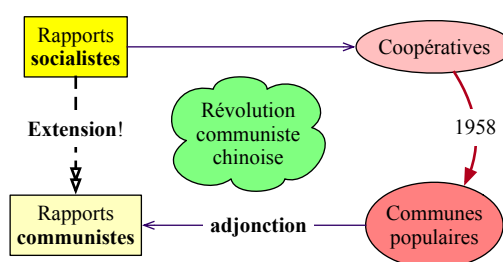
- 1) Addition is an **operation endogenous** to the initial situation: it can be understood from within this situation and controlled by intrinsic operations.
- 2) Addition **preserves the initial situation**: its own operations add and compose without destroying the original structure.
- 3) The resulting extension is larger, and its overall **size** is **not commensurable** with the original situation: there is no common measure (internal to the original situation) between the two situations (the extended situation is not globally appropriable as such in the original situation, even if each element can be separately: its new structure overflows it on all sides).
- 4) If it is indeed a revolution and not a simple reform, **extension comes at a price**: it does not retain all the structural characteristics of the initial situation, and one of them is most often lost (as we have seen: successively countability with Dedekind, good order with Gauss, constructibility with Cohen...).
- 5) A new type of addition can be **resurrected**: reappearing, renewed and in a completely different context, more than a century after its invention (Galois-1830 → Cohen-1960 ; Dedekind-1870 → Conway-1970³⁴). In other words, each addition-extension constitutes a **victory** for thought, which, once acquired, forms the basis of a **long-term hope** (the time scale of which far exceeds that of a single human life).³⁵

Five questions

So many questions that mathematics can intellectually address to this addition of the People's Communes in the socialist China of 1958, which gave rise to a communist revolution that can be schematized as follows:

³⁴ Let's not forget the resurrection of infinitesimals from the 17th century (Newton-Leibniz) to the end of the 20th century (Robinson-Lawvere), three centuries apart.

³⁵ Well under a century!



- 1) **The endogenous** character of the People's Communes in the Great Socialist Leap Forward is event-driven. Historically, this character has made it difficult to understand, since mass invention was initially poorly distinguished from specifically *state-led* (i.e. *constructivist*) socialist planning. In other words, the power of the endogenous character of the addition has as its counterpart, when it occurs event-driven (i.e. without being planned), a certain indistinctness.
- 2) In a certain sense, **the People's Communes did not radically abolish anything**: neither the cooperative form, nor the property relations associated with it, nor socialist social relations (e.g. "to each according to his work"), nor the socialist state, still less the Communist Party! They **supplemented** the situation, opening up a space for political confrontation that was all the more uncertain because it could no longer be fully understood within the old parameters of class division.
- 3) The People's Communes extended the Chinese political situation by **adding new, specifically Communist political principles** (such as "to each according to his needs"³⁶): not only by adding them in the countryside for the peasants, but by putting their relevance on the agenda first and foremost for the people of the cities (urban communes by the women of the people) and the workers (Shanghai workers' commune), but also for an overall communist policy (effectively tackling the reduction of the great contradictions and the withering away of the state rather than constantly reinforcing them in an "accelerated construction of socialism"). In this way, the communist orientation is **a hope rooted in limited victories here and now**, and not a hope in tomorrows that would sing of imaginary great definitive victories after centuries of sacrifice and misfortune.
- 4) This attempt at Communist expansion came **at a price**: an entirely new type of division in the old Communist Party, which had been united since 1949 in the construction of socialism. We know that this price was dearly paid from 1958 to 1976, and that Mao tried, foot by foot, to circumscribe it politically by constantly inventing new ways of politically organizing the Communist revolution thus event-driven.
- 5) However, the final failure of this communist addition-extension in China is not the last political word in the matter: its objective existence and its subjective ek-sistence on a mass scale (hundreds of millions of people for almost twenty years!) remains **a legacy for all mankind**, today and tomorrow, so that its ideas and principles can be re-appropriated and resurrected (with the necessary corrections and additions), just as Cohen was able to re-appropriate Galois 130 years later, or Conway was able to resurrect Dedekind's cuts 100 years later.

In this case, as in others, it's a question of **Long Collective Marches!**

Concluding reserve

We've been studying revolutions by addition-extension. But beware (and we've insisted on this at several points): conversely, not every addition-extension necessarily constitutes a revolution!

As proof of this, it suffices to note the following: in a given situation, to ek-sistentially hold one's subjective point is certainly to adjoin it (and not merely to add it) to the situation concerned, since the point held is supposed, by definition, to act on the various components of the situation (indeed, one doesn't hold one's point in a situation... by withdrawing or retrenching from it).

³⁶ Principle implemented in the canteens of the People's Communes (which canteens were precisely the focus of political criticism from the Right - see the Lushan conference in the summer of 1959).

But will the addition of this point "revolutionize" the situation in question? In this case, everything depends on the type of subjective ek-sistence that is added: certain added points can affect the **overall** situation without radically modifying it, in other words, revolutionizing it.

As we've seen, simply adding $\sqrt{2}$ to the \mathbb{Q} body is not enough to revolutionize it (it doesn't transform it into the new \mathbb{R} body), whereas adding $i=\sqrt{-1}$ to \mathbb{R} is enough to revolutionize it by transforming it into the new \mathbb{C} body.

There are therefore additions that **reform** their situation by extending it, but without, strictly speaking, revolutionizing it.

Beware, then, of the risk of fetishizing the term revolution, a risk inherent in the bias adopted here of reactivating it politically as a communist.

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[PRESS REVIEW]

This new section is designed to point out journals or issues of journals that we should follow or discuss, in order to confront our own intellectuality. It has only a signal function here, as articles can be the subject of critical reviews in "Choses Lues" when justified.

REVUE *FRACAS*

A new ecological magazine, the result of a left-wing split from *Socialalter* magazine. Its declared aim is to better integrate ecological and social struggles, environmental and class issues, dimensions of reproduction and dimensions of production. Hence our interest in following its editorial work.

FRACAS number 2: *The carbofascist threat*



The carbofascist threat

While Trump's victory and nationalist upsurges around the world never cease to be commented on, few analyses reveal the links between the far right and the fossil fuel industry. Yet both are fueled by the same ingredients: anti-environmentalism, extractivism and masculinism. By combining authoritarian power with unwavering support for fossil fuel capitalism, carbofascism brings us ever closer to climate chaos. This issue explores the dangers that the alliance between brown plague and black gold poses for the planet and humanity.

Extracts from the table of contents

- DOSSIER - *The carbofascist threat: black gold and brown plague*

The magazine argues for a split in the far right between "ecofascism" (ecology in its far-right version) and "carbofascism" (or "fossil fascism", addicted to fuels and hostile to ecological imperatives). The former would think primarily from a local terroir, the latter from a national framework.

- BOOKS AND OUTINGS

A review of recent publications, detailed (ten pages!), clearly commented and invaluable for those who want to keep abreast of the latest thinking on ecology.

LA RECHERCHE MAGAZINE: "SOILS"



Almost invisible beneath our feet, the soil is nonetheless vital. While forests, oceans and the air we breathe take center stage on the environmental scene, soil remains largely ignored. As if it were the blind spot in our collective imagination. This oversight has dramatic consequences: every year, thousands of square kilometers of fertile land disappear under concrete or are rendered sterile by intensive agricultural practices. Industrial, urban and domestic activities still discharge their effluents in the form of pollutants and waste, including the tenacious "eternal pollutants" and microplastics.

This silent destruction is hampering our ability to feed a world population that will reach almost ten billion by 2050. And yet, scientists tell us, solutions do exist. They involve sustainable, coordinated management that not only preserves soil fertility, but also combats global warming. By taking care of the soil, we are cultivating our future.

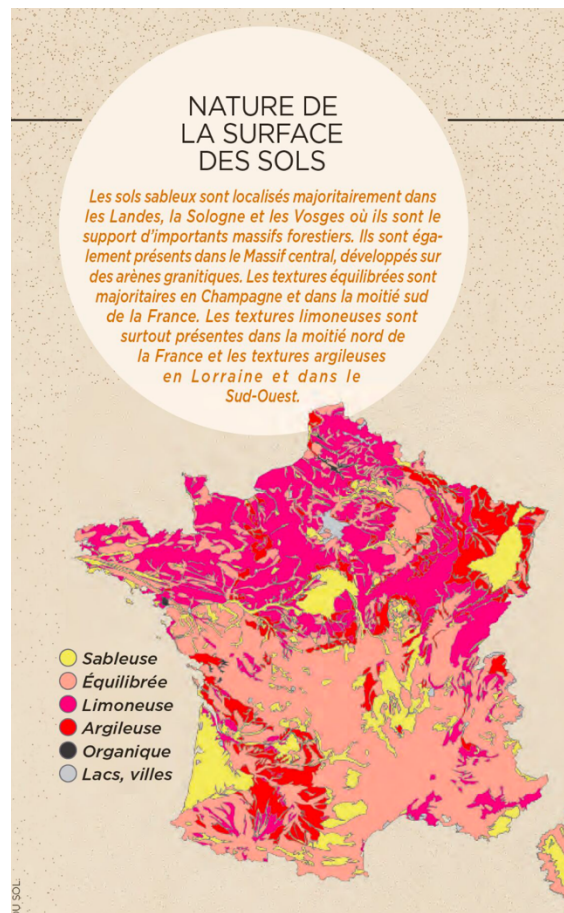
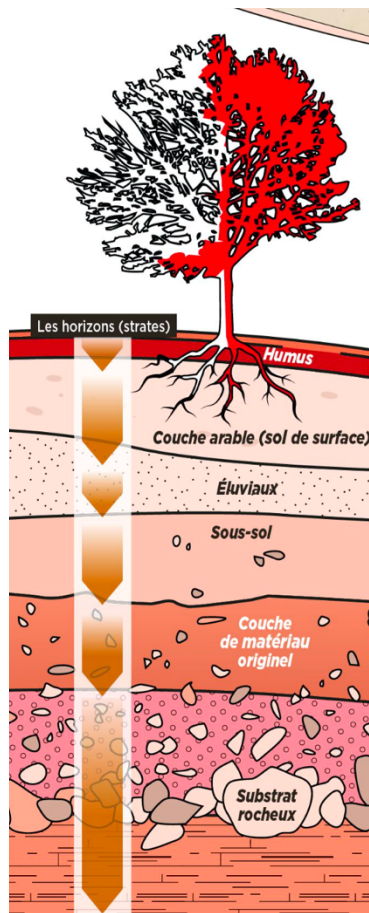
quarterly N°580 dated January-March 2025
<https://www.larecherche.fr/parution/trimestriel-580>

Excerpts from the "Soil: a vital ecosystem" dossier

- **The soil** is a thin layer ranging from a few centimetres to several metres.
 - After air and water, the importance of soil has finally been recognized.
 - It takes a century to create a centimetre of soil.
 - The soil is a zone of exchange between the various components of the globe: hydrosphere, lithosphere, biosphere and atmosphere.
 - Strictly speaking, soil is not alive in itself, but it contains a multitude of living organisms in complex interaction¹ which represent less than 0.1% of its volume (the rest being composed of minerals and organic matter).
 - Soil is not just a support, but an ecosystem in its own right. It's not just a stock of materials, but above all a place of processes. It's an incessant dynamic.
 - Hence *pedology* as the science of soil.
 - European soils, which are between 5,000 and 10,000 years old, are of average depth (a few metres at most).
- **Ploughing** may seem to help plants survive in the soil, as it aerates and mixes the soil. But in reality, it damages soil life and disrupts the actions of living organisms: it breaks roots, tears fungal filaments, destroys earthworms (those "soil engineers"). It breaks everything that holds the soil together, facilitating mudflows and erosion. Excessive ploughing increases soil erosion by a factor of 10 to 100. As a result, European soils have lost 50% of their organic matter since the 1950s.
- We need to distinguish between **organic** farming (no pesticides but ploughing) and **conservation farming** (no ploughing but some pesticides).

¹ 99% of bacterial species have yet to be described.

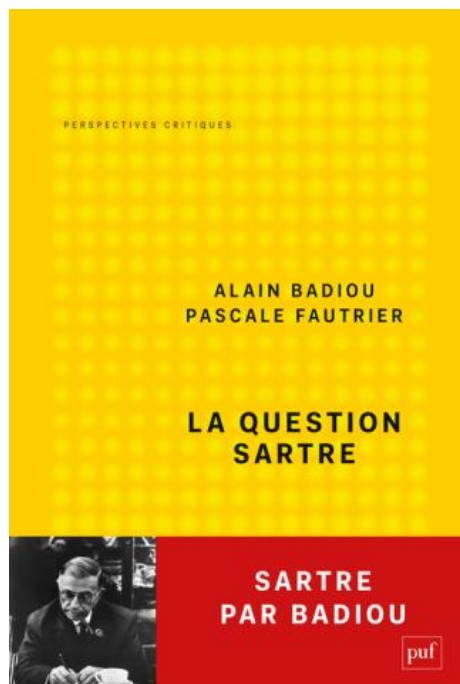
- **Agroforestry** integrates trees into crops: tree roots colonize the soil at greater depth than grass. In Europe, agroforestry represents 15.4 million hectares, or 8.8% of agricultural land.



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[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

THE SARTRE QUESTION (ALAIN BADIOU AND PASCALE FAUTRIER)



Is Sartre ancient history? Quite the contrary. Few of the great figures of twentieth-century thought have been so misunderstood. Often caricatured as the representative of an outdated political extremism, he was, on the contrary, the most rigorous intellectual of his time to steer a line of thought that refused to give up on the horizon of emancipation for all. At a time when the most terrible reactionary forces seem to be emerging from the dustbins of history to wipe out the last remnants of the struggle for equality and happiness, it's time to take another look at the itinerary and ideas of a man who spent his life fighting against all forms of fascism. Sartre's thought has always been at the heart of those of Alain Badiou and Pascale Fautrier. Together, in a kaleidoscope of texts, they rectify malicious interpretations and restore the irreducible philosophical and political heart of a thinker more relevant than ever to our times.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by Alain Badiou

Three lectures by Alain Badiou

- *Sartre and commitment* (2013)
- *Hommage à Sartre I* (1981)
- *Hommage à Sartre II* (1990)

Sartre in the work of Alain Badiou. Spotted by Pascale Fautrier

- The break with existentialism, 1967-1982
- The break is also a loyalty, 1981-2006
- *Sartre in The Immanence of Truths* (2018)
- Back to Plato

What is an idea? From Plato to the communist idea by Alain Badiou (2023)

PIERRE BOULEZ TODAY (LAURENT BAYLE)

LAURENT BAYLE

Pierre Boulez aujourd'hui



Nothing that has mattered since the end of the Second World War seems to have escaped Pierre Boulez: a leading composer of modernity, a revered conductor, an admired and feared intellectual, he was also the founder of prestigious musical institutions.

An unusual personality, open to the world, he questioned all fields of thought and maintained privileged relationships with the greatest writers, painters, directors, architects, philosophers and scientists of his time.

In this book, his fellow traveler Laurent Bayle analyzes why the vision and struggles of one of the twentieth century's greatest geniuses continue to shape our present and inspire the future of creation.

Florilège (P. Boulez)

"One may well arrogate to oneself the leisure to define affinities, in the rest and relaxation of reflection; but this detonation, then this silence within oneself that expands beyond all estimation, then this incoercible force and brutality that projects you beyond limits suddenly perceived as unacceptable, rare, rare are the face-to-face encounters capable of triggering them." (On René Char, 1983)

"Promoting **contemporary thinking** in all fields

"The musician is both **an intellectual and a musician**. This dual attitude is the *only* way to ensure coherence with regard to what he wants to express."

"**Composition**, composition, that's the only definition of art. [What is not composed is not art.

"I don't picture a rich existence in the dangers of dispersion, provided that at the center of multiple activity remains **the firmness of direction**."

[*Music is a whole; it is writing that unifies the whole*] (p. 49).

[*Lucid renunciation is a condition of creation*] (p. 56).

[*Let's not deceive ourselves about hope. Creation demands an immanent faith in our world*]. (p. 59)

"When Webern transcribes Bach, it's fascinating, because he grafts his perception onto a text that didn't require it. As a composer, I find it more **fertile**: I see a predator appropriating the past."

"Is it a good idea to separate music from general culture? My categorical answer is no!"

"It's better to have too many ideas than not enough!"

"Thinking the margin, expressing an identical subject by finding **new extensions each time**."

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SEMINAR : *MAMUPHI* (IRCAM)



mathematics - music - philosophy

The seminar takes place **AT IRCAM** (1 Place Igor Stravinsky, 75004 Paris).

<http://www.entretemps.asso.fr/2024-2025>

Youtube channel

Saturday, March 8, 2025

Program

10am-1pm

François **Nicolas**: *Contemporary incommensurabilities in mathematics, music and philosophy: saturations, obstacles or obstructions?*

2:30 - 5:30 pm: *Music and politics*

Frederico **Lyra de Carvalho** (USP/CRAE/Alameda) - *Notes for "Music and politics in and out of the world" and brief presentation of the volume*

Alípio **C Neto** - *Persuasion and rhetoric in improvisation*

Cecília **M. G. Pires** (CRAL/EHESS) - *The music policy of the Armorial Movement*

Sales pitch

F. **Nicolas**: *Contemporary incommensurabilities in mathematics, music and philosophy: saturations, obstacles or obstructions?*

This talk will focus on the following question (without demanding well-established answers): what is the state of **contemporary incommensurabilities** in various fields of thought, particularly in mathematics, music and philosophy?

I

We begin by distinguishing, in a situation considered blocked, three strategies for understanding and resolving this blockage:

- 1) as internal **saturation**: hence the **abandonment of** the situation considered definitively sterile;
- 2) as an extrinsic **obstacle**: hence a **deconstruction of** the situation as a dead end;
- 3) as an endogenous **obstruction**: hence the affirmative **relief** through the addition of the¹ object, which secretly accounts for the manifest blockage, an addition capable of refertilizing the initial situation by extending it.

Against the first two orientations (postmodern and nihilizing), we'll focus on the third, specifically **modern**, in the light of mathematics.

II

¹ of a new type...

We will then examine, at a time when incommensurabilities are proliferating, how today to take affirmative measure of their existence.²

- In **mathematics**, how does contemporary algebra take renewed account of the ancient incommensurability between **arithmetic and geometry**?
- How does **musical** discourse take contemporary account of the age-old incommensurability between **perception and writing**?
- In **philosophy**, how do the subjects of truths take measure of the original incommensurability that divides the "there is" into **what exists and what happens** (i.e. how do we subjectively ek-sist at the exact point where it turns out that "*there is not only what there is*")?³
- Between **men and women**, how does heterosexual love take the measure of a certain incommensurability between the two sexes (dividing humanity) under the sign of shared happiness, in contrast to romantic fusion, Proustian jealousy or the ancient matriarchal/patriarchal war?
- Finally, in **politics**, what kind of activists are needed to take the political measure of the incommensurabilities that are proliferating today (generalized apartheid, the "double standards" dear to the West...), thus dislocating any prospect of a world⁴ common to all humanity, and profiling war as the only conceivable measure of current antagonisms?

III

We'll be taking a closer look at these incommensurabilities, particularly the first three (*mamuphi* oblige!), by examining how, for each of them, the three orientations initially distinguished are now opposed: saturation and abandonment, obstacle and deconstruction, obstruction and recovery.

We conclude by outlining a *Mamuphi* work program to study the new obstructions and their modern reliefs.

Music and politics

F. **Lyra de Carvalho**: *Presentation of the volume* Music and politics in and out of the world

For this exhibition, we'll be presenting a first draft of a work-in-progress destined to become the article that will make up the book *Musique et Politique*, the contents and general idea of which we'll also briefly outline.

It's about thinking about a possible position, both inside and outside the hegemonic world of music and the social world.

We will attempt to elaborate a schematic and programmatic model of a possible relationship that an improvising musician can have with contemporary musical material and the space it can occupy in today's socio-historical world.

A. **C Neto**: *Persuasion and rhetoric in improvisation*

In my latest research, I've used unusual theoretical categories to understand the interconnections between improvisation and musical performance.

Improvisation has broadened the binary composition-performance model, requiring flexible interpretation mechanisms adapted to the fluid nature of music and its aesthetic perception.

C. **M. G. Pires**: *The Armorial Movement's music policy*

The Armorial Movement took place in Recife, Brazil, between the 1960s and 1980s, against a backdrop of military dictatorship. It was a multi-artistic movement in which music played a central

² Of course, to take the measure of the existence of an incommensurability is not to fantasize the measure of an incommensurable!

³ "It's not just **what exists**, because it's also **what happens**."

⁴ Thesis (*Logiques des mondes* by Alain Badiou): what makes a world is the existence of a common measure of what it means to exist and not to exist.

role.

In addition to presenting the movement, we will mainly discuss the political choices linked to the modal musical material used in the compositions of this music and its relations of tension with the tradition of popular and learned Brazilian music.

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