

glimpses
beyond
the
violence of
normativity

YOU ARE A VICTIM OF
THE RULES YOU LIVE BY

PRELIMINARIES

I

Behind the hypnotic grimace of official pacification there is a war being waged. A war that can no longer merely be called economic, social, or humanitarian. It has become *total*. Although everyone senses that their existence has become a battlefield upon which neuroses, phobias, somatizations, depression, and anxiety each sound a retreat, nobody has yet really grasped what is happening or what is at stake. Paradoxically, it is the total nature of this war—total in its means no less than its ends—that has allowed it to remain invisible.

Rather than open offensives, Empire prefers more intricate methods, chronic preventative measures, the molecular diffusion of constraint into everyday life. Here, internal police conveniently

takes over for general policing, individual self-control for social control. Ultimately, it's the omnipresence of the new police that has made the war undetectable.

II

What is at stake in the current war are forms-of-life, which is to say, for Empire, their selection, management, and attenuation. The stranglehold of Spectacle over the public expression of desires, the biopolitical monopoly on all medical power-knowledge, the restraints placed on all deviance by an army ever better-equipped with psychiatrists, coaches, and other benevolent “facilitators,” the aesthetico-police *booking* of each individual according to her/his biological determinations, the ever more imperative and detailed surveillance of behavior, the proscription by common accord against “violence,” all this enters into the anthropological project, or rather the *anthropotechnical* project of Empire. *It is a matter of profiling citizens.*

Evidently, impeding the expression of forms-of-life—forms-of-life not as something that would mold a material from the outside, material that would otherwise remain formless, “bare life,” but rather as that which affects every body-in-situation with a certain tendency, an intimate motion—does not result from a pure politics of repression. A

whole imperial project of diversion, interference, and polarization of bodies centered on absences and impossibilities is at work. The impact is less immediate but also more durable. Over time, and via so many combined effects, THEY ultimately obtain the desired disarmament—in particular *immuno*-disarmament—of bodies.

The vanquished in this war are not so much citizens as those who, denying its reality, have capitulated from the outset: what THEY allow the vanquished, in the guise of “existence,” is now nothing but a *lifelong* struggle to render oneself compatible with Empire. But for the others, for us, every gesture, every desire, every affect encounters, at some distance, the need to annihilate Empire and its citizens. A question of letting passions breathe in their fullness. Following this criminal path, we have the time; nothing obliges us to seek out direct confrontation. That would be proof of weakness. Assaults will be launched, however, assaults which will be less important than the *position* from which they originate, for our assaults undermine Empire’s forces just as our position undermines its strategy. Accordingly, the more Empire will seem to be accumulating victories, the deeper it will bury itself in defeat, and the more irremediable the defeat will be. Imperial strategy consists first of organizing the blindness of forms-of-life and their illiteracy when it comes to ethical

differences, of rendering the battlefield difficult to distinguish if not invisible, and in the most critical cases, of masking the *real war* in all manner of false conflicts.

Retaking the offensive for our side is a matter of making the battlefield manifest. The figure of the Young-Girl is a *vision machine* conceived to this effect. Some will use it to account for the massive character of hostile occupation forces in our existences, others, more vigorous, will use it to determine the speed and direction of their advance. What each of us does with this vision machine will show what we're worth.

You are on the tram to the city centre. Suddenly you see how two young men start insulting and then pushing around a black woman. When the woman asks them to stop, none of the passengers react.

What you can do

In this situation, a prompt and decisive reaction is needed. Someone is in danger, the woman needs help. There are some simple things you can do even if you are afraid or feel helpless.

- Ask the tram driver to call the police. If you have a mobile phone, call the police yourself. If you cannot reach the driver, ask a passenger who sits closer to the front to do so.
- Ask the perpetrators to stop harassing the woman – non-aggressive but decidedly. If one person reacts, others are likely to follow. Once people intervene, the perpetrators understand that their action sparks protest instead of indifference or even silent support.
- Keep eye contact with the woman and assure her that you will help her.
- Approach other passengers and ask them to come to the woman's aid. It is important to address third persons directly and individually, thus it is more probable that they will help ("You there, in the blue coat...").
- Do not address the perpetrators informally. This could increase their anger and aggression. Moreover, other passengers might think you know each other and that you have a personal conflict.
- Do not provoke the perpetrators and do not allow them to provoke you. Avoid staring at the perpetrators. This can make them aggressive and escalate the situation.
- You can ask the driver to block the doors until the police arrive.
- If the perpetrators runs away, the police will need details in order to start their investigation. Give a description of the perpetrators' appearance, sex, age and any other noticeable features to the authorities. Also

try to keep track of their escape route.

Many similar situations are imaginable. It is crucial to take action by all means. Your active intervention will show the perpetrators that their assault does not remain unnoticed, but that there are people who intervene and hold them accountable. Ignorance will be interpreted as acceptance, by the perpetrators, the public and the victims. A single step can change the situation and make a big difference for the victim.

This checklist summarises the most important steps for courageous intervention:

1. Be prepared.

Think about a situation in which a person is threatened or attacked. Imagine how you would feel and what you could do to help.

2. Keep calm.

Concentrate on what you imagined in step 1. Don't let fear or anger distract you.

3. Act immediately.

React quickly and don't wait until other people help. The longer you hesitate, the more difficult it becomes to intervene.

4. Bring help.

Use your mobile phone to call the police (make sure you have necessary numbers in your list of contacts). On the bus: Inform the driver. On the street: Shout loudly. If you are uncertain about the choice of adequate words: "FIRE!" definitely calls for immediate attention.

5. Attract attention.

Approach passengers and observers directly and individually: "You there, in the blue jacket, please inform the driver!" Speak loudly! Your voice will make you confident and encourage others to intervene as well.

6. Support the victim.

Keep eye contact with the victim to assure that you are there to help.

7. Irritate the perpetrator.

Scream loudly. This also works in case your voice fails.

8. Never use violence.

Don't use weapons. Don't touch the perpetrator. This can increase his or her aggression and escalate the situation.

9. Don't provoke the perpetrator.

Do not directly address him or her, as people could think

you know each other. Don't stare at the perpetrator; this could make him or her more aggressive.

10. Call the police.

Do not just stare but carefully observe the scene and try to remember the perpetrator's face, clothes and escape route. Report the case to the police and serve as witness.

Chaos

Chaos never died. Primordial uncarved block, sole worshipful monster, inert & spontaneous, more ultraviolet than any mythology (like the shadows before Babylon), the original undifferentiated oneness-of-being still radiates serene as the black pennants of Assassins, random & perpetually intoxicated.

Chaos comes before all principles of order & entropy, it's neither a god nor a maggot, its idiotic desires encompass & define every possible choreography, all meaningless aethers & phlogistons: its masks are crystallizations of its own facelessness, like clouds.

Everything in nature is perfectly real including consciousness, there's absolutely nothing to worry about. Not only have the chains of the Law been broken, they never existed; demons never guarded the stars, the Empire never got started, Eros never grew a beard.

No, listen, what happened was this: they lied to you, sold you ideas of good & evil, gave you distrust of your body & shame for your prophethood of chaos, invented words of disgust for your molecular love, mesmerized you with inattention, bored you with civilization & all its usurious emotions.

There is no becoming, no revolution, no struggle, no path; already you're the monarch of your own skin — your inviolable freedom waits to be completed only by the love of other monarchs: a politics of dream, urgent as the blueness of sky.

To shed all the illusory rights & hesitations of history demands the economy of some legendary Stone Age — shamans not priests, bards not lords, hunters not police, gatherers of paleolithic laziness, gentle as blood, going naked for a sign or painted as birds, poised on the wave of explicit presence, the clockless nowever.

Agents of chaos cast burning glances at anything or anyone capable of bearing witness to their condition, their fever of *lux et voluptas*. I am awake only in what I love & desire to the point of terror — everything else is just shrouded furniture, quotidian anaesthesia, shit-for-brains, sub-reptilian ennui of totalitarian regimes, banal censorship & useless pain.

Avatars of chaos act as spies, saboteurs, criminals of amour fou, neither selfless nor selfish, accessible as children, mannered as barbarians, chafed with obsessions, unemployed, sensually deranged, wolfangels, mirrors for contemplation, eyes like flowers, pirates of all signs & meanings.

Here we are crawling the cracks between walls of church state school & factory, all the paranoid monoliths. Cut off from the tribe by feral nostalgia we tunnel after lost words, imaginary bombs.

The last possible *deed* is that which defines perception itself, an invisible golden cord that connects us: illegal dancing in the courthouse corridors. If I were to kiss you here they'd call it an act of terrorism — so let's take our pistols to bed & wake up the city at midnight like drunken bandits celebrating with a fusillade, the message of the taste of chaos.

It would be a mistake to read *Anti-Oedipus* as *the* new theoretical reference (you know, that much-heralded theory that finally encompasses everything, that finally totalizes and reassures, the one we are told we "need so badly" in our age of dispersion and specialization where "hope" is lacking). One must not look for a "philosophy" amid the extraordinary profusion of new notions and surprise concepts: *Anti-Oedipus* is not a flashy Hegel. I think that *Anti-Oedipus* can best be read as an "art," in the sense that is conveyed by the term "erotic art," for example. Informed by the seemingly abstract notions of multiplicities, flows, arrangements, and connections, the analysis of the relationship of desire to reality and to the capitalist "machine" yields answers to concrete questions. Questions that are less concerned with *why* this or that than with *how* to proceed. How does one introduce desire into thought, into discourse, into action? How can and must desire deploy its forces within the political domain and grow more intense in the process of overturning the established order? *Ars erotica, ars theoretica, ars politico.*

Whence the three adversaries confronted by *Anti-Oedipus*. Three adversaries who do not have the same strength, who represent varying degrees of danger, and whom the book combats in different ways:

1. The political ascetics, the sad militants, the terrorists of theory, those who would preserve the pure order of politics and political discourse. Bureaucrats of the revolution and civil servants of Truth.
2. The poor technicians of desire—psychoanalysts and semiolo-

gists of every sign and symptom—who would subjugate the multiplicity of desire to the twofold law of structure and lack.

3. Last but not least, the major enemy, the strategic adversary is fascism (whereas *Anti-Oedipus'* opposition to the others is more of a tactical engagement). And not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini—which was able to mobilize and use the desire of the masses so effectively—but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us.

I would say that *Anti-Oedipus* (may its authors forgive me) is a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time (perhaps that explains why its success was not limited to a particular "readership": being anti-oedipal has become a life style, a way of thinking and living). How does one keep from being fascist, even (especially) when one believes oneself to be a revolutionary militant? How do we rid our speech and our acts, our hearts and our pleasures, of fascism? How do we ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behavior? The Christian moralists sought out the traces of the flesh lodged deep within the soul. Deleuze and Guattari, for their part, pursue the slightest traces of fascism in the body.

Paying a modest tribute to Saint Francis de Sales,* one might say that *Anti-Oedipus* is an *Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life*.

This art of living counter to all forms of fascism, whether already present or impending, carries with it a certain number of essential principles which I would summarize as follows if I were to make this great book into a manual or guide to everyday life:

- Free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia.
- Develop action, thought, and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction, and not by subdivision and pyramidal hierarchization.
- Withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lacuna), which Western thought has so long held sacred as a form of power and an access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic.
- Do not think that one has to be sad in order to be militant, even though the thing one is fighting is abominable. It is the connection of

*A seventeenth-century priest and Bishop of Geneva, known for his *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

desire to reality (and not its retreat into the forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force.

- Do not use thought to ground a political practice in Truth; nor political action to discredit, as mere speculation, a line of thought. Use political practice as an intensifier of thought, and analysis as a multiplier of the forms and domains for the intervention of political action.

- Do not demand of politics that it restore the "rights" of the individual, as philosophy has defined them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to "de-individualize" by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization.

- Do not become enamored of power.

It could even be said that Deleuze and Guattari care so little for power that they have tried to neutralize the effects of power linked to their own discourse. Hence the games and snares scattered throughout the book, rendering its translation a feat of real prowess. But these are not the familiar traps of rhetoric; the latter work to sway the reader without his being aware of the manipulation, and ultimately win him over against his will. The traps of *Anti-Oedipus* are those of humor: so many invitations to let oneself be put out, to take one's leave of the text and slam the door shut. The book often leads one to believe it is all fun and games, when something essential is taking place, something of extreme seriousness: the tracking down of all varieties of fascism, from the enormous ones that surround and crush us to the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical bitterness of our everyday lives.

“When I think about the way we use the term ‘study,’ I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It’s talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The notion of a rehearsal – being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory – there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it ‘study’ is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present.” (p. 110)

“Moten and Harney also study what it would mean to refuse what they term “the call to order.” And what would it mean, furthermore, to refuse to call others to order, to refuse interpellation and the re-instantiation of the law. When we refuse, Moten and Harney suggest, we create dissonance and more importantly, we allow dissonance to continue – when we enter a classroom and we refuse to call it to order, we are allowing study to continue, dissonant study perhaps, disorganized study, but study that precedes our call and will continue after we have left the room. Or, when we listen to music, we must refuse the idea that music happens only when the musician enters and picks up an instrument; music is also the anticipation of the performance and the noises of appreciation it generates and the speaking that happens through and around it, making it and loving it, being in it while listening. And so, when we refuse the call to order – the teacher picking up the book, the conductor raising his baton, the speaker asking for silence, the torturer tightening the noose – we refuse order as the distinction between noise and music, chatter and knowledge, pain and truth.” (p. 16)

In some remote corner of the universe, poured out and glittering in innumerable solar systems, there once was a star on which clever animals invented knowledge. That was the highest and most mendacious minute of "world history"—yet only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths the star grew cold, and the clever animals had to die.

One might invent such a fable and still not have illustrated sufficiently how wretched, how shadowy and flighty, how aimless and arbitrary, the human intellect appears in nature. There have been eternities when it did not exist; and when it is done for again, nothing will have happened. For this intellect has no further mission that would lead beyond human life. It is human, rather, and only its owner and producer gives it such importance, as if the world pivoted around it. But if we could communicate with the mosquito, then we would learn that he floats through the air with the same self-importance, feeling within itself the flying center of the world. There is nothing in nature so despicable or insignificant that it cannot immediately be blown up like a bag by a slight breath of this power of knowledge; and just as every porter wants an admirer, the proudest human being, the philosopher, thinks that he sees on the eyes of the universe telescopically focused from all sides on his actions and thoughts.

It is strange that this should be the effect of the intellect, for after all it was given only as an aid to the most unfortunate, most delicate, most evanescent beings in order

to hold them for a minute in existence, from which otherwise, without this gift, they would have every reason to flee as quickly as Lessing's son. [In a famous letter to Johann Joachim Eschenburg (December 31, 1778), Lessing relates the death of his infant son, who "understood the world so well that he left it at the first opportunity."] That haughtiness which goes with knowledge and feeling, which shrouds the eyes and senses of man in a blinding fog, therefore deceives him about the value of existence by carrying in itself the most flattering evaluation of knowledge itself. Its most universal effect is deception; but even its most particular effects have something of the same character.

The intellect, as a means for the preservation of the individual, unfolds its chief powers in simulation; for this is the means by which the weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves, since they are denied the chance of waging the struggle for existence with horns or the fangs of beasts of prey. In man this art of simulation reaches its peak: here deception, flattering, lying and cheating, talking behind the back, posing, living in borrowed splendor, being masked, the disguise of convention, acting a role before others and before oneself—in short, the constant fluttering around the single flame of vanity is so much the rule and the law that almost nothing is more incomprehensible than how an honest and pure urge for truth could make its appearance among men. They are deeply immersed in illusions and dream images; their eye glides only over the surface of things and sees "forms"; their feeling nowhere lead into truth, but contents itself with the reception of stimuli, playing, as it were, a game of blindman's buff on the backs of things. Moreover, man permits himself to be lied to at

night, his life long, when he dreams, and his moral sense never even tries to prevent this—although men have been said to have overcome snoring by sheer will power.

What, indeed, does man know of himself! Can he even once perceive himself completely, laid out as if in an illuminated glass case? Does not nature keep much the most from him, even about his body, to spellbind and confine him in a proud, deceptive consciousness, far from the coils of the intestines, the quick current of the blood stream, and the involved tremors of the fibers? She threw away the key; and woe to the calamitous curiosity which might peer just once through a crack in the chamber of consciousness and look down, and sense that man rests upon the merciless, the greedy, the insatiable, the murderous, in the indifference of his ignorance—hanging in dreams, as it were, upon the back of a tiger. In view of this, whence in all the world comes the urge for truth?

Insofar as the individual wants to preserve himself against other individuals, in a natural state of affairs he employs the intellect mostly for simulation alone. But because man, out of need and boredom, wants to exist socially, herd-fashion, he requires a peace pact and he endeavors to banish at least the very crudest *bellum omni contra omnes* [war of all against all] from his world. This peace pact brings with it something that looks like the first step toward the attainment of this enigmatic urge for truth. For now that is fixed which henceforth shall be "truth"; that is, a regularly valid and obligatory designation of things is invented, and this linguistic legislation also furnishes the first laws of truth: for it is here that the contrast between truth and lie first originates. The liar uses the valid designations, the words, to make the unreal appear as real; he says, for

example, "I am rich," when the word "poor" would be the correct designation of his situation. He abuses the fixed conventions by arbitrary changes or even by reversals of the names. When he does this in a self-serving way damaging to others, then society will no longer trust him but exclude him. Thereby men do not flee from being deceived as much as from being damaged by deception: what they hate at this stage is basically not the deception but the bad, hostile consequences of certain kinds of deceptions. In a similarly limited way man wants the truth: he desires the agreeable life-preserving consequences of truth, but he is indifferent to pure knowledge, which has no consequences; he is even hostile to possibly damaging and destructive truths. And, moreover, what about these conventions of language? Are they really the products of knowledge, of the sense of truth? Do the designations and the things coincide? Is language the adequate expression of all realities?

Only through forgetfulness can man ever achieve the illusion of possessing a "truth" in the sense just designated. If he does not wish to be satisfied with truth in the form of a tautology—that is, with empty shells—then he will forever buy illusions for truths. What is a word? The image of a nerve stimulus in sounds. But to infer from the nerve stimulus, a cause outside us, that is already the result of a false and unjustified application of the principle of reason... The different languages, set side by side, show that what matters with words is never the truth, never an adequate expression; else there would not be so many languages. The "thing in itself" (for that is what pure truth, without consequences, would be) is quite incomprehensible to the creators of language and not at all worth aiming for. One designates only the relations of things to man, and to

express them one calls on the boldest metaphors. A nerve stimulus, first transposed into an image—first metaphor. The image, in turn, imitated by a sound—second metaphor...

Let us still give special consideration to the formation of concepts. Every word immediately becomes a concept, inasmuch as it is not intended to serve as a reminder of the unique and wholly individualized original experience to which it owes its birth, but must at the same time fit innumerable, more or less similar cases—which means, strictly speaking, never equal—in other words, a lot of unequal cases. Every concept originates through our equating what is unequal. No leaf ever wholly equals another, and the concept "leaf" is formed through an arbitrary abstraction from these individual differences, through forgetting the distinctions; and now it gives rise to the idea that in nature there might be something besides the leaves which would be "leaf"—some kind of original form after which all leaves have been woven, marked, copied, colored, curled, and painted, but by unskilled hands, so that no copy turned out to be a correct, reliable, and faithful image of the original form. We call a person "honest." Why did he act so honestly today? we ask. Our answer usually sounds like this: because of his honesty. Honesty! That is to say again: the leaf is the cause of the leaves. After all, we know nothing of an essence-like quality named "honesty"; we know only numerous individualized, and thus unequal actions, which we equate by omitting the unequal and by then calling them honest actions. In the end, we distill from them a *qualitas occulta* [hidden quality] with the name of "honesty"...

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.

We still do not know where the urge for truth comes from; for as yet we have heard only of the obligation imposed by society that it should exist: to be truthful means using the customary metaphors—in moral terms: the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie herd-like in a style obligatory for all...

THE MAP IS NOT
THE TERRITORY

Our struggle then must begin with the reappropriation of our body, the revaluation and rediscovery of its capacity for resistance, and expansion and celebration of its powers, individual and collective.

Dance is central to this reappropriation. In essence, the act of dancing is an exploration and invention of what a body can do: of its capacities, its languages, its articulations of the strivings of our being. I have come to believe that there is a philosophy in dancing, for dance mimics the processes by which we relate to the world, connect with other bodies, transform ourselves and the space around us. From dance we learn that matter is not stupid, it is not blind, it is not mechanical but has its rhythms, its language, and it is self-activated and self-organizing. Our bodies have reasons that we need to learn, rediscover, reinvent. We need to listen to their language as the path to our health and healing, as we need to listen to the language and rhythms of the natural world as the path to the health and healing of the earth. Since the power to be affected and to effect, to be moved and to move, a capacity that is indestructible, exhausted only with death, is constitutive of the body, there is an immanent politics residing in it: the capacity to transform itself, others, and change the world.

AFTERWORD

On Joyful Militancy

The principle of joyful militancy is that either our politics are liberating, either they change our life in a way that is positive, that make us grow, give us joy, or there's something wrong with them.

Sad politics often come from an exaggerated sense of what we can do by ourselves, individually, which leads to the habit of overburdening ourselves. I am reminded here of Nietzsche's metamorphoses in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where he describes the camel as the beast of burden, the embodiment of the spirit of gravity. The camel is the prototype of the militants who are always loaded with huge amounts of work, because they think that the destiny of the world depends upon them. The heroic, Stakhanovite militants are always sad because they try to do so much that they are never fully present to what they are doing, never fully present to their lives and cannot appreciate the transformative possibilities of their political work. When we work this way, we are also frustrated because we are not transformed by what we do, and we have no time to change our relations with the people we are working with.

The mistake is setting goals that we cannot reach and always fighting "against" rather than trying to construct something. This means that we are always projected toward the future, whereas a joyful politics is constructive already in the present. More people today see that. We cannot place our

goals into a future that is constantly receding. We need to set goals that we can achieve in part also in the present, though our horizon must be obviously broader. Being politically active must positively change our life and our relations with people around us. Sadness comes when we continually postpone what is to be achieved to a future that we never see coming, and as a result we are blind to what is possible in the present.

I also object to the notion of self-sacrifice. I don't believe in sacrifice, if it means that we have to repress ourselves, that we do things that go against our needs, our desires, our potential. This is not to say that political work will not lead to suffering. But there is a difference between suffering because something we have decided to do has painful consequences—like facing repression, seeing people we care for hurt—and self-sacrifice, which is doing something against our desire and will, only because we think that it is our duty. This makes for unhappy, dissatisfied individuals. Doing political work must be healing. It must give us strength, vision, enhance our sense of solidarity, and make us realize our interdependence. Being able to politicize our pain, turn it into a source of knowledge, into something that connects us to other people—all of this has a healing power. It is “empowering” (a word, however, I have come to dislike).

I believe that the radical Left has often failed to attract people because it does not pay attention to the reproductive side of political work—the dinners together, the songs that strengthen our sense of being a collective subject, the affective relations we develop among each other. The indigenous people of the Americas teach us, for instance, how important the fiestas are as means not simply of recreation but also of solidarity building, of resignification of our mutual affection and responsibility. They teach us the importance of activities that bring people together, that make us feel the warmth of solidarity and build trust. Thus, they take the organization of fiestas very seriously. For all their limits, workers' organizations in

the past fulfilled this function, building centers where (male) workers would go after work, to drink a glass of wine, meet with comrades, pick up the latest news and plans for action. In this way politics created an extended family, the transmission of knowledge among the different generations was guaranteed, and politics itself acquired a different meaning. This has not been the culture of the Left, not at least in our time, and that is partly where sadness often comes in. Political work should change our relations with people, strengthen our connectedness, give us courage in the knowledge that we are not confronting the world alone.

I prefer to speak of joy rather than happiness. I prefer joy because it is an active passion. It is not a stagnant state of being. It is not satisfaction with things as they are. It is feeling our powers, seeing our capacities growing in ourselves and in the people around us. This is a feeling that comes from a process of transformation. It means, using Spinoza's language, that we understand the situation we are in and are moving along in accordance to what is required of us in that moment. So we feel that we have the power to change and that we are changing, together with other people. It's not acquiescence to what exists.

Spinoza speaks of joy as coming from reason and understanding. An important step here is understanding that we come to the movement with many scars. We all bear the marks of life in a capitalist society. This, in fact, is why we want to struggle, change the world. There would be no need for it if we could be perfect human beings—whatever this may mean—already in this society. But we are often disappointed because we imagine that in the movement we must find only harmonious relations, and instead we often encounter jealousies, backbiting, unequal power relations.

In the women's movement too we can experience painful and disappointing relations. In fact, it is in women's groups and organizations that we are most likely to experience deepest disappointments and pains. For we may expect to be let down

and betrayed by men, but we do not expect that from women, and we do not imagine that as women we can also hurt each other, we can feel devalued, unseen, or make other women feel this way. There are obviously times when behind the personal conflicts there are unacknowledged political differences that it may not be possible to overcome. But it is also possible that we feel betrayed and become heartbroken because we assume that being in a radical movement and above all being in a feminist movement is a guarantee of liberation from all the wounds that we carry in our bodies and souls, and therefore we let our defense down in a way we would never do in our personal relations with men or in mixed organizations. Inevitably sadness sets in, at times to the point that we decide to leave. With time we learn that the pettiness, the jealousies, the excessive vulnerabilities we often meet in women's movements are often part of the distortion that life in a capitalist society creates. It is part of our political growth to learn to identify them and not be destroyed by them.

What art can do when it tweaks toward the artful, what research-creation can do when the differential is activated by a minor gesture, is to make felt the intervals, the openings and captures within a process that is on its way to becoming a practice. This is explored in more detail in chapter 5.

The artful, in my reading of it, is aligned to what I have elsewhere called “autistic perception.”²¹ Autistic perception is the opening, in perception, to the uncategorized, to the unclassified. This opening, which is how many autistics describe their experience of the world, makes it initially difficult to parse the field of experience. Rather than seeing the parts abstracted from the whole, autistic perception is alive with tendencies that create ecologies before they coalesce into form. There is here as yet no hierarchical differentiation, for instance, between color, sound, light, between human and nonhuman, between what connects to the body and what connects to the world. When we engage in practice, when we are subsumed by process, we often seek this kind of perception, and it is available to us all: autistic perception does not belong exclusively to autistics. The difference is that, except in extreme circumstances, most of us parse experience before having a direct experience of the field in its complexity. The autistic, on the other hand, directly perceives the complexity before (and between) the parsings.

In the chapters that follow, the artful is always colored by the edgings into perceptibility of autistic perception. I focus on autistic perception not only to honor neurodiversity, to take into account modes of existence I consider key to making our worlds richer, but to make a political case for the necessity of creating techniques and minor gestures that open existence to its perceptual more-than. This is not to deny that autistic perception, for all its perceptual wonders, also makes typical aspects of everyday life difficult to manage. For instance: crossing a street, it is always safer to have been capable of parsing cars from sidewalks from humans. After all, we live in a world that privileges forms of perception where the part can quickly and

easily be singled out from the whole. By foregrounding the inheritance of autistic perception in the artful, we are reminded that the qualitative openings in experience activated by autistic perception have a value in their own right. The problem is not with autistic perception but with how we constitute and value the frameworks of everyday living.

Frameworks of everyday living are also of the event. And so, like all events, they can be modulated by minor gestures. They can be opened up to their potential in ways that intervene into capitalist time. They can become forms of resistance. They can do so, for instance, by altering rhythms, reducing our alignment to the homogeneity of capitalist speed. Altering the speed at which the everyday tends to function creates openings for neurodiverse forms of perception. It also makes time for modes of encounter otherwise elided. This call for the coursing of minor gestures within frames of everyday life involves crafting techniques that create the conditions not for slowness exactly, but for the opening of the everyday to degrees and shades of experience that resist formation long enough to allow us to see the potential of worlds in the making. This involves becoming more attuned to event-time, the nonlinear lived duration of experience in the making. For it is in event-time that the minor gesture tunes the event to what it can do.

A politics allied to study, engaged in the crafting of problems that open up the time of the event, is an affirmative politics, not in the sense that it is optimistic, but in the sense that it begins with the in-act and embraces the force of the *what else* at the heart of all speculative pragmatisms. Such a politics emphasizes the techniques and conditions that lead to the creation of new problems, rather than promising an already-constituted field replete with form and content. Form and content are short-lived, and this makes them false starters. In a politics attuned to emergent difference, we must begin instead in the midst, where force has not yet tuned to form. In this middle, where the event is still welling, there is potential for new diagrams of life-living to be drawn.

How You Can Use the NVC Process



Clearly expressing
how **I am**
without blaming
or criticizing

Empathically receiving
how **you are**
without hearing
blame or criticism

OBSERVATIONS

1. What I observe (*see, hear, remember, imagine, free from my evaluations*) that does or does not contribute to my well-being:
“When I (see, hear) . . . ”

1. What you observe (*see, hear, remember, imagine, free from your evaluations*) that does or does not contribute to your well-being:
“When you see/hear . . . ”
(Sometimes unspoken when offering empathy)

FEELINGS

2. How I feel (*emotion or sensation rather than thought*) in relation to what I observe:
“I feel . . . ”

2. How you feel (*emotion or sensation rather than thought*) in relation to what you observe:
“You feel . . . ”

NEEDS

3. What I need or value (*rather than a preference, or a specific action*) that causes my feelings:
“ . . . because I need/value . . . ”

3. What you need or value (*rather than a preference, or a specific action*) that causes your feelings:
“ . . . because you need/value . . . ”

Clearly requesting that
which would enrich **my**
life without demanding

Empathically receiving that
which would enrich **your** life
without hearing any demand

REQUESTS

4. The concrete actions I would like taken:
“Would you be willing to . . . ?”

4. The concrete actions you would like taken:
“Would you like . . . ?”
(Sometimes unspoken when offering empathy)



FURTHER READING

Accessibility resources:

<https://www.argosarts.org/activatingcaptions/help/#14844>
<https://www.disabilityintersectionalitysummit.com/places-to-start/>

Neurodiversity Instagram activist accounts:
@the.autisticats
@sefscatterbrain

'The Undercommons' available as free download
from Minor Compositions:
<https://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/undercommons-web.pdf>

Almost all texts available as PDF on Z Library:
<https://z-lib.org/>

workshop reader

dylan spencer-davidson

rupert alternative
education programme

7-8 july 2021