

Extract from **Internationale Situationniste at Context XXI**<http://contextxxi.org/basic-banalities.html>

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Basic Banalities

n KEN KNABB (TRANSLATION) ■
RAOUL VANEIGEM

1

Bureaucratic capitalism has found its legitimation in Marx. I am not referring here to orthodox Marxism's dubious merit of having reinforced the neo-capitalist structures whose present reorganization is an implicit homage to Soviet totalitarianism; I am stressing the extent to which crude versions of Marx's most profound analyses of alienation have become generally recognized in the most commonplace realities — realities which, stripped of their magical veil and materialized in each gesture, have become the sole substance of the daily lives of an increasing number of people. In a word, bureaucratic capitalism contains the tangible reality of alienation; it has brought it home to everybody far more successfully than Marx could ever have hoped to do, it has banalized it as the reduction of material poverty has been accompanied by a spreading mediocrity of existence. As poverty has been reduced in terms of survival, it has become more profound in terms of our way of life — this is at least one widespread feeling that exonerates Marx from all the interpretations a degenerate Bolshevism has made of him. The "theory" of peaceful coexistence has accelerated this awareness and revealed, to those who were still confused, that exploiters can get along quite well with each other despite their spectacular divergences.

2

"Any act," writes Mircea Eliade, "can become a religious act. Human existence is realized simultaneously on two parallel planes, that of temporality, becoming, illusion, and that of eternity, substance, reality." In the nineteenth century the brutal divorce of these two planes demonstrated that power would have done better to have maintained reality in a mist of divine transcendence. But we must give reformism credit for succeeding where Bonaparte had failed, in dissolving becoming in eternity and reality in illusion. This union may not be as solid as the sacraments of religious marriage, but it lasts, which is the most the managers of coexistence and social peace can ask of it. This is also what leads us to define ourselves — in the illusory but inescapable perspective of duration — as the end of abstract temporality, as the end of the reified time of our acts; to define ourselves — does it have to be spelled out? — at the positive pole of alienation as the end of social alienation, as the end of humanity's term of social alienation.

3

The socialization of primitive human groups reveals a will to struggle more effectively against the mysterious and terrifying forces of nature. But struggling in the natural environment, at once with it and against it, submitting to its most inhuman laws in order to wrest from it an increased chance of survival — doing this could only engender a more evolved form of aggressive defense, a more complex and less primitive attitude, manifesting on a higher level the contradictions that the uncontrolled and yet influenceable forces of nature never ceased to impose. In becoming socialized, the

struggle against the blind domination of nature triumphed inasmuch as it gradually assimilated primitive, natural alienation, but in another form. The struggle against natural alienation gave rise to social alienation. Is it by chance that a technological civilization has developed to such a point that this social alienation has been revealed by its conflict with the last areas of natural resistance that technological power hadn't managed (and for good reasons) to subjugate? Today the technocrats propose to put an end to primitive alienation: with a stirring humanitarianism they exhort us to perfect the technical means that "in themselves" would enable us to conquer death, suffering, discomfort and boredom. But to eliminate death would be less of a miracle than to eliminate suicide and the desire to die. There are ways of abolishing the death penalty than can make one miss it. Up till now the particular uses that have been made of technology — or more generally the socio-economic context in which human activity is confined — while quantitatively reducing the number of occasions of pain and death, have allowed death itself to eat like a cancer into the heart of each person's life.

4

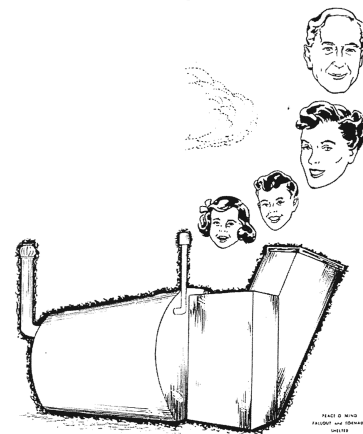
The prehistoric food-gathering age was succeeded by the hunting age during which clans formed and strove to increase their chances of survival. Hunting grounds and preserves were staked out from which outsiders were absolutely excluded — the welfare of the whole clan depended on it. As a result, the freedom gained by settling

down more safely and comfortably within the natural environment engendered its own negation outside the boundaries laid down by the clan and forced the group to modify its customary rules in organizing its relations with excluded and threatening groups. From the moment it appeared, socially engendered economic survival implied the existence of boundaries, restrictions, conflicting rights. It should never be forgotten that until now both history and our own nature have developed in accordance with the development of private appropriation: the seizing of control by a class, group, caste or individual of a general power over a socio-economic survival whose form remains complex, ranging from ownership of land, territory, factories or capital to the "pure" exercise of power over people (hierarchy). Beyond the struggle against regimes whose vision of paradise is a cybernetic welfare state lies the necessity of a still vaster struggle against a fundamental and initially natural state of things, in the development of which capitalism plays only an incidental, transitory role; a state of things that will only disappear with the disappearance of the last traces of hierarchical power — along with the "swine of humanity," of course.

5

To be an owner is to claim a good one prevents others from using — while at the same time acknowledging everyone's abstract, potential right to ownership. By excluding people from a real right of ownership, the owner extends his dominion over those he has excluded (absolutely over nonowners, relatively over other owners), without whom he is nothing. The nonowners have no choice in the matter. The owner appropriates and alienates them as producers of his own power, while the necessity of ensuring their own physical existence forces them despite themselves to collaborate in producing their own exclusion and to survive without ever being able to live. Excluded, they participate in ownership through the mediation of the owner, a mystical participation characterizing from the outset all the clan and social relationships that gradually replaced the principle of obligatory cohesion in

which each member was an integral part of the group ("organic interdependence"). Their guarantee of survival depends on their activity within the framework of private appropriation; they reinforce a property right from which they are excluded. Due to this ambiguity each of them sees himself as participating in ownership, as a living fragment of the right to possess, and this belief in turn reinforces his condition as excluded and possessed. (Extreme cases of this alienation: the faithful slave, the cop, the bodyguard, the centurion — creatures who, through a sort of union with their own death, confer on death a power equal to the forces of life and identify in a destructive energy the negative and positive poles of alienation, the absolutely submissive slave and the absolute master.) It is of vital importance to the exploiter that this appearance is maintained and made more sophisticated; not because he is especially Machiavellian, but simply because he wants to stay alive. The organization of appearance depends on the survival of the owner and his privileges, which in turn depend on the physical survival of the nonowner, who can thus remain alive while being exploited and excluded from being a real person. Private appropriation and domination are thus originally imposed and felt as a positive right, but in the form of a negative universality. Valid for everyone, justified in everyone's eyes by divine or natural law, the right of private appropriation is objectified in a general illusion, in a universal transcendence, in an essential law under which everyone individually manages to tolerate the more or less narrow limits assigned to his right to live and to the conditions of life in general.



6

In this social context the function of alienation must be understood as a *condition of survival*. The labor of the nonowners is subject to the same contradictions as the right of private appropriation. It transforms them into possessed beings, into producers of their own expropriation and exclusion, but it represents the only chance of survival for slaves, for serfs, for workers — so much so that the activity that allows their existence to continue by emptying it of all content ends up, through a natural and sinister reversal of perspective, by taking on a positive appearance. Not only has value been attributed to work (as a form of self-sacrifice during the old regime, and in its most mentally degrading forms in bourgeois ideology and in the so-called People's Democracies), but very early on to work for a master, to alienate oneself willingly, became the honorable and scarcely questioned price of survival. The satisfaction of basic needs remains the best safeguard of alienation; it is best dissimulated by being justified on the grounds of undeniable necessities. Alienation multiplies needs because it can satisfy none of them; nowadays lack of satisfaction is measured in the number of cars, refrigerators, TVs: the alienating objects have lost the ruse and mystery of transcendence, they are there in their concrete poverty. To be rich today is to possess the greatest *quantity* of poor objects.

Up till now surviving has prevented us from living. This is why much is to be expected of the increasingly obvious impossibility of survival, an impossibility that will become all the more obvi-

as the glut of conveniences and elements of survival reduces life to a single choice: suicide or revolution.

7

The sacred presides even over the struggle against alienation. As soon as the relations of exploitation and the violence that underlies them are no longer concealed by the mystical veil, there is a breakthrough, a moment of clarity — the struggle against alienation is suddenly revealed as a ruthless hand-to-hand fight with naked power, power exposed in its brute force and its weakness, a vulnerable giant whose slightest wound confers on the attacker the infamous notoriety of an Erostratus. Since power survives, the event remains ambiguous. Praxis of destruction, sublime moment when the complexity of the world becomes tangible, transparent, within everyone's grasp; inexpiable revolts — those of the slaves, the Jacques, the iconoclasts, the Enragés, the Communards, Kronstadt, the Asturias, and — promises of things to come — the hooligans of Stockholm and the wildcat strikes. Only the destruction of all hierarchical power will allow us to forget these. We intend to make sure that it does.

The deterioration of mythical structures and their slowness in regenerating themselves, which make possible the awakening of consciousness and the critical penetration of insurrection, are also responsible for the fact that once the “excesses” of revolution are past, the struggle against alienation is grasped on a theoretical plane, subjected to an “analysis” that is a carryover from the demystification preparatory to revolt. It is at this point that the truest and most authentic aspects of a revolt are reexamined and repudiated by the “we didn't really mean to do that” of the theoreticians charged with explaining the meaning of an insurrection to those who made it — to those who aim to demystify by acts, not just by words.

All acts contesting power call for analysis and tactical development. Much can be expected of:

- a. the new proletariat, which is discovering its destitution amid consumer abundance (see the development of the workers' struggles presently be-

ginning in England, and the attitudes of rebellious youth in all the modern countries);

- b. countries that have had enough of their partial, sham revolutions and are consigning their past and present theorists to the museums (see the role of the intelligentsia in the Eastern bloc);
- c. the Third World, whose mistrust of technological myths has been kept alive by the colonial cops and mercenaries, the last, over-zealous militants of a transcendence against which they are the best possible vaccination;
- d. the force of the SI (“our ideas are in everyone's mind”), capable of forestalling remote-controlled revolts, “crystal nights” and sheepish resistance.

8

Private appropriation is linked to the dialectic of particular and general. In the mystical realm where the contradictions of the slave and feudal systems are resolved, the nonowner, excluded as a particular individual from the right of ownership, strives to ensure his survival through his labor: the more he identifies with the interests of the master, the more successful he is. He knows the other nonowners only through their common plight: the compulsory surrender of their labor power (Christianity recommended voluntary surrender: once the slave “willingly” offered his labor power, he ceased to be a slave), the search for the optimum conditions of survival, and mystical identification. Struggle, though born of a universal will to survive, takes place on the level of appearance where it brings into play identification with the desires of the master and thus introduces a certain individual rivalry that reflects the rivalry between the masters. Competition develops on this plane as long as the exploitive relations remain dissimulated behind a mystical veil and as long as the conditions producing this veil persist; or to put it another way, as long as the degree of slavery determines the slave's consciousness of the degree of lived reality. (We are still at the stage of calling “objective consciousness” what is in reality the consciousness of being an object.) The own-

er, for his part, depends on the general acknowledgment of a right from which he alone is not excluded, but which is seen on the plane of appearance as a right accessible to each of the excluded taken individually. His privileged position depends on such a belief, and this belief is also the basis for the strength that is essential if he is to hold his own among the other owners; it is his strength. If he seems to renounce exclusive appropriation of everything and everybody, if he poses less as a master than as a servant of the public good and defender of collective security, then his power is crowned with glory and to his other privileges he adds that of denying, on the level of appearance (which is the only level of reference in the world of one-way communication), the very notion of personal appropriation. Denying that anyone has this right, he repudiates the other owners. In the feudal perspective the owner is not integrated into appearance in the same way as the nonowners, slaves, soldiers, functionaries and servants of all kinds. The lives of the latter are so squalid that the majority can live only as a caricature of the Master (the feudal lord, the prince, the major-domo, the taskmaster, the high priest, God, Satan). But the master himself is also forced to play one of these caricatural roles. He can do so without much effort since his pretension to total life is already so caricatural, isolated as he is among those who can only survive. He is already one of our own kind (with the added grandeur of a past epoch, which adds a poignant savor to his sadness); he, like each of us, was anxiously seeking the adventure where he could find himself on the road to his total perdition. Could the master, at the very moment he alienates the others, see that he has reduced them to dispossessed and excluded beings, and thus realize that he is only an exploiter, a purely negative being? Such an awareness is unlikely, and would be dangerous. By extending his dominion over the greatest possible number of subjects, isn't he enabling them to survive, giving them their only chance of salvation? (“What would become of the workers if the capitalists weren't kind enough to employ them?” the high-minded souls of the nineteenth

century liked to ask.) In fact, the owner officially excludes himself from all claim to private appropriation. To the sacrifice of the nonowner, who through his labor exchanges his real life for an apparent one (thus avoiding immediate death by allowing the master to determine his variety of living death), the owner replies by appearing to sacrifice his nature as owner and exploiter; he excludes himself mythically, he puts himself at the service of everyone and of myth (at the service of God and his people, for example). With an additional gesture, with an act whose gratuitousness bathes him in an otherworldly radiance, he gives renunciation its pure form of mythical reality: renouncing the common life, he is the poor man amidst illusory wealth, he who sacrifices himself for everyone while all the other people only sacrifice themselves for their own sake, for the sake of their survival. He turns his predicament into prestige. The more powerful he is, the greater his sacrifice. He becomes the living reference point of the whole illusory life, the highest attainable point in the scale of mythical values. "Voluntarily" withdrawn from common mortals, he is drawn toward the world of the gods, and his more or less recognized participation in divinity, on the level of appearance (the only generally acknowledged frame of reference), consecrates his rank in the hierarchy of the other owners. In the organization of transcendence the feudal lord — and through association with him the other owners of power or means of production, in varying degrees — is led to play the principal role, the role that he really does play in the economic organization of the group's survival. As a result, the existence of the group is bound on every level to the existence of the owners as such, to those who, owning everything because they own everybody, force everyone to renounce their lives on the pretext of the owners' unique, absolute and divine renunciation. (From the god Prometheus, punished by the gods, to the god Christ, punished by men, the sacrifice of the Owner becomes vulgarized, it loses its sacred aura, becomes humanized.) Myth thus unites owner and nonowner, enveloping them in a common form in which

the necessity of survival, whether mere physical survival or survival as a privileged being, forces them to live on the level of appearance and of the inversion of real life, the inversion of the life of everyday praxis. We are still there, waiting to live a life less than or beyond a mystique against which our every gesture protests while submitting to it.

9

Myth — the unitary absolute in which the contradictions of the world find an illusory resolution, the harmonious and constantly harmonized vision that reflects and reinforces the reigning order — is the sphere of the sacred, the extrahuman zone where an abundance of revelations are manifested but where the revelation of the process of private appropriation is carefully suppressed. Nietzsche saw this when he wrote "All becoming is a criminal revolt from eternal being, and its price is death." When the bourgeoisie claimed to replace the pure Being of feudalism with Becoming, all it really did was to desacralize Being and resacralize Becoming to its own profit. It elevated its own Becoming to the status of Being, no longer that of absolute ownership but rather that of relative appropriation: a petty democratic and mechanical Becoming, with its notions of progress, merit and causal succession. The owner's life hides him from himself; bound to myth by a life-and-death pact, he cannot see himself in the positive and exclusive enjoyment of any good except through the lived experience of his own exclusion. (And isn't it through this mythical exclusion that the nonowners will come to grasp the reality of their own exclusion?) He bears the responsibility for a group, he takes on the burden of a god. Submitting himself to its benediction and its retribution, he swathes himself in austerity and wastes away. Model of gods and heroes, the master, the owner, is the true reality of Prometheus, of Christ, of all those whose spectacular sacrifice has made it possible for "the vast majority of people" to continue to sacrifice themselves to the extreme minority, to the masters. (Analysis of the owner's sacrifice should be examined more carefully: isn't the case of Christ really the

sacrifice of the owner's son? If the owner can never sacrifice himself except on the level of appearance, then Christ stands for the real immolation of the owner's son when circumstances leave no other alternative. As a son he is only an owner at an early stage of development, an embryo, little more than a dream of future ownership. In this mythic dimension belongs Maurice Barrès's famous remark in 1914, when war had arrived and made his dreams come true at last: "Our youth, as is proper, has gone to shed torrents of our blood.") This rather distasteful little game, before it became transformed into a symbolic rite, knew a heroic period when kings and tribal chiefs were ritually put to death according to their "will." Historians assure us that these august martyrs were soon replaced by prisoners, slaves or criminals. The penalty was delegated, but the rulers kept the halo.

10

The concept of a common fate is based on the sacrifice of the owner and the nonowner. Put another way, the notion of a "human condition" is based on an ideal and tormented image whose purpose is to try to resolve the irresolvable opposition between the mythical sacrifice of the minority and the really sacrificed life of everyone else. The function of myth is to unify and eternalize, in a succession of static moments, the dialectic of "will-to-live" and its opposite. This universally dominant factitious unity attains its most tangible and concrete representation in communication, particularly in language. Ambiguity is most manifest at this level, it leads to a lack of real communication, it puts the analyst at the mercy of ridiculous phantoms, at the mercy of words — eternal and changing instants — whose content varies according to who pronounces them, as does the notion of sacrifice. When language is put to the test, it can no longer dissimulate the misrepresentation and thus it provokes the crisis of participation. In the language of an era one can follow the traces of total revolution, unfulfilled but always imminent. They are the exalting and terrifying signs of the upheavals they foreshadow, but who

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take them seriously? The discredited striking language is as deeply rooted and instinctive as the suspicion with which myths are viewed by people who at the same time remain firmly attached to them. How can key words be defined by other words? How can phrases be used to point out the signs that refute the phraseological organization of appearance? The best texts still await their justification. When a poem by Mallarmé becomes the sole explanation for an act of revolt, then poetry and revolution will have overcome their ambiguity. To await and prepare for this moment is to manipulate information not as the last shock wave whose significance escapes everyone, but as the first repercussion of an act still to come.

11

Born of man's will to survive the uncontrollable forces of nature, myth is a public welfare policy that has outlived its necessity. It has consolidated its tyrannical force by reducing life to the sole dimension of survival, by negating it as movement and totality.

When contested, myth homogenizes the diverse attacks on it; sooner or later it engulfs and assimilates them. Nothing can withstand it, no image or concept that attempts to destroy the dominant spiritual structures. It reigns over the expression of facts and of lived experience, on which it imposes its own interpretive structure (dramatization). Private consciousness is the consciousness of lived experience that finds its expression on the level of organized appearance.

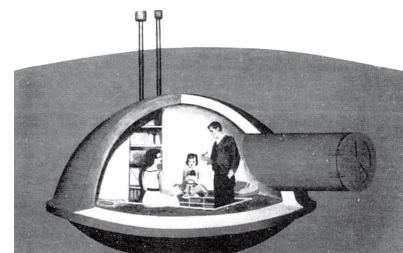
Myth is sustained by rewarded sacrifice. Since every individual life is based on its own renunciation, lived experience must be defined as sacrifice and recompense. As a reward for his asceticism, the initiate (the promoted worker, the specialist, the manager — new martyrs canonized democratically) is granted a niche in the organization of appearances; he is made to feel at home in alienation. But collective shelters disappeared with unitary societies, all that's left is their later concrete embodiments for the use of the general public: temples, churches, palaces... memorials of a universal protection. Shelters are private now-

days, and even if their protection is far from certain there can be no mistaking their price.

12

"Private" life is defined primarily in a formal context. It is, to be sure, engendered by the social relations created by private appropriation, but its essential form is determined by the expression of those relations. Universal, incontestable but constantly contested, this form makes appropriation a right belonging to everyone and from which everyone is excluded, *a right one can obtain only by renouncing it*. As long as it fails to break free of the context imprisoning it (a break that is called revolution), the most authentic experience can be grasped, expressed and communicated only by way of an inversion through which its fundamental contradiction is dissimulated. In other words, if a positive project fails to sustain a praxis of radically overthrowing the conditions of life — which are nothing other than the conditions of private appropriation — it does not have the slightest chance of escaping being taken over by the negativity that reigns over the expression of social relationships: it is coopted like an inverted mirror image. In the totalizing perspective in which it conditions the whole of everyone's life, and in which its real and its mythic power can no longer be distinguished (both being both real and mythical), the process of private appropriation has made it impossible to express life any way except negatively. Life in its entirety is immersed in a negativity that corrodes it and formally defines it. To talk of life today is like talking of rope in the house of a hanged man. Since the key of will-to-live has been lost we have been wandering in the corridors of an endless mausoleum. The dialogue of chance and the throw of the dice no longer suffices to justify our lassitude; those who still accept living in well-furnished weariness picture themselves as leading an indolent existence while failing to notice in each of their daily gestures a living denial of their despair, a denial that should rather make them despair only of the poverty of their imagination. Forgetting life, one can identify with a range of images, from the brutish conqueror and

brutish slave at one pole to the saint and the pure hero at the other. The air in this shithouse has been unbreathable for a long time. The world and man as representation stink like carrion and there's no longer any god around to turn the charnel houses into beds of lilies. After all the ages men have died while accepting without notable change the explanations of gods, of nature and of biological laws, it wouldn't seem unreasonable to ask if we don't die because so much death enters — and for very specific reasons — into every moment of our lives.

**13**

Private appropriation can be defined notably as the appropriation of things by means of the appropriation of people. It is the spring and the troubled water where all reflections mingle and blur. Its field of action and influence, spanning the whole of history, seems to have been characterized until now by a fundamental double behavioral determination: an ontology based on sacrifice and negation of self (its subjective and objective aspects respectively) and a fundamental duality, a division between particular and general, individual and collective, private and public, theoretical and practical, spiritual and material, intellectual and manual, etc. The contradiction between universal appropriation and universal expropriation implies that the master has been seen for what he is and isolated. This mythical image of terror, destitution and renunciation presents itself to slaves, to servants, to all those who can't stand living as they do; it is the illusory reflection of their participation in property, a natural illusion since they really do participate in it through the daily sacrifice of their energy (what the ancients called pain or torture and we call labor or work) since they themselves produce this property in a way that excludes them. The master can only cling to the notion of work-as-sacrifice, like Christ

~~On~~his cross and his nails; it is up to him to authenticate sacrifice, to apparently renounce his right to exclusive enjoyment and to cease to expropriate with purely *human* violence (that is, violence without mediation). The sublimity of the gesture obscures the initial violence, the nobility of the sacrifice absolves the commando, the brutality of the conqueror is bathed in the light of a transcendence whose reign is internalized, the gods are the intransigent guardians of rights, the short-tempered shepherds of a peaceful, law-abiding flock of owners and owner wannabes. The gamble on transcendence and the sacrifice it implies are the masters' greatest conquest, their most accomplished submission to the necessity of conquest. Anyone who intrigues for power while refusing the purification of renunciation (the brigand or the tyrant) will sooner or later be tracked down and killed like a mad dog, or worse: as someone who only pursues his own ends and whose blunt disdain for "work" lacks any tact toward others' feelings: serial killers like Troppmann, Landru, Petiot were doomed to defeat because they murdered people without justifying it in the name of defending the Free World, the Christian West, the State or Human Dignity. By refusing to play the rules of the game, pirates, gangsters and outlaws disturb those with good consciences (whose consciences are a reflection of myth); but the masters, by killing the encroacher or enrolling him as a cop, reestablish the omnipotence of the "eternal truth": namely, that those who don't sell themselves lose their right to survive and those who do sell themselves lose their right to live. The sacrifice of the master is the essence of humanism, which is what makes humanism — and let this be understood once and for all — the miserable negation of everything human. Humanism is the master taken seriously at his own game, acclaimed by those who see in his apparent sacrifice (that caricatural reflection of their real sacrifice) a reason to hope for salvation. Justice, Dignity, Nobility, Freedom ... these words that yap and howl, are they anything but household pets who have continued to reliably return home to their masters since the time when heroic lackeys

won the right to walk them on the streets? To use them is to forget that they are the ballast that enables power to rise out of reach. And if we imagine a regime deciding that the mythical sacrifice of the masters should not be promoted in such universal forms, and setting about tracking down these word-concepts and wiping them out, we could well expect the Left to be incapable of combating it with anything more than a plaintive battle of words whose every phrase, invoking the "sacrifice" of a previous master, calls for an equally mythical sacrifice of a new one (a leftist master, a regime mowing down workers in the name of the proletariat). Bound to the notion of sacrifice, humanism is born of the mutual fear of masters and slaves: it is nothing but the solidarity of a shit-scared humanity. But those who reject all hierarchical power can use any word as a weapon to punctuate their action. Lautréamont and the illegalist anarchists were already aware of this; so were the dadaists.

The appropriator thus becomes an owner from the moment he puts the ownership of people and things in the hands of God or of some universal transcendence, whose omnipotence is reflected back on him as a grace sanctifying his slightest gesture. To oppose an owner thus consecrated is to oppose God, nature, the fatherland, the people. In short, to exclude oneself from the whole physical and spiritual world. "We must neither govern nor be governed," writes Marcel Havrenne so neatly. For those who add an appropriate violence to his humor, there is no longer any salvation or damnation, no place in the universal order, neither with Satan, the great coopter of the faithful, nor in any form of myth, since they are the living proof of the uselessness of all that. They were born for a life yet to be invented; insofar as they lived, it was on this hope that they finally came to grief.

Two corollaries of singularization in transcendence:

- a. If ontology implies transcendence, it is clear that any ontology automatically justifies the being of the master and the hierarchical power wherein the master is reflected in

degraded, more or less faithful images.

- b. Over the distinction between manual and intellectual work, between practice and theory, is superimposed the distinction between work-as-real-sacrifice and the organization of work in the form of apparent sacrifice.

It would be tempting to explain fascism — among other reasons for it — as an act of faith, the auto-da-fé of a bourgeoisie haunted by the murder of God and the destruction of the great sacred spectacle, dedicating itself to the devil, to an inverted mysticism, a black mysticism with its rituals and its holocausts. Mysticism and high finance.

It should not be forgotten that hierarchical power is inconceivable without transcendence, without ideologies, without myths. Demystification itself can always be turned into a myth: it suffices to "omit," most philosophically, demystification by acts. Any demystification so neutralized, with the sting taken out of it, becomes painless, euthanasic, in a word, humanitarian. Except that the movement of demystification will ultimately demystify the demystifiers.

(continued in the next issue)

- What will become of the totality inherent in unitary society when it comes up against the bourgeois demolition of that society?
- Will an artificial reconstitution of unity succeed in hoodwinking the worker alienated in consumption?
- But what can be the future of totality in a fragmented society?
- What unexpected supersession of this society and of its whole organization of appearance will finally bring us to a happy ending?

If you don't already know, find out in part 2!

Raoul Vaneigem: Geboren 1934 in Lessines (Belgien). Künstler, Autor und Kulturphilosoph, Mitglied der *Situationistischen Internationale*.

Ken Knabb: Geboren 1945 in

Louisiana. Autor, Übersetzer und radikaler Theoretiker, Betreiber des Website *Bureau of Public Secrets*.

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