

self
interview
no.1

on the ideas and vicissitudes
of the Occupy X phenomenom

frère
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Q. You mean that the act of occupation produces something in the space, in the relations of the space, that runs counter to the project of occupation?

A. Not just counter to, but simply not registered by, the occupier's discourse. It is like throwing a log on a fire and watching the shower of sparks thrown up. There is, in any act of expropriation, the activation of other ranges of effects, many of which do not affirm the act itself. But the discourse of occupation, because it is so 'assertive' (by its nature) cannot retain these sparks, which after briefly flaring then become invisible...

Q. But these sparks of contradiction do not cool.

A. Lets escape the constraints of that metaphor. It is enough to say that flurries of problems thrown up by occupation are also invisible to it because it has defined itself in terms of 'occupation'.

Q. Would it have been better if Occupy X had never occurred? Would you have advised against it, if permission had been sought from you?

A. Not at all. My problem with it is that it is represented, by those

participating, as a chosen action undertaken by an autonomous body that has somehow 'decided' against its conditions. I think this is a naive representation of autonomy. It would be more useful to think of it in terms of a particular behavioural array which has been manifested in this form because it could take no other.

Q. You mean that the occupiers were driven into the act that they have taken, that it could not be otherwise?

A. I mean that they express the development of a particular logic to this particular point. The 'successes' and limitations of the action are realised by that which conditions them. As to there being an otherwise form of protest, it is true that I do not think, for this particular group of people constituted as it is, that there are many alternatives to this symbolic siege of symbolic landmarks of the productive relation. The move of politics into symbolism always indicates that a particular form is at the evolutionary edge of what it is, and what it can be.

Q. The Occupy London action has already encountered this evolutionary dead-end. It suffered in its attempt to actualise the contradictions of capitalism by the very fact that it did not manage to occupy its chosen space at all. It somehow bypassed what it intended to do. What do you make of this?

A. It is not an 'occupation', even on its own terms. It manifested itself by activating archaic laws of sanctuary, and thus currently relies for its continued presence upon the goodwill of the state church. An ideological escape route of religious symbolism, in which the priorities of spirituality are set against those of materialism, is thus established.

Q. This path of least resistance into moral symbolism also says something about the personae, the subject formations, that are taking part. Whether occupation is a problem or not, there is definitely a problem with those for whom the project of occupation appears as a viable politics. What do you think?

A. Of course, not only is too narrow a space defined by the project of occupation but a too restricted mode of being is also manifested. It would be too easy to talk of a proprietorial comportment, but

there is a self-identifying, self-righteous, element to the psychology of occupation which is inherited from what can broadly be called *What-is-the-3rd-estate* formations. They mislocate where the human appears, thinking it resides in the act of *authoring worlds*, and making things happen. But this idea of human endeavour has already been the dominant mode of subjectivity for the last two hundred years. It seems they have transposed the model of bourgeois agency from 'enterprise' to social activism... but the agent's faults have remained the same.

Q. Yes, the attempt to unite together in a single project the many different agendas is a recipe for incoherence. And yet, I would have thought you would appreciate the messiness of it?

A. Perhaps. Like everyone, I prefer something happening than nothing. But then nothing would be gained by my celebration. The goal is always to capture and analyse the faults within the general model. It would perhaps be more useful to record that these rigid, carried over formations, in protest consciousness remain invisible to those participating. The occupiers see themselves as embodying an alternative when it would be more helpful if they attempted to map how they remain part of the same.

Q. And yet, it is something extraordinary isn't it, this phenomenon, this manifestation which has not faded away but which has gone on and on?

A. Yes, it is true that we are conditioned to expect that the content of the media is all *here today and gone tomorrow*. Yesterday's newspapers are today's fish and chip papers and all that. We are *readied* for the novel, and also for obsolescence. We have come to expect *soundbites* and *tweets*.

Q. I see what you mean, the terrorist model of momentary *spectacular* followed by otherwise uninterrupted invisibility is both extremely inefficient and relatively easy for the state to summon up and dismiss at will. Socio-political bodies function optimally in the capitalised context at a constant rate. You think Occupy X's success is down to a drip-drip advertising strategy?

A. The 'silly season' is a thing of the past. We can always be certain

that there *will* be high quality news product tomorrow... and this produce is hydroponically cultivated and harvested according to the principle that *this story is going to run and run*.

Q. Basically, you are saying it is the model of the swan in reverse: capitalised information manifests as a churning at the surface, maintained by deep implacability underneath. What is the relevance of this to Occupy X?

A. The *serial*, or *soap opera*, or *branded* model, is the basic model of mass media. It is no accident that Occupy X, a sort of *brand x* marketing ploy, has *gone viral* given that it was initiated by a group fixated on the aesthetics of advertisements. The first rule of media is to stay there.

Q. Well yes, manufactured stunts keep the established brands in the public's consciousness... established brands become naturalised reference points. You are saying that in media terms Occupy X is no different to tobacco advertising. But that is not the point of my question, if we disregard the mass media aspects, it remains the case that this phenomenon of occupation is unprecedented. Can't you feel how it has connected to something in society, which from out of some deeply prepared reservoir of counter-conditioning, is now actively emitting reciprocal responses?

A. The advertiser and the hypnotist direct their suggestions to the subject during moments identified as falling between distinct psychological states, they make their pitch to moments in consciousness that occur *between* the expression of strong opinions... the subject is open to suggestion when it is neither particularly happy, nor thinking, nor angry, nor active but just *idling*.

If consciousness could be imagined as a necklace then the art of suggestion would be directed less at the *beads* (which stand for active states and opinions) than at the thread from which they hang; if a suggestion is sufficiently effective then it itself becomes a strong opinion, a new bead threaded on the necklace.

Q. This is maddening, I am looking for a clear statement of even partial endorsement, wouldn't that be the most honest course for you?

A. But it is the techniques that are fascinating here. The real true 'occupation' of psychic space occurs through branding and suggestion directed at what we can uselessly call *the preconscious*. The most intriguing aspect of this, returning to the necklace analogy, is that the solidified bead of suggestion, need not fit aesthetically with the other beads, but often stands out incongruously.

Q. You mean the wearer of the necklace cannot explain this *other* bead. And by this you mean that although there are sectors of the population that are latently susceptible to Occupy X suggestions, and this manifests itself in shiny beads of *sympathy*, the display of sympathy itself is inexplicable to the wearer. You are saying these members of *approval rating* graphs have no explanation, and no arguments, for why they have selected X brand and not another?

A. But it is also the case that the *suggestion* of Occupy X has caught the political establishment between two decisive states, and that this has caused a strangely convoluted and incoherent response: now lashing out, now expressing qualified support, now condemning, now recontextualising, now attempting to set rules and co-opt, now dismissive, now appealing, and so on.

Q. Is the apparent mystification and incoherence of the state genuine?

A. That is the nature of aesthetics, the unexpected location of inexplicable resonances. But since you have travelled thus far with me, you have earned your right to hear a clarifying statement of endorsement.

Q. Then make it snappy.

A. It seems to me that for this particular milieu, there is no more appropriate form for their activities to take than those of the present moment, *it has found a reciprocal resonance in the world*. As a political formation Occupy X certainly realises more of the question of what it means to *be* against capitalism, within capitalism, than that advanced by the militarist aesthetic of the black bloc for example. Even so, 'occupation' remains a dangerously false formulation of the question of *inhabitancy*.

Q. Okay, then if we begin again from basics, what is it that you object to in the project of Occupy X?

A. The very idea of expropriation as a method of realising relations, and the fields of relations. Occupation is correlated with certainty, and political certainty is another term for ideology... and this, i.e. a closed system of dominant, even if apparently radical, values, is *the* most unlikely means by which capitalism could be opposed. By its nature all certainty is *driven* by something other than the object that it is certain about. This renders it unable to play the 'second game', that is, choose against itself.

Q. What do you mean, 'play the second game'?

A. In this example, if the first game is the good idea of establishing a protest against capital, then the second game would begin with a critical analysis of the priorities, investments and thought constellations which made it seem like a good idea. The second game is played only on the basis of the first game no longer seeming such a good idea.

Q. I am surprised that you have not used this interview as a platform for your general ideas of change, why is that?

A. I would not blame anyone because they happen not to be the objectively constituted agent of change... this lack of capacity is not their fault. However, it is important to remember that it is not because a body occupies a space that this act of occupation enables it to control that space. Workers may occupy a factory but the extent to which they control its processes is often minimal. In reality, the factory is occupying them, and their 'occupation consciousness' is merely taking an optimal form, i.e. self-managed exploitation, where readily recognised, embodied class struggle is obscured by self-identification with production, and with positive 'achievements.' Similarly, with the occupiers it is difficult for them to come to terms with the limits of their capabilities...

Q. Describe these limits in greater detail.

A. Decision making as a process, and as function of society is not the cause of social change but an outcome. The point where decision making, and the bodies which enact decision making, are mani-

fested and participate in social mechanisms is not decided by those bodies themselves. It is futile to make decisions, and invoke general assemblies, where these have no purchase on reality. In all societies actual decision making only applies to a very small area of life... this area, to further utilise the spatial metaphor, is perhaps increased to its maximum in communism but it is not completely dominant. The fetish for the rule of society by decision, and for its process as an end in itself, as this appears amongst the occupiers in the form of 'real democracy' indicates an unthought out approach to all that is not decidable in human community.

Q. Because...?

A. Because, the actual forces of change are 'pre-human'. By this I mean, change produces people, people do not produce change. Communism will have to exist as an objective, pre-human, material social relation before communising human beings might appear there. In more simple terms: communism is an environment, not an activity. But I think I have discussed this in great detail elsewhere, there are other more pertinent issues related to the questions of occupation and of its space that can be usefully discussed here.

Q. We are now used to considering the unexpected consequences of our occupation of, or presence in, wilderness spaces. We understand that even though our personal occupation of that space might be undertaken from benign motivations, we are likely to produce outcomes that we had not anticipated and that we do not like. Is this your problem? The problem of contamination?

A. Every deliberate act of occupation briefly evokes a pristine wilderness, which then dies.

Q. You mean in the specifics of actualisation, the limitations of those involved, causes potentials to be used up. Conventional modes are imported into the space where unconviction is supposed to rule? If so, what is the 'alternative' to occupation?

A. The antonym of occupy is vacate. Those places we chose to depart from, their swept floor, their locked door, their shuttered window, begin to develop a life of their own. Perhaps to Occupy X I am proposing a letting be of the ghosts who inhabit vacated spaces.

Q. Don't you think it is very likely that a space must first be occupied before it can be vacated?

A. Yes, but it is not certain. It is also a melancholic thought. We have to destroy other potentials by these acts of realisation in order to recognise as lost potentials the alternatives to our actions.

Q. What is not a melancholic formulation for the critique of the project of occupation?

A. The important thing is to try and think in terms of departure... of going somewhere else, of being something else. That is, we should think of releasing and relaxing the space from the current specifics of our presence. We should be listening out for the voices of the space that are already active in it, and listening out for the voices that are speaking through us, but which we do not recognise as our own... we must allow these voices to speak, and also let them fall silent.

Q. What will be the biggest danger that the Occupiers face?

A. Something like entropy. Or boredom with the forms that they have established. The moment when the arteries of their beautiful dream have become calcified, and when some of them recognise it but others deny it, and an internal conflict ensues. That is what always happens.

Q. What would you hope that someone participating in an occupation could take from reading this?

A. I have no idea. If what is written here has any relevance to anyone else, I think this will only become apparent after this cycle of protest has decomposed, as it is this decomposition which I am trying to anticipate, and give expression to.



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