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Against the Language of Militancy

Wolfi Landstreicher

Sadly, in recent years, too much of the writing coming out of social conflict is wrought with stiff, wooden language, a tired, dead language that seems to contradict the energy of the rebellions of which they speak. It is the language of militancy, not of freedom, not of individuality creating itself against all odds. Perhaps this is, in part, because many of the present-day conflicts spring from the harshness of the times; they are responses to the hardness of current social, political and economic realities. But how can a response in kind counter these realities? Shouldn't the very method of our response reflect our rejection of these imposed realities?

Militancy is mistaken for passion and intensity, when in fact it is just an armored straightjacket closing in on one's nakedness, stiffening and limiting one's movements. Seriousness is mistaken for resoluteness, when in fact it is enslavement to the abstract, to the future, to the cause, to the past, another sort of self-imprisonment. And isn't this precisely what we resolutely need to refuse as we fight to make our lives our own in each moment?

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Perhaps the problem is that so many of those involved in social conflict do not see themselves as free individuals creating their lives, encountering obstacles to this self-creative process and fighting to destroy these obstacles, but rather as oppressed people resisting their oppression.

It is not necessary to ignore the reality of oppression to recognize that when our project becomes resistance to oppression, we become centered on our oppressors. We lose our own lives, and with them the capacity to destroy what stands in our way. Since resistance focuses on the enemy's projects, it keeps us on the defensive and guarantees our defeat (even in victory) by stealing our projects from us.

If, on the other hand, we start from our own project of self-creation, insisting upon moving through the world as free and aimless beings, we will encounter rulers, exploiters, cops, priests, judges, etc., not essentially as oppressors, but as obstacles in our paths, to be destroyed rather than resisted.

It is only in this context that destruction takes on its insurgent, poetic, revolutionary meaning, as a truly gratuitous act that defies the logic of work and opens reality to the marvelous, to surprise. Only then does destruction become playful.