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It Has to Come Out

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next. It's fuzzy enough to keep us in doubt about what's next, and it's probably quite handy to manage without too many reactions. Deconfinement is therefore accompanied, unsurprisingly, by the maintenance of a state of health emergency. In parallel with new rules and repressive devices, we are entitled to a kind of weekly national mass, like a new weather forecast of red and green zones, which are the places where we live (it already looks like a mutation of the orange weather alert, crossed with the nuclear accident protocol that was waiting for its time in the boxes, isn't it?).

As a lot of grafters, nomads, make-doers, trespassers, misfits, tinkerers, and other rascals, my horizon is quite reduced, with navigation at limited sight in the fog of changing restrictions at short notice. If I wasn't distrustful by experience, I would probably say that our dear managers are doing a difficult job, for our own good. But the idea comes to my mind that their question is perhaps not so much about good or bad management as about keeping their function as managers, among those who generally rather profit from the capitalist system.

Management of the unregulated

Well, in the end, the “Crisis” is neither economic, nor climatic, nor nuclear, nor even terrorist. No, it is “sanitary”. “We are at war” against a virus. Looks like the apocalypse has gotten a new mask in its collection. Surprise! The old idea of The Great End is right under our noses again. Somehow it’s even a bit reassuring, because it’s still one of the foundations of our civilization. We’re back to the traditions, the last judgment all that, and the genesis too. In short, a nice straight line, a beginning, an end, and an immense perpetual progress on the way, the History, the Past, the Future. And it allows us to say to ourselves that, in any case, it is going to collapse by itself, God willing, and that all we would have to do is wait while eating a cone with chocolate ice-cream.

In the meantime, our daily discussions are populated by The Crisis and its newspeak, which describes the extreme narrowing of our horizons, geographical, social, emotional, temporal. At the same time, we lose our grip through the contradictory injunctions to think of ourselves on the giant and distant scales of a “planet”, a “nation”, a future of a “humanity”. Shit, after all, we can say that we are out of our depth, can’t we? Already we don’t know how to deal well with what is at hand?

“Barrier gestures” transform simple logical precautions into supposedly impassable ramparts against the outside world. The old fear of the Other was already well-nourished by piles of nationalist, racist, identitarian shit. Now here is “social distancing” which puts everyone in the dangerous category, even without intention or sign of hostility. But fortunately, the hydro-magic gel makes the dirt clean in one push. Plus it’s fun for children, and sanitizing everything is promising of a future market for immune disasters.

Then there is the next phase, the “deconfinement”, which they have been careful to call by a new name, between the reassuring of the end of one thing and the worrying of the unknown of the

Binary Misery

With this virus and its management, I saw a haze of fear descending suddenly and contaminating everything. I searched where mine was, to look it in the face, to distinguish it among the self-evident and the commotion, and to better understand that of others.

First of all, I wasn’t afraid of the virus. I saw it as an unknown among others, one that arrives and belongs to the world of scientific experts and all other categories of managers, politicians, economists and cops. I was not afraid of being exposed to the disease, nor of the death that roams around. I didn’t hope to avoid it, I was sick, it was annoying and long. I am actually quite confident in my immune system and I felt able to be careful for other people’s relationships and needs, without believing in the idea of “zero risk”. I did had to fight against my fear of the cops, of their “carte blanche”, of the fines that add to the daily misery of so many people, of the prison sentences even. In short, of the repression and control that are only getting stronger, with all the “fragile” people by other criteria who are even more ignored than usual.

All around, these two particular fears were the most visible, and difficult to disentangle. They created a powerful shock and complicated reflection, by confusing or opposing each other in clichés. As if choosing to take precautions was to submit, or to rebel was murderous. It concealed the many other reasons and ways of reacting. Whether it is fear of social judgment and stigmatisation if you don’t appear at the window for the holy ceremony of applause, or if you are often seen outside to find something to survive, or because you don’t have a home, or because you don’t want to go crazy inside, or on the contrary, because you needed to stay inside out of fear of going out in the nightmare of the outside.

The government measures have also created two false categories of people, those who respect them and those who refuse them. It all seems far too binary and simplistic to me. No, not all

the “fragile” ones were “freaked out”. Not all the “disobedient” were “able-bodied”. Not all the “responsible and caring” people were “good confined citizens”. Not all the “confined” had the same privileges to do so. Neither did all the “rebels”...

And “deconfinement” brings new questions. Why are people going out now? What has changed? Is it suddenly less dangerous, or are the police, or the neighbours? I want to look for complexity, and others to share it with. That we don’t tell ourselves that there is only one right way to deal with this kind of “sanitary putsch”, and on this scale. But neither should we tell ourselves anything other than the real choices we made during this period. That we assume strengths and weaknesses, both individual and collective, and that we try to find out how to deal with what comes afterwards, which is likely to be worse.

Criminality within reach; towards a different relation with illegality?

Walking around in a park, accidentally on the first day it reopened, it made me feel super weird to pass openly through the front gate, as if something was missing, something that after almost two months of confinement had become a habit: a daily practice of illegality. Fortunately, I quickly found, in the company of my friend, a forbidden door to push that allowed me to fill the lack. This is where it seemed to me that, in times of confinement, of excessive control and repression, due to the fact that most of our actions, our needs, our desires had become outside the law, crime could, more than ever, appear as self-evident, a way out, a means to reconnect with oneself, to regain one’s autonomy, to breathe.

Moreover, and paradoxically, it seemed that for some, the sheer amount of prohibitions made “crime” more accessible, the barrier easier to jump over. To be in fact breaking the law when you are walking for more than an hour or more than a kilometre from

home, to be a criminal when you cross the street without a certificate or when you hang out with a friend outside less than a metre away, seems profoundly absurd; so much so that it tends to create a new context in which illegality can potentially be taken for granted, more easily experienced, and finally, as a daily practice being an integral part of this life.

And so it was that within a few weeks, while the state boasted of being able to declare falling crime rates all over the country, new delinquency, new practices outside the law, infinite and innumerable, diffuse and incalculable, exploded everywhere, as the expression of a new closeness to crime.

The complicity in crime also became more obvious, more recognisable: to meet people walking in a park in broad daylight, to glimpse here with a smile groups standing in a dead-end street without a camera, there people carrying full bags at dubious hours lol, to share in passing little “tricks” or an itinerary to get around avoiding running into a roadblock of cops, to exchange amused glances with strangers doing forbidden things, in a forbidden place at a forbidden time.

Far from saying that all these people, in the facts outside the law, were my accomplices, it still made me very happy to see, in times of confinement and repressive mania, the apparent multiplication and diffusion of outlawed practices, of criminal intentions.

At a time of a so-called “deconfinement” or a “phase 2” of confinement, it seems important to me to keep in mind this small movement on the slider, to keep fresh the memory of the multiplication of these moments of transgression, to take care of these new relations with crime, in order to be more at ease, more confident, and why not dare to imagine more in our moments of mistrust towards and against the state, its machinery and its supporters.

“This culture has branded us as criminals, and of course, in turn, we have dedicated our lives to crime.” - MNG.