

**There is nothing less passive than the
act of fleeing**

November 2010

#6

The University as I understand it, has been a threshold between youth and the labor market. Or it has been a threshold between a general education and a more specialized one. In its more progressive form, it's been a zone of transition into an expanding middle class. But does this form still exist? Honest question, because on the one hand there's been a rapidly contracting middle class over the past few decades (general) but on the other hand I know of quite a few people (anecdotal) who are invested in the public University for just this reason. I'm inclined to think just the opposite, that the University is becoming a form for filtering people out of the middle class via student loan debt, which now exceeds credit card debt.

The point of the questions for me is simply what is the point of the University? What are we fighting for or defending or so romantic about? Is it the buildings themselves? Because there's other buildings out there. Is it the principle? The history? Is it really the education? Is it the greatest time of our life that we want our kids to be able to experience? Is it the fantasy of pure research, unmotivated by the market all around?

#15

The next question might be, do students work? We know that the university is a crucial site in the reproduction of class relations; we know that students are consumers, and are treated as such by the universities they attend; we know the student is a future worker who will be compelled to work, and work in a specific way, because she is crushed by debt contracted during her tenure as a student; we know that students work while attending school, and that for many students school and work eerily begin to resemble one another.

But asking whether students work is to ask something more specific: do students produce value and, therefore surplus-value? If we can assume, for the moment, that students are a factor in the "knowledge production" that takes place in the university, is this production of knowledge also the production of value? We know that Marx went to great lengths to distinguish productive and unproductive labor, and that this distinction for him was not only a technical matter, a scientific concern, as it was a political one: the only workers who have the capacity to unleash an insurrectionary sequence are those who are exploited, that is, those who produce value and therefore surplus value.

But today things are not so clear-cut. It takes the most stubborn anti-empiricism to refuse to acknowledge that certain features of logic of the production process have changed dramatically over the past 150 years, particularly its spatial fragmentation, its becoming dispersed across the entire surface of the social. The emergence of this "social factory," as it was called in Italy in the 60s and 70s, coincides with, or precedes just a little, the ramping up of financialization of the Western, supposedly advanced, economies – a process that by the late 20th century resulted in a staggering divergence between the way wealth was accounted and distributed, and any remotely objective measure of value.

Work, in this context, became for many something that increasingly resembled a technique of discipline, of social control – of behaviors, of bodies, even of souls – increasingly disconnected from the production of value and the valorization of capital. We confront, maybe, a paradox: all social activity has become "productive" – captured, absorbed, snorted up the valorizing nose of a cracked-out capital – at the very moment value becomes unmeasurable. And all the categories of classical political economy, as well as those of

the critique of political economy, become increasing incapable of conceptualizing the real social processes we are all inscribed within, and chewed up by.

What does this have to do with students, and their work? The thesis of the social factory was, at a certain point, supplemented by the assumption that knowledge had, somewhere, sometime, become a central node in the production of value in post-Fordist environments. If that were so, wouldn't this mean that the university, as a privileged site of knowledge production, could become an increasingly important flashpoint in social struggles, now that it has become not simply the site of the reproduction of the capital relation, but involved in the immediate production process, directly productive of value? And would we have to understand students themselves as, if not knowledge producers (I am speaking of undergraduate students; graduate students clearly produce knowledge, when they are not service workers tending to the class relation in their TA sections), an irreplaceable moment or function within that process?

None of this remains clear. And the question, moreover, is not only a sociological one, a matter of determining objectively the place of students in the production of knowledge and therefore, hypothetically, value (itself increasingly elusive as an objective reference). It is also a political one.

The strategy of reconceptualizing students as workers and as producers of value or elements in the process of knowledge production in an economic context driven by "immaterial labor" is rooted in the classical Marxist identification of revolt with the point of production, that is, exploitation. To declare all social activity to be productive is another way of saying that social war can be triggered at any site within society, even among the precarious, the unemployed, and students. And yet we must also remember that Marxist theory is not a manual for a more efficient and just management of the economy; it is a critique of political economy, and the political correlate of this critique is the destruction – immediate, merciless – of real abstractions that suck the what remains of life out of the social corpse: destruction of the wage-form, money, exchange- value and yes, production itself.

To declare students producers might, then, not be an affirmation of the legitimacy of their revolts; it can just as well be a first step in a process of integrating students into the circuitry of valorization, a heave in the direction of capital's bottomless maw.

#18

We are quite aware today of the economic value produced by students as 'immaterial workers' within the framework of 'cognitive capitalism'. We see how financial capitalism is entering the university by colonising also students' debt too. But how can education and knowledge themselves be framed politically and reinvented in a new way, moving from such economic considerations and looking at the crisis of the disciplines themselves? How to produce new forms of knowledge abreast of our political desires?

There is a beautiful intuition by Mario Tronti that he expressed in a book of the 60s seminal to the whole tradition of Italian *operaismo*.

"Knowledge is tied to struggle. To truly know is to hate truly. This is why the working class can know and possess everything of capital, as it is enemy to itself as capital."

Knowledge — and we could say education also — is coming only from conflict. Only she who grows up and lives along the tensions of the social fabric, perceiving and registering the field of forces of conflicts and frictions, can develop a proper knowledge, a sharp theory, a meaningful aesthetics — only she who lives conflicts on her own skin can run a 'public school'.

This is the lesson of the social movements of the 60s and 70s and a lesson we learnt again in the punk age. Deleuze said once in a dialogue with Foucault: "No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall". That wall is the wall of conflict.

If art claims to be the very realm of radical gestures, it should be able also to initiate new forms of knowledge and new education practices. Knowledge is never neutral, but always an unconscious incarnation of power structures: here Foucault has already said everything. However Foucault does not say much about the autonomous forms of counter-knowledge. That passion mentioned by Tronti — hate for your own condition of exploitation — is suggesting something new. The political passion of hate becomes part of the backbone of a new counter-knowledge.

The relation between hate and knowledge suggested by Tronti stays on the opposite side of the cynical detachment of the new social figure of the entrepreneur-artist. In order to educate ourselves we should hate our very own environment

and social network in which we were educated — the university. Knowledge production and education too should be based on the very hate for our existential condition, that is for a form of life hegemonized by capital.

#14

At my first proper meeting with my graduate advisor upon entering school, a question was posed, "how is power operating at the moment, right now in this room?" I gazed upwards at the florescent lights hanging 20 feet above my head. Shifted awkwardly in my chair and felt my heartbeat quicken. My ears picked up the low hum of the air unit hanging precariously above and the sound seemed to thicken into a booming drone.

How does one reply to this question? What are the coordinates that a student, a generally confused one at that, map this dynamic onto. Years later, of course, one can find the proper references and "knowledge" to describe the situation, but at that moment it felt as if it was an assault. Felt as though I was on a dance floor in front of a large group of people and didn't know the proper steps. It was only the two of us, but the weight of the institution in this context was palatable. I felt the need to perform, prove myself. Only then would the possibilities of a meaningful intellectual and pedagogical experience take place. The pressure of was important, it was preparation. It would make me ready, stronger and more fit for future exploits.

"Art School" (and art in general) seems to be an endless stream of these encounters that attempt to hone a particular talent to perform on demand. The position the artist in their work and the performance of themselves (often no different) can take are manifold; they can redirect, play dumb and confused; they can over intellectualize and over conceptualize things; they can simply remain silent. There are histories for all of these postures that can be referenced and adopted. And given all the options at our disposal (from medium to message), we feel agency, a freedom to define the parameters within which we work, and of course we can always change - that is OK as well. They are all acceptable tactics as long as long as we keep doing and churning out more.

But where does this get us, both within the confines of the arts and the larger social structure? We are taught that the artist is always working, thinking, observing. We have learned the tricks of communication, of performance, of adaptability. We can go anywhere, react to anything, respond in a thoughtful and creative way to all problems. And we do this. We travel, exhibit, perform on demand whenever, because while there is opportunity, we should take

it. We are fortunate to have the chance and who knows when the next thing will come along. Does this make us happy? Do we even have time to ask this question? When we do, it is typically at the level of a specific situation. There is no room to deal with the a broader conditions that shape this space. The only times seem to come when we are in some far off city, tired from jet lag, having a drink with others experiencing the same thing, all with droopy eyes, discussing the pressures of travel and the need to perform. It often ends the same way, "we are lucky, no?" "We shouldn't complain, others have it much worse." This is definitely true, but it doesn't mean that we shouldn't imagine something else. To begin thinking this way, it means a refusal to deliver an event, to perform on demand. Maybe we need a kind of inflexibility, of obstruction, of non-conductivity. This seems like the first step to negotiate our condition and exit. After all, what exactly are we producing and performing for? Whose demands are we fulfilling? Can we try to think about these talents of performance, of communication, that we have accumulated outside a market that produces for the sake of itself? If so, could this be the basis for an intimacy, friendship, a common shared space, another institution?

#11

Let's consider briefly the desire for "new pedagogical models" and "new forms of knowledge production". When articulated by the University, this simply means new forms of instruction and new forms of research. It comes as no surprise that liberal faculty and neoliberal politicians or administrators will find themselves joined in this hunt for future models and forms. On the one hand, faculty imagines that these new techniques can provide space for continuing the good work while under the pressure of reduced budgets and standardization. They might even "engage with the community" or produce more timely research if these models introduce a mechanism to break through their inherited boundaries, ideally while preserving the security and comfort of their position. On the other hand, investors, politicians, and administrators look for any means to make the University profitable, whether at an immediately financial level or via the fruits of its "knowledge production." How can new forms of teaching and research use unpaid labor, eliminate non-productive physical spaces, and create new markets?

Symptomatically, there is very little resistance to this search for new forms and new models for the simple reason that there is a consensus that the University should and will continue. Applied research (experimentation and discovery) and the market (identifying new products or productive techniques) collaborate once again, but here in the reproduction of that very partnership.

Given that we are speaking in an arts context, it's important to note that many of the so-called new forms and new models being considered lie beyond the walls and payroll of the institution, therefore both low-cost and low-risk. They have been taken up for consideration by institutions across Europe to suggest "an educational turn" to art practice and again to propose "new forms of knowledge production." It is now a familiar story: the institution attempts to renew itself by importing its own critique. But what is the other side of this story? What happens to this "critique" as it is brought into the institution? The story is again familiar: the vampire institution extracts life from its critique, abstracts it according to institutional logic and history, and replaces its values with institutional ones – a familiar fate of "the alternative."

The Public School is not a new model and it's not going to save the University. It is not even a critique of the University any more or less than it is a critique of the field of art or of capitalist

society. It is not “the next University” because it is a practice of leaving the University to the side. It is energy spent in another direction entirely, where instruction and research are not the primary motivation, let alone sustaining the institution that controls access to these while participating in the production of an indebted class. It would be a mistake to think that this means isolation or total detachment. After all, aren’t most of us the offspring of the institution and some of us providing our labor to it? More than that, don’t we parasite on it for materials, texts, and if we’re lucky, money?

#8

Exodus does not naturally coincide with autonomy. Exodus must conquer autonomous organization by organizing its own institutions.

There are a few historically important examples. One is the case of Black Studies in the United States. Far from belonging to the progressive evolution of academic disciplines or in the national integration processes, Black Studies began with the barricades of the 1968 Third World Strike in San Francisco, the affirmations of the Black Power movement, and the rifles on the shoulders of black students at Cornell University. [...] In a recent book dedicated to this extraordinary history, Noleeway Rooks clarifies how the passage of the Black movement from the lexis of rights to the exercise of power has nothing to do with the third internationalist idea of taking control of the state or with the symmetrically opposite positions of John Holloway. Rather, it involved the rupture of democratic integration and the constitution of separate institutions, autonomously controlled and self-managed by the Black community. It was the attempt to change the word(?) exercising power relations in complete independence from the state. The response to the institutional organisation of exodus and separation is concretized in a lethal articulation of brutal repression and differential inclusion, the sum of which is represented by the Ford Foundation's strategies. Rooks briefly lingers on the selective financing of Black communities and Black Studies to favor the leaders of the groups that sustained the cause of racial integration and attempted to marginalize radical militants. University governance here is a response to struggles and autonomous organization: inclusion becomes a device of control and, where this is not possible, it is always ready to exercise violence.

Analogously, today the forms of university governance cannot allow them-selves to uproot self-education. To the contrary, self-education constitutes a vital sap for the survival of the institutional ruins, snatched up and rendered valuable in the form of revenue. Governance is the trap, hasty and flexible, of the common. Instead of countering us frontally, the enemy follows us: the origin of this asymmetrical conflict is the ungovernability and infidelity of living labor. That means, on one hand, that governance is permanently faced with its own crisis, which is genealogically determined by the autonomy of living knowledge and the impossibility of vertical government. On the other hand, we must immediately reject any weak interpretation of the theme of autonomous institutions,

according to which the institution is a self-governed structure that lives between the folds of capitalism, without excessively bothering it. In the worst cases, this can even become individual entrepreneurship. So, the institutionalisation of self-education doesn't mean being recognised as one actor among many within the education market, but the capacity to organize living knowledge's autonomy and resistance. This means determining command and collective direction within social cooperation, as well as producing common norms that destructure the existing university. [...] Common institutions are continually traversed by the possibility of their subversion.

#16

One of the most important "new pedagogical models" that emerged over the past year in the struggles around the implosion of the "public" university are the occupations that took place in the Fall of 2009. Unlike some other forms of action, which tend to follow the timetable and cadence of the administration, to the point of mirroring it, these actions had their own temporality, their own initiative, their own internal logic. They were, in many ways, more antagonistic than the other tactics we saw throughout the year, insofar as they were not at all concerned with saving a university that was already in ruins, but rather with creating a space at the heart of the university within which something else, some future, could be risked, played out, elaborated, prefigured. But if they were more aggressive than the protests and walkouts, and the handwringing coming from their professors over furloughs and pensions, they were also ambitious in another way, insofar as they represented an attempt to take "back" the university that was, in fact, theirs to begin with, while also, in the same gesture, taking leave of the university, abandoning it, in order to elaborate a space of the common, a time of the commons. Everything had to be improvised, from moment to moment, and in these improvisations new knowledges were developed and shared. This improvisation, or this experimentation, required a readiness to address external threats, coming from without, but more importantly it was demanded by the aleatory quality of the types of relations that emerged within these spaces, relations no longer regulated by the social alibis that assigns everyone her place – a kind of community, a common, founded on a friendship that, even brief, was absolute and nonnegotiable. I am sure that those students that who had the nerve and courage to take those buildings and to abandon themselves to one another learned more during those brief spells, brief but decisive, brief but leaving deep traces, than they did in their PhD orals or the chemistry labs: they learned what their university really is, they learned how treacherous their tenured teachers, many quite progressive, can be, and they learned what it might take to seize hold of, or construct, their own conditions of existence, conditions that are as material as they are affective.

When students occupy university buildings, here and in NYC and in Puerto Rico and in Europe and the UK, everywhere, they do so – let's wager – not because they want to save their universities or contribute to its educational mission. They do because they know the university for what it is, as something to be at once seized and abandoned. They know that they can

only rely on, that is, learn from, one another. It means they have stopped waiting for the faculty, who are worried more about saving their pensions than their university, to shut down the institutions at whose pleasure they serve. This is what pedagogy meant last Fall, and after.

#9

One way to think of what we might recognize as an increasing bifurcation of the public and the common is to recast this split in terms that are more classical, and which belong to the origins of the workers' movement. I am thinking in particular of the difference posited by Joseph Jacotot between what he calls a community of equals and the idea of society or the social bond. As recounted in Jacques Ranciere's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, what is so "disconcerting" about Jacotot's theory of intellectual emancipation – his new "pedagogical model" – is that it is founded on a split, asymmetry or incompatibility between the logic of community or the common and the dynamics of the social body.

For Jacotot, society is an order, and every order is founded on a hierarchy of places, roles, capacities, and qualities. On inequality. The project of social emancipation, the goal of social equality is a contradiction. Only a space of community can be governed by the axiom of equality of intelligences, and such a community by definition cannot be realized in the form of a social institution, institutions that are "public" in nature.

Ranciere writes that "a community of equals is an insubstantial community engaged in an ongoing creation of equality," that is, it consists simply in the reiteration of acts that verify its presupposition, the equality of intelligences. Anything else, Ranciere continues, "paraded under the banner is either a trick, a school, or a military unity." And we might add, a university. Especially a university that thinks of itself as a progressive force in society, a university that sees itself as a force in the progressive diminution of social inequality. Which hardly any "public" university claims for itself these days, anyway.

So what is really so disconcerting about this antinomy between the logic of the common and the logic of the social or the public? For Jacotot, it means the development of a communist politics that is neither reformist nor seditious. It proposes the formation of common spaces at a distance from – if not outside of – the public sphere and its communicative reason. The relation between these two logics is, then, not structured by negation, and not necessarily antagonistic in nature.

A communist pedagogy, to force the language of this figure of the early workers' movement, would not see its task as the transformation of a given institution, specifically the public universities and schools, or what in the progressive

France of the late 19th century, was called "Instruction Publique." The task, for Ranciere at least, is clear: "whoever forsakes the workings of the social machine has the opportunity to make the electrical energy of emancipation circulate."

What does it mean to forsake the social machine? That is the major political question, I think, facing us today. Such a foresaking – and really, what does this word mean? abandonment, forgetting, neglect, exodus? – would require that our political energies organize themselves around spaces of experimentation, pedagogical but not only pedagogical. It would take place at a distance not only from the university and what is likely its slow-motion collapse, but also from an entire imaginary inherited from the workers movement: the task of a future social emancipation along with the vectors and forms of struggle such a task implies.

To the contrary, perhaps what is required is not to put off equality for the future or for our children, but presuppose the common, to affirm that commons as a fact, a given, which must nevertheless be verified, created, not by a social body, not by a collective force, but a power of the common, now and now and then now again.

#17

Within the history of social movements and political theory in Italy, there is an historical intuition that is always presented as a Copernican turn. In the 60s, in a famous book, following the rise of new social struggles, Mario Tronti suggested a radical inversion of the traditional political narrative. Marxist thinkers have often thought that capitalism is the engine of innovation and organisation of society and that social struggles are simply an act of resistance to that primary force.

On the contrary, Tronti suggested that workers' struggles (as well as student struggles) have to be put first. Tronti said, in other words, that technological and economic innovation themselves are just a reaction to new social forces posing their demands and desires. In this framework, social subjects are not simply labour power producing surplus value but also driving industrial innovation, for instance:

We too have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first, and workers second. This is a mistake. And now we have to turn the problem on its head, reverse the polarity, and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class. At the level of socially developed capital, capitalist development becomes subordinated to working class struggles; it follows behind them, and they set the pace to which the political mechanisms of capital's own reproduction must be tuned.

This intuition was at the base of the long-run of the "project of autonomy", but moreover open up a new dimension of consciousness: not just the usual and pious feeling of dignity for the proletariat but the feeling of pagan potentiality against the Moloch of the state and capitalism.

A simple example of this political intuition that can be mentioned here in California is the digital revolution that emerged precisely out of the utopian dreams and countercultures of the 60s and 70s. Network society and cognitive capitalism are partially the result of these cultural revolutions and demands of new forms of knowledge sharing and production, thereafter reabsorbed by capitalism.

This Copernican turn of political perspective can also be applied to our perception of university struggles, to show how the factory of education is re-organising itself under the pressure of new social forces. As mentioned previously, the form of self-education can be easily hijacked to "save" the

university or to outsource for free the tasks that the university itself is traditionally asked to accomplish.

The university is reacting to the demands of students for self-organised education while keeping the roles of power for itself: management, measurement, validation and ranking. The university of the future will likely welcome all new independent forms of education.

Students' struggles are shaping the university of the future, as much as the struggles of the past decades have shaped, for instance, that architecture of today's campus in California — so well separated from the society in order to be controlled easier in case of any unrest and riot.

#12

School is not University. Neither is it Academy or College or even Institute. We are all familiar with the common meaning of the word: it is a place for learning. In another sense, it also refers to organized education in general, which is made most clear by the decision to leave, to “drop out of school.” Alongside these two stable, almost architectural definitions, the word gestures to composition and movement – the school of bodies, moving independently, together; the school only exists as long as that collective movement does. Similarly, a group of people united by a similarity of principles or methods, as the art historians will know, is a school.

Rather than disambiguate the word – matching the best fitting definition to the situation – why not pull all of it along, like a glacier? In this conception, moments of place, territory, and enclosure are dispersed by forces of exploration, movement and invention, only to compose themselves again. The school takes shape in this oscillation between form and formlessness, again, not through the act of constructing a wall but by the process of realizing its boundary through practice.

Perhaps this is a way to think of how to develop what Felix Guattari called “the associative sector” in 1982 – “everything that isn’t the state, or private capital, or even cooperatives”. At first gloss, the associative sector is only a name for the remainder, the outcast, the already outside; but, in the language of a school, it is a constellation of relationships, affinities, new subjectivities, and movements, flickering into existence through life and use, not the word. Rather, this kind of school is a collective articulation, an “engaged withdrawal” that simultaneously creates an exit and institutes in the act of passing through.

The “engaged withdrawal” recalls Mrs. Dalloway who “sliced like a knife through everything, at the same time was outside looking on.” Which itself might bring us back to school, to the Greek etymology of school, *skhole*, “a holding back, a keeping clear” – usually in the form of leisure or spare time – of space for reflective distance. On the one hand, perhaps this reflective space simply allows meaning, theoretical knowledge, and experience to shape or affect performative action; but on the other hand, the production of this “clearing” is not given, certainly not now and certainly not by the institutions that claim to give it. Reflective space is not the precondition for performative action. On the contrary, within

the current configuration, it criticizes it, authors it, organizes it, and postpones it. Performative action is the precondition for reflective space – or, more appropriately, space and action must be coproduced.

#10

Sticking with the Greeks for a moment, there is an ancient practice, the meditation on death, which might be useful here. The basic idea is:

- Death is not something that will not possibly occur, it is inevitable and necessary.
- Because death is an inevitable event, we must all prepare ourselves.
- In preparation of death, one must take the point of view of death on oneself, which effectively makes death present and actualizes it while we are still alive.

This practice is not something that happens at the end of one's life, it must occur everyday, as the moment of death itself can't be predicted.

What this mediation on death opens up is an instantaneous view of the present from above, which takes a snapshot of all of the activities of life and their representations. This is important as it allows one to look at the present from a certain distance, the current activities that one is engaged with. Since the possibility of death is there at every moment, you can ask yourself, "Is this what I want to be doing when I die?" If not, then you chose another activity.

Additionally, viewing the accumulation of one's activities over life, allows a passing of judgement on the whole of oneself, as you are potentially at the final moment of your life. So then, the death mediation is not something about a future state of being but as a constant present.

Perhaps, we should take part in this death meditation together. We can begin by focusing on the now, not a future pre-determined trajectory, and ask yourself, "Why am I here?" What do the material conditions and practices that compose your lives in the university - teaching, sitting in a seminar, hiring committee, a crit, a faculty meeting, a conference - leave you with at the end of the day. Would you leave saying, "This is what I want to be doing when I die?" If not, then what?

The Public School cannot save the university, but maybe it can be its specter of death.

#2

And is the university even worth "saving"? I think this is question worth posing, as many of us have done during the most recent attacks on public universities by those entrusted with managing those institutions. We are right to respond with indignation, or better, with an array of tactics – some procedural, some more "direct" – against these incursions, which always seem to authorize themselves by appeals to economic austerity, budget shortfalls, and tightened belts. We know very well that economic decisions are political matters, and that when other institutions are threatened with the same sort of financial shakeouts, massive state interventions occur, and billions and even trillions of dollars materialize overnight, usually in the bank accounts of those most responsible for engineering the crisis to begin with. But these most recent predatory moves on the public university and, in a very important way, the "public" sphere in general should also force us to ask ourselves why we so inflexibly insist on protecting an institution that is much older than the modern state, whose supposed demise or marginalization it should be pointed is not always lamented on the non-liberal left. Perhaps what is being destroyed in this process is the very notion of the public sphere itself, a notion that is relatively less archaic than the university itself but which has no right to an eternal life either. It is easy to succumb to the illusion that the only possible result of this destruction of the figure of the public, of "publicness", is privatization, the transfer of public and socially or collectively produced wealth, knowledge and even affective energies into the hands and pockets of tiny cliques of plutocrats and assorted vampires. But what if the figure of the public, which emerged in the context of the transition from the absolute to the liberal state, was to be set off against not only the private and property relations, but against a new and vibrant figure of the "common" as well? What if the erosion of the public university and the public sphere in general was a process torn between two poles: private confiscation of socially produced wealth and knowledge, and an antagonistic process of "commonization" (or, better, communization) on the other? What if, in other words, the notion of the public has always been an unstable, mediating term between privatization and communization, and what if the withering of this mediation left these two processes openly at odds with each other? In the ruins of the university, could we not also propose the formation of poles of the common, in which new techniques and forms of knowledge production and transmission crystallize outside of the circuits of valorization that they currently feed? Perhaps, then, it is not simply a question of

saving a university and, more broadly, a public space that is already withering away; maybe our energies and our intelligence, our collective or common intellectual forces, should be devoted to organizing and articulating just this sort of counter-transition, at a distance from the public and the "private." Perhaps this is the only effective riposte, if still larval and overwhelmed by the processes of financialization, "primitive" accumulation, and state-sponsored looting that currently define the space of domination in which we move, act and think.

#14

For decades we have spoken about the “death of the author” but no one really believes it. Every disavowal of authorship is seen as a stroke of genius, a clever new take on a timeless concern. The less we see the hand of the artist in the work of art, the more we want their signature - or at least their voice. Even the formation of collectives is not as much a renunciation of authorship as an overinvestment in it. The less there is to say, the more important it is who is speaking.

The most sustained critiques of authorship have been made from the spheres of Art and Education, but not coincidentally, these spheres have the most invested in the notion. Credit and accreditation are the mechanisms for attaching symbolic capital to individuals via degrees and other lines on CVs. That *curriculum vitae* – the course of my life – the paperwork I keep because nobody else does! It is an inverted credit report, evidence of underpaid work, kept orderly with an expectation of some future return. Today, authorship is the singular connection between my life and my CV, my self- presentation; and more than that, it is my inability to break that connection, which hardens with time. How often we’ve heard the phrase “but I’ve invested so much...”

This is by no means restricted to the professionalized fields of Art and Education. One familiar example marches hand-in-hand with the increasing prominence of the CV: “social spaces” on the Internet (which historically would include bulletin boards, chat rooms, forums and now, social networks) have become progressively less anonymous. Now Facebook compels us to attach our real identity to a single *profile* and we work on maintaining that profile for whomever is watching.

All of this work, this self-documentation, this fidelity between our selves and our papers, is for what, for whom? And what is the consequence of a world where every person is armed with their *vitæ*, other than “the war of all against all”? It’s that sensation that there are no teams but everyone has got their own jersey. Not to mention reports of feeling “stuck”, “paranoid”, “depressed”, “floating”, and “wanting to get out”. My intention here is not moral judgment, but unblinking description. What if authorship was not just another slain meta-narrative, but the neoliberal foundation for the slogan “everyone is creative”?

Outsourcing, crowdsourcing, any way to get work done

cheaply, maybe even pay by giving them credit. Money doesn't matter as much when they've got credit (cards).

Rather than taking authorship as a monolithic axiom of contemporary capitalism to be affirmed or opposed (and the *possibility*, let alone the efficacy, of opposition is a question here), perhaps we can think of it as a mechanism, or a process, or a point of intervention?

#19

The idea behind the project The Public School is to teach each other in a very horizontal way. No curriculum, no hierarchy. But is the Public School also able produce new knowledge and new content by itself? Can the Public School become a sort of *autonomous collective author*? Or, is the Public School just a place of book exchanges, workshops and social networking? This is for me would be a crucial question that I'm happy to extend also to today's so-called "academic activism" and students' struggles.

Are students fighting for the right to study Hegel and Lacan again and again forever?

Recently some collectives started to refresh the idea of *coresearch*, that is not at all the idea of 'collective research' but the attempt of a form of knowledge that moves from the very ground, material conditions and desires of the people involved in a particular context. The practice of *coresearch* was introduced in Italy in the 60s and 70s against an academia completely blind towards the new social movements. Coresearch was dismissed by academia as a sort of anarco-sociology, as simply it was directly immersed in the life of factories from dawn to fall. Coresarch abolished the distinction between object and subject of knowledge.

Moreover, the real final purpose of coresearch was about a form of knowledge that could produce new political subjectivities and new political organisation. Marx would say, a form of philosophy that can change the world and not just describing it... The ambition of co-research was about new social subjectivities able to produce new knowledge and a new knowledge able to produce new forms of political organisation.

There are many examples of forms of autonomous knowledge in the history of political movements. Gramsci's idea of 'organic intellectual' was a bit totalitarian, but some of his ideas resonate today in a nice way: "all humans are intellectuals", he was used to say. Gramsci advanced the idea of factory councils as educational spaces to allow workers to better understand their situation and develop a proper political consciousness. With the spread of the internet and knowledge sharing, these places appear to be no longer necessary. But on the opposite, with the spread of the internet and dematerialised form of communication and exchange, we need new material and tangible forms of encounter and

organisation.

Foucault founded the Prison Information Group (GIP) on the need to understand the prison apparatus and on the desire to immerse himself in the real flesh of the power structures. The GIP was composed of prisoners, former prisoners, academics, students, activists, psychiatrists. The distinction between the object and the subject of research was abolished also here. As Foucault said, the need of GIP was also a way "to be done with spokespersons".

Similarly, in the same years, under different intellectual latitudes, in the realm of journalism, Hunter Thompson started to abolish the distinction between subject and object, facts and reporter to become himself the object of his own reports. His idea of gonzo journalism should be applied to other fields, perhaps to envision a gonzo philosophy and why not a gonzo education.

If knowledge comes only from conflict, knowledge has to go back to conflict and to produce new autonomous subjectivities and 'institutions of the common'.

#3

Teachers should go to classes that they don't teach.

Let's invent discrediting bodies (or negative accreditation).

Art should withdraw from the University.

All adjunct faculty to strike for the next quarter.

Mount an assault on credit agencies (or, for example, take positions that allow updates, hack databases, destroy backups) to eliminate individual debts.

Students should stop paying.

Teachers should allow anyone into their classes.

Mount an assault on degree databases (take positions that allow updates, hack databases, destroy backups) to grant degrees to whoever.

Slowly steal away materials, syllabuses, books, students, time, software, furniture for autonomous schools.

Quickly steal away real estate.

Students and teachers take over administration — all fees to be eliminated. Introduction of a University Department, which is to be what it sounds like.

Eliminate grading.

Remove the mention of any specific discipline from degrees, diplomas, etc.

Funding idea, in lieu of fees or tuition: tax graduates based on their income or net worth.

Remove the application process from the academy. Students come and leave as they like.

Faculty should stop "collaborating" with students on projects. Don't use the auspices of education to produce artwork for the instructor.

Resist any invitation for interdisciplinary work and instead put

all effort into creating new departments.

Create more consistency between the administration of the university and the content it provides. In other words, follow the model of many nonprofits, magazines, or other cultural institutions and have people who are participating modulate between different roles (from janitor to professor).

Make university libraries public libraries.

Remove any state or private oversight of the university's activities.

Reject any funds and related requirements that come from applied research.

We should burn our degrees.