

**ON
THE
POVERTY
OF
STUDENT
LIFE**

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We might very well say, and no one would disagree with us, that

THE STUDENT IS THE MOST UNIVERSALLY DESPISED CREATURE IN FRANCE (SOCIETY),

apart from the priest and the policeman*. **Naturally** he* is usually attacked from the wrong point of view, ~~with specious reasons derived from the ruling ideology.~~ He may be worth the contempt of a true revolutionary, yet a revolutionary critique of the student situation is currently taboo** on the official Left. ~~The licensed and impotent opponents of capitalism repress the obvious that what is wrong with the students is also what is wrong with them.~~ They convert their unconscious contempt into a **blind** enthusiasm.

* Girls too

** It's taboo almost everywhere at this point...

The radical intelligentsia (~~from Les Temps Modernes to L'Express~~) prostrates itself before ~~the so-called rise of the student~~ and the declining ~~bureaucracies of the Left (from the "Communist" party to the Stalinist National Union of Students)~~ bids noisily for his moral and material support.*

* People of the left tend to think of the student too idealistically, almost in the assumption that students are all leftists & thus never truly criticize his role.

~~There are reasons for this sudden enthusiasm, but they are all provided by the present form of capitalism, in its overdeveloped state.~~

WE SHALL USE THIS PAMPHLET FOR DENUNCIATION. We

shall expose these reasons one by one, on the principle that the end of alienation is only reached by the straight and narrow path of alienation itself.**

** In this passage they're talking about trying to use the current conditions (no matter how bad) to a revolutionary advantage.

Alienation is estrangement or splitting apart. The term has specialized meanings in a variety of disciplines. In sociology and critical social theory, social alienation refers to the individual subject's estrangement from its community, society, or world, a characteristic condition of workers & citizens in western capitalist countries.

UP TO NOW, STUDIES OF STUDENT LIFE HAVE IGNORED THE ESSENTIAL ISSUE.

The surveys and analyses have all been psychological or sociological or economic: in other words, academic exercises, content with the false categories of one specialization or another*.

* Studies on the social role of students have mostly been carried out by people who work (consciously or not) for the ruling order and such studies have, if anything, contributed to the mystification of the issue by fragmenting it into many smaller issues.

NONE OF THEM CAN ACHIEVE WHAT IS MOST NEEDED: A VIEW (CRITIQUE) OF MODERN SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

~~Fourier denounced their error long ago as the attempt to apply scientific laws to the basic assumptions of the science (le porteur régulierement sur les questions primordiales).~~ Everything is said about our society except what it (really) is, and the nature of its two basic principles — the commodity and the spectacle*. The fetishism of facts masks the essential category, and the details consign the **totality**** to oblivion.***

* Read: products and distractions

** See "The Totality for Kids" (aka "Basic Banalities") by Raoul Vaneigem.

*** The central role of products & objects in our society rarely gets questioned. Our societies are so concerned with the surface of things that a look at the larger picture seems impossible, as we continue to obsess over what gadget to buy next.

Modern capitalism and its spectacle allot everyone a specific role in a **general passivity**.*

The student is no **exception** to the rule.

HE HAS A PROVISIONAL PART TO PLAY, A REHEARSAL FOR HIS FINAL ROLE AS AN ELEMENT IN MARKET SOCIETY

as conservative as the rest. Being a student is a form of initiation.

An initiation which echoes the rites of more primitive societies with bizarre precision.

~~It goes on outside of history, cut off from social reality.~~

The student leads a double life, poised between his present status and his future role.** The two are absolutely separate, and the journey from one to the other is a mechanical event "in the future." Meanwhile, he basks in a schizophrenic consciousness, withdrawing into his initiation group*** to hide from that future. Protected from history, the present is a mystic trance.

* Free market capitalism (and its specialized system of appearances/distractions) has calculated that in order to function efficiently, people must be as passive and politically isolated as possible and that passivity should seem like the only option.



** The student's transitional role takes the form of a ritualistic initiation into general society.

*** Students tend to close themselves into a group with other students forming a separate social group totally separate from the rest of society.

At least in consciousness, the student can exist apart from the official truths of "economic life." But for very simple reasons: looked at economically, student life is a hard one.

IN OUR SOCIETY OF "ABUNDANCE," HE IS STILL A PAUPER.*

* Students are notoriously poor, even those who come from wealthy families.

To this effect there is a whole range of specialized products students spend their money on in order to fulfill the role properly.

80% of students come from income groups well above the working class, yet 90% have less money than the lowest laborer. Student poverty is an anachronism, ~~a throwback from an earlier age of capitalism; it does not share in the new poverty of the spectacular society; it has yet to attain the new poverty of the new proletariat.~~

Nowadays the teenager shuffles off the moral prejudices and authority of the family to become part of the market even before he is adolescent:

AT FIFTEEN HE HAS ALL THE DELIGHTS OF BEING DIRECTLY EXPLOITED.*

In contrast the student covets his protracted infancy as an irresponsible and docile paradise. Adolescence and its crises may bring occasional brushes with his family, but in essence he is not troublesome: he agrees to be treated as a baby by the institutions which provide his education. ~~(If ever they stop screwing his ass off, it's only to come round and kick him in the balls.)~~

* As the market develops, it targets increasingly younger consumer ages, leading to generations of people more and more accustomed to the language of advertising.



**“THERE
IS NO
STUDENT
PROBLEM.”**