

Against the (New and Old) Familism

Down with the Family!

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Whoever is DEPRIVED of the means to satisfy his needs is faced with private property. He is coerced, if he does not want to die (socially and physically), to submit to the whims, arbitrariness and volubility of those who have the power to provide for his needs: in the case of the children, the parents.

Not coincidentally, the word 'family' derives from the Latin 'famulus', "slave, servant". In this word, the Latin radical 'fames' means "hunger", according to Roman popular etymology¹. For the ancient Romans, the 'familia' is primarily constituted by the power to punish (by starving) and reward (by ending the hunger) the slaves / servants (which included the wife, children, and the acquired 'famuli').

Today, many criticize the patriarchal family defending one modern, postmodern, libertarian, matriarchal, queer, polygynic, polyandric, tribal, zoogamic, communal, digital, neo-hippie family and so on. They wish to add to the family a plurality of new adjectives, perpetuating the bondage to which the new generations are subjected for millennia.²

THE FAMILISM

Since the emergence of capitalism (ie, the industrial capital, the proletariat and the modern state, simultaneously, eighteenth century), the familism is the central fetish by which the proletarians (ie, those deprived of the property of any means of life) accept willingly to engage in maintaining and improving the enterprise and the government, creating and accumulating with dedication the very hostile power that systematically subjugates them, wears out them, recycles them, discards them and abandons them - the capital. This is because they place their libido (cathectis), their desires, in the family, pseudo capitalist property in which they fantasize are accumulating their own capital on a par with the capitalists. This leads them to support the ruling class and the police, that is, the state as guarantor of this fictitious property.

Thanks to familism, which is this belief in their pseudo-capitalist property on a set that encompasses children, sexual partners, toothbrushes, car, house, etc., the proletarians imagine themselves as capitalists as the owners of the means of existence and production who exploit it, and imagine themselves to have the same interests as they.

¹ <http://etimologias.dechile.net/?familia> e <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=family>

² This was already the case in tribal communities, where the family generally identified with the tribe itself, and all uncles and aunts could have status of mothers and fathers (or depending on the kinship, patrilineal or matrilineal system, only the relatives of the father or mother). For each tribe, all other unfamiliar humans were beasts, nonhumans or false humans, against whom one was in a state of constant or latent war (when then, through the "gift", a bond of mutual debt was created, for example, the potlatch). In order to mark membership in the only tribe of supposed "true humans", who were considered the strongest and superiors, the tribal family subjected the new generations to rites of passage as a probation of the "merit" of belonging to their family to the exclusion of all humanity. These rites literally wrote in the flesh and in the soul the marks of belonging (mutilations, humiliations, various proofs of resistance to pain, proof that one is not "loose" by murdering enemies without hesitation, acquiring scars of war, etc.). Of course, the new generations were forced to submit because there was no other means of satisfying their needs outside the tribe, unless they desired the solitude of inclement nature, vulnerable to enemy tribes and beasts. And if they came together to create another independent tribe, they would be forced to recreate the same probation of rites of passage and the same violence toward the other tribes. For this depends not only on the will, but on the material conditions of existence, that is, on the human capacity of transforming, with the existing productive forces, the nature, the circumstances, the concrete conditions of human relations. It was the state of nature in which they found themselves that materially compelled them to adopt all these coercions, grouping themselves into the social form family-tribe.

It follows from the familism the belief that there are only "middle class" and "bandits": an infinitely subdivided hierarchy, ranging from "successful" families - "high high middle class" - to "failed" families - "low low middle class", - a hierarchy which is supposed to be established "objectively, naturally, legitimately" in the cruel but fair ("meritocratic") competition for survival, competition for what is for few (scarcity - private property imagined as a natural, eternal phenomenon). But the "middle class" as a whole congregates and cheer for the police (which they ascribe a theocratic, superhuman status, completely free to kill and torture) against the "bandits." These latter are any scapegoats that the factions of the proprietary class (grouped as identities, fatherlands, ethnicities, "good citizen", or dressed in other fantasies, such as the symmetrical left and right halves of capital and state) exhibit in the means of communication as the cause of all evil: from "slums dweller" to "Jews", "vagabonds", "foreigners", "outsiders", "terrorists", "imperialists", "communists" etc. Thus, in case of war, each competing bourgeois faction easily recruits proletarians to attack and massacre each other, to attack and massacre their own class brothers behind the frontiers invented by the exploiters, imagining that they are attacking those stereotypes, ideological scarecrows, scapegoats.

If in its apex familism is the consecration of the military slaughter, in its base it is the consecration of the daily war of all against all called market and of the armed power that guarantees this war, the state. They imagine that these entities are natural, eternal, sacred and immutable because are imagined to be the consolidating foundations of the family, which they consider the only thing that gives meaning to their lives, the only reason they do not commit suicide. Capitalists need individuals who repress and restrict their desires to mere familism so that they engage with full commitment to maintain and improve the state and capital seen as a means of fulfill this narrow, squeezed, formatted, petty, and ultimately suicidal and homicidal desire.³.

Thus, while for the capital (accumulation of dead labor, surplus value, automatic subject, endless self-expanding self-referential profit) what matters is that there are atoms sellers / buyers, existing socially only by the exchange of commodities, simple gears interconnected only by the accumulation of capital (hence, capital easily adopts an atomizing feminine, homosexual, worker, racial, ethnic, sexual emancipation), for the capitalist class - which is the personification of capital as a direct, practical power over human beings, vampirising them in the flesh to implement the accumulation of capital, a class that includes bureaucrats and owners, government and enterprise - for the capitalist class there is the crystal clear clarity that, without the belief in the pseudo-property called family, hardly anyone would be willing to sacrifice itself until the exhaustion by increasing a power that will only wear out him to the bone to discard him to the end in the street's drain-hole.⁴. Let us then analyze how capitalists make familism inculcated in children by their parents from generation to generation.

³ See *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

⁴ In *Capital*, Marx explains that in the sphere of commodity circulation, this semblance of equality and voluntary exchange is real, not a mere lie. And since the sphere of production is invisible, private, isolated and without communication with society, it is no wonder that the appearance of capitalism is that of voluntary exchange and that the majority of the proletarians consider themselves to be "middle class" and even "capitalist". The book *Capital* begins by analyzing the immediate appearance of the capitalist mode of production, the simple production of commodities (in which each one alone produces, sells and buys goods, seeking to satisfy their needs), showing that the illusion is based on that appearance. Marx explains that it is only from the point of view of the proletariat, when it imposes itself as an autonomous class against the work imposed on it, against the enterprise and the national frontiers, that one can have a theoretical-practical perspective that makes publicly visible the sphere of production - exploitation, alienated labor, reification, fetishism of capital etc - as the foundation of capitalist society.

”DISCIPLINARY SOCIETY” AND ” SOCIETY OF CONTROL”

Apparently, the power of parents over children today (since the 1970s-80s) is principally ”objectivist.” Parents simply remind their children endlessly of the existence of the so-called ”real world”: dog-eat-dog world / streets full of murderers-rapist-monsters / war-of-all-against-all / market-the-impartial-picker-and-last-criterion-of-truth. A ”real world” always confirmed by the media, by shocking rumors or by the real degradation of the surroundings. The fear then entails the children’s ”voluntary” lock-in and submission to ”domestic safety” and school. Well, this is exactly the old mode of subjection of the proletarians to the owners. The proletarian is subject to the power of the owner not because the owner imposes himself ”personally” but ”objectivistically.” Thrown into a desolate and inhuman dog-eat-dog world, deprived of property of all means of life, there is no way out for the proletarian unless it sells itself ”voluntarily” in the labor market. But this apparently ”objective” and ”natural” situation is actually armed and guaranteed by the state (and its inseparable underground: crime), the armed body of the proprietary class responsible for the enforcement of private property.

The present ”control society” (which succeeds the ”disciplinary society” from the 1970-80s onwards), with its ”objectivism”, can be seen as an extension of the process of proletarianisation from the sphere of production to the sphere of reproduction of society (family, education, health, sexual repression)⁵. In contrast, the old family of ”disciplinary society” may be considered a survival of the feudal or caste family, with a type of subjection not yet fully capitalist (In other words, there was formal subsumption but still no real subsumption of the reproduction of the proletariat to capital). Because in it, parents exercised a power primarily personal, not ”objectivist.” The children used to spent most of their time on the streets (”world of curiosities and wonders”) playing with their friends (while the daughters were treated as ultra-protected ”dolls”, helping the mother in housework, to be future housewives and not ”women of the world”). The predominance of personal power is evident because, at the end of the day, when the father came home from work, his parents recriminated him by demanding ”respect for him” and even brutally chastising the children to ”shape up.” Moment of discipline.

GENERALIZED FAMILISM: THE DOMESTICATION OF UNIVERSAL EVERYDAY LIFE THROUGH THE INTERNET

The proletarianization of reproduction that characterizes the present ”control society” would be unstoppably explosive if it were not accompanied by generalized familization. And it is the internet that now leads to a previously unimaginable absolutization of familism. In the advent of the internet, the so-called ”web 1.0” resulted in a volcanic confluence of disparate dimensions

⁵ This perspective seems to allow an understanding of the ”control society” in a much less holistic and mysterious way than it is usually done (which seems to lead many to mistakenly believe that present-day society is ”permissive” - as espoused for example by spectacular stars as Zizek and others academicians - or that self-subjection is truly self- subjection - eg, ”the tyrant inside yourself”), making it possible to understand what is determinant and what is accidental. This seems to open a more potent emancipatory practical perspective. On the expressions ”society of control” and ”disciplinary society”, see the works of Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault. The repression of sexuality, the feeling of guilt, etc., all continue in the brutal objectivist form, according to which all people are essentially struggling monsters, dawdlers, murderers, rappers and vagabonds, bandits, being necessary to repress oneself and repress others, suffer and make suffer, in order to ”get ahead” and join the few ”winners.”

of existence: everyday life and information technology collided without control, provoking a universalism or communism of ideas freely produced by anyone and accessible to everyone in the world. For each person a universe was opened infinitely beyond familism, the familiarity of the "cliques" of friends and the reification of identity. A potentially revolutionary volcanic disparity, because it made the perspective of a free worldwide association of individuals through their needs, desires, projects and passions more entralling than the miserable and frightened self-imprisonment of the family. People defined themselves, met and related for what they wanted to be and do: pseudonym and anonymity were the rule. However, with the advent of the so-called "web 2.0", capital has been careful to destroy this volcanic disparity, forcing everyone to identify themselves, to meet and relate as "people with families, friends and registered by the state", annihilating at the root the perspective of a universalist internet of individuals freely associated based on their free and common needs and passions.⁶

The "web 2.0" is the emptying of the internet (websites, forums, emails etc) by the so-called "social networks" (now dominated by facebook, whatsapp etc), that lead to a privatization or even a feudalization of what is shared and accessed on the Internet. Familism (and the "friendism" or "cronyism" inherent in it) occupy all time and libido of people: it is no longer possible for almost no one to exist socially if he does not let himself to be wallowed in a frantic and endless "timeline" of personal and family exhibitionisms infinitely disposable every second. Almost all internet universalist and freely accessible (eg. by search engines) and made autonomously (homepages, discussion groups ...) was abandoned and emptied. Under these conditions, there is a brutal reduction in the capacity of individuals to express themselves, associate themselves and think outside of the stupidity of the personal, family, "cronyist" and identitarian dimensions. A general infantilization takes place.

There is still an even more appalling aspect in the familism of "social networks". Since everyone is practically only accessible and only communicates through them (facebook, whatsapp ...), each proletarian would be isolated and incommunicable if he did not become a user of them. This gives an absurd surveillance power over what each one thinks, does and feels. Facebook is the largest and most powerful surveillance and monitoring system ever in the history of mankind. And not just for the state and secret services. Whoever is forced, in order to survive, to sell himself as a living object of consumption in the labor market, has, for that very reason, his survival under the power, arbitrariness and whims of other people (the capitalist class, both bureaucrats and businessmen) which, of course, watch and monitor the facebook of its wage slave. The slightest critical idea that the chief can find may lead, the next day, on any pretext, the proletarian to be fired, thrown down the street. So familism becomes the only thought and feeling that the proletariat is allowed to express in public, unless it wants to commit suicide, socially (becoming beggar) or physically.

SOLUTION: ABOLITION OF THE FAMILY

Some people ask us, "What new family will replace the traditional family?" None. The family as such will have to be overcome: new generations will find freely in common in society the means to develop for themselves their innumerable potentialities, capabilities and passions,

⁶ See Infoenclosure 2.0 (Dmytri Kleiner & Brian Wyrick) and Fetishism of Digital Commodities and Hidden Exploitation (Wu Ming).

growing as autonomous beings. That is, they will freely find the means of not being forced to submit to arbitrariness or whim of anyone. Then, parents and children can have true love for each other, because they will no longer be feigned by their children's interest in receiving from their parents the means of satisfying themselves. Of course, all this can only happen with the world-wide self-abolition of the proletariat and therefore with the destruction of capital and the state, through the free global association of individuals who freely and universally access the practical material conditions (the means of production interconnected worldwide) necessary for the self-realization and free development of their desires, needs, passions, aptitudes, projects ... Only in this way, those who are passionate about helping to make the new generations autonomous (those who are today the wage slaves called educators, teachers, nannies, etc.), can freely associate all over the world to perform and enhance their capacities they love, by providing freely to new generations the base for them to grow and develop their autonomy. The basic lesson: Never accept the servility to do anything in exchange for money, wage, job, commodities or any other kind of blackmail or threat.⁷

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⁷ The abolition of the family is no new idea, but part of the invariable communism of the autonomous proletariat, that is, anti-state and internationalist, since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Joseph Déjacque, Karl Marx, William Morris, Piotr Kropotkin and Alexander Bogdanov, among many others, contributed to systematize and improve these ideas.

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