

Anastasia Veprev

**Lecture-Projection: How to Live If You Are a Left Melancholic?**

Import scene:

*// Darkness. A table, a chair, a projector shining. On the screen is a cat in a pink blanket. You are sitting at the table.*

Import materials:

1. Photos from protests
2. Images of petitions
3. Video "Judges" loop
4. Image FALC
5. USB-web-camera, live
6. New file "Notepad"
7. Shout from the audience, pre-planned
8. Eighth page of the newspaper of the group Chto Delat, issue No. 16, 2007, pdf
9. Gif image flashing the words "end" / "beginning"

Import the first part:

*// Read in a detached voice.*

What should you do if you are for everything good, while everything around you is so bad?

In sadness one can hide from work.

The bright future will come, but without us. We are doomed as a species.

I am so saddened that I cannot even write a text. Why go to a protest if the machine will decide everything for us?

*// One by one cover the protest photos on the screen (1)*

I am not there.

Why do anything if everything will go wrong anyway?

*// One by one cover the petition images on the screen (2)*

The possibilities for solidarity have become outdated.

The bright future will come,

But without us; we only need to endure; never; despite everything; well, to hell with it.

I want nothing, I am tired.

Import the second part:

*// Turn video 3 to full screen, leave your place and sit among the audience. Watch the video for one and a half or two cycles, depending on the situation. The audience hears the following lines, repeated in a loop throughout the performance.*

Video block 1

Person 1: The main thing is to have a positive attitude toward everything and to love the world.

Person 2: We must act right now.

Person 1: If you love the world, then you have a positive attitude toward everything.

Person 2: We definitely must begin to act.

Video block 2

Person 3: I see no meaning in life, and I do not believe in the future.

Person 2: We cannot change anything anyway.

Person 3: It is hard to believe in the future when you see no meaning in life.

Person 2: Whatever we do, we will change nothing.

Video block 3

Person 3: Live in the present, do not give in to depression.

Person 4: And I will definitely help other people.

Person 3: Everything most interesting in your life is happening now.

Person 4: Helping other people is absolutely necessary.

Video block 4

Person 4: I will not allow anyone to use me.

Person 1: You never know what to expect from people.

Person 4: It is unacceptable for others to use me.

Person 1: Better to prepare in advance for the worst.

Import the third part:

*// Return to the table, lower the volume, begin reading cheerfully.*

- Hi Baruch! Maybe you would be interested to watch my last "left melancholy" work - this is a PC version and originally this was a video-installation – loop

- Hi Anastasia! Very mysterious! ... And gloomy I watched the "Solanas" one too. Very good. Not so sure how they are "left" though, except in the sense that especially the "Judges" one might seem to take place in "FALC" (Fully Automated Luxury Communist) society... where people need to confront their mortality all the time in the most excruciatingly mundane way

*// Open and close image 4 on the screen.*

- Thank you very much! I thought mostly about our unconditional belief in technique that can save us by itself. And "Judges" is the dystopian, post-apocalypse world after crashing that belief, in which the machine starts to delete people as a mistake, "wrong working machine". Several years I tried to work with this idea of "technique" from different points of view. In my works, I speak about biased judgments, distrusting, lacking of methods and tools for qualitative change, and about a sense of impotence and uncertainty in a world that we do not understand.

*// Pause. Then say sadly.*

He didn't answer.

Import the fourth part:

*// Connect device 5 and begin setting it up. Place it in the center of the screen over the running video 3. Admire yourself through the live broadcast of device 5 and after some time begin reading.*

Skidan: The experience of disappointment is important because it confirms Alain Badiou's idea about traditional forms of mobilization and organization of revolutionary action, such as the party or even the movement: they have probably truly exhausted themselves. Therefore the main task today is to find ways of creating new forms.

Magun: This requires clarification. Walter Benjamin and Badiou have completely different positions regarding the past. Badiou proposes relying on something important and necessary that happened in the past and moving forward accordingly. Benjamin, on the contrary, seeks in the past something suppressed, something that did not happen, something that perished and is only now awakening. And the event that for Badiou happened in the past, for Benjamin happens now.

Because the problem is that these forms may also carry a completely reactionary, escapist character,

*// Add mannered intonation.*

they may deceive, they may be an illusion of hope that you live autonomously, while in fact it means that a person is a conformist in political life, an ordinary consumer. If for Badiou the event in the past is emphasized as actuality, then for Benjamin in the past it is precisely potentiality, chance, that is emphasized. In this sense, one must seek potentials in actuality, remembering that something is being realized. The utopia of consumption and the utopia of technique are very powerful utopias that are realized, yet realized almost deliberately in the opposite way from how we imagine them. It is a caricature of our real utopian desires.

There are two contemporary approaches to potentiality. Through asceticism — this is closer to the approach of Giorgio Agamben, who reminds us that potentiality is affirmed through refusal of action, through its suspension, a tense caesura. Another important approach today to potentiality (= power, possibility) proceeds from the overflowing force of new productive powers already active in the economy and at the same time a political force capable of instituting a new self-governed society. This is the approach of Antonio Negri.

First, we must expose the enjoyment,

*// Open tool 6, distribute it evenly on the screen together with device 5, and begin writing large outline points such as: "1. Expose enjoyment within the technical-consumer system," etc..*

that people in fact experience in this technical-consumer system, though unconsciously, and are ready to sell very cheaply. We must raise the stakes.

Second, we must de-objectify utopian force, translating it from microcosm to macrocosm. The privatized collectivity of the supermarket and the private house must be returned to an original collectivity, which a person either suppresses within themselves or sells too cheaply. And we must invent relations. It is in relations (between people and people, people and things) that any potentiality is in fact contained. Relations formed through activity are possibilities themselves, space as possibility.

*// Hear angry question from the audience: (7) "What does melancholy have to do with this?" Become confused, fall silent, apologize, ask the audience to wait a little.*

Import the fifth part:

*// Bring material 8 onto the screen, combining it with the other materials already on the screen (5,6). Silently, yet actively and convincingly performing a puzzled face for the live transmission (5), read the highlighted text to yourself, slowly moving it across the screen so that it can be read from the audience. Video 3 remains audible and partially visible to the audience. The spectator observes the following theses in material 8. They are not read aloud.*

Sadness came after the event. [] According to Spinoza, sadness (melancholy) consists in the limitation of our capacities for action (potentia). In many cases our political sadness assumed the form of powerlessness and melancholy in the face of the growing distance between this social experiment and the political imagination capable of realizing it. []

#### I. Political Sadness

Logic of specialists. [] Thus, following the era of "disorder," came the categories of specialists — in order to restore and resurrect classifications which, as they assure us, never entirely disappear. [] In this way hybridity, implied in any creation of new political figures, is deliberately confused with a costume party, after which the old classificatory forces return and distribute uniforms, ignoring the fact that all these processes always possess a dimension of irreversibility.

Repetition without difference. [] Productive forces cannot withstand repetition outside the situations in which their meaning is rooted without becoming a formula. []

Duration as a criterion of viability. [] The key idea [] consisted in the "third group": associations formed around tasks that would suspend differences between groups while simultaneously uniting them into genuine laboratories for the creation of images, words, and organizations. []

*// Write with the mouse "unrealistic" in the body of the text next to point 3 in material 8 and silently lament. Continue reading.*

Contempt for the socialization of production. []

Machines of capture. The classical dilemma concerning institutions — participate or withdraw? [] The resources wrested by collectives and movements from institutions dictated neither the "meaning" of their use nor of their functioning. On the contrary, they became cogs in another machine. []

Autonomy as corset. [] When autonomy becomes morality and/or a strict party line, it chokes within narrow particularity and loses its capacity for discovery and innovation. [] Sadness also manifests itself [] as guilt for what they did not do, for that of which they "proved incapable." []

Sudden appearance in the spotlight. [] Collectives and movements that only yesterday were being watched, applauded, and joined suddenly came to be ignored or even ridiculed, which is usually experienced as a mixture of extreme loneliness, betrayal, and guilt.

#### II. Politicize Sadness

*// Become animated and enter into tool 6 a new heading: "Politicize Sadness," then continue taking notes according to the highlighted points in material 8.*

1. Rework the event in the light of memory as a potential force (potencia). [] Arm yourself with true political memory.

2. Do not make a victim of yourself. [] Sadness is not only the politics of power, but above all the circumstances in which the politics of power becomes powerful.

*// Express great skepticism regarding the second point and place question marks in the notes (6).*

3. Capacity (potencia) for restraint. [] The politicization of sadness may perhaps be understood as a form of prudence in which seeming passivity radically preserves its active subjective content.

4. New public spaces. [] The institution of new public spaces [] requires the non-state institution of that which is collective.

5. Rework the collective anew. [] The collective as a level of political production and the experiences that accompany one another. [] The collective as participation in the adventure of becoming the situational interface of the world.

[] As political sadness drifts toward its politicization, we intend to discuss these dilemmas, which are opened by the ever-present danger of becoming lost within the frozen, and therefore illusory, binary logic of "victory-defeat."

Import the sixth part:

*// Finish the notes, abruptly stand up and just as abruptly fall to the floor beside the table. Then curl up into a ball with your back to the audience and in a defeated voice read the following from a smartphone..*

1. Q U I D / Katya Agler & Jeanne Holmsted / | Turn your anus toward the sun and shout "FORWARD!"  
Quote. Melancholy has passed into a more severe condition — manic depression. If mania is encouraged as an innovative, highly productive type of obsessive state, depression is rejected in its unproductivity.

2. David Riff. Quote. The conditions of contemporary intellectual labor leave so little time for writing long texts. That is why I must end at this stage, having sketched only in broad outlines no more than yet another new beginning.

*// Stand up, brush yourself off, and switch image 9 to full screen. Smile, sit at the table, and say: "That's all, the end."*