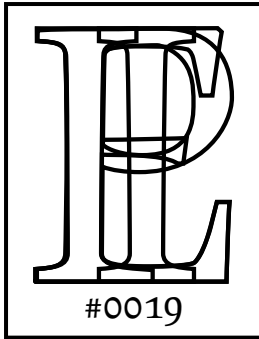


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ALIENIST MANIFESTO + Interview

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ALIENIST MANIFESTO

The dissolution of the metaphysics of alienation isn't a purely intellectual task. Its necessity is profoundly inscribed in the whole experience of present life.

Born alienated into this world, humanity is constituted as such to its very core. Technology is the word conceived to express this revelation: that humanity itself is both agent & product of abstract processes, & is so COMPULSIVELY. On this basis RESISTANCE & SUBVERSION obtain a meaning that is symbiotic & not merely relative, since emancipative potential stands in a fixed ratio to the fact of alienation. That the individual exercises no volition over the circumstances of its coming-into-being has, at least since Rimbaud, presented itself as a Cartesian "tragedy" of the highest order, when it hasn't assumed the form of pure farce. How it lives, or that it lives, appears to it a separate question – yet existence itself, in the absence of a workable superstition to the contrary, remains "irredeemable." Unwittingly, this is the acme of its optimism. To those who've dreamt of a self-emancipated Being illuminated by a burning barricade at night, philosophy proffers the compensating spectacle of a hermeneutics-without-end: "language games" with which to construct new myths on a moment-to-moment basis – a technocratic Kabbalah of "words for Being" to be muttered over the delicate homunculus as if even vaguely expecting it to live, awake, rise-up, assume humanity's place in the world. Naive hope? Existential horror? For what creates this abstract promise of resurrected matter in the form of an emancipation of the spirit, creates its "concrete unfreedom" also.

Alienation, n. 1. state of being alienated, estranged, disenfranchised, foreign; 2. condition of subjectivity in capitalist industrialist societies; 3. mania; the estrangement of Reason; schizophrenia ("mental alienism"); 4. expropriation of personage; expropriation of legal or property rights; 5. estrangement from the means of production of social reality; commodification; 6. subjection to a system of control-force under the guise of collective or individual emancipation.

Alienism, n. 1. (arch.) branch of social medicine concerned with diagnosis & treatment of mental alienism (Philippe Pinel); 2. (arch.) system or ideology of alienage (quality of being or making alien); 3. (contemp.) critique of alienation as the constitutive condition & system of control of the Corporate-State Apparatus.

Alienist, n. 1. practitioner of alienism; 2. one who fights economic & cultural totalitarianism with unconventional weapons, using unconventional means.

An Alienist is a person who fights economic cultural totalitarianism with unconventional weapons, using unconventional methods. The Alienist must be a good tactician, to compensate for the fact that the forces ranged in defence of economic cultural totalitarianism are vastly

asymmetrical in nature. The Alienist's weapons may appear inferior to the enemy's, but from the semantic point of view the Alienist has an undeniable superiority.

The severe limitation placed upon non-economic non-cultural conformity means that the Alienist must be constantly imaginative & creative. Alienists must possess initiative, mobility & decisiveness, as well as versatility in the creation of advantageous situations. The Alienist's duty is to act, to analyse & plan or improvise solutions to each problem that presents itself to effective dissent. To strike & to rapidly redeploy. It is better to err than to do nothing. The Alienist must know how to hide & to remain vigilant. Never to fear danger. Never to be discouraged. In the face of almost insurmountable difficulties, the Alienist must remain constantly resilient, studying & preparing new tactics.

The work of counter-expropriation extends into all aspects of daily life & affords the Alienist almost unlimited scope for subversive activities. But these activities need to be accompanied by theoretical discipline in order for the Alienist to fatally damage, rather than to strengthen, the system of economic cultural totalitarianism. The basic question in the technical preparedness of the Alienist is, nevertheless, to know how to manipulate & counteract – to damage, make useless & destroy – the language of power in its broadest scope.

The Alienist's most effective weapon is the re-appropriation of those fundamental elements of totalitarian discourse over which it itself is secretly unable to exercise control. This exploitation of radical ambivalence exposes the principle weakness of any totalitarian system of meaning or of unmeaning, & has the capacity to reduce the enemy's attempts at counterinsurgency to self-parody. The tactics of the Alienist must always be offensive in nature: defensive action means death. Perpetual analysis of situations merely forestalls action & offers the greatest means of preparedness to the enemy. Similarly, open battle & decisive combat, can only be to the enemy's advantage.

The Alienist must maintain the element of surprise; to know the semantic terrain; to have greater mobility & speed than the enemy; to be constantly informed; to sow confusion; to gain command over any given situation; to maintain an effective degree of unverifiability. Operations always have a time-limit that cannot be overextended without risk to their effectiveness. At every point, the enemy's superior resources must be counteracted by throwing them back upon the uncertainty of unfolding events, thereby wresting the initiative from them.

In many cases, the effective subversion of enemy forces can be accomplished by a single Alienist, patient, alone & unknown, operating in absolute secrecy & in cold blood.

– INTERIOR MINISTRY

Im Bett Mit Alienisten: An Interview

It seemed straightforward: do an interview, get some glosses, get some lolz. But the Alienists have to take you for a ride first. Always.

After a mutual friend put me into contact with the Alienist cell, the interview was conducted via email correspondence with an anonymous “committee representative” of the Interior Ministry of The Republic of Žižkov. I was explicitly instructed that “the number of questions would be limited to a prime number less than 19.” The dear madam, sir, or other sapient invariably responded promptly and efficiently, making me suspect a chatbot doing the writing from the other end – although I don’t fathom the they could quite script that special cocktail of hard-boiled blassé and high-brow détournement just yet...

Vit Van Camp: The question of “what is Alienism” constitutes a whole section of the Alienist manifesto, but I must say it has left me baffled. Although the imagery is limelight stark, a positive definition of the movement seems lacking. Being a manifesto, the political dimension of the format is implicit, and it strikes me strange to see the intended definition flee on the lines of flight of pure aesthetics. As self-professed “cultural terrorists” what are your demands?

Committee Representative: As unrepentant cultural terrorists, we declare that our intentions and demands do not include: the ‘consensual hallucination’ of democratic mass individualism that affirms a nostalgia for a ‘real’; the accumulation of prestige in a narrowly permissive Culture; the consumption of false choices; a resolution of the seeming contradiction posed by alienation to the experience of ‘everyday life’; a reactive stance against the shifting winds of public opinion; ‘educational’ schemes that plagiarize creativity; ‘art’ produced as decor for despotism; ‘truth’; writing that sinks to the level of commodity; the prevalence of ideology in the domain of the ‘non-ideological’; the appropriated naturalism of ‘everyday life’; the delegation of sense to a regime of representation; mass ‘culture’ as the propaganda wing of the military-industrial complex; ‘reality’; a composition in the shadow of an idea; the ‘betterment of society’; abstraction-of-abstraction; the permitted form of a dream of impossible emancipation; realism that finds its salvation in a belief in miracles; the ‘right to dream’; writing reduced to a Literary artifact; the myth of transparency; the excess of the code that only enlarges its domain; the individual that becomes the nebulous author of a future in which all life is retrospectively lived; the ideological phantasm; the mystique of powerlessness. To give answers is to waste questions.

Exactly how does mass culture constitute the “propaganda wing of the military industrial complex”? With the dominance of networked media and their affordance of multivalent ‘messy broadcasting,’ a lot of the dissemination has shifted to the myriad users, and the bilateral relationship of sender and receiver (hegemon vs. the public) has shifted. The reductionist, conspiratorial, and ultimately paranoid distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ seems to have become more fuzzy, so exactly which position do you voice your alternative from?

The forces ranged in defense of economic cultural totalitarianism are vastly asymmetrical in nature. The social is 5 technological to its core and inversely there’s no discourse of technology that’s ideologically neutral – in other words, not political. The truth is that society is always prepared to suffer at the hands of a pragmatic idealism. The future “state” will not be the outcome of reasoned self-supersession, but of disproportionate & unforeseen evolutionary forces. The effective subversion of enemy forces can be accomplished by a single Alienist, patient, alone and unknown, operating in absolute secrecy and in cold blood. It is better to err than to do nothing.

Your approach seems reminiscent of Debordian Situationism. Have you consciously abducted any practical or theoretical tools from the Situationist International, and do you, as Alienists, have any intention of “playing the game“?

We are inclined to believe, since none of us manifest signs of maniacal insanity or general delirium, chronic maniacal insanity, selective delirium, manie sans délire, dementia, melancholia, disturbances in understanding, blind fury, obliteration of the intellectual as well as emotional faculties, nor ideas which are inconsistent with one another, that our thoughts about Guy Debord are entirely identical to Debord’s opinion on the Alienists. We tend to assume the feeling is mutual. Playing the game changes the rules.

What is then the Ministry’s position on Equus Press founder David Vichnar’s “Open Letter to the Prague Literary Establishment“?

Everywhere, “literary establishment” is first and foremost “establishment” and only “literary” by expropriation. All writing which isn’t self-alienated is the subversion of Literature.

I am at the moment corresponding with you, a representative of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Žižkov. How does such an institution, which implies some form of “establishment,” fit into the Alienist project? To what degree does mimicry, whether individual or institutional, play a part in your activities?

In a two-dimensional universe, Earth is flat. We refuse the false choices posed by the ‘discontents’ of today’s pseudo-struggle-against-the-System, the System’s witting and unwitting agents provocateurs. We require more than a rhetorical mania for rediscovering ideology under every unturned stone. The machinery of approval never sleeps.

You’ve recently launched the Alienist magazine. What is its focus, and through which channels will it be distributed?

It is a question of bringing to consciousness that which is unspoken. The exclusive delusional focus of melancholics for certain objects and their sombre character yield with difficulty to treatment. Focused delusions can also spring quite often from religious terrors, thoughts of a vengeful and inexorable God, and the everlasting punishment one believes one has earned. The Alienist’s duty is to act, to analyze and plan or improvise solutions to each problem that presents itself to effective dissent.

What does the future hold for the Alienists and your Republic of Žižkov? Are you content with staying localized, or are you metastasizing, setting up embassies/factions/sleeper cells in other geographical locales?

The Alienist must maintain the element of surprise; to know the semantic terrain; to have greater mobility and speed than the enemy; to be constantly informed; to sow confusion; to gain command over any given situation; to maintain an effective degree of unverifiability. Escapees in slow motion, Kafka’s bug multiplied by each page of bureaucratic writing, spasmodic passions, tinned nits, extreme irregularities, dwarfs in party hats, men swinging axes, lapses of reason, a mob gathering outside your door. We are legion.