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A Manifesto for the Present

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1.

Nostalgia for our past and utopian dreams for our future prevent us from looking at our present.¹

2.

The flight from history. . . represents the false hope of an escape from responsibility, the illusion that we can somehow wipe clean the slate of our past and return to the tabula rasa that supposedly existed before we began to leave our marks on the world.²

3.

If it should turn out to be true that knowledge (in the modern sense of know-how) and thought have parted company for good, then we would indeed become the helpless slaves, not so much of our machines as of our know-how, thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible, no matter how murderous it is.³

4.

Our disability is discursive: we simply do not know how to talk about these things any more. For the last thirty years, when asking ourselves whether we support a policy, a proposal or an initiative, we have

restricted ourselves to issues of profit and loss--economic questions in the narrowest sense. But this is not an instinctive human condition: it is an acquired taste.⁴

5.

In an age of accelerated change, the need to perceive the environment becomes urgent. . . New environments reset our sensory thresholds. These in turn, alter our outlook and expectations.⁵

6.

Now more than ever, nature cannot be separated from culture; in order to comprehend the interactions between ecosystems, the mechanosphere and the the social and individual Universes of reference, we must learn to think 'transversally'.⁶

7.

Participation precedes recognition: being precedes cognition. The separately recognizable, speakable identities of the objects and subjects involved in the unfolding event come into definition only retrospectively. . . Coming-together, or belonging-together, takes logical and ontological precedence over discreteness of components and, in particular, over the subject-object separation.⁷

8.

The organization and self-education of groups in the community and workplace, and their networking and activism, continue to be the fundamental elements in steps toward the democratization of our social life and any meaningful social change.⁸

9.

Put cooperation into the infrastructure, design systems that coordinate the output of the group as a bi-product of the system, without regard to institutional models. . . Take the problems to the individuals. Replace planning with cooperation.⁹

10.

The global city is a border zone where the old spatialities and temporalities of the national and the new ones of the global-digital age get engaged.¹⁰

11.

We need to honor the Other within and the Other next door as much as we do the exotic Other that lives far away- a lesson that applies as much to people as it does to (other) natural things. In particular, we need to discover a common middle ground in which all of these things, from the city to the wilderness, can somehow be encompassed in the word "home."¹¹

12.

The world already possesses the dream of a time whose consciousness it must now possess in order to actually live it.¹²

Endnotes

- ¹ Diana Balmori. In conversation with Marina Zurkow, Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery, NYC. October 27, 2009.
- ² William Cronon, ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1996.p. 80.
- ³ Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998. p. 3.
- ⁴ Tony Judt. *Ill Fares the Land*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2010. p. 34.
- ⁵ Marshall McLuhan, edited by Michel A. Moos. *Marshall McLuhan Essays, Media Research: Technology, Art, Communication*. Amsterdam: OPA(Oversees Publishers Association), 1997. pp. 119-120.
- ⁶ Felix Guattari. *The Three Ecologies*. London: The Athlone Press, 2000. p. 29.
- ⁷ Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002. p. 231.
- ⁸ Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York, Pantheon Books: 1988, 2002. p. 307.
- ⁹ Clay Shirky. *Institutions vs. Collaboration*. TED talk. July, 2005.
<http://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_on_institutions_versus_collaboration.html>
- ¹⁰ Saskia Sassen. 'The Global City: The Denationalizing of Time and Space'. Joan Ockman, ed. *The Pragmatist Imagination*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000. p. 255.
- ¹¹ William Cronon, ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1996. p. 89.
- ¹² Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black and Red, 1983. para. 164.