Political and Artistic Radicalism in the 20th Century: A Situationist Solution for an International Value Conflict

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ANNALS of the University of Bucharest
Philosophy Series

Vol. LXVII, no. 1, 2018
pp. 47 – 64.
POLITICAL AND ARTISTIC RADICALISM IN THE 20th CENTURY:
A SITUATIONIST SOLUTION FOR AN INTERNATIONAL VALUE CONFLICT¹

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Abstract

At 50 years from May ’68 and 150 years from the moment when Marx’s Capital was published, revisiting the Situationist International appears to be one of the most urgent tasks that any attentive observer of the effects of the French “intellectual revolution” must fulfil in order to explain the cultural synchronicities and mutual interdependencies between the European (Leftist) cultural revolutions of the 20th century. On the one hand, the S.I. explicitly aimed to overcome the collapse of May ’68, considered an aborted and failed revolution, by engaging a radical agenda for the reformation of the so-called “society of the spectacle”, ideologically framed by Debord. On the other hand, in the light of the Thesis and the multiple manifestos that the S.I. movement developed as a cultural program, the ex-partisans of Lettrism conceived their social and political measures, supported by artistic productions, as an intended and necessary radicalization of capitalist detours, at the end of which society emerges from “constructed lived situations” through which individuals can resist to alienation and to the consequences of commodity fetishism that expresses the mediation of social relations through consumption objects. There through, in the first part of my article I will explain the

¹ This article represents the improved form of a lecture that I gave on the occasion of the International Conference “Contemporary Philosophy. Problems, trends and perspectives” (28 August – 2 September 2017, Varna, Bulgaria) organized by the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences; the Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences; the Romanian Academy, the Department of Philosophy, University of Liège, Belgium; Institute of Philosophy, Slovak Academy of Sciences.

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manner in which the S.I. ideologically puzzled a set of objectives, concepts and methods inspired by the Marxist thought and the May ’68 program, as main coordinates that prepare the axiological radicalization developed by Situationism as a two folded-process of political and artistic radicalism. The second part of this research endeavours to reframe the cultural and artistic coordinates of Situationism in order to explain it as one of the last and, arguably, most politicized, avant-gardes of the 20th century.

**Keywords:** Situationism, avant-gardes, commodity fetishism, detour, alienation, capitalism, cultural criticism, derive, society of spectacle, Guy Debord, neo-Marxism.

This paper deals with the multiple acceptances of “radicalism”, inspired and applied by the *Situationist International* movement, as a challenge to revisit the theme of value conflicts and radicalism in the 20th century. Despite its political origins and objectives, the concept of “radicalism” has at its core the radical critique of the capitalist society, that Debord, for example, takes up to the formula of the “society of the spectacle” (Debord 1977): the massive proletariat, the alienation of consciousness of the modern individual through his work or the capitalist competition among markets which encouraged the expansion of fine arts to the entertainment and new media arts express, at their roots, the opposition with the quotidian, in its political, economic and cultural layers. “The radical theory behind the Situationist theses”\(^3\), as Kauffman would put it, lays on the correspondences between a political radicalism and an artistic one: as an example, in the Situationist discourse, mainly inspired by Debord’s works, the “bad governance” is associated to a complete cultural disorder, easily identified through the phenomena of “bad painting”.

Therefore, my paper is focused on constructing different arguments for sustaining Kauffman’s position that “this radicalization (n.a. promoted by the S.I.), can also be understood as a determination to transcend everything aesthetic, all formal and figural production, and replace it with the ludic requirement to construct lived situations” (Kaufmann 2002, 298).

In order to support Kaufmann’s thesis, I will analyse arguments such as the synchronicity between the radically negative critiques

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developed among the theoretical productions of the S.I. and the production of anti-art objects, specific to the artistic portfolio of multiple Situationists; the identification of a political situation and its conversion to an artistic spectacle or representation, the political formalism and the radical aesthetic form or the correspondences between the radical political agenda of the S.I. and the potential of this movement to be regarded as one of the last and, arguably, most politicized, avant-gardes of the 20th century.

In the end of my paper, I will explain the value conflicts between socialism and capitalism, in their numerous formulas, that the S.I. define and try to solve through a cultural and political program, based on the Situationist theses, arguing that this opposition might be regarded as a process of axiological radicalization.

Early forms of radicalism in the Thesis of the Situationist International

As a modern revolutionary movement, the Situationist International reacts to the capitalist historical subversions of the European society, inspired by the Marxist theories from the 19th century, considering that “the radicality of his conceptions”⁴ can truly be followed. The group of the S.I. recommends itself as a revolutionary movement that attempts to continue the theory of the proletariat – according to the third thesis of the Situationist program – by the means of the new social background, which is “radically new”; “the language of power has become frantically reformist” (Thesis 11), the technological orientation of the

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⁵ “WHAT ARE KNOWN AS situationist ideas are merely the first ideas of the period of the reappearance of the modern revolutionary movement. What is radically new about them corresponds exactly to the new characteristics of class society, to the real development of its temporary successes, its contradictions, and its oppression.” (Thesis 3)
current society reframed the urban conditions of existence as a capitalist outcome of the rational instrumentality, the inherited social inequalities reshaped the popular conceptions on commodity-based well-fare. When the S.I. appeared as a cultural nucleus of reformists, its partisans had the perfect historical circumstances to conceive a social critique of their contemporary times by engaging the language of “decomposed domination” (Thesis 11).

Culturally, there was already a realm of undermined authority among different spheres of discourse and ideologies: the S.I. showed up when most of the avant-gardes – mainly Dada and Surrealism – lost their revolutionary energy. Hence, the virulent “ruptures” that Dada provoked by abolishing reason and embracing spontaneity, defying the academic standards of creation and fighting against the institutionalization and commercialization of art in a specialized and politically governed markets; that Surrealism proposed by exploring the unconscious dimensions of our psychological parts of creativity, or Futurism supported in a political order, alimented the appetite of Situationists for finding new forms for radicalism in all the aspects of life. By its cultural pedigree, the S.I. born from the left-wing tendency within Lettrism opened its public agenda seeking to apply modern perspectives on the liberty of creation, the role of the new technologies in developing cultural products and the immunization of art in front of politics using all the means of critical theories.

The Situationists reacted against the economic framework of their century without silently conspiring against the institutional structures and forums of power that sustained it. They took their protest and reactive thinking as an exercise of public intellectual honesty. Composing the intellectual mass of the students of revolutions whose voices lead the French people on the Parisian streets on May ’68, with a high civic sense and with modern convictions about the democratic regime of power, they discouraged the society of the spectacle. This concept reflected the ideology of consumption that shaped the material and dramatized approach of the standards of life and social interactions, reduced at simple representations instead of lived and authentic situations. Affirming a conduct that is “radical-ontologically revolutionary” (Thesis 29), they conceived through passionate discourses the “critique of life as
a whole” (Thesis 29), considering that society must react against social alienation and commodity fetishism, which have invaded all spheres of ordinary life and culture, by narrowing the means of expression and self-fashioning, as well as the dynamic of social interactions, to objects. Individuals became passive subjects of a social dynamics based on entertainment and technologies that depict life as a spectacle.

Against this practical tendency of consuming life without living it, the Situationist International emerged towards the ideology of the society of the spectacle in its late years of maturity. The concept, proposed by Guy Debord, was launched after the breaking of decors that early Lettrists made, also in their quality as founders of the Situationist International, when they interrupted the Mass from the night of the 1950’s Easter, infiltrating in the Notre-Dame Cathedral and yelling near the altar the Nietzschean expression, “God is dead” – revealing the age of decadence and hypocrisy that we all fall in – or when they disrupted Charlie Chaplin’s press conference in 1952, asking him to abolish his aesthetic projects and condemning his low-art forms of expression restricted to mime6.

If the Notre-Dame affair experienced radicalism both by the lens of Lettrism and Situationist movement, the action “No More Flat Fleet!” from Chaplin’s press conference was already a form of radical gesture that true Situationists made as members of the Lettrist International, a new

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6 The Manifesto against Chaplin was considered to have caused a drift among Situationists: there were partisans of his art considering that he reflected in his movies the consequences of capitalism on the individuals’ behaviour, as many as the advocates of his condemnation in the name of the fact that he played the role of the paradigmatic modern individual who passes through and reflects social transformation by new means of technology and industrialization that ultimately affect the production of authentic art. The latter embraced Berna’s explanations for qualifying Chaplin a symbol of cultural decadence: “Because you’ve identified yourself with the weak and the oppressed, to attack you has been to attack the weak and oppressed — but in the shadow of your rattan cane some could already see the nightstick of a cop. You are «he-who-turns-the-other-cheek» — the other cheek of the buttock — but for us, the young and beautiful, the only answer to suffering is revolution.” See Serge Berna, Jean-Louis Brau, Guy-Ernest Debord & Gil J. Wolman, “No More Flat Fleet!”, in Situationist International Online Archive, available at: https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/flatfeet.html (last time accessed at August 20, 2017).
movement represented by the radical members of the classical Lettrism, from which Debord was part of. Their polemics was against Isou’s respect for Chaplin as a reformer of the cinematic art: this rupture shows that the Lettrist International, that became the Situationist International, had at its core radicalism in its most drastic and convincing forms.

Nevertheless, this two moments are part of the history of the Situationist International understood as a chronological succession of “constructed situations”, and they both reveal the true significance of this concept, meaning the substitution of pre-made contexts of life, beliefs and political setups, with authentic moments of life, which are created, humanized and have an experiential value for the evolution of the individual within a society. The concept was inspired by Debord’s film technique from his 1952 creation, Jurlementen Faveur de Sade, a paradoxical cultural product consisting in a movie without images and animated only by voices, arguing that “the art of the future will be the overturning of situations or nothing”, following “a science of situations that is to be created, which will borrow elements from psychology, statistics, urbanism and ethics”7. In fact, this dialogue of voices represents the orchestration of the ideology behind Debord’s productions, which insists on the conscious creation of life-contexts, in the name of which, in June 1958, the S.I. defined its program by recourse to the key-term situation construite, as it follows: “a moment of life, concretely and deliberately constructed by a collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events”8. My point, at this level, is that les situations construites that the Situationists propose represent an early form of radicalism that might be synthesized as the attempt to substitute the material tendency towards constructing life through the quantity of objects, frameworks and social pre-determined contexts with the quality

of the lived moments, in order to revolutionize “behaviours which it
gives rise to and which radically transform it”

The Situationists aimed, in this manner, to invite the modern
individual to be the author of any operative perspective on life, by
reconsidering the society of the spectacle – I would add here an
impersonal, directed, prefabricated narration for our quotidian life that
depends on a material basis – following new paths of authenticity,
creation and sensitivity. The radical dominant of this program was also
supported by other key concepts that shape the Situationist radicalism,
in an ideological order, such as the detour – referring to the practice of
turning expressions of capitalism and capitalist systems against themselves,
the psychogeography – through which Lettrists tried to cartography
emotions and behaviours developed in concrete spaces belonging to our
society, the derive, as a framework that allows the individuals to abandon
their motives for an action or an intervention and to be guided by
emotions and new experimental opportunities for shaping their
perspectives. These concepts, taken out from their theoretical framework
and implemented in the social and practical contexts of life were
considered by Situationists the only viable manner to “upset the
relationships with people, cities, and ideas with games, derives and
constructed situations” (Plant 1992, 89), and starting a whole and
impressive social revolution. Nevertheless, the experience that should
have corresponded to these theoretical visions had been hardly
conceived as possible and commutable from theory to ordinary life:
critics of the S.I. such as Plant, Knabb and Banash considered that
despite the bold visionary perspectives that these concepts addressed,
such critiques are impossible to be separated from a practice that
destroys society through acts of “rebellion, subversion and negation”
(1991, XI). In my opinion, such standpoints should be framed within the
revolutionary and factual context of the S.I.

9 See Guy Debord, “Report on the Construction of Situations and on the
International Situationist Tendency’s Conditions of Organization and Action”,
June 1957, trans. by Ken Knabb, in International Situationist Online Archive,
available at: https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html (last time
Debord would defend the fact that May ‘68 represents one of the many events or manifestations that might be subjected to the patronage of the S.I., not only because it respected the theoretical coordinates of the *Theses* of their movement, also because a critique must be consistent with its outcomes. I strongly believe that the S.I.’s social critique offered the possibility to develop “a radical social transformation” (Kellner 298) that aimed to perform cultural criticism without letting it be operated by instrumental politics. In fact, the entire discussion about radicalism should be put in the terms of Banash’s arguments on the reception of the relationship between theory and practice in our postmodern times:

“In their book *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, Best and Kellner argue that the value of any theory is the possibility it offers to actualize radical social transformation. Life Eagleton, Best and Kellner argue that theory must develop an immediate relationship to practice or remain «just another specialized discourse» whose members accumulate cultural capital and theorize «just for the fun of it».” (Quigley 2014, 84; Banash 2000)

But can we consider the S.I.’s social critique a specialized discourse, somehow utopian since many of its ambitions for an organized and liberated society were impossible to achieve? Unfortunately, as Banash continues to observe, the S.I.’s image has been associated, whenever their radicalism was disputed, with the chaotic image of May ‘68, that actually was a moderated street intervention of civil and intellectual masses, and not a bloody revolution:

“Consider that articles and books on the S.I. are almost invariably scattered with gritty black-and white photos from the events of May ‘68: cars overturned, students hurling stones, shop windows broken, members of the S.I. in meetings of the occupation committee. This is the image that sells the S.I. in its current academic commodification – theoretically sophisticated revolutionaries who gave up their desks and typewriters to spray paint the walls and put theory into practice for a total revolution.” (Banash 2000, 4)

From this contexts, we can barely get convinced by the fact that the S.I.’s radicalism consisted in a total reform of the public space as a cultural and political exercise of reshaping the post-avant-gardes society: we can see rebels, violent peoples, and destructive voices.
Therethrough, in order to truly understand the multiple acceptances on radicalism that the S.I. patronage claimed, we have to seek deeper in their written legacy and historical organized events that depict a Situationist solution for the conflict of values that modernity, in the age of its last decades belonging to the 20th century, giving birth to a new form of political and artistic radicalism.

An argument in favour of the Situationist Political and Artistic Radicalism

The most difficult task, that a critique of the Situationist International has, is to prove that the S.I. wasn’t just a group of avant-garde, and yet, that there are sustainable arguments that can be brought in favour of considering it as one of the last avant-gardes movements of the 20th century. The revolutionary intentions of Debord or Jorn explain the fact that the S.I. tried to transpose their political perspectives into artistic contents taking advantage by the power of art to perform a universal, powerful and seductive message towards the masses that have been subjected to the alienation phenomena provoked by the consumerist lifestyles specific to late-capitalism. Arguing that avant-gardes generally represent radical discourses that target cultural changes, inspired by the inadequacy between the quotidian framework composed from political ideologies and forms of repression and control, and the general tendency towards a liberated cultural context for creation and free speech, might be a way to highlight the Situationist particularities in this context. But we risk a lacunar reception of the S.I.’s objectives, if we choose only this narrowed path of interpretation.

It is known the fact that the S.I. recommended itself as a Left revolutionary movement inspired by the anti-capitalist directions suggested by Marx, as well as a community which was clearly against any repressive regime of political power. This simple delimitation involves by all means a model of political action, which may consists in forms of resistance, detour of existent political centres of authority, or productions of ideologies and public discourses that defend the individual’s liberated consciousness, authenticity and non-politicized private life-style.
Clark and Smith brought into our attention the fact that presenting the S.I. as an intellectual group of visionaries that supported societal and political changes but failed in express their beliefs by other means than art is a comfortable position that those who were radical capitalists, in their turn, took in order to present themselves as unbreakable leaders of power:

“We think he should look again at these sentences (which conclude some thirty pages of discussion of the S.I.’s place in modern art), and ask himself whether they are not lofty, contemptuous, and dismissive. That’s how they read to us. They seem to epitomize – and, in view of their publication history, to enshrine – a certain effort to turn the S.I. safely into an art movement, and thereby to minimize its role in the political and social movements of the sixties” (T.J. Clark and D. Nicholson-Smith in McDonough 2002, 491).

In my opinion, arguing for an apolitical reading of the Situationist avant-garde works is as inappropriate as dismissing the Situationist political theory from their cultural productions; on the one hand because avant-gardes are simultaneously artistic and aesthetic revolutions that either generated or supported political revolutions, on the other hand because it would be a non-Situationist interpretation that of ignoring the double delimitation of their revolutionary movement, both by artistic and political backgrounds. Situationists had the privilege to appear after the most important avant-gardes performed their program, changing artistic styles and methods of creation and addressing their power to familiarize the individuals with their unconsciousness, irrational part of their life, as a dimension with high potential of creation. But I consider that it is the Situationists’s merit to teach us how to look at avant-gardes as a homogenous cultural project with political and artistic ambitions:

“The very notion of a collective avant-garde, with the militant aspect it implies, is a recent product of the historical conditions that are simultaneously giving rise to the necessity for a coherent revolutionary program in culture and to the necessity to struggle against the forces that impede the development of such a program. Such groups are led to transpose into their sphere of activity certain organizational methods originally created by revolutionary politics, and their action is henceforth inconceivable without some connection with a political critique. In this regard there is a notable progression from Futurism through Dadaism and Surrealism to the movements formed after 1945.” (Debord 2002, 31-32)
I argue that this would contradict the main principles of the Situationist axiological orientation, focusing my arguments on the fact that Situationists conceived themselves as a “minority” that emerged from the left Lettrists and get to inspire all the avant-garde existent groups to be part of a unitary cultural and radical movement. They invited reactionaries among Europe to be the authors of a “classless society” in which “there will no longer be painters, but only situationists who, among other things, sometimes paint” (Debord 1957).

My point is that the revolutionary movement that the S.I. aimed to perform was projected as a “constructed situation”: by any situationist method, they were constructing an anti-capitalist and classless society, in which the political agenda was getting to influence the artistic creation:

“Together we must eliminate all the relics of the recent past. We now believe that an accord for a united action of the revolutionary avant-garde in culture must be carried out on the basis of such a program. We have neither guaranteed recipes nor definitive results. We only propose an experimental research to be collectively led in a few directions that we are presently defining and toward others that have yet to be defined. The very difficulty of succeeding in the first situationist projects is a proof of the newness of the domain we are penetrating. Something that changes our way of seeing the streets is more important than something that changes our way of seeing paintings.” (Debord 2002, 49)

The evolution of the S.I. is quite interesting from this perspective: from an International Lettrist group, to the International Situationist, they managed to became representatives of an “International Avant-Garde”, that used artworks in order to combat the emotional influence of advanced capitalist methods of propaganda and diminish the ideological effects of capitalism on individuals relating with their authenticity, desires and liberty.

“Your role, revolutionary artists and intellectuals, is not to complain that freedom is insulted when we refuse to march alongside the enemies of freedom. Your role is not to imitate the bourgeois aesthetes who try to restrict people to what has already been done, because what has already been done doesn’t bother them. You know that creation is never pure. Your role is to find out what the international avant-garde is doing, to take part in the critical development of its program, and to call for its support.” (Debord 1957)
When Simon Sadler argues that Situationists did not want to be just another avant-garde he is right, but in the sense that they wanted to be all the avant-gardes at once. Situationists slogans from their public manifestations such as “Watch Out for Manipulators, Watch out for Bureaucrats” or “Ne travaillez jamais”, definitely coherent with anti-capitalist intentions, gave life to artistic projects and to a revolutionary imagery that transmitted the general idea that the spectacle characteristic to our modern time does not prove that society is dominated by images; it explains that our social interactions are mediated by images. Merlin Monroe’s painting in its Situationist version includes the message “my thoughts have been replaced by moving images” (Annex 1) depicting this Situationist thesis, which had also some extended commentaries in the direction of the institutionalisation of art. One of the posters of May ‘68 illustrates the following message: “The police post themselves at the School of Fine Arts – the Fine Arts’ students poster the streets.” In this context, posters regarding the economic situation of their contemporary society subjected to capitalism couldn’t miss either: “An S.I. poster from May of ‘68 declines the verbs of participation and profit, clearly breaking the door between proletariats and bourgeois: I participate, you participate, he participates, we participate, they enjoy (they profit)” 10 (Annex 2).

By this means, Situationists succeeded in investing and transposing their political radicalism into one of the most ingenious forms of artistic radicalism: they created by valuing traditional methods of the so-called “classical avant-gardes” such as the poster of the Dada movement, platforms for spontaneous expression. Graffiti, posters, slogans supported their propaganda for a classless state, prescribing what Debord calls in his essay from June 1963, “New Forms of Action in Art and Politics”, that I consider proofs of the Situationist radicalism. Engaging the perspective of constructed situations, in 1963 Situationists were considered successful in creating “a qualitative transformation of society” abolishing the spectacular passive behavior to which late-capitalism encouraged. We might wonder how is radicalism, in its political and artistic versions, compatible with the Situationist movement as “an experimental investigation of possible ways for freely constructing everyday life”?

Debord gives an answer:
"Once it is understood that this is the perspective within which the situationists call for the supersession of art, it should be clear that when we speak of a unified vision of art and politics, this absolutely does not mean that we are recommending any sort of subordination of art to politics. For us, and for anyone who has begun to see this era in a disabused manner, there is no longer any modern art, just as there has been no constituted revolutionary politics anywhere in the world since the end of the 1930s. They can now be revived only by being superseded, that is to say, through the fulfillment of their most profound objectives." (Debord 1963)

Avant-gardes, including the Situationist movement, have the role to connect individuals with the experiences they plea for, engaging each human being in the struggle with the forms of control and dominance, psychologically or politically projected by means of public and institutional control and dominance. Radicalism, in its political and artistic acceptance, can be defined in Situationist terms as a project of destroying the conventions of obedience that individuals have in front of institutionalized and capitalist forms of governance and continue in depersonalized forms of expression, such as artworks created in order to respect the exigencies of art industries and markets or the expectances of the dominant political perspectives within a society.

In order to sum up the coordinates of my analysis and to skip to the conclusions, I must recall that the Situationist radicalism has as its core two inseparable directions, an artistic and a political component, based on a mechanism of engaging constructed situations of authentic life in the negation of the current society and, consequently, in the assertion of a “positive” new societal context.

On the one hand, this form of radicalism continues the path opened by the avant-gardes. In the same essay, Debord reminds us that the role of the modern art was to destroy conventional means of experiencing language, art and human behaviours. Providing Dada as one of the most prolific examples of cultural movements which aimed to provoke such a radical change, Debord considers that despite the fact that it created and supported a form of social-critique, it was unarmed and failed, and the proof for its historical lack of success is the fact that “Dadaism itself has become a recognized school of art”. In the same time, Debord inspired the radicalism of Situationist International from
the modern art represented by cubism and, to be more exactly, from the philosophy of life that artists used to turn society against its destroyers, confronting them by the power of image to depict their crimes and disasters:

“However, the negative truth that modern art has contained has always been a justified negation of the society in which it found itself. In Paris in 1937 the Nazi ambassador Otto Abetz pointed to the painting Guernica and asked Picasso, Did you do that? Picasso very appropriately responded: No. You did.” (Debord 1963)

As a matter of fact, Situationists used aesthetic positivity to put at work the political negativity, and this is exactly the short definition that we might give to radicalism. One can get convinced of my perspective just by interpreting the manner in which Debord himself chooses to criticize the concepts of aesthetic positivity belonging to the neo-dadaists of the modern art as a potential manner to turn back to the negativity of the form of expressions that lack, because of political considerations, for many years:

“Whereas the neodadaists speak of charging with (aesthetic) positivity the plastic refusal previously expressed by Marcel Duchamp, we are sure that everything the world now offers us as positive can only serve to endlessly recharge the negativity of the currently permitted forms of expression, and in this roundabout way produce the sole representative art of these times. The situationists know that real positivity will come from elsewhere, and that from now on this negativity will collaborate with it.” (Debord 1963)

Such a perspective was lately reaffirmed by Situationists such as Clark, Gray, Smith and Radcliffe, in a 1967 essay devoted to “The Revolution of Modern Art and the Modern Art of Revolution”. In their collective work, they argued that “modern art is at a dead end”. In short, their argument is that avant-gardes had the moral duty to create an imaginary transformation of this world by engaging radical theses, but instead, they insisted only in recreating the nature of creativity by all the means of Dada and Surrealism which let us with an “incoherent, chaotic and incomprehensible” modern art. Situationist art is responsible to repair this failures following the project of art that Nietzsche saw as a transvaluation of all values through which art becomes negation. But this radicalism creates a homogenous project of reforms by addressing
the world of art as the world of our quotidian life: reformism and nihilism are two elements that make possible such a project and inspire the radicalism that Situationists exposed in all their creations, from artworks to written discourses. We could also examine this form of radicalism as a manner of associating the insufficiencies and inconsistencies of the capitalist power regarded as “bad governance” with the inauthentic forms of “bad art”, among whom we recognize and identify artworks created just to respond to the exigencies of the market and not to the most personal forms of expression of the artists.

**Conclusions**

It is true that Situationists, sometimes associated with anarchists, otherwise associated with the name of the democratic councils of workers, are a historical figure impossible to be targeted as an exclusive moderated or an extreme group of the left-wing political order. Nevertheless, this shift between moderated and extreme political positions reflects a puzzle of values that discourage capitalist institutionalization of politics and, implicitly, of arts. Its radicalism is projected as a reactionary attitude that must support a coherent and consistent social critical theory which has the duty, as part of the ideological framework of this International Avant-Garde called International Situationist, to combine all the ingredients of previous forms of radicalism that the cultural movements of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century experienced. Exploring the Situationist axiological radicalism, as a cultural revolutionary program developed on a two-folded areas, an artistic, respectively a political one, provides us a significant hermeneutical outcome, that of integrating Situationism in the boarder spectre of avant-gardes, albeit its exhaustion is owed to an ideological, Marxist, detour, overshadowed by the latter structure of Pop culture and artistic capitalism. This year we celebrate 50 years from May ’68: by this, revisiting Situationism becomes more than a historical recurrent task. For those who claimed that “beauty is in the street!” the S.I. has been a source of inspiration for constituting the radical revolutionary praxis that denounced the bad governance represented by autonomous and detached political art. Situationism plea for a social and politically
engaged art (even art forms considered neutral from a political standpoint became, by this position, embedded in a certain political situation, explicit or implicit, assumed or detached, partisan or anarchist). However, from this perspective, bridging divides: May ’68 and the S.I., although they both claimed to be representatives of a cultural revolution, they created different “situs” for autonomy, individualism and for a critical and reflexive positioning against capitalism. If the social chaos provoked by May ’68 is far from prescribing the terms of a “radical” revolutionary program – Situationists considered it an aborted revolution, the cultural manifestations of the S.I. – including their artistic inheritance – depicts a coherent and radical project of our modern society, that embraces all forms of an avant-gardist and reformatory order: from manifestos to new institutions, values and individual public behaviours. The main paradox is that the Situationist political spectacle asked to the individuals to “watch out for manipulators” and “for bureaucrats”. But, as any other ideological construct, Situationism failed by becoming one of these two avoidable extremes. Historically, there is no greater regrettable narrative than that of manipulators who failed to be bureaucrats. They sublimate the need of order through the chaos of streets: but they get to confound the existing laws and institutions with the manifestos and the revolutionary groups. In the end, they rise the spectacular noninstitutionalized bureaucracy of the streets: mottos, placards, banners, revolutionary programs (on key-points), declarations and public statements.

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