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Intellectual Vagabonds

Renzo Novatore

“All who appear suspicious, hostile and dangerous to the good bourgeois,” Stirner said, “could be brought together under the name ‘vagabond’; every vagabond way of life displeases the bourgeoisie. And there are also intellectual vagabonds, to whom the hereditary dwelling place of their fathers seems too cramped in and oppressive for them to be content any more with its restricted space and so go to find more space and light far away. Instead of remaining curled up in the family cave stirring the ashes of moderate opinion, instead of accepting what has given comfort and relief to thousands of generations as irrefutable truth, they go beyond all the boundaries of tradition and run wild with their impudent criticism and untamed mania for doubt. These extravagant vagabonds form the class of the unstable, the restless, the volatile, formed from the *proletariat*; and when left to give voice to their unset-

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Retrieved on June 6, 2011 from sites.google.com

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tled natures, they are called unruly, hot heads, fanatics...”¹

Oh, intellectual vagabonds! Pale, unrepentant subverters! The ones who gallop on and on through the endless regions of their capricious imaginations that create new things.

While speaking to them, Zarathustra once said: “The earth is still free for great spirits. There are still many harbors for solitary spirits and their kindred, around whom the aroma of tranquil seas drifts. Life is still free, free for the free spirit.”

Then he continued: “Only where the state ceases to exist does the man who is not futile begin: that is where the hymn to the necessary begins, the refrain that is not uniform. There, where the state ceases to exist... but watch a bit, my brothers: don’t you see the rainbow over there and the bridges to the overhuman?”

But before telling them all of this, he spoke of the apes and lunatics who bow at the feet of the “new idol” — the state. He said, “Oh my brothers, do you want to be suffocated by the breath from their putrid mouths and their unhealthy longings? Instead, shatter the windows and save yourselves in the pure air!”

And they — the intellectual vagabonds — shattered the windows and rushed eagerly through the desecrating freedom of the fields, where festive nature wove songs of life; there where the golden crops danced in the wind, kissed by the sun.

From that day forward, they — the subverters — declared themselves outlaws... Enthralled by the seductive charm of freedom won, they almost stayed lying on the ground, resting, when the symbolic murmur coming from the verdant fronds of the mountain called them again, farther... higher... They looked into each other’s eyes. The fire of love flashed in each of their pupils like volcanic lava.

¹ Novatore is not quoting Stirner precisely here, but rather, in part, poetically paraphrasing him.

They then understood what the Teacher had told them and, recognizing each other as “kindred spirits,” they all went off toward the peak of the green mountain that was supposed to reveal new life to them.

When their profaning and sacrilegious feet rested on the high summits, the sun was already setting, leaving nothing of itself but vast red bands that resembled magnificent tongues of fire. At that moment, a sad vision passed through all of their minds. They all seemed to see the Teacher’s shadow sinking in those red flames. But in that primitive and desolate silence, they still seemed to hear his voice telling them: “Have no fear. I will rise again with the sun. And now the sunset is ready for you as well, but you too will rise again with the first rays of dawn.”

But, alas, turning back to look at each other, they felt a shudder of terror enshrouding them in a mantle of desolation, since the fire of love no longer flowed like volcanic lava in their pupils. The black wings of melancholy beat violently at the door of their hearts filling them with sadness and sleep.

When the dawn came, with its silvery motes, to find the eyes of the free sleepers, to announce the birth of a new day, they leapt to their feet with an even more fiery flame in their eyes. They sang a hymn to life and focused intensely on the distance.

A few moments passed, and then a howl of dionysian joy poured out from all their throbbing breasts.

The rainbow and the bridge to the overhuman, of which the Teacher had spoken, now rose up majestically, brilliantly from the midst of the murky flames of the christian fog.

Gradually, as the sun lit up the horizon, they came to the realization that those regions were already inhabited by other Creatures. Oh, they even recognized these inhabitants... They saw, in all their tragic beauty, Henrik Ibsen’s creatures, who with the volcanic fire of passion their eyes, terribly destroyed the gangrenous plagues aimed against the I by social prejudice. And through all that this

symbolic Ibsenian destruction, it seemed to them that they caught sight of the birth of the overhuman.

With silent minds and hearts on fire, they watch Rubek and Irene rise up from the grave to head to where the white flood was waiting, which, saturated with death, sprouted the eternal light of life. But still they watched. They watched and saw! They saw the “Fisherman” — who lived in the “House of Pomegranates” that Oscar Wilde built in the middle of the misty light that emanated from the rainbow that was rising on the flanks of the overhuman — come out, with his great, irrefutable passion locked in his heart. He launched himself at the priest’s house, the Market square, the rock where a young and incredible Mayulda lives and on to the mountain saturated with baleful devices, where she urged him so that she could seduce him in a diabolical witches’ dance presided over by the One who could do everything before the appearance of the Fisherman.

But the FISHERMAN challenged everyone, defeated everyone, so impelling is the mad and tenacious desire of his passion. He had to free himself from his soul, the sole obstacle now between him and his heart, since only after this liberation would he be able to freely plunge into the frightening whirlpools of the sea to join his mermaid who lived in the abyss, and who alone could give him the joyous intoxication of love.

Oh, how many things these Intellectual Vagabonds would have seen gleaming between the “rainbow” and the bridges to the overhuman if the uncouth and bestial howl of the vulgar herd — which still vegetates in stagnant waters and grows old without ever renewing itself at the foot of the rocky mountain — had not shaken them, calling them maniacs and lunatics.

A smile of scorn and bitter irony still curled their lips when a red automobile drove ominously through one of the biggest modern cities and, terrible as lightning, propagated a new form of life.

But now I realize that I have wandered. And, worse, in wandering, I have placed myself in bad company... Stirner and Nietzsche,

Henrik Ibsen and Oscar Wilde. Is there even a gray automobile? Madmen, degenerates, delinquents, all of them

Oh, luminaries, you save me from the wrath of decent people... And save me yet again from those who don’t take the time to destroy, each day in battle, a bit of this society that oppresses and crushes us, but rather waste their time trying to teach, to impose systems of struggle and thought on those who have tried to learn to struggle and think for themselves. And when their time is not used up in accomplishing all this, it is employed in figuring out how big the lunatic asylums, in which the new rebels against the future society will get locked up, will have to be.

For my part, I find myself in good company with these madmen, and along with one of them, perhaps the best, I cry: “scorn them, scorn the good and the just, since they have always been the beginning of the end.” Oh, how well I have lived in the company of these madmen! How great I find their “madness of destruction”! I assure that I love destructive madness more, far, far more than conserving wisdom.

Yes, yes, leave me with my madmen since I promise you that if the next European revolution denies us the joy of falling wrapped in the delirium of DESTRUCTION, in better times, I will come back to speak of Them, and if there is anything to reproach — perhaps the smallness of their madness? — I will do it and without reserve.