Tatanka
The Question of Preservational Violence

A response to Jacques Camatte's "The Question of Violence". (*In This World We Must Leave and Other Essays* by Jacques Camatte. 1995, Autonomedia.)
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> . . . the groupuscles of the left and extreme left, but not the anarchists, preach about the necessity of learning to kill because they think they can make death "rebound" on capital. But none of them (and this is particularly true of the most extreme elements) ever take into account the fact that they are suggesting the necessity of destroying human beings in order to accomplish this revolution. (Pg. 114)

Perhaps Camatte was right in respects to this statement. The majority of remarks made towards the use of violence were aimed at the 'defenders of capital', primarily cops, mirroring a large sentiment of revolutionaries (especially the Class Warriors). Twenty-seven years after this essay was written, that movement and sentiment still stands somewhat strong. But what of those who share that sentiment for different reasons? I'm getting at the comprehension that his statement may be true, but what if the violence is not an act of revolution?

"Violence is a fact of life in present-day society; the question now is how that violence can be destroyed." (Pg. 115). This is true, but the understanding of this fact cannot be simplified into a categorical answer as Camatte, and numerous others, have done. The actual reality of daily life, in light of the all-encompassing techno-industrial death machine is reason for a split of the obligations of revolutionaries (that is those who understand the techno-industrial mega-machine to be their enemy). S/he must see the dualism that lies here. On the one hand there is the goal, which, presumably, is the abolition of civilization (or industrial/consumer society, more immediately). However noble this is in itself, cannot be the sole recipient of one's actions. In the possibility that this revolution may not arrive for decades, lays the other directive, the preservation of what remains undestroyed. This is where the tactics must be reconsidered. The light of the everyday destruction (and possibility of total annihilation) by the mega-machine requires a new level of immediacy and directly aimed actions to lessen the blow that tomorrow will likely bring in civilized nations (and even to all others). Camatte asks, "How can you celebrate a revolution with a rifle butt??" (pg. 114), and so we must ask, 'How can we have a revolution with no world left?'

"If human beings are to be destroyed, they must first be despoiled of their humanity. And so if, during the revolutionary struggle people choose to proceed according to this view, are they not simply imitating the methods used by the capitalists, and thus furthering the destruction of human beings?" (pg. 116). This is a very real possibility. There is only one way to deal with this issue, and that is to fully declare the deplorement of violence as non-revolutionary, but as an act of desperate preservation. (It should be noted here that violence is not the primary measure being advocated by any means. Direct action and property destruction should always be used primarily for this, only in cases were these actions will not stop a person/persons/corporation/etc. from making a largely destructive action.)[1] This may seem like a slight technicality to some, but is really requiring an overturn in tactics and deplorement.

To partake in violence to preserve wildness or prevent destruction is hypocritical. There should be little debate. A person is a person is a living thing. To take this away is by no means upholding the sanctity of all life, there should be no illusions made about this. The person/s who undertake these acts are doing away with one's integrity. (Of course, in light of this act, this is obviously not the primary issue.) So in this context, justifying persons as targets of violence must meet strict criteria.[2] (I do not feel or claim to be one to set this in stone, but I will suggest what I see a criteria for further debate.)

Camatte himself lays out a basis for this criterion, "The representations that justify an individual person's defense of capital must be revealed and demystified; people in this situation must become aware of contradiction, and doubts should arise in their minds." (Pgs. 117–118). As people from civilization, we recognize that all of us are various representations of that civilization, "'the system' [. . .] produces cops and revolutionaries alike." (Pg. 117). For Camatte this implies that civilization had denied our humanity, so it lies deep within all of us as human beings. So kill the representation and you kill the potential to be human as well. There can

[1] As well it should be stated that these actions are by no means an appeal to any state or authority, but a means of direct preservation showing the complete unwillingness to compromise the sanctity of the Earth.

[2] As should go without saying, more strict targets than those Camatte's opponents seem to have taken up. (Cops, 'defenders of capital', etc.)

be no formula for this, there comes a point were the actual destruction brought about by a person overrides the sanctity of the potential humanity that lies buried. It is vague and problematic to leave it this unclear, but there are few ways to have a set point (especially considering the varying targets of potential humans). So a viable target must be one whom is proven to not be merely a spoke in the machine (as a layperson may be. Someone who has not reached their potential, who carries on in the destructiveness of everyday civilized life, but is a function of the machine, not an active proponent.), but a primary controller. (A position highly reserved for CEOs and the like. Those whose potential to be human is actively pushed away as they reap in destructiveness as a cost of their own profiteering.)

Precautions must be made as to ensure the person/s who carries out such acts won't lapse into an unattached killing machine (or a mirror of the dominant society). While justifications must show the target is a primary part of the death machine (not just a representation), it must never be seen only in this light. The perpetrator must acknowledge the target as a living being, and keep this in mind. But they must not allow this segregation of this individual from the whole to become habit. How this can be ensured is an individual case basis, and I will not pretend to make an overarching statement regarding this. But I hope this may have opened the air for further discussion on this topic.