

## **Human Strike Has Already Begun**

**Claire Fontaine**

“Human strike” designates the most generic movement of revolt against any oppressive condition. It’s a more radical and less specific strike than a general strike or a wildcat strike. It attacks the economic, affective, sexual and emotional positions within which subjects are imprisoned. It provides an answer to the question “How do we become something other than what we are?” It isn’t a social movement although within the uprising and agitations it can find a fertile ground upon which to develop and grow, sometimes even against these.

For example, it has been said that the feminist movement in Italy during the 1970s demolished the leftist political organizations, but it hasn’t been said what the leftist political organizations were doing to the women who were part of them. Human strike can be a revolt within a revolt, an unarticulated refusal, an excess of work or the total refusal of any labor, depending on the situation. There is no orthodoxy for it. If strikes are made in order to improve specific aspects of the workers’ conditions, they are always a means to an end. But human strike is a pure means, a way to create an immediate present here where there is nothing but waiting, projecting, expecting, hoping.

Adopting a behavior that doesn’t correspond to what others tell us about ourselves is the first step of the human strike: the libidinal economy, the secret texture of values, lifestyles and desires hidden by the political economy are the real planes of consistency of this revolt.

“We need to change ourselves”: everyone agrees on this point, but who to become and what to produce are the first questions that arise as soon as this discussion takes place in a collective context. The reflex of refusing any present that doesn’t come with the guarantee of a reassuring future is the very mechanism of the slavery we are caught in and that we must break. To produce the present is not to produce the future.

“How do I do it and where do I start?” Surely everyone knows this better for oneself than anybody else ever could: no more leaders, no more teachers, no more students, here comes the time of inventing new mediations between people, and we are already in the midst of the work of the human strike. There are no preliminaries, no intermediary steps, no organizers in charge of the logistical aspects. The work of the human strike strikes against itself. It transforms at the same time what we see and the organs we see with. It transforms both ourselves and the people who made this transformation possible. It kills the bourgeois in all of us, liberating unknown forces.

Explaining what human strike is, how to map it, how to articulate it, is like giving a technical lesson of sexual education to the person we wish to seduce. It is like describing to ourselves the overwhelming ocean of our possible madness while sitting safely on the shore. Writing about the human strike is in itself the experience of a double bind, it’s like walking on a tight rope between making things possible and exorcizing them through language.

There are no lessons of human strike, it is nothing but a disquieting possibility that we must remain intimate with. We are remunerated neither for the work of love nor for being able to find the right words to bridge the social fractures that separate all of us. We do not get paid

for making everyday life more enjoyable or simply possible for ourselves and for other people.

The unremunerated labor of the affects continuously crushes the insulting pyramid of capitalistic values but this conflict is effaced day after day.

Without the mothers' excess of love for their children there would be no one left to exploit. If we ceased to believe that we can still communicate non-commercial sensations and feelings to each other, the prostitutional business of advertising would lack even the syntax to make itself understandable. Wherever it takes place, human strike declares the end of the criminal fiction of the equivalence between money and time, money and space, money and food, money and bodies.

If the current negotiations on the right to pollute the planet have just reached a dead end, we could already read in a French newspaper on May 11, 2009 that "in order not to ignore the irreparable damage that the development of industrial civilization causes to the ecosystem, we have decided to put a price on the natural resources that are pillaged day by day. It's established that one hectare of forest is worth 970 euros and that one hectare of meadow is worth 600 euros. It's established that the value of the extinction of the bees is calculated on the basis of the cost of artificial pollination made by humans."<sup>1</sup> There was no mention of the cost of the extinction of the humans who would not know what a bee is, its presence in the warm air, its colors, the wax, the honey, the flowers inclining under its weight or the meaning of Mandeville's tale. No logical movement can oppose such a state of things, a new wave of irrational actions must disorganize the ordinary progression of the disaster. Human strike simply declares the effective bankruptcy of the market economy that pretends to own life but endlessly annihilates it.

No mourning of the impossible revolutions can get in the way of the human strikers because human strike is not a mission, nor a project or a program. It is the gesture that makes legible the silent political element in everything: women's life, the dissatisfaction of rich people, the anger of privileged teenagers, the refusal to submit to the mediocrity of necessity, ordinary racism, and so on.

When we inhabit language we place ourselves on the permeable membrane between life and desires, where it clearly appears that life and desires are made of the same fabric. Desiring togeara ther makes things come true even when they are not technically true. Witches were burned for having truly been flying in the night and for having actually kissed Satan's ass. When we come out of prison we are delinquents, even if we were innocent when they first wrongly arrested us.

We constantly become what other people want us to be, but starting a human strike means inverting that movement and refusing to act upon the actions of others through the use of power; it means opposing a philosophy of management with the material presence of potentiality.

Reality can be more than what any realistic representation of the facts offers. The very concept of reality progressively starts to fade when we lose touch with the possible and the impossible that human strike points to.

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<sup>1</sup> Guillaume Launay, "Pour mieux la préserver l'État met la nature à prix," *Libération* (Paris), May 11, 2009.

— *NYC, December 17, 2009*