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An Abbreviated Theses on the Philosophy of Collective Task's History:

I

The story of Collective Task is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning monthly game of chess, answering each task by a member with a countermove. A group of artist and writer puppets, in stylish attire and cigarettes in their mouths sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actually, a bearded poet, who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called "collective task" is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of modern technology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight.

II

"One of the most remarkable characteristics of the Collective Task" writes Fitterman, "is, alongside so much selflessness in certain instances, the freedom from envy in which the first year displays toward the second year." Reflection shows us that our image of happiness is thoroughly colored by the time to which the course of a task is assigned us. The kind of happiness that could arouse envy in us exists only in the air we have breathed, among people we have talked to, institutions who could have given themselves to us. In other words, our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of a second round. The same applies to our view of the first round, which is the concern of making history. The past Task carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to as a collection. There is a secret agreement between members of the first Collective and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* creative power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of us.

III

As chroniclers who recite events without distinguishing between major and minor ones, we act in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for our practice. To be sure, only artists and poets steeped in modernism and post modernism receive the fullness of our past—which is to say, only for a post-post modern generation has its past become citable in all its moments. Each moment as it has lived becomes a *citation à l'ordre du jour*—and that day is Judgment Day.

IV

*Seek for food and clothing first, then
The Kingdom of God shall be added unto you.*
--Hegel, 1807

The class struggle, which is always present in Collective Task, is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist. Nevertheless, it is not in the form of the spoils which fall to the victor that the latter make their presence felt in Collective Task. They manifest themselves in this struggle of courage, humor, cunning, and fortitude. They have retroactive force and will constantly call in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers. As flowers turn toward the sun, by dint of a secret heliotropism, Collective Task strives to turn toward that sun which is rising in the sky of history. Collective Task must be aware of this most inconspicuous of all transformations.

V

The true picture of Collective Task flits by. It can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. “The truth will not run away from us”: is Collective Task’s historical outlook of historicism of these words of Gottfried Keller marking the exact point where Task cuts through historicism. For every image from the past Task that is not recognized by the present Task as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably. (The good tidings which the curator of the past Task brings with throbbing heart may be lost in a void the very moment he opens his mouth.)

VI

To articulate Collective Task in an introduction does not mean to recognize it “the way it really was” (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Collective Task II wishes to retain the image of Collective Task I, which unexpectedly appears to be singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both Task I and II: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. Robert Fitterman and Lanny Jordan Jackson came not only as the curators. They came as the subduers of Task II. Only that curator will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in Collective Task who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if they don't complete the tasks. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.