



image by Manuela Johanna Covini

SITUATIONS

The praise of scepticism and the error of certainty

by Manuela Johanna Covini

So it's about that one moment.



...the place before the events, before the decisions.

This moment of the absence of any foreign determination and dependence. Creating a self-determined, constructed situation - that was the vision of the situationists in the 1960s.

Like **Hegel**, the situationists returned to the place before the action, because only here lay the multiplicity of possibilities for the next steps of doing. This place, this moment before an action thus had to be activated and put into operation and thus also brought under one's own control. Through conscious planning, the situationists wanted to intervene in this one moment, to make it conscious, with the idea of being able to interrupt the ingrained routines and courses of action. By disrupting everyday life, the Situationists hoped, the political individual could make a start in his or her action, and this "situation" would then give rise to a "NEW REALITY".



Hegel used the example of drama to examine the question of where human, social and political action actually begins and how it can come about. The beginning of action, Hegel thinks, must lie in something that precedes action and makes it possible in the first place. It is a place of transition: from non-action to action, from the status quo to activity. Hegel calls this place the "situation". (cf. Sabrina Habel 2019)

The "**situation**" thus circumscribes a place before action, a place where different possibilities are stored as potency. In his search for the beginning of action, Hegel has arrived at the historical and social conditions, because they have an effect on action. Hegel recognised that these conditions and circumstances shape the actions of the individual. With Hegel, it is the power of the bourgeois order, the power of everyday life and the world of work, which create these social and economic dependencies and ties, i.e. very clear framework conditions, for individual *action*.

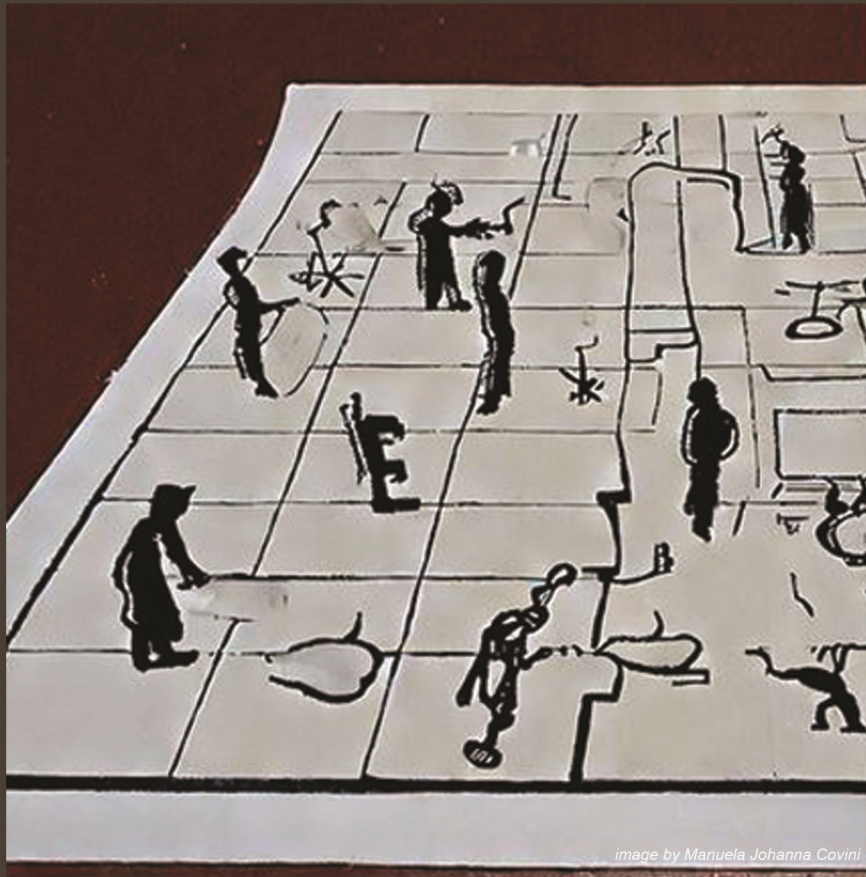


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Hegel understood the "situation" as a provocation of a reaction, but also as a fragile moment of a game, thus preparing the *political* and *artistic* further development by the Situationists.



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A situation always has the potency of possibilities.

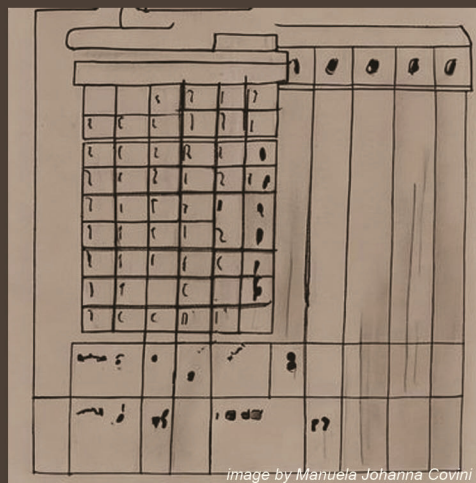


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**A situation always has the potency of possibilities.
But nothing is forever. Move along. Get lost.**

The future, this is a project that transforms every historical and ideational site into a SUBJECT to ensure dialogue with the present. On the one hand, this subjectification demands an engagement with current ruptures; on the other hand, it conserves the future in one particular of many possibilities.

At the same time, the perception of time becomes a process that cannot be delimited nor concluded. Terms, concepts and culture also "migrate"; i.e. they transform themselves by adapting to the respective circumstances and contexts. (cf. Mieke Bal 2002)

The artist is expected to uncover this process of the emergence of other, new worlds/systems in a poetic - political way. For poetry lies in these manifold potencies of SITUATION, the place before a decision, an action. In these "situations" it is a matter of (re)establishing relationships between distant epochs and languages, of forming new contemporaries. And it is not only the artist who does this. Everyone in a society intervenes in their respective culture through committed and creative coping with everyday life. In this sense, the political and socio-cultural determination of the artist has a mediating role. In doing so, the artist traces these sensitive beginnings of connections and relationships with different and diverse working methods. And he succeeds in breathing life into these potentials/possibilities. For example, the artist's diverse working methods can measure the local and the global in a new unit of measure. But for this to happen, the artist must inevitably move within ecological, economic and social systems in his themes/projects (which is equally equivalent to a "situation": a place of decision). In the best case, the artist actually succeeds in producing something completely new and surprising. But, as someone has already said: Nothing is original. For even our non-places, whether public spaces or private retreats, are never free of time and the respective complexity of their context. Actually, the artist, like any other social role in a society, has the obligation to focus on the realisation of a better future. But this decision cannot be forced and so it goes back to that place/that one moment before the action.



(disruption 1)

The speculative in the spectacle

The world is burning on every corner.
The order of the world is out of control.
So it is time to prepare for the future.

But everywhere cultural humanity is oriented towards
the barbaric seriousness of war.

This is a scandal.

The scandal of the speculative in the spectacle.
And that is language.

*In the beginning, nothingness was everything and
everything had to have a name.
But the name puts an end to the search for narratives.*

Language actually makes us mute, because with language
we practice justification.

But man is a being who cannot stop practising.
In other words, we practise all the time.
Often unknowingly.

So I am a being condemned to practise.
And it is said that this practice of practising affects me all the time.

*I practise and it influences me.
I exercise and it influences me.*

*A circle.
A circle that makes me dizzy.*

Practising balance means not avoiding a necessary struggle.
Practising balance also means not provoking a superfluous fight.
Language makes us mute because we practice legitimacy.

But the world is still burning.

Someone says that if I practise, I cannot be free.

Make a perfect circle!

Form and **function** are prescribed and determined by the respective societies.

And so *form* and *function* press the desire for social relations into **speculative** spectacles. It looks like that every action is a moment of a shared *decision-making*.

If only that were true.



image by Manuela Johanna Covini

As different as decisions may be, they all have one thing in common: the moment of uncertainty about making the right decision.

That is the situation. And in this situation you are alone. You would think so. In pedagogy, for example, the situational approach - in contrast to authoritarian education, which focuses on the rigid imparting of knowledge - is characterised by the fact that the focus is on the individuality of the individual child.

The aim here is to educate the children to act independently. However, the idea of mutual consideration, the wishes and needs of the environment should also play a major role. The child feels a sense of belonging to a community and can thus build and shape social relationships. It takes responsibility and recognises that the own actions also have consequences for others. It also learns to accept help and to help others.

The situational approach in builds on these individual experiences.

These experiences are processed and emotionally classified. Always in a timely manner and adapted to the respective situation. Learning through direct experiences in direct, specific situations. Basically, it is as Jürgen Zimmer, founder of the situational approach in the 1970s, describes it: ***an invitation to get involved in life.***

(disruption 2)

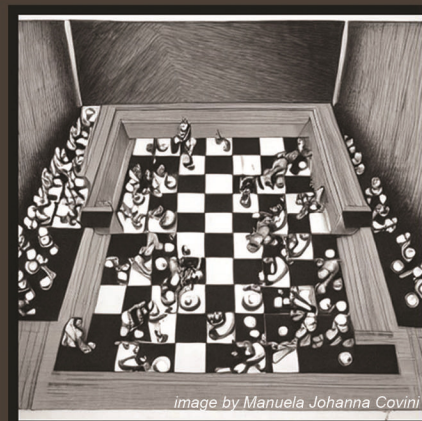




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Ultimately,

the concept of situation (only) describes our location in a present network of interactions and reflections, experiences and expectations. A situation is thus embedded in a normative, rhetorical, socio-historical, history of ideas environment. But it is precisely here, in these concrete "situations", that the history (of ideas) is perpetuated. Above all, it is the questions that emerge that drive this process of updating.

***Cutting the ribbon to the world and to oneself.
Of one's own self.***



Image by Manuela Johanna Covini

But the world is burning on every corner.

***The world is disenchanted and we are alienated.
Our own orientation shimmies along our own selfie.
We no longer need the gaze of the other. This gaze that
should remind me of this moment before the action.***

The idea that situations are birthplaces of new, innovative (artistic) practices in response to this state of siege by the disillusioned world is hopeful. So these "situations", these moments before the action, give us back the world and ultimately our own selves. Cinema promises the same.

Gilles Deleuze formulated such a confession of faith in his writings on cinema: "From this it is necessary that cinema should film not the world but faith in the world, our only bond... To give us back faith in the world, that is the modern power of cinema". Thus Deleuze has Rossellini say: the less human the world is, the more it is incumbent on the artist to believe in it. This belief does not move mountains, but it produces images of the world.

"It is the world that emerges from the cinema".



The old cinema image still needed a camera and an object in front of the lens to create a world for us. The AI images need neither an object in front of the lens nor a lens.

A new game.



Every image is an assertion

The list of crisis

Making decisions - that is also what criticism demands of me.

Every critique I make requires me to go to those **uncertain places** of that one moment.

This means that as a critic (and this is how a good artist sees himself, or at least a critical attitude is required of a good artist) I am constantly faced with the decision of which concepts/criteria to *include* in my decisions or which to *ignore*.

In this sense, critique requires me to be **autonomous** - to be truly free of all *dependencies*.

This is the first crisis, because I am not autonomous.

I cannot detach myself from everything, withdraw.

So I also don't create the **distance** that criticism seems to demand. Or to put it another way: Criticism suggests a distance and an aura of entitlement and competence to me. How can I free myself from this?

Another crisis.

The critical distance we need does not concern a distance in space, a distance in our posture or attitude, but **criticism** needs a distance in time - time as a **formulated perspective for the future**.

Criticism is always an attempt at legitimisation.

How can I distance myself from this?

So how do I write a little theory of autonomous things.

Beginning exactly from that special moment...

Another crisis.

The list of crises is endless.



**The decisive thing
about the critique
is not the *judgement*,
but the new
understanding.**

**And *that should
actually be the
place/moment
before the action*.**

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