Enactive Aesthetics
(*constructing poetic reality*)

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A Social entity is more than a collection of individuals in the same way an individual human is more than a collection of cells.

This distinction is essential.

The concept of self-organization implies an increase in complexity. Cells don't just organize into biological systems, they co-evolve as more complex interactive systems emerge spontaneously from their "structural coupling" (see the section: *Enactive Cognition*). This co-evolutionary process brings greater complexity with self-regulatory subsystems, functional specializations that provide greater mobility, greater sensitivity, etc.

It's also important to understand this (co)evolution is not an optimizing process. This is not a matter of adaptation to a given environment (for one thing, the "environment" is an artificial distinction, and only has meaning relative to a given system, since both form a larger, more complex process). Viability becomes more like a filter which prevents some (spontaneously self-organizing) variations from continuing, while allowing all others -- simply an constraint on what's possible.

The vast diversity of visual systems among animals and insects should be sufficient proof of this concept. If evolution were a matter of finding the best adaptation to more or less fixed environmental characteristics, the function of visual systems would have converged.

Social entities develop in the same way. People interact, friendships and animosities, alliances and antagonisms form, maybe they start chess clubs, corporations, or baseball teams and (co)evolving regulatory systems to assure their continuing viability as well as peaceful coexistence (rules, legal systems, umpires) etc. Eventually you have something far more complex than people interacting.

The other essential point is that "self-organization" is an emergent, not a directed process. We do before we are (to use the human example). The "self" emerges from the accumulated history of our actions, it does not direct action toward organization.

So, after that divergence, let's try to bring this back on point:

When i defined an "authentic (human) life" as "one which is freely 'self-organized' -- as opposed to one which accepts organization from the outside"...

"Outside" relative to the individual, is anything which isn't internally generated spontaneously (i.e. "intuitive").

"Outside" relative to the social system can also be described as anything not internally generated spontaneously -- but "internally" would refer to the social system, not individuals (so the term "intuitive" would not really apply here). Which is why i was not willing to declare The Spectacle inauthentic.

To return to (and shamelessly stretch) the opening metaphor: cellular metabolism desires a number of nutrients but it does not desire a sirloin steak.

What makes a "spectacular lifestyle" inauthentic is that the "desire" for commodities, or POWER, is a "falsified desire" in the sense that it is not "intuitive" but can only emerge and have meaning on the level of the social system. Moreover, such "falsified desire" effectively and intentionally displaces intuitive desire. This leads to the

"spectacular lifestyle" artificially constraining its potential, its concept of what's possible, to that which passes the viability filter of the existing social system (The Spectacle).

A life which denies its full potential is inauthentic.

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The Revolutionary Act

Chaos theory and autopoiesis can teach us something about "revolutionary action." From Alvin Toffler's forward to Order From Chaos by Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers:

> "Summed up and simplified, they [Prigogine and Stengers] hold that while some parts of the universe may operate like machines, these are closed systems, and closed systems, at best, form only a small part of the physical universe. Most phenomena of interest to us are, in fact, open systems, exchanging energy or matter (and, on might add, information) with their environment. Surely biological and social systems are open, which means that the attempt to understand them in mechanistic terms is doomed to failure.

> "This suggests, moreover, that most of reality, instead of being orderly, stable, and equilibrial, is seething and bubbling with change, disorder, and process.

> "In Prigoginian terms, all systems contain subsystems, which are continually 'fluctuating'. At times, a single fluctuation or a combination of them may become so powerful, as a result of positive feedback, that it shatters the preexisting organization. AT THIS REVOLUTIONARY MOMENT -- the authors call it a 'singular moment' or a 'bifurcation point' -- IT IS INHERENTLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE IN ADVANCE WHICH DIRECTION CHANGE WILL TAKE: whether the new system will disintegrate into 'chaos' or leap to a new, more differentiated, higher level of 'order' or organization..."

> [emphasis mine]

This is nothing short of a description for a scientifically based version of the Situationist International's concept of "reversible coherence".

What we know is that the existing order suffocates creative life. We cannot know that any new order woud be better, but our options are simple:

> accept the limits we encounter, or
> refuse them and create a life more authentic.

Because the ultimate outcome of any act is unpredictable, the action itself must be not only consistent with, but identical to our purpose. "Authentic action" (that inspired by and in exploration of intuitive desire) is self-justifying and no other goal should be involved.

A pre-bifurcation (revolutionary) chaos is provoked within a given system, only when the very feedback systems which ordinarily help stabolize it, instead reinforce such a potentially destabolizing perturbation.

Intention is irrelevant.

What persuades us that an individual person is worthy or unworthy of trust is the characteristics of desire perceived in his/her actions.

What persuades us that a (social) system is worthy or unworthy of trust is the characteristics of "desire" perceived in its actions. These characteristics emerge from the acts of individuals, but are something other (more complex) than a simple sum of these acts.