

Tiqqunism & Antitiqqunism



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The publication of *Call* [in France] by Éditions Divergences again brings to the surface the debates surrounding “tiqqunism,” a topic widely discussed in radical circles.¹ Although tiqqunism is the subject of numerous rumors and zines, and antitiqqunism shapes debates and arbitrates several conflicts here and there, the matter remains somewhat taboo. People still talk about it in hushed tones, feigning detachment or mystery.

This text is the result of collective reflection to shed light on the matter because all of this appears to us to have the contours of a myth: on one side, we have heard plenty of bizarre things about the tiqqunists, and on the other, antitiqqunist discourses seem inconsistent and contradictory.

¹ What in the anglophone world is called “tiqqunism” is in French called “appelisme” from *l'Appel*, the original French title of *Call*. *Call* was published anonymously in 2005, and is generally considered to share its authorship with the *Tiqqun* journals and the Invisible Committee. This text, written in 2023, refers to its recent republication.

The Worst Stories Heard About the Tiquunists

Terrifying and unbelievable stories circulate about the tiquunists, much like in the past about wandering Jews or sea monsters. There is never any time for political discussion.

The “CMDO” and the tiquunists are an elite that controls the struggles from within. *From the ZAD (Zone to Defend) to Les Soulèvements de la Terre, from social movements to the black bloc, wherever political action goes beyond the horizon of affinity groups, the tiquunists are accused of making secret decisions.*

CMDO, the “Committee for the Maintenance of Occupations,” is the name a group of ZAD activists in Notre-Dame-des-Landes gave themselves in reference to the occupiers of the Sorbonne in ’68. Although the activities of the CMDO were never really secret, the disagreements between this group and other inhabitants of the ZAD in 2018 gave rise to an absolute myth.

It must be said that this period of evictions at the ZAD is very confusing. We don’t know all the stories that took place there, and we don’t seek to establish any truth (which we wouldn’t believe).

Nevertheless, the myth of CMDO—a minority of strategists who would have influenced the ZAD negatively—seems false. It contradicts all the analyses of what led to a victory: the diversity of tactics, a broad political composition, and rootedness in a territory.

After 2018, the myth has spread: it serves, for example, as an ideological matrix to disqualify Les Soulèvements de la Terre. The smear campaign against this movement in radical circles goes from the accusation of political betrayal to ad hominem denunciations. These attacks seem disgusting to us, since they arrive at a time when the movement is in the crosshairs of the French anti-terrorist machine. However, the facts continue to belie the myth: for the DGSi itself, Les Soulèvements de la Terre succeeded in “embodying the concept of a transversality of struggles.”

inates from re-appropriating a definition imposed by normality on something that escaped it. Today, through identity logic, it tends to establish itself as a possibility within the norm (even Netflix has an LGBTQ category). For us, queerness remains a constant estrangement from the language of dogma and norm, and it is precisely this inability to be wholly captured that makes queerness a subversive force.

The Bash Back! movement—an insurrectionary queer network in the United States, which also had to deal with many myths—dissolved itself to avoid co-optation and capture by empty narratives. Problematizing these fantasies and interpretations, it concluded its history with “Bash Back is dead! Long live Bash Back!”

This publication of *Call* offers several possibilities: either tiquunism or antitiquunism will strengthen as polarized identity positions—either you are with them or against them—ending in a bitter soup where revolutionary potential turns into a battle of postures. Or, tiquunism will dissolve, leaving its myths without resonance and allowing the power of its ideas to persist.

Moral and ideological positions may drown with antitiquunism, and we may discuss the fundamental questions that move us with all the instability they entail. Because tiquunism, like queerness, “are not stable zones of occupation.”

“The practice of communism, as we experience it, we call it the Party [...] The Party is not an organization—where everything is inconsistent due to transparency [...] The Party is a set of places, infrastructures, communized means, and the dreams, bodies, murmurs, thoughts, desires that circulate between these places.” (Call)

“Throughout its existence, there were always a plethora of interpretations of what Bash Back! was. A network of queer anarchists, a gang, a tendency, a gay terrorist organization, a form-of-life, a theory group: the answer differs depending on who one asks. Perhaps the correct answer is that Bash Back!, true to queer form, problematizes each of these categories. Any analysis of Bash Back! fails if it doesn’t recognize the need to understand each of these possibilities independently and yet all at once.” (Queer Ultraviolence)

experiences. The political work left to us is immense, and we don't have their time.

What is antitiqqunism? What is the purpose of antitiqqunism?

Antitiqqunism absorbs genuine critiques, contradictions, theoretical knots, and valid reasons for conflicts, turning them into dogmatic positions that freeze reality, the movement of thought, and possible transcendence. It serves as a "political" cover for interpersonal, territorial, and career-based disputes, among others.

Above all, antitiqqunism creates a cathartic and exorcising monster that allows everyone to take a moral stance without engaging in real struggles or ethical positions related to reality. It acts as a relay for the media-police discourse of the State, warding off the possibility of revolution while constructing politically harmless and comfortable environments.

By condemning "intelligence," antitiqqunism maintains the hierarchies of knowledge it claims to want to destroy. The antitiqqunist ends up defending the intellectual mediocrity of radical circles as a mark of quality.

Tiqqunism is dead, long live tiqqunism!

After discussing and pondering these ideas among ourselves, it became evident that the question of tiqqunism is a neurosis within the revolutionary camp. The publication of *Call* may be an opportunity to dissolve this sterile opposition. We reject tiqqunism as an absurd identity that contradicts tiqqunism itself and reject antitiqqunism as unbearable conformism.

If there is an tiqqunism we claim, it is that of a sensitive reading of texts, their strength, and the theoretical heritage of a tradition—a form of organic tiqqunism that cannot be an identity. In the same way, some of us recognize themselves in "queerness." "Queer" orig-

The myth of the CMDO is suspicious because it is the symptom of a fantasy of omnipotence: a secret group, a minority of strategists, would be capable of influencing a whole movement? By mirror effect, it betrays the lingering Leninist belief still rampant in radical circles in the anachronistic strength of a revolutionary vanguard.

It's all the more suspicious because it repeats the media-police framework that seeks to construct an enemy according to its own hierarchical models: building leaders and command centers, even if it means inventing them (the Tarnac affair, the ghost of Action Directe and the Bolsheviks).

Contemporary struggles are spontaneously horizontal, without leaders, without demands, and without centralizing organizations. This is what those in power worry about? But it would seem that this "anarchic" dimension of struggles is as frightening to the State as to radical circles. One is left to wonder: could it be that, when embodied in actual movements (Yellow Vests, ecology, banlieues, etc.), this anarchizing dimension questions the political motivations of anarchist circles?

It goes without saying that this way of understanding tiqqunism has strong collusions with certain forms of conspiracism and antisemitism, which are not new to far-left circles. Finally, the perpetuation of this myth is built on an ethos of antisemitism and policing: the antitiqqunist is like an investigator trying to understand hidden and shameful realities, such as: "who's behind the invisible committee?" Except that, in principle these secrets are supposed to worry the representatives of power, not radical militants.

With *lundimatin* and the Invisible Committee, the tiqqunists manipulate people. *Because of their ideas, books, and media, the tiqqunists are perceived as intellectuals disconnected from action who have mastery over language.*

The Invisible Committee is a group of anonymous writers whose books became known to the general public thanks to media coverage during the Tarnac case and the relentless efforts of the French

anti-terrorist prosecutor to criminalize its authors. *Lundimatin* is an online journal that gained some notoriety thanks to its participatory and vibrant editorial during social movements.

These accusations of manipulation are rooted in a superstitious and naive perception of knowledge. Everything we read, experience, and hear affects and determines us. There is no reason for a text, even if it is manipulative, to have more influence on us than the thousands of other things we absorb in our society—except for the conscious or unconscious importance we attribute to it. Paradoxically, if anti-tiqqunists feel manipulated by the words of tiqqunists, it's because they attach great importance to them. As another text says, “One is manipulated if they want to be.”

The idea that theoretical ideas are necessarily divorced from practice aligns with a stale view of knowledge. This theory/practice or thought/action distinction is an old apparatus of the bourgeois economic and philosophical order. The strength of a theory lies precisely in its practical origin; thinking, writing, and speaking are still actions.

Of course, there are hierarchies of knowledge, and knowledge sometimes serves as a border in the various structures of domination. But you'd have to be a cynic or a cop to want everyone to stay where they belong. All revolutionary movements have had their poetic theories and tactics (more or less lyrical), starting with feminism.

In the context of these different hierarchies, and despite the rare editorial successes of Éditions La Fabrique, make no mistake: what is hegemonic in the cultural field is, unfortunately, BFMTV, not *Lundimatin*; Houellebecq, not the Invisible Committee.

Finally, making the success of a media outlet, a concept, or a practice a marker of betrayal is very dangerous for the revolutionary camp. We don't want to minimize the risk of co-optation—a relentless machinery that knows no ideological limits (let's remember Paul B. Preciado's participation in Gucci's advertising campaign). Yet, if we systematically put down the successful things, we risk re-

them, nourished them with their experiences, and who have relied on this political genealogy. Tiqqunism would then be a kind of camaraderie. Not to mention all those who arrived too late, all those who cling to a fantasized camaraderie, and all the poor imitators. The experience of camaraderie around a text from the 2000s is old enough for those concerned to be around 45 years old today.

Without minimizing the strength and beauty of such an experience, this camaraderie must have run its course. In this case, if tiqqunism is a group of fallen forty-somethings, why does its ghost continue to structure debates in all radical circles in France?

Why do we, young people who intend to disrupt society, gender, and the world's economic order, concern ourselves with the squabbles of old anarchists living in the countryside? Perhaps this camaraderie experience, combined with theoretical reflection, has given rise to something that surpasses and intrigues us? That the texts do not belong to their authors and that we can take hold of them?

We have indeed read some of them. In these texts, many things align with a critique of political identity: “*There is no ‘revolutionary identity.’ Under the Empire, it is, on the contrary, non-identity, the constant betrayal of the predicates imposed on us, which is revolutionary. ‘Revolutionary subjects’ have not existed for a long time, except for power. To become anyone, imperceptible, to conspire means distinguishing between our presence and what we are for representation, to play it.*”

Because of this, it seems absurd that tiqqunists—in the sense of people who claim the philosophical tradition of *Call*—consider themselves “tiqqunists” because that would, against the intellectual tradition itself, make tiqqunism a political identity. So, in a way, tiqqunists are the first antitiqqunists.

It is up to us, the young generations, to wrestle tiqqunism from the tiqqunists. All the 20-year-old comrades building themselves against tiqqunism, perceived as a group of people, live with a myth. They are caught up in the troubles and regrets of frustrated forty-year-olds. Let's live our own communal, political, and theoretical

and political traditions, is vast. Even as a scholar or fan of tiqqunism, it would be difficult to have read it all. The theoretical debates and political questions raised by such a current of thought cannot be ignored. On the contrary, we can only hope that they will finally open up with the publication of *Call* and the overcoming of a certain dogmatic antitiqqunism.

In this sense, dogmatic antitiqqunism—which doesn't concern itself with theoretical questions, and speaks only of anecdotes and verbal attacks—is ultimately the main obstacle to the discussion and political critique of tiqqunist themes and concepts. Even if this set of texts would seem uninteresting, false, incomplete, in contradiction with our ideas: a theoretical position can be discussed, overcome, fought, and transformed, but not condemned. However, the antitiqqunist position cannot stand without a moral condemnation of supposedly tiqqunist gestures.

But in the end, who are the tiqqunists that are talked about so much? Is an tiqqunist simply a reader of *Call*? In that case, there are many more tiqqunists than expected, and the book's publication will likely increase the number of tiqqunists worldwide even more.

Moreover, how can reading (or even the agreement that these texts may provoke) lead to wrongdoing? That's the question that the most daring antitiqqunist seriously asks. The question is dishonest in itself: there is no connection between reading or agreeing with "tiqqunist" texts and being an "tiqqunist" in a sense understood by antitiqqunists.

For them, tiqqunist is "a set of practices against which we must organize," the *movement of what is evil*. But this perspective is a dead end: we are always someone else's tiqqunist. And there is a strong likelihood that, by appreciating the history of Italian autonomy, believing that feminism is not about rights, liking the philosophy of Agamben or Deleuze, rejecting political identities, and loving poetry and riots, we may be tiqqunists without knowing it.

Tiqqunism could be something else: a network of people involved, to varying degrees, in writing these texts, who have carried

maintaining definitely locked in the neurotic microenvironments of the far left, endlessly ruminating over defeats.

The tiqqunists put a person in a trunk after breaking their knees and negotiated with the State at the ZAD. *According to some accounts, the tiqqunists are ultra-violent, willing to use force to steer decisions in their favor; others are pacifists and legalists, ready to make any concessions to save their skin.*

The internal contradictions in such narratives—here, the tiqqunists are ultra-violent, there too pacifist—are enough to sniff out the scam: there is such a thing as a pure way of being in the world, with some people always making the right choices. There's no room for errors or conflicts, only betrayed ideals.

Purity does not exist; every individual or collective choice has consequences. The experiences mentioned in these narratives result from situational positions: was it necessary to go that far? Why choose to negotiate or not to? How to resolve a conflict without the State? These are the questions that moral narratives obstruct, establishing an overarching and soothing interpretation of facts.

The experiences at the ZAD, regardless of the positions taken (for or against the trunk!), are of interest to all revolutionaries because they are extreme experiences of a revolution that seeks to do without the State (how do we administer justice?) and finds itself confronted by it (when and why negotiate?). These facts call for good faith discussions about the choices made at the moment by everyone involved in each specific context.

Here, the term "tiqqunists" obviously designates an "evil camp" that would oppose a hypothetical "good camp," which is obviously non-existent and doesn't correspond to any sociological reality. The experiences in question, such as negotiation during the evictions at the ZAD in 2018, concern many people of diverse origins who do not identify as "tiqqunists."

The accusation of hidden control is the fundamental motive for all these different ways of doing evil, violently or peacefully, which

would characterize the tiqqunists. Yet, power and the desire for control are structural; they can be found in all groups, and we end up fighting them everywhere, and they cannot be the characteristic of any particular group. Assigning the desire for control to one group, in particular, is dangerous because it would invisibilize the fact that such dynamics are at play in every group at all times and prevent people from intervening to change them.

In an tiqqunist space, an tiqqunist guy has raped several women. *We shouldn't associate with tiqqunists because they are rapists. They have a reputation for being wealthy anti-feminists who scoff at structures of domination.*

Sexist and sexual violence is systemic. Some rape stories in tiqqunist circles have been explained, made public, or collectively discussed, which may be why they are so widely known. Making these issues politically visible seems desirable to break free from mechanisms of silence. Speaking about sexual violence isn't enough, but it is necessary for justice to be made. Where stories remain silent, violence intensifies.

Structures of domination are challenging to overthrow, present everywhere, and overwhelming in many respects; every milieu has to confront them. Should we then morally condemn all political circles: squatters, anarchists, autonomists...? And be surprised when, in the end, violence occurs in the group that we thought was safe. The question is not to label a perpetrator's political affiliation. Framing the problem this way turns it into an ideological issue instead of addressing the mechanisms of domination head-on.

Externalizing sexism (or any other form of domination) from oneself, one's groups, and practices is tempting. But the process is perverse: if it is the tiqqunists who are sexist, racist, and classist, then it's not us. Removing these systems in this way exposes us and makes us blind to their emergence. On the other hand, acknowledging their reach is an opportunity for transformation.

Furthermore, by placing ideological conflicts in terms of

morality, antitiqqunism masks the fact that feminism, or anti-racism or anti-capitalism, are fields of force; that there are currents opposing them, fighting over concepts and ways of thinking about domination and/or resistance. We don't all have the same idea of revolution—should we take over the state? Should we destroy it? Condemning other groups through dubious sociological elements is often a way of concealing unspoken ideological positions. The anarchism of many antitiqqunists is nothing more than a radical aesthetic that poorly conceals a well-thought-out universalism.

Do tiqqunists exist? What is tiqqunism? Are we tiqqunists without knowing it?

No matter how hard we look, no one (except perhaps one or two isolated provocateurs) claims to be a "tiqqunist." Under these conditions, it is doubtful that tiqqunists exist; or, and this is the theory of a 2019 text, that the tiqqunist is "the Jew" of the militant milieu. The construction of a monstrous figure invented by the antitiqqunist to justify his moral authority. But the idea comes from somewhere: what could tiqqunism be?

Like anarchism, communism, and feminism, tiqqunism could be a current of thought linked to practices. In this respect, it is striking to note that antitiqqunism is almost never based on theoretical or philosophical arguments (or else is particularly obscure and incomprehensible).

Yet it was a book, *l'Appel*, self-published in the 2000s, that gave tiqqunism [*appelisme*] its name. *Call*, in addition to being a text of political intervention, is a kind of orientation table for the journal *Tiqqun*. The journal itself was a gateway to other theoretical and practical experiences, such as those of Italian autonomy in the 70s and 80s (a period little-known by the French far left). The experience of *Tiqqun* subsequently gave rise to the Invisible Committee, which continued the journal's gesture.

Tiqqunism, then, as a current of thought rooted in philosophical