



BEDFORD SQUARE

but, yes! (things fall apart).

d. ayat

As a child of the late eighties, I've often heard our generation described as the generation of collapse. We were born as the old world order crumbled, and we came of age in a period bookended by the collapse of the Twin Towers and of the world economy, all while constantly being reminded of the impending/ongoing collapse of the ecosystem.

But what are the implications of this generational epithet? Are we going to wistfully look back on our present situation and tell our (hypothetical) grandchildren that this was the moment when things fell apart? Or will collapse come to characterize a profoundly optimistic moment when crisis became the source of active change?

The headlines have been looking grim lately, which makes optimism a hard sell. And while I deeply sympathize with the victims of various forms of collapse in Japan and the Middle East, I have to believe in the latter option. 2011 has to serve as a moment of awakening; of a radical generation (in both senses of the word) that is born of an indulgent change in attitude towards collapse.

It has almost become a truism to say that crisis is a necessary part of modernity, shaping it through a sequence of solutions to problems as they arise. But

whether collapse will serve as a pessimistic historical pejorative or an optimistic appraisal will come down to our collective ability to accept this embedded chaos.

Our responses to crises cannot be limited to a posteriori reactive measures.

When things fall apart, putting them back together can be noble (and necessary) enough, but most often serve as a pessimistic apologia to our own inability to see beyond the immediate consequences of our actions.

A truly optimistic response would be to embody the idea of chaos itself on an individual level and to relish the constant change in a world wrought through its own unbending.

Though admittedly bordering on irreverence, the optimistic and necessary reaction is to say yes to crisis, to rejoice in collapse, and most importantly, to actively provoke it.

Daniel Simon Ayat is currently on the first year HTS staff at the AA.

NEW YORK

yes, but...

t.c. therrien

Yes, but what if it is precisely this "inability to see beyond the immediate consequences of our actions" that characterizes our contemporary world? Would not modernity itself then be in crisis? Underwritten by the proviso "we can insure for that," such modernity balks at the contemporary risks that burn through the pools of capital in which actuarial science attempts to cooled them. This is nothing new. The recent financial crisis rendered into high relief the impotence of modern techniques for measuring risk. What is different today is the lack of explanation, a silence wrought by the epistemological horror of reaching the limits of the knowable. We are left with bare optimism – "Japan will overcome this tragedy and will recover" – punctuated by a silent, implied "trust us".

Trust? Is not trust precisely that which modern science allows us to forgo? Did not probability calculus do away with moral certainty? Did not the scientific revolution do away with recourse to belief and infallibility? Has not statistics allowed us to tame such beasts as nuclear fission or the weather?

Yes, but not nuclear fission and the weather. Science, the handmaiden of political economics, has come up lame. In its wake, rhetoric: "trust us." This optimism insults modernity. Categorically positive, it is anti-rational, anti-calculation, anti-Enlightenment. But history is a record, not a mandate.

Modernization is not policed by our conceptions of modernity. Rather than dismissing optimism as anachronistic, could we entertain it as an historical fact of the present? Could optimism be epistemic?

For Ulrich Beck, optimistic practice has bound science to political economic interest since the early 1970s. Attenuated scientific specialization allowed governments and corporations to cull at will from equally credible scientific opinions, curating truth in their favour in the public sphere. The "us" in their "trust us" carried the claim of scientific objectivity. However specious, at least it had a referent. As baffled scientists pleading irreducible uncertainty are broadcast globally on 24-hour news channels today, has "us" resigned? Are we left with, simply, "trust"?

Yes, but is this a bad thing? History is not an object to critique, but a prompt to ask, critically, "what now?" So, what now?

Troy Conrad Therrien is Canadian, lives in New York, and has studied, taught, designed, curated and written about architecture.

AATEA

Is it conceivable that your hometown 'disappears' in a split second, without any legitimate reason or the slightest premonition? It happens. The tsunami caused by the Tohoku earthquake on March 11th literally swallowed whole villages along the coastal region of Tohoku district. The influence of the earthquake, and urgency of containing the potential atomic incident scarcely needs to be mentioned at this time.

Facing such a catastrophe, AATEA was set up to support the victims. As a starting point, we will hold our first fund raising event on the 25th March, and are hoping to organize and support various activities in the long term to stand by Japan.

Our first fund-raising event will be held on Friday 25th March, 18:30, on the AA Terrace.

**We will happily
serve sake &
authentic Japanese
food!**

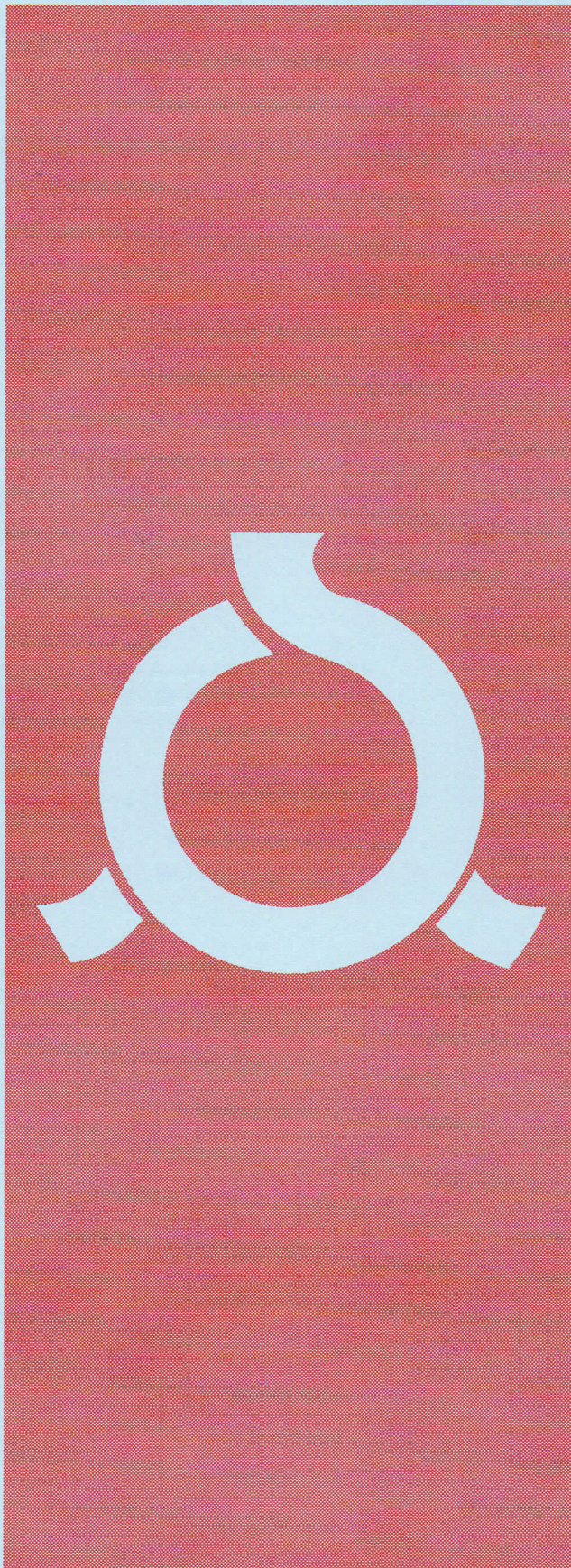
Donations may be made in person by one of the boxes at the AA bar and reception, or online through our Facebook page and website.

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*AATEA (AA Tohoku Earthquake Action) is a voluntary group formed by AA students. AATEA's aim is to support Tohoku Earthquake/Tsunami victims through various forms of activity in the short term as well as in the long term.

All donations will go to Japanese official charities undertaking the disaster relief work in Japan.



Flag of Fukushima, one of Tohoku region's six provinces, & home to the compromised nuclear power plant.

LEGIT VOICE

Monday's School Community meeting saw a much reduced turn-out in comparison to those heady mid-term scuffles, doubtless resulting from our crushing end of term deadlines.

Hugo Hinsley explained the previous models of student representation and made several key points: there are many organisational committees within the school already. He was not sure how many, or what their precise roles were and Brett agreed to provide a document explaining the situation. He asked, is there a need for a new advisory body, or is it enough to modify existing ones? If an overarching New Forum is needed, how will it be formed and how will it represent students and staff?

I argued that calls for change cannot be seriously addressed when they come from the floor, but must stem from a legitimate and organised student voice. I will be pressing for its formation shortly after April break. *J. Self.*

CORRECTION

Fulcrum would like to apologise for a series of errors in last week's issue (#8). We hope the explanation below clarifies E. de Sousa's position:

"I would like to have avoided the superimposition of 'id/ego/super-ego' to the terminology I had advanced for the article, which intended a language purely scientific, namely neuroscience, which does not correspond one-to-one with the Freudian construct.

I believe the change of 'map as sentiment' to 'map of sentiment' changes the meaning, so it is not saying the same thing.

And finally, although understanding the parallelism between the titles, I don't think the article 'the' is necessary, I actually believe the definition of 'the interlude' contradicts the whole argument of multitude of interludes intended.

All the best,
Emanuel de Sousa"