

Dumpster Diving the Anarchist Library Text Bin – Part One

Various Authors

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A library enthusiasts introduction

This text was created for anyone curious about various library crew's archiving ethos.

The internet, bookshops, and libraries are all swamped with more information than anyone could read in a lifetime, but when searching for reading on a particular subject, having the choice of a 100 texts on that subject isn't necessarily valuable if the task of choosing between them is made more difficult by a library crew's choice to archive 50 texts that showcase embarrassingly anti-anarchist ideas, or where the one text that would interest you most has been deleted from the catalog due to the library crew having a personal issue with the author.

Therefore, when browsing texts from these institutions it would be valuable to get a sense of what type of texts are likely included at a higher or lower rate. So, what type of texts it is better to go elsewhere to look for. A simple brochure or web page people could read would suffice, to see a list of some of the texts that were controversially included or excluded, and ideally the reasons why.

Finally, I think there is value in discussing the embarrassment some people feel about controversially platforming some texts under the banner of 'The Anarchist Library'. For example, if one of the reasons for hosting a text on the The Anarchist Library is that it can't easily be found elsewhere, then having that be more well-known may encourage people to start a unique archival project specifically for exploring texts on that subject. Also, most every anarchist would agree that platforming the complete works of Mao under the banner of The Anarchist Library just because he was an ex-anarchist would be an unjustifiably embarrassing platforming of ideas. So, I just think it would be good for the library crew to post publicly the arguments and counter-arguments for why they think archiving various controversial authors and texts would or would not amount to this kind of embarrassing platforming.

The Why, The How & The Lessons Learned

I was bored so I decided to spreadsheet the web.archive.org list of URLs of The Anarchist Library and sort them against the live sitemap.

This meant that I could see the list of texts that were once public on the library, but that have now been deleted.

Here's some of what I found out:

1. Most of the texts are saved to unlisted URLs so that they can be remembered by librarians and searched through in an 'unpublished console'.
2. Often the reason given for deleting a text was just because it was discovered that the text had lots of OCR errors, so fell below quality standards. I found a few texts that I thought were worth the time fixing, so I fixed them, re-submitted them and one has already been re-published.
3. I agreed that some of the texts weren't suited for the anarchist library, but I was glad to find them as I thought they were worthwhile archiving on other libraries.
4. I disagreed with some of the reasons for deleting texts given by librarians, but I found the reasons interesting nonetheless for understanding the library crew's archiving ethos.

Finally I've been able to gather together a collection of essays to display here for people who are curious to read some of the texts that were deleted for unclear reasons or because the librarians thought they weren't anarchist enough.

None of the texts below are ones that were deleted due to a request by the author, or DMCA, or bad formatting.

I won't show the unlisted URL's in case a spam bot brakes the texts or something. Also, if any authors of the texts below stumble on this collection and wish to see their text removed, you can feel free to edit the text yourself to delete your section, or leave a note in the proposed edits, or email 'TheLibraryofUnconventionalLives at proton.me' and I'm sure it'll be deleted.

Further reading

- A text dump on various library publishing ethos
- Some of The Anarchist Library's Controversially Published, Deleted & Rejected Texts
- My recommendations for different amusewiki libraries

A Short List of Some of the Deleted Texts

1. Finbar Cafferkey: The life and death of an Irish fighter ‘who put his money where his mouth is’ in Ukraine
2. Thirty Years Ago Today I Shot My First Fascist
3. Unbreakable
4. Child Molestation vs. Child Love (Critically Annotated)
5. The Left-Overs
6. Where did all the tankies come from?
7. The Virtual Factory
8. Armenia doesn’t need another political party — it needs a MOVEMENT!
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23. The Devil and Karl Marx
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25. Anarchism and Immigration

26. Anarchists Hate Racism
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49. What is Dadaism and what does it want in Germany?
50. On Capitalism and Desire

1. Finbar Cafferkey: The life and death of an Irish fighter ‘who put his money where his mouth is’ in Ukraine

Subtitle: ‘He was quite pragmatic about it’: Family and comrades tell the story of how an Achill islander (45) wound up first in Syria and later in Ukraine

Author: Conor Gallagher and Daniel McLaughlin

Topics: 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Finbar Cafferkey, Ireland, anti-imperialism, eulogy, obituary

Date: July 15, 2023

Date Published on T@L: 2023-09-04

Source: Retrieved on 4th September 2023 from www.irishtimes.com

A librarians argument for deleting: not anarchist, only mentions they were helped by anarchists

A librarians argument against deleting: ...

A readers argument for deleting: The story is about someone who wasn’t an anarchist and who it only mentions was helped by anarchists.

A readers argument against deleting: The network of internationalist and anarchist support for the Ukranian people is an important and inspiring subject.

Colm Cafferkey was getting a bag of chips in Keel on Achill Island when he got the call saying his older brother Finbar was missing in action on the front lines in Ukraine.

Finbar and two other international volunteers were fighting with Ukrainian units in April to keep open a vital supply route to the city of Bakhmut, which was on verge of being overrun by the Russian invaders.

A sustained mortar strike hit the group, causing many casualties. Amid the chaos no one could be sure what happened to the 45-year-old Mayo man.

For the next week the Cafferkey family was worried but hopeful. Finbar had a reputation for disappearing for days or weeks at a time, only to pop up in another city or country.

Colm recalls them attending 1996 All-Ireland football final between Mayo and Meath and Finbar failing to show up at an arranged meeting spot.

“He rings us a few days later and he is in London. And then he rings a week later and he’s in Holland,” Colm recalls with a smile. “He could go three months without texting you.”

A week after he first heard his brother was missing, Colm got confirmation: Finbar was killed in the strike near Bakhmut, the devastated city in Donbas, eastern Ukraine, during Europe’s bloodiest battle since the second World War. He is the third Irish man known to have been killed in the fighting since the war started in February 2022. Continued fighting and the trading of territory between the sides meant recovering his remains was impossible.

Interviews with those who knew and fought alongside Cafferkey paint him as a brave, occasionally withdrawn man who was unable to stand still for long and who was willing to make sacrifices for his beliefs, even when it meant working alongside ideological opponents.

“He put his money where his mouth is,” says Colm. “He thought long and hard about how he could help in the world.”

Growing up as one of five children in an Irish-speaking family in Achill, Cafferkey was a voracious reader. He took an interest in Irish history and the Troubles which shaped much of his republican worldview.

“He was really stubborn but really fair as well,” says Colm, four years his junior. Colm remembers his older brother figuring out at the age of six that Santa wasn’t real.

“But he didn’t tell the rest of us,” he says.

As a teen, he was “never bound by social expectations,” says Colm. “I wouldn’t say it made a loner of him but it made him stand out.”

Cafferkey went to college for a while, spent a short period with the Army Reserve and worked various jobs, including in construction. By the mid-2000s, he was drifting somewhat, his brother recalls.

That's when he became involved in Shell to Sea. This was the grassroots protest against the construction of a gas pipeline through north Mayo, which campaigners said would pose serious health and ecological risks.

Finbar had involved himself in some activist causes before but his participation in the Shell to Sea protests was transformative.

"That was a big moment for him. Once he got in there, he couldn't step away," says Colm. "It set him on a certain trajectory."

In 2015 Finbar travelled to Greece to assist the huge numbers of Middle Eastern migrants arriving in rubber dinghies on the island of Kos. It was perhaps there where he conceived of the idea of trying to address the source of the refugee crisis directly.

He never told his family he was travelling to Syria in 2017, which was then six years into a bloody and complex civil war. He enlisted with a heavy weapons unit of the YPG, a left-wing Kurdish militia that was fighting to oust Islamic State from its base in Raqqa in the north of the country.

The first time Colm knew his brother was in Syria was when a video appeared online of him wearing a traditional Kurdish scarf and carrying a Kalashnikov.

"I came here because I admire the struggle of the Kurdish people," says Finbar on the video, drawing parallels between the YPG and the IRA.

I knew there were two new guys coming who were hardcore republicans. I was a bit wary as I had served in Northern Ireland ... I really took to Fin straight away

— A former British soldier who met Finbar Cafferkey in Syria

Colm was shocked at the video "but really proud of him as well. It's such a step for someone to take."

When he later spoke to Finbar, he realised he had "thought long and hard" about the decision. "He had prepared himself mentally for it. No one had brainwashed him," he says.

While undergoing military training in Syria, Finbar met Mark Ayres, a former British army soldier.

"I met Fin in northern Syria at the YPG training academy for international volunteers," says Ayres. "I knew there were two new guys coming who were hard-core republicans. I was a bit wary as I had served in Northern Ireland and didn't know how we would get on. I need not have worried as I got along with both of them ... I really took to Fin straight away."

The YPG was successful in destroying Isis, also known as Islamic State, leaving Cafferkey searching for another cause.

At the time he was sort of idle and trying to think of what he would do next. He was quite pragmatic about it. He didn't have children. He was in a position where he thought he could help

— Colm Cafferkey

When Russia invaded Ukraine last year, Colm knew immediately his brother was likely to get involved.

"At the time he was sort of idle and trying to think of what he would do next," says Colm. "He was quite pragmatic about it. He didn't have children. He was in a position where he thought he could help."

Thousands of foreign fighters have travelled to Ukraine to aid in the fight against Russia, including dozens from Ireland. Some have extensive military experience; others have none.

"Some are basically kids who should never be there and are probably a danger to themselves and others around them," says an Irish man who has fought in Ukraine who asked not to be named as he intends to return to the frontline soon.

"There's others who tend to be older and have that bit of experience in fighting or medicine or logistics, and they can be helpful."

Finbar Cafferkey seemed to fall in to the latter category.

“He said to me before that war is awful, that so many people are not able for it, that it ruins them,” says Colm. “He felt he was able to go to it and be around that stuff without it completely destroying him.”

Cafferkey made contact with an anarchist group in the Polish capital, Warsaw, and travelled from there to Ukraine to try to join a volunteer defence unit, preferably one made up of like-minded leftists.

But in those frantic first weeks of war, Ukraine’s forces struggled to equip all the volunteers who wanted to fight. Cafferkey returned to eastern Poland without signing up.

“I got a message that two comrades were coming and could we host them,” says a member of the Anarchist Black Cross Galicja group (ACK Galicja), who uses the pseudonym Leon Czołg.

“The other comrade was more orientated to fighting over there so he didn’t stay long. But Ciya stayed,” he adds, using the nom-de-guerre Finbar took in Syria.

Czołg first met Finbar and the other man, who is from Scandinavia, in ACK Galicja’s warehouse in eastern Poland, where he found them “tearing apart” bulky boxes of medical supplies and turning them into lightweight combat first-aid kits.

“They looked like serious, proper guys ... That’s what struck me from the beginning. They had only just arrived but they wanted to put their energy straight into the warehouse without messing around,” he says.

Cafferkey began making aid delivery runs to places deeper and deeper inside Ukraine, eventually to eastern Donbas, near the front line.

“He would come with a vehicle and say, ‘I have got a week or two and I will go wherever you tell me,’” says Sergey Movchan, an organiser in Kyiv for anti-authoritarian volunteer network Solidarity Collectives, which sends supplies to civilians and soldiers in Ukraine.

“Maybe he had some fear but he didn’t show any. He was very calm and kind and willing to help.”

On one run to Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine, which was then under daily shelling, Finbar reconnected with Mark Ayres.

“A few times I tried to talk him into joining my unit. He always declined and said he would carry on helping civilians ... I was shocked to learn that he joined up,” says Ayres.

Cafferkey is thought to have revived his initial aim of taking up arms when he heard about plans to form the kind of leftist unit he had sought at the start of the war.

Its commander was Dmitry Petrov, a leading light in the anarchist underground in Russia with a long record of opposition to the regime of Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Petrov had also spent time with Kurdish guerrillas in Syria and Iraq.

“It was a surprise for me that Ciya [Finbar Cafferkey] decided to join Leshiy’s unit,” says Sergey Movchan, of the anti-authoritarian volunteer network Solidarity Collectives, using one of Petrov’s many pseudonyms.

“Before he went to training, I asked Ciya whether maybe this was not the best time – there was very heavy fighting near Bakhmut, lots of people were being injured and dying, and my Facebook page was like one big obituary.”

Cafferkey and some anarchist comrades were so eager to join they agreed to train for a month under the Bratstvo (Brotherhood) battalion linked to a far-right Christian movement.

In March, Petrov and Cafferkey met in Kyiv with former US marine Cooper “Harris” Andrews and an activist from a Ukrainian environmental group who uses the pseudonym “Yenot” (Raccoon), before travelling to the Bratstvo training ground.

“We all decided that we can spend a few weeks with these guys because we have a bigger goal, and after this we can start something of our own,” says Yenot (26).

“It was actually better than expected. Every day there were things we didn’t like – their symbols and songs, for example – but in general it was all right ... There was no hostility. We were all in the same situation and wanted to train. We were on same side, fighting the same enemy.”

One trainer was “Madzh”, a Bratstvo fighter who says Finbar performed well with physical and weapons training. Around this time the Mayo man took a new nom-de-guerre, Osyp, a traditional Ukrainian name.

On April 17th the Bratstvo fighters and the four anarchists drove east through the night to a town near Bakhmut and the so-called road of life, which was the last open supply route for Ukrainian troops fighting a rearguard action in the ruined city.

Cafferkey, Petrov and Andrews were assigned to a combat platoon and Yenot to a medical unit that would treat the wounded.

“Before the fight they were optimistic, with a good fighting spirit. I clearly remember Harris repeating the phrase: ‘We come and they die.’ Ciya seemed calm, as always, and confident,” says Yenot.

“I said I wished we could have a beer together, and Leshiy replied: ‘Don’t worry, we will finish this mission and when we have won, we will have a beer.’”

Madzh remembers Finbar having a moment of doubt before the battle, as he says happens quite often in such situations.

Finbar said he had a bad feeling about the mission, prompting his commander to suggest he should stay behind. “But Finbar said, no, he wasn’t going to leave the group.”

The operation started on the morning of April 19th.

“An eyewitness, someone who was in combat there, told me it was a horrible scene. There were a lot of corpses from both sides in those trenches,” says Yenot.

“Someone on the radio said the guys were about 100m from the enemy, and it sounded like they would soon finish their job. I didn’t know that the real hell was about to begin.”

Footage from the road at this time shows shell-blasted fields criss-crossed by trenches where soldiers struggled through thick mud and clambered past crumpled bodies.

“It was near Bakhmut, so everything was firing: artillery, tanks, rifles, drones dropping grenades,” says Madzh.

“There were lot of explosions there, happening all the time. The land is full of craters from explosions. A Kalashnikov is like a children’s toy there.”

Yenot says Russian mortars landed to the right and left of her comrades before directly hitting their trench.

“One of the commanders said Ciya [Cafferkey] and Harris had been killed,” she says. Leshiy was later confirmed dead, too.

The grief felt by the men’s anarchist friends was compounded by Bratstvo’s claim that they had “joined” the far-right Christian movement with “strange leftist beliefs” but had subsequently “learned to respect faith and love God” and “took part in worship”.

In the Kyiv office where he last saw Cafferkey, Movchan recalls the Achill man telling him how training with Bratstvo had been “funny and weird and he had really thought about quitting”.

“But they decided, basically, to get through this and then they would have their own unit without all this religious bullshit,” adds Movchan.

Photographs of the three dead men stand in the Solidarity Collectives office, where in May dozens of people, including Petrov’s parents, gathered to honour them. Finbar’s family joined the event by video link.

“Many people would ask Ciya what he, an Irish person, was doing in Ukraine,” says Movchan. “And Ciya would reply that he had decided that he could be useful here, and he had time.”

When news of Finbar’s death was confirmed in Ireland, Tánaiste Micheál Martin paid tribute to him in the Dáil, calling him a “man of clear principles”. It was a relatively uncontroversial statement from the Government, which didn’t want to be seen to be encouraging people to travel to Ukraine to fight.

But it caught the ire of Russia’s ambassador to Dublin, Yuriy Filatov, whose embassy issued a statement blaming the media and the Irish Government for Finbar’s death in a Russian mortar strike.

“We also do not know if Mr Martin’s remarks signify support for the Irish to take part in combat in Ukraine, but we do know that if that is the case, then Ireland would be the direct participant of the conflict with all the ensuing consequences,” the embassy said.

The remarks drew a furious response leading to calls for Filatov’s expulsion. Colm Cafferkey, still coming to terms with his brother’s death, was not comfortable with the furore. He saw various sides, including supporters of Nato, trying to lay claim to his brother’s memory.

He issued his own statement. Finbar was, he said, against “all forms of imperialism, be it US, British, or Russian, and was strongly opposed to Ireland’s support of US troops and any moves towards joining Nato”.

The statement continued: “He was in Ukraine to help the Ukrainian people, as he would have helped any person in the world who was under attack.”

Looking back, Colm says he owed it to Finbar to clarify his position. “He wouldn’t have been any more in favour of Nato than he was the Russian gang.”

The Cafferkey family are still grieving as they await the return of Finbar’s remains, which are stored in a Ukrainian military base, alongside many others, awaiting formal identification.

It may be several more months before repatriation can occur and a funeral can be held.

“We’ll bring him home, le cúnamh Dé,” his father, Tom, said at a memorial service on Achill in May.

Does he hold any anger towards his brother for putting himself in such a dangerous situation? Colm pauses to think.

“That hasn’t hit me yet,” he says. “It feels like the really heavy emotions are still out in front of me still ... but it’s not anger. He knew what he was doing. He wouldn’t have had regrets.”

2. Thirty Years Ago Today I Shot My First Fascist

Author: Ali Al-Aswad

Topics: anti-fascism, anti-imperialism, history, Palestine, armed struggle

Date: 30.07.2008

Date Published on T@L: 2024-03-06

Source: <indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/leedsbradford/2008/07/405016.html>

A librarians argument for deleting: is this by an anarchist? doesn't use the word, couldn't find info about it online

A librarians argument against deleting: ...

A readers argument for deleting: ...

A readers argument against deleting: The author of this text is anonymous, but it was posted at the same time as an interview of a public anarchist PLO volunteer with a similar life story and lots of other anonymous texts exist on the website. Anarchist internationalists often write under local names given to them during their service. The text feels very relevant to the current bombing of Gaza and anarchist participation in protests against the bombings.

The camp was in a remote location in the Zahrani river valley. Access was by a steep track that snaked down the hillside from the Sida road. The track came to an end alongside what had been a farmhouse once, consisting of a stone hut where some of the men slept. Beneath this was a much larger stone manger, this was unused except by a few chickens, but in the warm weather it's flat roof became the main focus of the camp, being used for both eating and sleeping. Beyond this building were a few tents, one of which was my home. Straight ahead was a blind valley which held a concealed ammunition dump and field guns, but before that was a large tent in which several older *fedayi* lived. Some were recovering from injuries sustained in the conflict.

To the left of the manger a path led down to another stone building which acted as a storeroom for tinned food, dried foodstuffs, and also ammunition. The storeroom was built into the hillside, having a flat roof, and adjacent to this was a large stone water-tank, which had been cut into the terrain. Below the tank and next to the storeroom was a water-tap, and further along the path was the Zahrani river itself.

The camp was isolated and quite vulnerable, with the Phalangist-held village of Haga visible high on the far hillside across the river. Nonetheless, throughout my life, I have rarely felt more safe.

Ostensibly the camp was under the command of Abu Abdullah, a thoughtful, introspective man aged somewhere in his 30's. He had jet black hair and a full beard. The structure of the camp was entirely democratic though, and it had a militant reputation. Only weeks before our arrival the men had refused Yasser Arafat admission to the camp because they disagreed with a political decision he had taken.

Our training instructor was Ali Hassan from Gaza. He was aged only 23, but after 10 years fighting, it was impossible to guess that. He was tough, but with a warm, friendly manner, and bore a striking (and possibly cultivated) resemblance to Che Guevara. We also received some technical instruction from Jaffa, a Russian-trained armourer.

The older men kept to themselves for the most part, but I got on well with them, on occasion drinking tea and eating freshly caught fish in their large tent. Abu Muhamed was of the same age as the others, but he was still a very active fighter, and once saved my life.

Also at the camp was Abu Fathi, a round black man, filled with humour. Muhamed Ali had come to fight all the way from Sarajevo, a town in Yugoslavia I'd never heard of at the time. There were many more at the camp whose names I forget.

On the last day of July though, as darkness fell, the camp was nearly empty. Why I cannot recall, but there was only myself, Ali Hassan, and my English comrade (who had been given the *nom de guerre* Jihad), sat out on the roof of the manger. The older men were probably in their tent, but would have

been out of earshot, while others I think were at the house at the top of the track, which guarded the Sida road.

We had just finished eating. There was little food because of the war, and we ate simply, sharing a plate in the traditional Arab manner. Suddenly Ali Hassan became alert, motioning for us to listen. I could hear nothing untoward, but Ali said he had heard something down towards the river. We both grabbed our Kalashnikovs and I strapped on my belt containing extra magazines of ammunition. As we stepped into the darkness and towards whatever was there, leaving Jihad to guard the house and wait for assistance, I felt no fear at all, except perhaps that I might be afraid.

Turning left in front of the manger, we skirted up the steep hill to the right, eventually passing the open water-tank and crawling on our stomachs across the flat roof of the storeroom. We reached the edge, with the level ground next to the river perhaps 30ft below us. We looked into the darkness listening for the slightest sound which might mean a raiding party of Israelis or Phalangists.

Ali beckoned me towards him and I rolled over. He pointed towards the dense undergrowth next to the narrow path which ran alongside the river. As I squinted in the darkness I saw the shape of a man standing, then another kneeling, and others behind. I could make out perhaps 4 or 5, but there were most likely others hidden in the darkness. The ones I could see were carrying Kalashnikovs, which meant they were almost certainly Phalangists rather than Israelis.

On my stomach I followed Ali back across the flat roof. Then he jumped into the darkness. I leapt after him, the fall seemed to last forever. It must have been at least 25 feet, but I landed well on the path below. As we slid the selector switches on our rifles onto full auto, Ali gestured for me to aim to the left and he would aim to the right.

We both came round the corner of the stone storeroom firing. I aimed into the darkness to the left of our position, firing on full auto and raking my gun round until it pointed straight ahead. Ali did the same, but starting from the right. We emptied our magazines. The fascist raiding party did not get the chance to return fire.

3. Unbreakable

Author: Ali Al-Asfa

Topics: Palestine, armed struggle

Source: <tiktok.com/@user2990229552439/photo/7301346753133956385>

A librarians argument for rejecting: not anarchist, no mention of anarchist word, unknown author

A librarians argument against rejecting: ...

A readers argument for rejecting: No mention of anarchist word and unknown author.

A readers argument against rejecting: Anarchist internationalists often write under local names given to them during their service. It feels very relevant to the current bombing of Gaza and anarchist participation in protests against the bombings. The author is anonymous, but it was posted at the same time as a public PLO volunteer with a similar life story and lots of other anonymous texts exist on the website.

The first time it happened, I was asleep, curled up with my 'Kieshen' beside me, and awoken by the sound of explosions, and the sonic boom of the jet, which had already passed overhead. Since I was, as always, fully clothed, and wearing my boots, it took only seconds to run outside. All I knew is that we were under attack. Other fighters were already outside, or running alongside me, but there were no enemy soldiers to confront. The war-plane, one of three, had flown out over the sea, and was already returning. We had no missiles, or heavy weapons, with which to confront it, and were told not to waste ammunition by firing. We found what little shelter we could, behind rocks.

The plane had arced round our small camp, dropping bombs on other positions, but when it returned, so low in the sky, nothing had prepared me for its vastness. It seemed like a huge spaceship, with the flashing lights on its belly, adding to the effect. It was so low, it felt like I could have reached out, and touched it, the seams and bolts on its skin were clearly visible, as was the face of the pilot within. The machine fired rockets, and spat cannon fire. The pilot saw me clearly, as I looked up, together with my comrades, but he was already flying past. As he went over, I could see two other planes, bombing the nearby town, where only women and children, and some old men, lived.

Thankfully we suffered no casualties that day, but it was not the same in the town, and in the afternoon, some small boys came to show us the large pieces of twisted metal they had found, parts of Israeli cluster-bombs. The bombing had taken place in support of the Lebanese Falange, the fascist militia, the Zionists perversely supported, and with whom we, and the Syrian Army at that time, were engaged in fighting.

Over the following weeks, and months, we were subject to regular air raids, almost always at first-light, but they could come at any time, as could shelling from the sea. There would be three planes, and they would make two or three bombing runs. We would check everyone was uninjured, go for our morning run, exercise under the strict instruction of our sergeant, Ali Hassan of Gaza, and then have breakfast. The air -raids became like a diabolical alarm-clock, with which we started our day.

The war-planes ruled the skies unopposed, except in Beirut, where there were heavier weapons, and the sight of an Israeli jet would be met by fire from hundreds of heavy 'Deutchka' machine-guns, mounted on Chevy trucks. The same was true of towns like Sida, which the Zionists bombed regularly. Fatah, at that time, possessed only one SAM-7 missile, and the order to fire it was not given.

Back at the camp, frustrated by the impunity of the enemy, we begged to confront them with the few heavier machine-guns, and more plentiful RPGs, we possessed. On one occasion, permission was granted, and we waited in the shallow valley, which the planes used as a path to our camp. Hiding behind huge boulders, we armed our weapons, and prayed for them to come, but on that day, they never did.

We were fighters, committed to the armed struggle against the Zionist entity, and their fascist proxy army. Despite our frustration at the inequality of our arms, and the fact the cowards rarely got out of

their machines to fight us, we considered ourselves legitimate targets. We were not like the innocent people of Gaza, who have absolutely no way of either defending, or protecting, themselves, and on whom much bigger bombs, and in vastly greater numbers, have rained down relentlessly. I saw many terrible things in my years as a fighter, I witnessed many cruelties, and suffered many hardships, but they were as nothing compared to what the children of Gaza are subject to today.

However, I have absolutely no doubt that the courage of the Palestinian people will not fail them, that the viciousness of the Israeli genocide will not break them, and that one day the Colonialist Zionist state will be nothing more than a sickening footnote in history, which some will look back on in shame.

Free Palestine!

4. Child Molestation vs. Child Love (Critically Annotated)

Authors: Black Oak Clique & Wolfi Landstreicher

Topics: sex, criticism, egoism, critique

Date: 2019, 1987

Date Published on T@L: 2019-08-26

Source: <https://heresydistro.noblogs.org/>

A librarians argument for deleting: because the author didn't want it up (the library presumed)

we don't know. wolfi doesn't use the internet

but we can presume that, because he left it out of every reprint of that collection, he didn't want it out there

A librarians argument against deleting: ...

A readers argument for deleting: Likely the author's preference.

A readers argument against deleting: Wolfi's philosophy and creative writing style has been the subject of popular discussions among anarchists, so it would be valuable to see a critique of how Wolfi marshalled his particular political philosophy in defense of child sexual abuse. Also, so that people can feel better prepared to be able to notice and critique this kind of apologia for abuse if it's ever taken up by other people in one's own life.

Introduction: A Word of Warning

Here Be Dragons

The material contained in this text is gut-wrenching and disturbing. What follows is a critically annotated edition of Apio Ludd / Feral Faun / Wolfi Landstreicher's *Child Molestation vs. Child Love*, from his (otherwise celebrated) anthology, *Rants, Essays and Polemics*. It is a defense of the sexual abuse of children and, ironically, a call to "fight the real child molesters" — Landstreicher's term for parents, schools, and churches. In some parts of the work, it is quite graphic and the reader should tread lightly. Those who have suffered child sexual abuse in the past may want to stop here. It is presented with criticism. It is not in the interest of Heresy Distro to distribute molestation apologia by itself. Our choice of publishing this work is in the interest of knowledge — not of the arguments of self-styled "child lovers," but rather knowledge about Wolfi Landstreicher's views on "child love" so that one can act accordingly in their interactions with him.

Morals?

Our intent is not to moralize. Our motives for publishing *Child Molestation* is love — real, egoistic love for children. We do not believe it is our "duty" to protect children nor are we guided by any outside, abstract, spectral "morals" to do so. It is rather our lived, experienced, and felt camaraderie with children; with our desire to return to the pre-civilized and Wild existence that is childhood. Rarely is there a moment with children when they are not mesmerized by the natural world — insects, spiders, the grass, squirrels, rocks, rain, thunder. This is not merely naïve curiosity. Children exist in a state before the bifurcation into man and animal. Truly, the trope of the "feral child" is not a child who has lost their humanity. Rather, they never developed it.

Childhood “sexuality”

One cannot deny that children possess a sort of sexuality, or, more precisely, what adults term sexuality. Childhood is a stage of exploration, and it is to be expected that children will partake in bodily exploration as well — individual and collective.

However, it must be made abundantly clear that a child’s conception of sexuality is much different than an adult’s. Children do not possess a concept of, and thus cannot grant, consent. Thus, an adult (who possesses a grasp on consent) who engages a child sexually will be enacting a sort of sexualized authority over them. Further, children are scarcely aware of the power dynamics that mark adult sexuality, and therefore cannot contend with and rectify them, as adults can. They are made into objects of pleasure, not, as Landstreicher contends, equal partners in a mutually-beneficial erotic relationship.

When one’s reading of *Child Molestation vs. Child Love* is informed by this understanding, the true content of the piece is laid bare: a quasi-egoist appropriation of anarchist rhetoric to justify (and perhaps hide) a cruel and authoritarian desire to control and fetishize the bodies of children.

Child Molestation vs. Child Love (Main text from 1987)

A child is scolded, restricted, forced to conform to schedules and social norms, limited, bribed with rewards and threatened with punishments. This is called love. A child is kissed, caressed, played with, gently fondled and given erotic pleasure. This is called molestation. Something is obviously twisted here.

(1)

One of the main dichotomies of this society is the child/adult dichotomy. It has no basis in any real needs or natural ways. It is a totally arbitrary conception which only serves to reinforce authority. (2)

Certainly, newborn infants need to be fed and watched over until they can begin to move around their environment with some ease, steadiness, and self-assurance. And thereafter, it is certainly a kindness to inform them of anything they may need to know to avoid accidents and relate well to their environment. But the structuring and regimentation a child undergoes in our society has nothing to do with natural needs or kindness. It is the slow destruction of the child’s freedom under authority. (3)

From the moment an infant is born s/he is in the firm hand of authority. S/he is almost immediately forced to feed on a schedule. Early on, s/he begins to see that the “love” of most adults is something that must be bought by conformity and obedience. Sensuality begins to be repressed by the scheduling of feeding and the use of diapers and other clothing even when they’re uncomfortable. Toilet training continues the process. And the constant threat of punishment instills the fear necessary to keep the process of sensual repression going strong. All of this is the dirty work of parents. What defines a “good” parent is their ability to instill this repression appearing to be the monsters they are. For once this repression is well begun, the child can be easily molded into what this society wants. School completes the process begun by the parent. It forces the child to regiment most of her/his daylight hours. Sensual activity is straight-jacketed during this time. After school, there is homework which the parents make sure the child does. This process usually continues well past puberty. All of these years of repression and forced acquiescence to authority make the child into a grown-up (more accurately, a *groan-up*), which, in this society, means a conforming, obedient, and usually anxiety-ridden slave.

It is the nature of this education process which makes society define the child-lover as a devil. For to the child-lover, a child is not a lump of clay to be molded to the will of authority. S/he is a god, the manifestation of Eros. The child-lover encourages the free expression of the child’s sensuality and so undermines the entire education process. And the child, who has not yet been as repressed as her/his adult lover, helps to break down the repression within the adult. How could a society which requires repressed, conforming, obedient groan-ups possibly tolerate child love? (4)

It is clear who the true child molesters are. The parents and schools rape the minds of children, forcing guilt and fear, conformity and obedience to authority upon them, repressing their sensuality

and imagination, their wild erotic ecstasy. (5) But children are still less repressed than most adults. Their divinity still shines through with an especially clear beauty. For they are not mere clay to be molded. They are wild, dancing gods. To adventure erotically with children is liberating both for the children and for we “adults” who are really just repressed children. It is a major blow against authority and an expression of paradise. For we all are gods, and all shared pleasure is a beautiful expression of our divinity. So let us fight the real child molesters, the family, the school, the church, and all authority, and share erotic pleasure as freely as we can with children. Then we may again regain our own repressed childhood and become the gods we truly are in beauty and in ecstasy. (6)

Critical Annotations by Black Oak Clique

1. As outlined in the previous section, child sexual abuse is not simply kissing, caressing, and playing with a child. This is a gross and intentional mischaracterization of child molestation. Further, one can be opposed both to the imposition of authoritarian social norms and the sexualization of children.

2. It is true in some sense that the child-adult dialectic serves to reinforce unequal power dynamics. We dispute, however, that the dichotomy has no basis in real needs or natural ways. Perhaps the only meaningful distinction between children and adults is the development of a concept of consent. However, Landstreicher himself even goes further than this — he contradicts himself in the very next paragraph. One must wonder what his intent here in “disrupting” this dichotomy is...

3. Here is the contradiction — newborn infants cannot feed or protect themselves sufficiently and are totally reliant on their parents. Again, it is true in some sense that the structuring of a child’s life is more for the good of capital-S Society than for the child themselves. But to state that the child-adult dialectic is completely or wholly a construction of authority is fallacy. What is needed is not the complete or total destruction of the parent-child opposition. Rather, it is a radical reconstruction (or perhaps even a rediscovery) of the lived relationship of family. Unlike the empty, cold, mediated relationships we experience under industrial capitalism, the bonds of family, while certainly not wholly good in any sense, are fiery, hot, and emotionally potent. What is needed is not a destruction of the family — but liberation of it! Liberation from the chains of Morality and Obligation, and a reformation of the family as a real, lived experience.

4. In fact, the exact opposite is true. A child is exactly that to the “child lover” — an object to be molded according to authority. Landstreicher’s description of child molestation conveniently makes the truth of it opaque. Landstreicher’s child lover is more properly a child groomer, who, through the performance of affection and play, makes a child open to sexual acts they do not, and perhaps cannot, understand. They are not being “encouraged” to express their “sensuality.” Their sensuality is being produced, they are turned into a machine for the production of sexual pleasure.

5. How convenient that the authorities Landstreicher charges with “true” child molestation are the ones who are most directly engaged in the protection of children from sexual predators!

6. Finally, Landstreicher closes with the clearest objectification of children in this “rant.” For Landstreicher, in the end, the child is a tool for the production of an imaginary, repressed childhood. For Landstreicher, “child love” — molestation — is a ritual with which he can become feral and return to an Adamic state of “beauty and ecstasy.” It is not the relationship he intends to portray.

5. The Left-Overs

Subtitle: How Fascists Court the Post-Left

Author: Alexander Reid Ross

Topics: anti-fascism; fascism; fascist creep; post-left; criticism and critique; anarcho-primitivism; Bob Black; ELF; green anarchism; Hakim Bey; John Zerzan; Lawrence Jarach; Max Stirner; nihilism

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A librarians argument for deleting: not anarchist

A librarians argument against deleting: ...

A readers argument for deleting: ...

A readers argument against deleting: I think this is a cool critique of a small post-left to fascist pipeline.

Author's Note: *A few months ago, the radical publication, Fifth Estate, solicited an article from me discussing the rise of fascism in recent years. Following their decision to withdraw the piece, I accepted the invitation of Anti-Fascist News to publish an expanded version here, with some changes, at the urging of friends and fellow writers.*

Chapter 1: The Early Composition of Fascist Individualism

A friendly editor recently told me via email, “if anti-capitalism and pro individual liberty [sic] are clearly stated in the books or articles, they won’t be used by those on the right.” If this were true, fascism simply would vanish from the earth. Fascism comes from a mixture of left and right-wing positions, and some on the left pursue aspects of collectivism, syndicalism, ecology, and authoritarianism that intersect with fascist enterprises. Partially in response to the tendencies of left authoritarianism, a distinct antifascist movement emerged in the 1970s to create what has become known as “post-left” thought. Yet in imagining that anti-capitalism and “individual liberty” maintain ideological purity, radicals such as my own dear editor tend to ignore critical convergences with and vulnerabilities to fascist ideology.

The post-left developed largely out of a tendency to favor individual freedom autonomous from political ideology of left and right while retaining some elements of leftism. Although it is a rich milieu with many contrasting positions, post-leftists often trace their roots to individualist Max Stirner, whose belief in the supremacy of the European individual over and against nation, class, and creed was heavily influenced by philosopher G.W.F. Hegel. After Stirner’s death in 1856, the popularity of collectivism and neo-Kantianism obscured his individualist philosophy until Friedrich Nietzsche raised its profile again during the later part of the century. Influenced by Stirner, Nietzsche argued for the overcoming of socialism and the “modern world” by the iconoclastic, aristocratic philosopher known as the “Superman” or “*übermensch*.”

During the late-19th Century, Stirnerists conflated the “Superman” with the assumed responsibility of women to bear a superior European race—a “New Man” to produce, and be produced by, a “New Age.” Similarly, right-wing aristocrats who loathed the notions of liberty and equality turned to Nietzsche and Stirner to support their sense of elitism and hatred of left-wing populism and mass-based civilization. Some anarchists and individualists influenced by Stirner and Nietzsche looked to right-wing figures like Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky, who developed the idea of a “conservative revolution” that would upend the spiritual crises of the modern world and the age of the masses. In the words of anarchist, Victor Serge, “Dostoevsky: the best and the worst, inseparable. He really looks for the truth and fears to find it; he often finds it all the same and then he is terrified... a poor great man...”

History’s “great man” or “New Man” was neither left nor right; he strove to destroy the modern world and replace it with his own ever-improving image—but what form would that image take? In Italy, reactionaries associated with the Futurist movement and various romantic nationalist strains expressed affinity with the individualist current identified with Nietzsche and Stirner. Anticipating tremendous catastrophes that would bring the modern world to its knees and install the New Age of the New Man, the Futurists sought to fuse the “destructive gesture of the anarchists” with the bombast of empire.

A hugely popular figure among these tendencies of individualism and “conservative revolution,” the Italian aesthete Gabriele D’Annunzio summoned 2,600 soldiers in a daring 1919 attack on the port city of Fiume to reclaim it for Italy after World War I. During their exploit, the occupying force hoisted the black flag emblazoned by skull and crossbones and sang songs of national unity. Italy disavowed the imperial occupation, leaving the City-State in the hands of its romantic nationalist leadership. A constitution, drawn up by national syndicalist, Alceste De Ambris, provided the basis for national solidarity around a corporative economy mediated through collaborating syndicates. D’Annunzio was prophetic and eschatological, presenting poetry during convocations from the balcony. He was masculine.

He was Imperial and majestic, yet radical and rooted in fraternal affection. He called forth sacrifice and love of the nation.

When he returned to Italy after the military uprooted his enclave in Fiume, ultranationalists, Futurists, artists, and intellectuals greeted D'Annunzio as a leader of the growing Fascist movement. The aesthetic ceremonies and radical violence contributed to a sacralization of politics invoked by the spirit of Fascism. Though Mussolini likely saw himself as a competitor to D'Annunzio for the role of supreme leader, he could not deny the style and mood, the high aesthetic appeal that reached so many through the Fiume misadventure. Fascism, Mussolini insisted, was an anti-party, a movement. The Fascist Black-shirts, or *squadristi*, adopted D'Annunzio's flare, the black uniforms, the skull and crossbones, the dagger at the hip, the "devil may care" attitude expressed by the anthem, "Me ne frego" or "I don't give a damn." Some of those who participated in the Fiume exploit abandoned D'Annunzio as he joined the Fascist movement, drifting to the *Arditi del Popolo* to fight the Fascist menace. Others would join the ranks of the Blackshirts.

Originally a man of the left, Mussolini had no difficulty joining the symbolism of revolution with ultranationalist rebirth. "Down with the state in all its species and incarnations," he declared in a 1920 speech. "The state of yesterday, of today, of tomorrow. The bourgeois state and the socialist. For those of us, the doomed (*morituri*) of individualism, through the darkness of the present and the gloom of tomorrow, all that remains is the by-now-absurd, but ever consoling, religion of anarchy!" In another statement, he asked, "why should Stirner not have a comeback?"

Mussolini's concept of anarchism was critical, because he saw anarchism as prefiguring fascism. "If anarchist authors have discovered the importance of the mythical from an opposition to authority and unity," declared Nazi jurist, Carl Schmitt, drawing on Mussolini's concept of myth, "then they have also cooperated in establishing the foundation of another authority, however unwillingly, an authority based on the new feeling for order, discipline, and hierarchy." The dialectics of fascism here are two-fold: only the anarchist destruction of the modern world in every milieu would open the potential for Fascism, but the mythic stateless society of anarchism, for Mussolini, could only emerge, paradoxically, from a self-disciplining state of total order.

Antifascist anarchist individualists and nihilists like Renzo Novatore represented for Mussolini a kind of "passive nihilism," which Nietzsche understood as the decadence and weakness of modernity. The veterans that would fight for Mussolini rejected the suppression of individualism under the Bolsheviks and favored "an anti-party of fighters," according to historian Emilio Gentile. Fascism would exploit the rampant misogyny of men like Novatore while turning the "passive nihilism" of their vision of total collapse toward "active nihilism" through a rebirth of the New Age at the hands of the New Man.

The "drift" toward fascism that took place throughout Europe during the 1920s and 1930s was not restricted to the collectivist left of former Communists, Syndicalists, and Socialists; it also included the more ambiguous politics of the European avant-garde and intellectual elites. In France, literary figures like Georges Bataille and Antonin Artaud began experimenting with fascist aesthetics of cruelty, irrationalism, and elitism. In 1934, Bataille declared his hope to usher in "room for great fascist societies," which he believed inhabited the world of "higher forms" and "makes an appeal to sentiments traditionally defined as exalted and noble." Bataille's admiration for Stirner did not prevent him from developing what he described decades later as a "paradoxical fascist tendency." Other libertarian celebrities like Louis-Ferdinand Céline and Maurice Blanchot also embraced fascist themes—particularly virulent anti-Semitism.

Like Blanchot, the Nazi-supporting Expressionist poet Gottfried Benn called on an anti-humanist language of suffering and nihilism that looked inward, finding only animal impulses and irrational drives. Existentialist philosopher and Nazi Party member, Martin Heidegger, played on Nietzschean themes of nihilism and aesthetics in his phenomenology, placing angst at the core of modern life and seeking existential release through a destructive process that he saw as implicit in the production of an authentic work of art. Literary figure Ernst Jünger, who cheered on Hitler's rise, summoned the force of "active nihilism," seeking the collapse of the civilization through a "magic zero" that would bring about

a New Age of ultra-individualist actors that he later called “Anarchs.” The influence of Stirner was as present in Jünger as it was in Mussolini’s early fascist years, and carried over to other members of the fascist movement like Carl Schmitt and Julius Evola.

Evola was perhaps the most important of those seeking the collapse of civilization and the New Age’s spiritual awakening of the “universal individual,” sacrificial dedication, and male supremacy. A dedicated fascist and individualist, Evola devoted himself to the purity of sacred violence, racism, anti-Semitism, and the occult. Asserting a doctrine of the “political soldier,” Evola regarded violence as necessary in establishing a kind of natural hierarchy that promoted the supreme individual over the multitudes. Occult practice distilled into an overall aristocracy of the spirit, Evola believed, which could only find expression through sacrifice and a Samurai-like code of honor. Evola shared these ideals of conquest, elitism, sacrificial pleasure with the SS, who invited the Italian esotericist to Vienna to indulge his thirst for knowledge. Following World War II, Evola’s spiritual fascism found parallels in the writings of Savitri Devi, a French esotericist of Greek descent who developed an anti-humanist practice of Nazi nature worship not unlike today’s Deep Ecology. In her rejection of human rights, Devi insisted that the world manifests a totality of interlocking life forces, none of which enjoys a particular moral prerogative over the other.

Chapter 2: The Creation of the Post-Left

It has been shown by now that fascism, in its inter-war period, attracted numerous anti-capitalists and individualists, largely through elitism, the aestheticization of politics, and the nihilist's desire for the destruction of the modern world. After the fall of the Reich, fascists attempted to rekindle the embers of their movement by intriguing within both the state and social movements. It became popular among fascists to reject Hitler to some degree and call for a return to the original "national syndicalist" ideas mixed with the elitism of the "New Man" and the destruction of civilization. Fascists demanded "national liberation" for European ethnicities against NATO and multicultural liberalism, while the occultism of Evola and Devi began to fuse with Satanism to form new fascist hybrids. With ecology and anti-authoritarianism, such sacralization of political opposition through the occult would prove among the most intriguing conduits for fascist insinuation into subcultures after the war.

In the '60s, left-communist groups like *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, *Pouvoir ouvrier*, and the Situationists gathered at places like bookstore-cum-publishing house, *La Vieille Taupe* (The Old Mole), critiquing everyday life in industrial civilization through art and transformative practices. According to Gilles Dauvé, one of the participants in this movement, "the small milieu round the bookshop *La Vieille Taupe*" developed the idea of "communisation," or the revolutionary transformation of all social relations. This new movement of "ultra-leftists" helped inspire the aesthetics of a young, intellectual rebellion that culminated in a large uprising of students and workers in Paris during May 1968.

The strong anti-authoritarian current of the ultra-left and the broader uprising of May '68 contributed to similar movements elsewhere in Europe, like the Italian *Autonomia* movement, which spread from a wildcat strike against the car manufacturer, Fiat, to generalized upheaval involving rent strikes, building occupations, and mass street demonstrations. While most of *Autonomia* remained left-wing, its participants were intensely critical of the established left, and autonomists often objected to the ham-fisted strategy of urban guerrillas. In 1977, individualist anarchist, Alfredo Bonanno, penned the text, "Armed Joy," exhorting Italian leftists to drop patriarchal pretensions to guerrilla warfare and join popular insurrectionary struggle. The conversion of Marxist theorist, Jacques Camatte, to the pessimistic rejection of leftism and embrace of simpler life tied to nature furthered contradictions within the Italian left.

With anti-authoritarianism, ecologically-oriented critiques of civilization emerged out of the 1960s and 1970s as significant strains of a new identity that rejected both left and right. Adapting to these currents of popular social movements and exploiting blurred ideological lines between left and right, fascist ideologues developed the framework of "ethno-pluralism." Couching their rhetoric in "the right to difference" (ethnic separatism), fascists masked themselves with labels like the "European New Right," "national revolutionaries," and "revolutionary traditionalists." The "European New Right" took the rejection of the modern world advocated by the ultra-left as a proclamation of the indigeneity of Europeans and their pagan roots in the land. Fascists further produced spiritual ideas derived from a sense of rootedness in one's native land, evoking the old "blood and soil" ecology of the German *völkische* movement and Nazi Party.

In Italy, this movement produced the "Hobbit Camp," an eco-festival organized by European New Right figure Marco Tarchi and marketed to disillusioned youth via Situationist-style posters and flyers. When Italian "national revolutionary," Roberto Fiore, fled charges of participating in a massive bombing of a train station in Bologna, he found shelter in the London apartment of Tarchi's European New Right colleague, Michael Walker. This new location would prove transformative, as Fiore, Walker, and a group of fascist militants created a political faction called the Official National Front in 1980. This group would

help promote and would benefit from a more avant-garde fascist aesthetic, bringing forward neo-folk, noise, and other experimental music genres.

While fascists entered the green movement and exploited openings in left anti-authoritarian thought, Situationism began to transform. In the early 1970s, post-Situationism emerged through US collectives that combined Stirnerist egoism with collectivist thought. In 1974, the For Ourselves group published *The Right to Be Greedy*, inveighing against altruism while linking egoist greed to the synthesis of social identity and welfare—in short, to surplus. The text was reprinted in 1983 by libertarian group, Loompanics Unlimited, with a preface from a little-known writer named Bob Black.

While post-Situationism turned toward individualism, a number of European ultra-leftists moved toward the right. In Paris, La Vieille Taupe went from controversial views rejecting the necessity of specialized antifascism to presenting the Holocaust as a lie necessary to maintain the capitalist order. In 1980, La Vieille Taupe published the notorious *Mémoire en Défense* centre ceux qui m'accusent de falsifier l'histoire by Holocaust denier, Robert Faurisson. Though La Vieille Taupe and founder, Pierre Guillaume, received international condemnation, they gained a controversial defense from left-wing professor, Noam Chomsky. Even if they have for the most part denounced Guillaume and his entourage, the ultra-leftist rejection of specialized antifascism has remained somewhat popular—particularly as expounded by Dauvé, who insisted in the early 1980s that “fascism as a specific movement has disappeared.”

The idea that fascism had become a historical artifact only helped the creep of fascism to persist undetected, while Faurisson and Guillaume became celebrities on the far-right. As the twist toward Holocaust denial would suggest, ultra-left theory was not immune from translation into ethnic terms—a reality that formed the basis of the work of Official National Front officer, Troy Southgate. Though influenced by the Situationists, along with a scramble of other left and right-wing figures, Southgate focused particularly on the ecological strain of radical politics associated with the punk-oriented journal, *Green Anarchist*, which called for a return to “primitive” livelihoods and the destruction of modern civilization. In 1991, the editors of *Green Anarchist* pushed out their co-editor, Richard Hunt, for his patriotic militarism, and Hunt's new publication, *Green Alternative*, soon became associated with Southgate. Two years later, Southgate would join allied fascists like Jean-François Thiriart and Christian Bouchet to create the Liaison Committee for Revolutionary Nationalism.

In the US, the “anarcho-primitivist” or “Green Anarchist” tendency had been taken up by former ultra-leftist, John Zerzan. Identifying civilization as an enemy of the earth, Zerzan called for a return to sustainable livelihoods that rejected modernity. Zerzan rejected racism but relied in no small part on the thought of Martin Heidegger, seeking a return authentic relations between humans and the world unmediated by symbolic thought. This desired return, some have pointed out, would require a collapse of civilization so profound that millions, if not billions, would likely perish. Zerzan, himself, seems somewhat ambiguous with regards to the potential death toll, regardless of his support for the unbomber, Ted Kaczynsky.

Joining with Zerzan to confront authoritarianism and return to a more tribal, hunter-gatherer social organization, an occultist named Hakim Bey developed the idea of the “Temporary Autonomous Zone” (TAZ). For Bey, a TAZ would actualize a liberated and erotic space of orgiastic, revolutionary poesis. Yet within his 1991 text, *Temporary Autonomous Zone*, Bey included extensive praise for D'Annunzio's proto-fascist occupation of Fiume, revealing the disturbing historical trends of attempts to transcend right and left.

Along with Zerzan and Bey, Bob Black would prove instrumental to the foundation of what is today called the “post-left.” In his 1997 text, *Anarchy After Leftism*, Black responded to left-wing anarchist Murray Bookchin, who accused individualists of “lifestyle anarchism.” Drawing from Zerzan's critique of civilization as well as from Stirner and Nietzsche, Black presented his rejection of work as a nostrum

for authoritarian left tendencies that he identified with Bookchin (apparently Jew-baiting Bookchin in the process).¹

Thus, the post-left began to assemble through the writings of ultra-leftists, green anarchists, spiritualists, and egoists published in zines, books, and journals like *Anarchy: Journal of Desire Armed* and *Fifth Estate*. Although these thinkers and publications differ in many ways, key tenets of the post-left included an eschatological anticipation of the collapse of civilization accompanied by a synthesis of individualism and collectivism that rejected left, right, and center in favor of a deep connection with the earth and more organic, tribal communities as opposed to humanism, the Enlightenment tradition, and democracy. That post-left texts included copious references to Stirner, Nietzsche, Jünger, Heidegger, Artaud, and Bataille suggests that they form a syncretic intellectual tendency that unites left and right, individualism and “conservative revolution.” As we will see, this situation has provided ample space for the fascist creep.

¹ Black writes, “Bakunin considered Marx, ‘the German scholar, in his threefold capacity as an Hegelian, a Jew, and a German,’ to be a ‘hopeless statist.’ A Hegelian, a Jew, a sort-of scholar, a Marxist, a hopeless (city-) statist — does this sound like anybody familiar?” Full text available at theanarchistlibrary.org

Chapter 3: The Fascist Creep

During the 1990s, the “national revolutionary” network of Southgate, Thiriart, and Bouchet, later renamed the European Liberation Front, linked up with the American Front, a San Francisco skinhead group exploring connections between counterculture and the avant-garde. Like prior efforts to develop a Satanic Nazism, American Front leader Bob Heick supported a mix of Satanism, occultism, and paganism, making friends with fascist musician Boyd Rice. A noise musician and avant-gardist, Rice developed a “fascist think tank” called the Abraxas Foundation, which echoed the fusion of the cult ideas of Charles Manson, fascism, and Satanism brought together by 1970s fascist militant James Mason. Rice’s protégé and fellow Abraxas member, Michael Moynihan, joined the radical publishing company, Feral House, which publishes texts along the lines of Abraxas, covering a range of themes from Charles Manson Scandinavian black metal, and militant Islam to books by Evola, James Mason, Bob Black, and John Zerzan.

In similar efforts, Southgate’s French ally, Christian Bouchet, generated distribution networks and magazines dedicated to supporting a miniature industry growing around neo-folk and the new, “anarchic” Scandinavian black metal scene. Further, national anarchists attempted to set up and/or infiltrate e-groups devoted to green anarchism. As Southgate and Bouchet’s network spread to Russia, notorious Russian fascist, Alexander Dugin, emerged as another leading ideologue who admired Zerzan’s work.

Post-leftists were somewhat knowledgeable about these developments. In a 1999 post-script to one of Bob Black’s works, co-editor of *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, Lawrence Jarach, cautioned against the rise of “national anarchism.” In 2005, Zerzan’s journal, *Green Anarchy*, published a longer critique of Southgate’s “national anarchism.” These warnings were significant, considering that they came in the context of active direct action movements and groups like the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), a green anarchist group dedicated to large-scale acts of sabotage and property destruction with the intention of bringing about the ultimate collapse of industrial civilization.

As their ELF group executed arsons during the late-1990s and early-2000s, a former ELF member told me that two comrades, Nathan “Exile” Block and Joyanna “Sadie” Zacher, shared an unusual love of Scandinavian black metal, made disturbing references to Charles Manson, and promoted an elitist, anti-left mentality. While their obscure references evoked Abraxas, Feral House, and Bouchet’s distribution networks, their politics could not be recognized within the milieu of fascism at the time. However, their general ideas became clearer, the former ELF member told me, when antifascist researchers later discovered that a Tumblr account run by Block contained numerous occult fascist references, including national anarchist symbology, swastikas, and quotes from Evola and Jünger. These were only two members of a larger group, but their presence serves as food for thought regarding important radical cross-over points and how to approach them.

To wit, the decisions of John Zerzan and Bob Black to publish books with Feral House, seem peculiar—especially in light of the fact that two of the four books Zerzan has published there came out in 2005, the same year as *Green Anarchy*’s noteworthy warning against national anarchism. It would appear that, although in some cases prescient about the subcultural cross-overs between fascism and the post-left, post-leftists have, on a number of occasions, engaged in collaborative relationships.

As *Green Anarchy* cautioned against entryism and Zerzan simultaneously published with Feral House, controversy descended on an online forum known as the Anti-Politics Board. An outgrowth of the insurrectionist publication *Killing King Abacus*, the Anti-Politics Board was used by over 1,000 registered members and had dozens of regular contributors. The online platform presented a flourishing site of debate for post-leftists, yet discussions over insurrectionism, communisation, green anarchy, and

egoism often produced a strangely competitive iconoclasm. Attempts to produce the edgiest take often led to the popularization of topics like “‘anti-sexism’ as collectivist moralism” and “critique of autonomous anti-fascism.” Attacks on morality and moralism tended to encourage radicals to abandon the “identity politics” and “white guilt” often associated with left-wing anti-racism.

Amid these discussions, a young radical named Andrew Yeoman began to post national anarchist positions. When asked repeatedly to remove Yeoman from the forum, a site administrator refused, insisting that removing the white nationalist would have meant behaving like leftists. They needed to try something else. Whatever they tried, however, it didn’t work, and Yeoman later became notorious for forming a group called the Bay Area National Anarchists, showing up to anarchist events like book fairs, and promoting anarchist collaboration with the Minutemen and American Front.

An important aspect of the Anti-Politics Board was the articulation of nihilist and insurrectionary theories, both of which gained popularity after the 2008 financial crisis. In an article titled, “The New Nihilism,” Peter Lamborn Wilson (aka Hakim Bey) pointed out that the rising wave of nihilism that emerged during the late 2000s and into the second decade could not immediately be distinguished from the far right, due to myriad cross-over points. Indeed, Stormfront is riddled with users like “TAZRiot” and “whitepunx” who promote the basic, individualist tenets of post-leftism from the original, racist position of Stirnerism. Rejecting “political correctness” and “white guilt,” these post-left racists desire separate, radical spaces and autonomous zones for whites.

Through dogged research, Rose City Antifa in Portland, Oregon, discovered whitepunx’s identity: “Trigger” Tom Christensen, a known member of the local punk scene. “I was never an anti [antifascist] but I’ve hung out with a few of them,” Christensen wrote on Stormfront. “I used to be a big punk rocker in the music scene and there were some antis that ran around in the same scene. I was friends with a few. They weren’t trying to recruit me, or anybody really. They did not, however, know I was a WN [white nationalist]. I kept my beliefs to myself and would shut down any opinions the[y] expressed that seemed to have holes in them. It’s been fairly useful to know some of these people. I now know who all the major players are in the anti and SHARP [Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice] scene.”

For a time, Christensen says he hung out with post-leftists and debated them like Yeoman had done. Less than a year later, however, Christensen followed up in a chilling post titled, “Do You Think It Would Be Acceptable To Be A ‘Rat’ If It Was Against Our Enemies.” He wrote, “I had an interesting thought the other day and wanted peoples opinions. If you were asked by the Police to provide or find evidence that would incriminate people who are enemy’s [sic] of the movement, i.e. Leftists, reds, anarchists. Would you do it? Would you ‘rat’ or ‘narc’ on the Left side?” Twenty one responses came beckoning from the recesses of the white nationalist world. While some encouraged Christensen to snitch, others insisted that he keep gang loyalty. It is uncertain as to whether or not he went to the police, but the May 2013 discovery of his Stormfront activity took place shortly before a grand jury subpoenaed four anarchists who were subsequently arrested and held for contempt of court.

In another unsettling example of crossover between post-leftists and fascists, radicals associated with a nihilist group named Ultra harshly rebuked Rose City Antifa of Portland, Oregon, for releasing an exposé about Jack Donovan. An open member of the violent white nationalist group, Wolves of Vinland, Donovan also runs a gym called the Kabuki Strength Lab, which produces “manosphere” videos. As of November 2016, when the exposé was published, one member of Ultra was a member of the Kabuki Strength Lab. Although Donovan runs a tattoo shop out of the gym and gave Libertarian Party fascist Augustus Sol Invictus a tattoo of the fasces there, a fellow gym member wrote, “Obviously Jack has very controversial beliefs and practices that most disagree with; but I don’t believe it affects his behavior in the gym.” Donovan, who has publicly parroted “race realist” statistics at white nationalist gatherings like the National Policy Institute and the Pressure Project podcast, also embraces bioregionalism and the anticipation of a collapse of civilization that will lead to a reversion of identity-bound tribal structures at war with one another and reliant on natural hierarchies—an ideology that resonates with Ultra and some members of the broader post-left milieu.

It stands to reason that defending fascists and collaborating with them are not the same, and they are both separate from having incidental ideological cross-over points. However the cross-over points, when unchecked, frequently indicate a tendency to ignore, defend, or collaborate. Defense and collaboration can, and do, also converge. For instance, also in Portland, Oregon, the founder of a UK ultra-leftist splinter group called Wildcat began to participate in a reading group involving prominent post-leftists before sliding toward anti-Semitism. Soon he was participating in the former-leftist-turned-fascist Pacifica Forum in Eugene, Oregon, and defending anti-Semitic co-op leader, Tim Calvert. He was last seen by antifas creeping into an event for Holocaust denier, David Irving.

Perhaps the most troubling instance of collaboration, or rather synthesis, of post-left nihilism and the far right is taking place currently in the alt-right. Donovan is considered a member of the alt-right, while Christensen's latest visible Facebook post hails from the misogynistic Proud Boys group. These groups and individuals connected to the alt-right are described as having been "red-pilled," a term taken from the movie, *The Matrix*, in which the protagonist is awakened to a dystopian reality after choosing to take a red pill. For the alt-right, being "red-pilled" means waking up to the "reality" offered by anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, misogyny, and white nationalism—usually through online forums where the competitive iconoclasm of "edge-lords" mutates into ironic anti-Semitism and hatred. Among the most extreme forms of this phenomenon occurring in recent years is the so-called "black pill"—red-pillers who have turning toward the celebration of indiscriminate violence via the same trends of individualism and nihilism outlined above.

"Black-pillers" claim to have shed their attachments to all theories entirely. This tendency evokes the attitude of militant anti-civilization group, Individuals Tending to the Wild, which is popular among some post-leftist groups and advocates indiscriminate violence against any targets manifesting the modern world. Another influence for "black-pillers" is Adam Lanza, the infamous mass shooter who phoned John Zerzan a year before murdering his mother, 20 children, and six staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Zerzan has condemned Individuals Tending Toward the Wild, and months after Lanza's horrifying actions, he penned a piece imploring post-left nihilists to find hope: "Egoism and nihilism are evidently in vogue among anarchists and I'm hoping that those who so identify are not without hope. Illusions no, hope yes." Unfortunately, Zerzan developed his short communiqué into a book published by Feral House on November 10, 2015—the day after Feral House published *The White Nationalist Skinhead Movement* co-authored by Eddie Stampton, a Nazi skinhead.

Conclusion

In light of these cross-overs, many individualist anarchists, post-leftists, and nihilists tend not to deny that they share nodal networks with fascists. In many cases, they seek to struggle against them and reclaim their movement. Yet, there tends to be another permissive sense that anarchists bear no responsibility for distinguishing themselves from fascists. If there are numerous points in which radical milieus become a blur of fascists, anarchists, and romantics, some claim that throwing shade on such associations only propagates fallacious thinking, or “guilt by association.”

However, recalling the information in this essay, we might note that complex cross-overs seem to include, in particular, aspects of egoism and radical green theory. Derived from Stirnerism and Nietzschean philosophy, egoism can reify the social alienation felt by an individual, leading to an elitist sense of self-empowerment and delusions of grandeur. When mixed with insurrectionism and radical green thought, egoism can translate into “hunter versus prey” or “wolves versus sheep” elitism, in which compassion for others is rejected as moralistic. This kind of alienated elitism can also develop estranged aesthetic and affective positions tied to cruelty, vengeance, and hatred.

Emerging out of a rejection of humanism and urban modernism, the particular form of radical green theory often embraced by the post-left can relativize human losses by looking at the larger waves of mass extinctions. By doing this, radical greens anticipate a collapse that would “cull the herd” or cause a mass human die off of millions, if not billions, of people throughout the world. This aspect of radical green theory comes very close to, and sometimes intertwines with, ideas about over-population compiled and produced by white nationalists and anti-immigration activists tied to the infamous Tanton Network. Some radical green egoists (or nihilists) insist that their role should be to provoke such a collapse, through anti-moralist strikes against civilization.

As examples like Hakim Bey’s TAZ and the lionization of the Fiume misadventure, Zerzan and Black’s publishing with Feral House, and Ultra’s defense of Donovan indicate, the post-left’s relation to white nationalism is sometimes ambiguous and occasionally even collaborative. Other examples, like those of Yeoman and Christensen, indicate that the tolerance for fascist ideas on the post-left can result in unwittingly accepting them, providing a platform for white nationalism, and increasing vulnerability to entryism. Specific ideas that are sometimes tolerated under the rubric of the “critique of the left” include the approval of “natural hierarchies,” ultranationalism understood as ethno-biological and spiritual ties to homeland and ancestry, rejection of feminism and antifascism, and the fetishization of violence and cruelty.

It is more important today than ever before to recognize how radical movements develop intersections with fascists if we are to discover how to expose creeping fascism and develop stronger, more direct networks. Anarchists must abandon the equivocations that invite the fascist creep and reclaim anarchy as the integral struggle for freedom and equality. Sectarian polemics are the result of extensive learning processes, but are less important than engaging in solidarity to struggle against fascism in all its forms and various disguises.

6. Where did all the tankies come from?

Subtitle: How anarchists fucked up and by inaction created the tankie resurgence

Author: William Gillis

Topics: Authoritarian Left

Date: 16th August 2020

Date Published on T@L: 2021-01-14T10:54:55

Source: Retrieved on 14th January 2020 from threadreaderapp.com

A librarians argument for deleting: transphobia. can discuss. removing for now. see comment.

A librarians argument against deleting: ...

A readers argument for deleting: ...

A readers argument against deleting: I don't know if there exists conclusive evidence for this, but if there did exist evidence of a real phenomenon of trans people feeling alienated and existing in reactionary online groups at higher rates than cis people per person, then I don't think it would be transphobic to simply mention that as part of a larger argument. I read it as a critique of how reactionaries prey upon alienated people and have a higher turn-over rate for not seeking to work with people in a stable situation in life.

My sincere answer for why tankies reemerged five years ago is that movements are social hierarchies and newbie teens don't want to compete for status in existing illegible/inaccessible spaces like anarchism, so they resurrected a dead/empty scene that had trappings of status.

Leftism exploded in social cachet for a variety of reasons, and newly minted leftists needed to slap an identity, a brand, a flag of status and association on themselves.

"Stalin did nothing wrong, USSR looked cool" is a quickie that requires no work or long acculturation.

For all of recorded history tankies were like three old creepy white dudes no one cared about at the back of an IWW meeting. Sometimes they'd trick a kid or two for a couple years.

The reemergence of tankies involved people completely disconnected and unrelated to prior tankies.

When I first started hearing whispers of anyone under 50 actually defending Lenin it was newly minted trans girls in abusive cult collective houses. They weren't like getting this shit from contact w/ actual leninists, they were inventing a new social milieu from whole cloth.

Sure, there were *some* points of transmission. A creepy professor schooled in standard creepy tankie entryism gathered some students, got them to take over fb pages, etc. But mostly tankies were just googling "what is communism" and grabbing random shit.

Anyway, this is why today's online tankiedom is such an uniformed and contradictory grab-bag of bullshit. There's been some congealing as folks competed to show off what texts (in this previously dead space) they'd read, but mostly it's just social positioning.

This kind of thing happens EVERY time a movement gets a flood of new recruits. People flood in and want to grab high status immediately, are resentful of those already there, and clash over not wanting to learn or accept preexisting consensus positions they don't yet hold.

My go-to example of this in Occupy were kids who "not to brag but had been an anarchist now for OVER A MONTH" getting furious and yelling at longstanding anarchists that we were "fake anarchists who don't know anything!" because we weren't pacifists.

See also leftypol & the dirtbaggers. Folks get converted on one issue and then recoil about being expected to also learn / change their opinion on a variety of other topics. *Respecting pronouns?! Never! You olds are a joke! We're making a new movement with hookers & blackjack!*

Anyway, tankies and their eternal tactics of parasitic duplicitous entryism are particularly effective online with kids who are freshfaced and have no deep AFK contact with radical/activist spaces. They basically ate 99% of meme pages on facebook and every subreddit.

Now did some of these people get hooked up with checks from the PRC or something? Maybe. We've seen eg DPRK funding neonazi reading groups. But I think this is minor and is not responsible for the 2015/2016 tankie explosion. Bernie did that.

I mean quite literally it was Bernie. In 2016 an activist group I was in was interviewing people looking to get involved and we found (to my comrades' shock) a number of fervent bloodthirsty tankies. Looking at their social media they were THREE MONTHS into being tankies.

I mean literally we're talking about people who had been Bernie Bernie Bernie liberals and then the moment prospects for further standing in that scene fell out with the collapse of his campaign they turned on a dime and got into Stalin did nothing wrong, Castro's a hero, etc.

These kids had basically never done activism before and knew NOTHING but were fronting as longtime super serious radicals. They were *astonished* to learn we were all anarchists. They didn't know anarchists were real or 90% of the actual activist scene.

These kids who had again, three months prior been all about Bernie and had no fucking politics beyond a few Bernie videos they watched, were making posts to their social media praising Stalin exterminating anarchists.

They were DESPERATE for belonging, status, identity, etc. Particularly that which could be gotten from behind a computer screen by joining like a discord or fb group or watching a few youtube videos.

Anarchism was simply inaccessible by comparison.

Most of the anarchist movement had sneered at and avoided the internet (seen as an insecure tool of civilized alienation). Also it was illegible, most of the shit we expect you to learn/accept we don't even write down. And getting involved? We're terrible at helping folks join.

Anarchist recruitment for decades had been primarily social / subcultural, with a fringe of super committed altruistic nerds who would persevere.

There was simply no recruitment machinery for randos who wanted to quickly join, learn shit, and gain standing via the internet.

(This is also related to why breadtube types tend to be so open to tankies and/or slip further and further from anarchist mainstream shit and towards tankie shit.)

There's a secondary thread in all this which is the amount of low-quality anarchists that jumped ship to leftcom trash (because low-investment snotty status hierarchies in fb discussion groups). That's kinda the path by which older anarchists made their way eventually to MLism.

Academic status hierarchies are also related to why some anarchists went leftcom.

These folks are *also* our fault because they usually had a very anemic knowledge of or exposure to substantive/contemporary/analytic anarchist theory, so leftcom shit looked better.

Anarchism is inherently more diverse & decentralized and thus illegible to newbs. Anarchism prioritizes individual agency and thus doesn't do the "sign your contact info onto this sheet and we'll order you around" recruitment. Also we're ultimately opposed to status hierarchies.

But ALSO the anarchist movement got up its own ass. We derided the internet and avoided utilizing it effectively. We embraced illegibility as resistance, forgetting that accessibility is critical to undermining hierarchies. And we corrupted into playing internal status games.

Those internal status games meant people sneering at uneducated and very "liberal" newbs, gatekeeping people out just to maintain our eliteness. Not just gatekeeping in the sense of preserving hard won understandings and consensus agreements from erosion.

But my last thought:

Having more folks isn't necessarily good.

An effective movement does require some filters, eg stopping abusers and opportunistic grifters at the door.

The upside of tankies is they draw away the shallow, status-driven authoritarian trash we never wanted.

7. The Virtual Factory

Deleted reason: as per yea.

Author: Anton Freinen

Topics: spectacle, social sciences, situationist, post-situationism, post-industrial

Date: 12/10/2017

Notes: L'Usine Virtuel, Anton Freinen

A librarians argument for deleting: as per yea.

A librarians argument against deleting: ...

A readers argument for deleting: It's situationist, but not necessarily anarchist. Plus, no source that can be checked.

A readers argument against deleting: The text was published with no source that can be checked. However, many anonymous texts get uploaded with no source, so if the uploader put a lot of effort into translating this text then it might be worth publishing in the hope that it will lead to more information coming out on the author and the situationist history that included many anarchists.

A new kind of factory was birthed by the technological developpement of capitalist society, the virtual factory, subset of the social factory, a factory without walls and billions of uncounscious cyber-proletarians, producing commodified social value in it, the perfect capitalist production, where the proletariat voluntarily produce value for the cyber-capitalists owning the the virtual factory.

Of course this value is one that is fictitious and real only for the capitalists, despite our modernity, a modern re-lecture of Marx would give us an insight that the virtual factory was already there, if you read between the lines of The Capital, the virtual factory is already predicted, it is a logical developpement in a techno-capitalist society ; before proletarians were only alienated from their labor, now they are alienated from their own social life that has been commodified in the virtual factory, but of course as Debord tells us « The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images. » Thus the virtual factory can be understood as an accumulation of commodified social relations mediated by images in a new form of production of capitalist value.

This is the perfect capitalist production because it necessitates no physical ressource production, effectively creating a circle economy that only feed itself, without producing anything real, and the techno-proletarians do not require wages or material, they already possess the material in the form of social interactions, the techno-proletarian now even define his identity with the commodity, the commodity now define his identity within the frame of spectacle, « I appear therefore i am » says Debord, this could not be more true in the virtual factory where appearing is the only goal, over being, any authenticity, authenticity is defined by the models of identification, in the vidual factory, the individual will be satisfied more if he can match perfectly these models and becomes himself a model of identification, an agent of spectacle.

The virtual factory will only grow to occupy most of modern production if the present conditions persist, with the automation, this virtual factory will become the main source labor value production, a facotry without walls and laborers who produce value indefinitely with only a sublte cohersion done through models of identification, inciting voluntary servitude to commodity and Capital, while the disciple of Lenin, Stalin and Mao would probably want to make the virtual factory « socialist », in the hand of the « workers state », because they are left-wing of Capital, on the other hand we want to tear it down, now must not only abolish labor but also virtual labor, for that, traditional methods of anti-capitalists struggle are useless, we must take direct action to create a counter-spectacle to take down the virtual factory, create situatons to pull the cyber-proletarian away from seat of spectator until we reach the revolutionary situation.

8. Armenia doesn't need another
political party — it needs a
MOVEMENT!

Author: Armenian Libertarian-Socialist Movement

Topics: Armenia, political parties, social movements, Libertarian Socialism

Date: February 8, 2007

Source: Retrieved on 27th January 2021 from azat.wordpress.com

A librarians argument for deleting: deleted

A librarians argument against deleting: ...

A readers argument for deleting: ...

A readers argument against deleting: It's likely useful to know what grassroots efforts anarchists are potentially involved in internationally.

The fact that there are so many parties in Armenia might not actually be a bad development (given that there is the right type of constitutional setting to cater for such a development). Of course, that's not what the Republican and Parliamentary system desire, but at least it shows that people care and are involved with political life of the country.

Now it's not something that should be disqualified as a necessarily ill development on the grounds that it won't work within the configurations of Parliamentarianism (after all the struggle should be to make Democracy work, and not the Representative Parliamentarism). Instead, we should be asking how to re-structure the political system in such a way that would accommodate and make the best use of such political diversification (something that many political scientists, for instance, would praise).

Nevertheless...

As the parliamentary elections rapidly approach, and as the political campaigning in the form of Kartofil-distribution has already begun, it is both interesting to observe the hopes for democratic processes, but at the same time, it is all ultimately laughable. No, I'm not talking only about the quality of arguments and the level at which they take place. What is really amusing is the way that there are so many political parties, all feeding into the same game-plan. Their discourses are all so predictable: "the truth is on our side, we know what people think, we are going to get elected" (or at least, "we are going to get minimum of so-many seats"), etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And the media is following (or maybe, initiating) the same mode of discourse – **the same game-plan**.

Sooner or later this field of democratic Babel is going to crystallize into groups, camps, tribes (call it what you will)... there will be Conservatives (Republican Party & Co), Liberals (all so many), and if we're lucky, maybe some Pseudo-Socialists (like Labour or Pasok). This is the end of the game-plan. Soon we will be left with simple choice of either voting for the Puppet-on-the-Right or the Puppet-on-the-Left. It is already predetermined by the structure of the system, which will lead us to Pseudo-Democracies like in so many Republics in the west or around the world.

When I hear those passionate speeches (from both/all of the sides) about how they are going to emerge victorious and finally set things right and bring the near-messianic Bright Future or Prosperity or Democracy or Strength and Power (or all of these together), I sense that idiotic, dogmatic and narcissistic overtone that defined the great dictators of the 20th century who competed to shape that century to their will.

Question: where do these people get such a confidence and arrogance that they know better?... know better what all of the Armenian people need and want? ... know better how to conduct diplomacy and foreign affairs? ...know better how to stimulate socially, environmentally and ethically responsible economical growth? They all strike me as ultimately POPULIST!

The current debates, as they do within all Pseudo-Democratic structures, revolve around personalities. But there is no sense of Direction – no sense of a systematic analysis or perspective; no sense of intellectual vigour that could mobilise the people into that great sense of immediacy and engagedness that was in the air in 1987–1991 (please don't get me wrong, I'm not proposing that Armenia needs

yet another idee-fix or ideology). Instead, the stand-up “politicians”, in accordance to the good Liberalist protocols, point fingers at each other: they question each others virtues, abilities, personalities, appearances, views, and (mostly, standardized) policies, but they don’t question the STRUCTURE!

In effect, they all, universally miss out the broader picture. After all it is the structure – the setting, within which the game-plan of political life is set, that already predetermines the outcome. There is an overwhelming sense of tyrannical **Lust for Power** in all of their speeches. It’s almost like listening to a child who due to his small size and powerlessness, finds himself doing all sorts of absurd things so as to gain attention and to pretend that his is in control. “*I am the Lizard King, I’ll get you anything. Will you die for me?*” There is also an antiquarian notion of “Power” and how the Power works, that these people seem to inherit from the 20th century. They still inherit that 18th century rationalist belief that Power works from top down – that a perfectly rational and ordered society can be organised by decrees from the Central Command-Post down the lowest strata of society. Maybe, if these people are so clever, they need to read what 20th century social scientists had to say on how Power really works.

The internal dynamics of Society and Culture are quite distinct from those of the perfect hierarchy of a disciplined Army. This is something that Armenian politicians and “Social Scientists (Statisticians)” alike will need to get through their thick skulls sooner or later, if they wish to move into the 21st century. **Power can only work in a harmonious and, indeed, powerful way only when it springs from below to the top – when a society and its institutions and processes are organised from bottom up**, and not from top down. (Please pause to contemplate this proposition). For this reason, **Armenia does not need yet another political Party** that will rally like a stand-up comedian or a stand-up philistine or a stand-up imbecile. Political parties are the institutions of the 20th century (for instance, in UK Labour membership is down to 110,000 and Conservatives have only 70,000 memebrs left). Parties are institutions of the past: this is the information age, not the industrial age. Parties are institutions that can, and soon are, controlled by the economical elite (oligarchs and bankers). They are good instruments for deceiving people and temporarily controlling the mass, while strip-robbing the country and its people, but one thing that they are not good for, is for cultivating a culture of participatory democracy, dignity, integrity, self-respect, pride and Power. **What Armenia needs today is a MOVEMENT. Yes, a Pan-National Movement** that would start from the grassroots of the lowest of social classes; which will be driven not by central leadership, but by an idea/platform and a set of principles and ethics; which will first prioritise direct on-the-ground activism of Empowering people, over gaining parliamentary seats; which would help peasants, and later workers, to restructure their modes of production and decision-making in such a way that would allow them to conquer and control their own governance (restructure the constitution along the Swiss model), culture, knowledge, finances and production. Only through this Movement can we once again regain that sense of immediacy, directness and engagedness with our land, our country, our history and our future.

9. The Evolution of the Language Faculty

Deleted reason: not anarchist

Subtitle: Clarifications and implications

Author: Marc D.Hauser, Noam Chomsky, W. Tecumseh Fitch

Authors: Marc D.Hauser, Noam Chomsky, W. Tecumseh Fitch

Topics: evolution, language

Date: September 2005

Date Published on T@L: 2021-09-11T14:51:38

Source: Retrieved on 11th September 2021 from dash.harvard.edu

Notes: ISSN 0022-2860. doi:10.1016/j.cognition.2005.02.005

A librarians argument for deleting: not anarchist

A librarians argument against deleting: ...

A readers argument for deleting: ...

A readers argument against deleting: I know it would risk contributing to modern day anarchism being seen as a Chomsky cult, but I think it would likely be good to see one text on Chomsky's academic chops. It's a useful part of the equation of whether he has anything useful to say, since his motivation behind studying language is also connected to his desire to see massive societal change.¹

¹ Lis W. Wiehl and Lisa Pulitzer. *Hunting the Unabomber: The FBI, Ted Kaczynski, and the Capture of America's Most Notorious Domestic Terrorist* [Book]. Nelson Books. April 28, 2020. Original link. Archived link.

Abstract

In this response to Pinker and Jackendoff's critique, we extend our previous framework for discussion of language evolution, clarifying certain distinctions and elaborating on a number of points. In the first half of the paper, we reiterate that profitable research into the biology and evolution of language requires fractionation of "language" into component mechanisms and interfaces, a non-trivial endeavor whose results are unlikely to map onto traditional disciplinary boundaries. Our terminological distinction between FLN and FLB is intended to help clarify misunderstandings and aid interdisciplinary rapprochement. By blurring this distinction, Pinker and Jackendoff mischaracterize our hypothesis 3 which concerns only FLN, not "language" as a whole. Many of their arguments and examples are thus irrelevant to this hypothesis. Their critique of the minimalist program is for the most part equally irrelevant, because very few of the arguments in our original paper were tied to this program; in an online appendix we detail the deep inaccuracies in their characterization of this program. Concerning evolution, we believe that Pinker and Jackendoff's emphasis on the past adaptive history of the language faculty is misplaced. Such questions are unlikely to be resolved empirically due to a lack of relevant data, and invite speculation rather than research. Preoccupation with the issue has retarded progress in the field by diverting research away from empirical questions, many of which can be addressed with comparative data. Moreover, offering an adaptive hypothesis as an alternative to our hypothesis concerning mechanisms is a logical error, as questions of function are independent of those concerning mechanism. The second half of our paper consists of a detailed response to the specific data discussed by Pinker and Jackendoff. Although many of their examples are irrelevant to our original paper and arguments, we find several areas of substantive disagreement that could be resolved by future empirical research. We conclude that progress in understanding the evolution of language will require much more empirical research, grounded in modern comparative biology, more interdisciplinary collaboration, and much less of the adaptive storytelling and phylogenetic speculation that has traditionally characterized the field.

1. Introduction

In a recent paper, we (Hauser, Chomsky, & Fitch, 2002) (HCF hereafter) offered a framework for research on language evolution, stressing the importance of an empirical, comparative and interdisciplinary approach to this problem, and of distinguishing between several different notions of “language” found in the literature on this subject. In their paper “The Faculty of Language: What’s Special about it?” Steven Pinker and Ray Jackendoff (PJ hereafter) present a critique of this paper. In our response, we begin by noting the many areas of agreement between HCF and PJ, among them the need to fractionate language into its component mechanisms, the need for an empirical approach to test hypotheses about these mechanisms, the value of comparative data from diverse animal species for doing so, and the need for collaborative, inter-disciplinary work in this endeavor. However, several distinctions and hypotheses that formed the core of our original paper have been misunderstood by PJ. We first clarify these core ideas before addressing PJ’s specific criticisms concerning empirical evidence. Many of their criticisms are based on a mischaracterization of the perspective we outlined; but several substantive areas of disagreement are discussed. This section allows us to clarify certain issues that were left open in HCF, or unmentioned due to space constraints.

1.1. Clarifying the FLB/FLN distinction

One main thrust of PJ’s critique results from their blurring the distinction we drew between broad and narrow interpretations of the term “faculty of language.” Although PJ endorse this distinction, many of their arguments appear to result directly from a failure to make it themselves, or to perceive where we were making it. We thus start by clarifying this distinction, and its importance.

It rapidly became clear in the conversations leading up to HCF that considerable confusion has resulted from the use of “language” to mean different things. We realized that positions that seemed absurd and incomprehensible, and chasms that seemed unbridgeable, were rendered quite manageable once the misunderstandings were cleared up. For many linguists, “language” delineates an abstract core of computational operations, central to language and probably unique to humans. For many biologists and psychologists, “language” has much more general and various meanings, roughly captured by “the communication system used by human beings.” Neither of these explananda are more correct or proper, but statements about one of them may be completely inapplicable to the other. To this end, we denoted “language” in a broad sense, including all of the many mechanisms involved in speech and language, regardless of their overlap with other cognitive domains or with other species, as the “faculty of language in the broad sense” or FLB. This term is meant to be inclusive, describing all of the capacities that support language independently of whether they are specific to language and uniquely human. Second, given that language as a whole is unique to our species, it seems likely that some subset of the mechanisms of FLB is both unique to humans, and to language itself. We dubbed this subset of mechanisms the faculty of language in the narrow sense (FLN). Although these mechanisms have traditionally been the focus of considerable discussion and debate, they are neither the only, nor necessarily the most, interesting problems for biolinguistic research. The contents of FLN are to be empirically determined, and could possibly be empty, if empirical findings showed that none of the mechanisms involved are uniquely human or unique to language, and that only the way they are integrated is specific to human language. The distinction itself is intended as a terminological aid to interdisciplinary discussion and rapprochement, and obviously does not constitute a testable hypothesis.

We believe that a long history of unproductive debate about language evolution has resulted from a failure to keep this distinction clear, and that PJ, while agreeing with its importance in principle, have not made it in practice. Only this can explain their disagreement with the hypothesis they attribute to HCF at the culmination of their introduction: “that recursion is the only aspect of language that is special to it, that it evolved for functions other than language, and that this nullifies ‘the argument from design’ that sees language as an adaptation”. In any interpretation that equates the last “language” in this sentence with FLB, we not only disagree with this hypothesis (which is not our own), but reject it as extremely implausible. Our focus on the mechanism of recursion in HCF was intended as a plausible, testable hypothesis about a core component of FLB, and likely FLN, not a blanket statement about “language as adaptation.” Here, we hope to clarify any possible misunderstanding by exploring these issues in greater detail.

As we argued in HCF, treating “language” as a monolithic whole both confuses discussions of its evolution and blocks the consideration of useful sources of comparative data. A more productive approach begins by unpacking FLB into its myriad component mechanisms. These components include both peripheral mechanisms necessary for the externalization of language, and core linguistic computational/cognitive mechanisms. The proper fractionation of FLB into its components is obviously not trivial or given, and it would be naïve to suppose that the biologically appropriate fractionation will precisely mirror traditional disciplinary subdivisions within linguistics (phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics, etc.). For example, “phonetics” is traditionally concerned with the sounds of spoken language, while “phonology” concerns more abstract questions involving the mapping between sounds and linguistic structures. Though distinct, both components of language presumably tap some of the same mechanisms. The “phon-” root of both terms reveals their original preoccupation with sound, but language can also be externalized through the visual and manual modality, as in signed languages, raising tricky questions about the precise borders of the sensory-motor component of language. While it would be a mistake to exclude visual/motor mechanisms from FLB, it is not a core component for the vast majority of humans. This is not an issue we attempted to answer in HCF, nor will we do so here. We raise it simply to illustrate the complexity of the issues raised when one attempts to properly fractionate FLB.

In HCF, we offered one potential cut through FLB, explicitly distinguishing the sensory-motor (SM: phonetics/phonology) and conceptual-intentional (CI: semantics/pragmatics) systems from the computational components of language that have been the traditional focus of study in modern linguistics, including syntax, morphology, a phonological component that interacts with SM systems, and a formal semantic component that interacts with the CI system. We make no claims that this is the only correct way to fractionate FLB, explicitly leaving room for other components (see Figure 1 in HCF). “We make no attempt to be comprehensive in our coverage of relevant or interesting topics and problems” (p. 1570). However, contrary to PJ’s suggestion, our framework does not exclude the many important issues that arise in phonology, morphology, or the lexicon. Questions concerning how internal computations relate signal and meaning are explicitly raised in the initial theoretical discussion (p. 1571), and must be, by definition, part of an adequate theory of language.

Something about the faculty of language must be unique in order to explain the differences between humans and other animals—if only the particular combination of mechanisms in FLB. We thus made the further, and independent, terminological proposal to denote that subset of FLB that is both specific to language and to humans as FLN. To repeat a central point in our paper: FLN is composed of those components of the overall faculty of language (FLB) that are both unique to humans and unique to or clearly specialized for language. The contents of FLN are to be empirically determined. Possible outcomes of this empirical endeavor include that ALL components of FLB are shared either with other species, or with other non-linguistic cognitive domains in humans, and only their combination and organization are unique to humans and language. Alternatively, FLN may turn out to include a very rich set of interconnected mechanisms, as assumed in many earlier versions of generative grammar. The only “claims” we make regarding FLN are that (1) in order to avoid confusion, it is important to

distinguish it from FLB, and (2) comparative data are necessary, for obvious logical reasons, to decide upon its contents. An equally obvious point is that research on non-linguistic cognitive domains (number, navigation, social intelligence, music, and others) is fundamental to the proper eventual delineation of FLN.

PJ's central complaint with HCF lies with our further hypothesis—stated clearly as such in the paper—that only a relatively compact, but powerful, component of the computational component of language falls into the FLN subset of FLB (Hypothesis 3 of HCF). “We propose in this hypothesis that FLN comprises only the core computational mechanisms of recursion as they appear in narrow syntax and the mapping to the interfaces.” (p. 1573). The term “FLN” thus served dual duties in HCF. To be precise, we suggest that a significant piece of the linguistic machinery entails recursive operations, and that these recursive operations must interface with SM and CI (and thus include aspects of phonology, formal semantics and the lexicon insofar as they satisfy the uniqueness condition of FLN, as defined). These mappings themselves could be complex (though we do not know) because of conditions imposed by the interfaces. But our hypothesis focuses on a known property of human language that provides its most powerful and unusual signature: discrete infinity. We offered this hypothesis as a starting point for discussion and research, “restricting attention to FLN as just defined but leaving the possibility of a more inclusive definition open to further empirical research” (p. 1571). We do not define FLN as recursion by theoretical fiat (note, we say “a key component”), which would contradict the aims of our paper, but offer this as a plausible, falsifiable hypothesis worthy of empirical exploration. We hypothesize that “at a minimum, then, FLN includes the capacity of recursion”, because this is what virtually all modern approaches to language (including those endorsed by PJ) have agreed upon, at a minimum. Whatever else might be necessary for human language, the mechanisms underlying discrete infinity are a critical capability of FLB, and quite plausibly of FLN.

1.2. Bilingualism and the Minimalist Program

PJ give a long and detailed critique of the Minimalist Program (MP), based on their interpretation of how the minimalist program informed our “overall vision of what language is like.” In fact, partly for reasons of space, HCF barely discussed MP. The framework advanced in HCF for the study of language evolution does not rise or fall with the fate of the minimalist program. Indeed, most of our points (e.g. the FLN/FLB distinction, the value of an empirical, hypothesis-testing approach, the importance of comparative data, etc.) apply equally to any of the various flavors of modern generative grammar. Like HCF, our discussion here will be largely non-committal as regards the virtues and faults of the various flavors of generative grammar currently available. The only assumption made in HCF, and here, about syntactic theory is the uncontroversial one that, minimally, it should have a place for recursion. We think researchers in fields outside linguistics should adopt a wait-and-see attitude as these intradisciplinary issues are sorted out. It is certainly not the case that our framework is based on a covert “presumption that the Minimalist Program is ultimately going to be vindicated,” and we are quite puzzled by PJ's assertion to this effect.

PJ see minimalism as providing “a rationale” and “motivation” for our hypothesis 3—the only obvious justification for their long and detailed critique of minimalism. This speculation is incorrect. A primary motivation for writing HCF was our recognition of some pervasive confusion that have led to persistent and unnecessary misunderstandings among researchers interested in the biology and evolution of language. Such misunderstanding has polarized debate unnecessarily, has helped to fuel dogmatic and even hostile stances, and has generally acted to block progress in this field, including especially the severing of possible collaborative projects between linguists, psychologists and biologists. It has contributed to a situation in which animal researchers interested in language almost automatically consider themselves anti-linguist, or anti-generative, while some linguists feel justified in being anti-cognitive or anti-evolutionary. The FLN/FLB distinction, we hoped, would help the field to see that there is

no incompatibility between the hypotheses that FLB is an adaptation that shares much with animals, and that the mechanism(s) underlying FLN might be quite unique. We further realized that earlier statements that had been interpreted as anti-evolutionary were in fact compatible with contemporary (and perfectly orthodox) neo-Darwinian theory. This realization, not a covert acceptance of minimalist precepts, was the primary motivation for writing HCF, and phrasing our hypotheses as we did.

PJ's comments about MP are thus mostly irrelevant to most of the topics of HCF, and of the current paper, and due to space constraints we are unable to discuss them fully here. However, lest readers conclude that PJ's characterization of MP is accurate, we devote an online appendix to correcting their many misconceptions about this research program (www.wjh.harvard.edu/~mnkylab). Research in a minimalist framework has made considerably more progress than allowed by PJ, and this research has addressed many of the issues on PJ's list of "ignored" phenomena.

Although we stress the independence of the framework advanced in HCF from the minimalist program, we did suggest and maintain here that a core element of FLN may be structured by considerations of efficient use of the core computational mechanisms of recursion; this is the only place where the discussion in HCF ties in directly to the minimalist program. One implication of this proposal is that much of the complex technology of earlier versions of generative grammar might possibly be eliminated, without losing (and sometimes gaining) empirical coverage (see online appendix). The only practical implication of this additional suggestion is that the study of the evolution of language will be made easier if this proposal turns out to be true, as opposed to more baroque alternative possibilities. If most of FLB builds upon ancient foundations, shared with other animals, we will have a much better chance of understanding these foundations from a genetic and neuroscientific viewpoint, because of the much greater variety of deployable experimental methods. If other aspects of FLB are shared with other cognitive domains (e.g. number, navigation, music, social intelligence) or overarching principles of efficient computation, that will vastly improve our chances of gaining an empirical grip on these mechanisms. The fact that a minimalist FLN would be easier to implement neurally, easier to code genetically, and easier to evolve should hardly be counted as evidence against it. Thus, should the minimalist approach find increasing empirical support, it would be good news for biologists and psychologists.

1.3. What is language "for"?

The hypothesis set laid out in HCF might be interpreted as a set of mutually exclusive alternatives. This would be an error. The hypotheses described represent different perspectives and focus on different targets of analysis. The first two hypotheses concern FLB, and were intended to span the range of currently available hypotheses. In contrast, our hypothesis 3 explicitly concerns only FLN; it is a proposal about what mechanisms are uniquely human. In contrast, PJ emphasize the design features of language "as an adaptation for communication." Crucially, questions of mechanism are distinct from and orthogonal to questions of adaptive function (Tinbergen, 1963), a point clearly distinguished by Hauser (1996). This is not to say that questions at one level do not inform questions at another, as they surely do, but rather, that these are different questions that each require answers. We think PJ's (and others') overly restrictive emphasis on adaptive function is misplaced and counter-productive.

The term "adaptation" conceals a conceptual minefield, long recognized as such by practicing evolutionary biologists (Mayr, 1982; West-Eberhard, 1992; Williams, 1966). Definitions run from diachronic and historical (Gould & Vrba, 1982) to purely synchronic and contemporary (Reeve & Sherman, 1993). Without further specification, the statement that "language is an adaptation" is thus vague enough to have few empirical consequences. In our opinion, there is no question that language evolved, and is very useful to humans for a variety of reasons. We thought our viewpoint on this issue was made relatively clear in HCF: language evolved, shows signs of adaptive design, and comparative data and interdisciplinary cooperation will be necessary to figure out the details of the evolutionary process. We didn't belabor the point as it seems relatively obvious and is far from a new idea, (e.g. Hauser, 1996;

Hewes, 1973; Jackendoff, 2002; Lenneberg, 1967; Lieberman, 1975; Nottebohm, 1976; Pinker & Bloom, 1990). To go further than this requires a more rigorous unpacking of the term “adaptation” with respect to language. We will discuss two aspects in turn, first addressing the current utility of language, then turning to past function(s).

Questions about current utility are (at least in principle) empirically testable. But questions about original function are of a different logical type. It is an unfortunate fact that the two main sources of data to address such historical issues, namely paleontological and comparative, are simply unavailable for behavioral traits unique to one species. This is one reason that some biologists advocate a purely synchronic interpretation of “adaptation” (Reeve & Sherman, 1993). For some behavioral traits there are fossil data available to test hypotheses (e.g. we know from fossils that humans adopted a bipedal posture before brain size expansion), and for some linguistic mechanisms there may be relevant comparative data (e.g. for vocal learning). But, considering language as an unfractionated whole, neither type of data is available: “language” does not fossilize and is unique to humans. Thus, from an empirical perspective, there are not and probably never will be data capable of discriminating among the many plausible speculations that have been offered about the original function(s) of language, as for music, mathematical reasoning or a host of other interesting human abilities. We of course do not question PJ’s right to speculate along these lines, as long as it remains clear that these speculations are not confused with, or offered as alternatives to, testable hypotheses. However, in our opinion, preoccupation with such questions has served as an impediment to more useful empirical research on the evolution, development, and neurobiological underpinnings of language.

1.3.1. Current utility

Empirically addressing specific hypotheses concerning adaptation requires equally specific hypotheses about function. As we discuss below, “communication” is far too vague to constitute such a hypothesis, and none of the other candidates on offer seem much better. So why argue about them? Consider the analogous question: “What is the brain for?” No one would question the assertion that the brain is an adaptation (in some broad and not particularly helpful sense), but it would seem senseless to demand that neuroscientists agree upon an answer before studying neural function and computation.

Even more specific questions like “what is the cerebellum for?” have defied resolution for many decades without blocking detailed and productive empirical research on this neural subsystem. The question “what was the cerebellum originally for?” is hardly even a topic of discussion. This is not to deny the possible utility of adaptive hypotheses in guiding empirical research: suitably specific adaptive hypotheses can serve a useful function in focusing and inspiring empirical research (see Fitch, 2000a; Hauser, 1996 and Section 2.3.2 below). However, there is no need at present for researchers interested in the biology and evolution of language to resolve these issues, or even take a stand on them.

PJ are additionally concerned with the question of what an adaptation is “for”. To them, it seems quite obvious that “language is an adaptation for communication.” To understand our skepticism about this claim, consider a parallel question: “What is bat echolocation for?” If we interpret the question as one about current utility—“what do today’s bats use their echolocation abilities for and how does it contribute to genetic fitness?”—then there are many correct answers. For example, bats use echolocation to find and capture prey (feeding), to navigate, to find mates, and to engage in aerial dogfights with competitors. Bat echolocation is “for” many things, each subserving different aspects of survival and reproduction. Although the majority of pulses are probably used for finding and capturing food, they are simultaneously employed in navigation, and also signal the bat’s presence to conspecifics. The question is akin to asking “what is primate vision for?” There are many correct answers, some of them perhaps conflicting, and it would seem odd to stipulate any one of them as “the purpose” of vision or of echolocation. It is hard for us to see the scientific value of framing the question this way.

Returning to language, and distinguishing rigorously between FLB and FLN, the question of “what is FLB for?” clearly has many answers if interpreted in terms of current utility. Today, FLB is used

extensively in both communication, and in private thought. The communicative uses can be further subdivided: humans use language in just about every social interaction, including courtship and mating, aggressive interactions with competitors, caring for offspring, sharing information with kin, etc. Thus there can be little doubt that language is useful for communication with other humans, and communication must be one of the primary selective forces that influenced the evolution of FLB. In fact, one of us wrote an entire book on the evolution of communication (Hauser, 1996) based on this observation. But the private uses of language are equally varied and important, including functions like problem-solving, enhancing social intelligence by rehearsing the thoughts of others, memory aids, focusing attention, etc. They seem to extend into almost every domain of thought. Further, many cognitive scientists have speculated, in the Whorfian tradition, that specific details of language may alter thought, creating cross-cultural cognitive differences (Bowerman & Levinson, 2001); if true this would further complicate the relation between FLB and thought. Finally, the phonological component of private speech might help serialize private cognition, focus attention on one train of thought, and increase the capacity of short-term memory. Thus, the phonological component is not necessarily superfluous to “private” uses of language, as PJ assert.

Questions about the specific current utility of FLN are better defined. Accepting for a moment our provisional, tentative assignment to FLN of only recursion and mapping to the interfaces, it seems clear that the current utility of recursive mental operations is not limited to communication. In addition to its clear utility for cognitive functions like interpreting mathematical formulas that are not plausibly adaptations at all, recursive thought would appear to be quite useful in such functions as planning, problem solving, or social cognition that might themselves be adaptations. As an example of how recursion plausibly functions in spatial reasoning and navigation, consider such concepts as (((the hole) in the tree) in the glade) by the stream) and ask whether there is an obvious limit to such embedding of place concepts within place concepts (. in the forest by the plain between the mountains in the north of the island.). Our proposal that aspects of FLN may function in spatial navigation did not concern dead reckoning or landmark recognition, as PJ assume, but processes of optimal computation already established in animal navigation, like efficient path integration and no backtracking (e.g. Gallistel & Cramer, 1996). Thus, questions of current utility, while empirically addressable, offer little reason to conclude that either FLB or FLN are useful only in communication.

1.3.2. Functional origins

There is a different way, also interesting, of interpreting the question “what is bat echolocation for?” as a question about functional origins: “What was echolocation for in the first echolocating bats?” This is clearly a different question, and requires different analyses and data if it is to be answered. One potential source of data is the fossil record, but for most traits, paleontological data tell us when a trait appeared, but not why. Analyses of the middle ear in bat fossils suggest that microchiropteran bats evolved echolocation very early in their evolutionary history (Novacek, 1985), but do not tell us what they used it for. And this is exceptional: in the case of behavioral traits like language, even this much fossil data is unavailable. A more promising approach to questions of original function is the comparative method, as emphasized in HCF. If a trait is shared, the first question is whether it evolved independently (“analogy”) in different lineages or is shared by common descent (“homology”). Homologous traits, those shared via common descent, play a central role in comparative biology because they are the key to reconstructing phylogeny (Hall, 1994). However, the existence of homology seriously complicates questions of adaptation, since traits that were adaptive in the common ancestor of some clade are not necessarily so for each species that makes up the clade (Harvey & Pagel, 1991). Thus, while homologous traits are indispensable in systematics, they are not necessarily the traits of choice for the study of function and adaptation.

Organisms can also come to have similar traits through convergent evolution (“analogy”—one form of homoplasy). The discovery and analysis of analogous mechanisms is an equally interesting and im-

portant arm of the comparative method, because analogy can provide crucial insights into the adaptive nature of natural selection, independent of inherited details (e.g. Lockwood & Fleagle, 1999; Sanderson & Hufford, 1996). The similarities in body form between dolphins and seals, or in the wings of birds and bats, are independently evolved responses to the physical constraints of swimming and flight respectively. Such similarities provide the surest sign of adaptations to these ways of life, and are crucial in distinguishing adaptation from mere inherited similarity (Gould, 1976). Other types of homoplasy, such as reversions and parallelism, also provide insights into the role of constraints in evolution (Wake, 1991, 1996). Thus, scientists interested in the study of adaptation seek to discover and explore cases of convergence. Returning to bats, if we look at other species which have independently evolved echolocation, echolocating birds appear to use it solely for navigation (Suthers & Hector, 1988), as does a separate bat lineage, the megachiropteran bat *Rousettus* (Moñhres, 1956). Echolocating cetaceans certainly use echolocation for navigation, and perceptual abilities to use sound to sense space exist in other mammals, including cats and humans (Griffin, 1958). The one thing common to all of these species is navigation, making the hypothesis that bat echolocation originally functioned in navigation, and was only later specialized for feeding and communication, a plausible one. But while plausible, it is extremely difficult to test or falsify. The primary value of such hypotheses is to drive comparative work and to lead to more specific, testable hypotheses about mechanistic function.

Regarding the original function of FLB, we advocate a multi-component, multi-functional perspective in HCF, and PJ's commitment to a view of language as a complex adaptation would appear to entail a similar perspective. From this perspective, it seems unproductive to assume, or to seek, a single answer to the question "What was FLB originally for?" An approach to language evolution that fractionates FLB into its component parts is unlikely to come up with the same overarching function for all of these mechanisms. Moreover, if this question is asked, then surely comparative evidence is absolutely critical to a satisfying answer. For example, several researchers have argued that the evolution of major components of FLB were driven by sexual selection (e.g. Darwin, 1871; Miller, 2001; Pinker & Bloom, 1990). For vocal imitation this seems quite plausible (based on comparisons with birdsong or whale song). But, based on comparative data, sexual selection seems unlikely to have driven the communication of complex facts about the world. This aspect of FLB seems more plausibly driven by kin selection or some other non-sexual selection (Fitch, 2004).

Regarding FLN, we wrote: "It is possible, as we discuss below, that key computational capacities evolved for reasons other than communication, but after they proved to have utility in communication, were altered because of constraints imposed at both the periphery . and more central levels." (pp 1569–1570). This statement clearly does not deny a communicative role to FLB or FLN. It does, however, suggest the difficulties inevitably involved in discussions of past function(s) of any unique components of FLB. PJ state that "Chomsky's positive argument that language is not 'for' communication" is based on the use of language as inner speech. In the passage to which they refer (Chomsky 2000, pp. 76–7, not 75), not only is their "positive argument" not proposed, it is explicitly *rejected*. To quote in full: "Furthermore, whatever merit there may be to guesses about selectional processes that might, or might not, have shaped human language, they do not crucially depend on the belief that the system is an outgrowth of some mode of communication. One can devise equally meritorious (that is, equally pointless) tales of the advantage conferred by a series of small mutations that facilitated planning and clarification of thought.—*not that I am proposing this or any other story*. There is a rich record of the unhappy fate of highly plausible stories about what might have happened, once something was learned about what did happen—and in cases where far more is understood" (emphasis added). In discussion elsewhere, the same points about frequency of "inner speech" are adduced to illustrate the pitfalls in trying to determine "function" or "purpose" of a biological system from frequency of use (Chomsky, 2003).

A "positive argument" has been made, most forcefully by prominent biologists, that communicative needs would not have provided "any great selective pressure to produce a system such as language" with its crucial relation to "development of abstract or productive thinking" (Luria, 1974), through its

unique property of allowing “infinite combinations of symbols” and therefore “mental creation of possible worlds” (Jacob, 1982). Of course current utility is a poor guide to past function, and it is an open question whether Luria and Jacob are right to question what PJ declare a “truism.” But PJ’s position on this matter seems obscure. On the one hand, they forcefully deny the Luria-Jacob position. However they also insist on this position, claiming that basic properties of language derive from prior systems of “recursive thought.” There are some concrete proposals about “recursive thought”: namely, generative grammars that yield structures at the CI interface (e.g. Heim & Kratzer, 1998; Larson & Segal, 1995). But that cannot be what PJ mean. Perhaps they have in mind a “language of thought,” which evolved prior to FLB and includes its basic internal computational mechanisms. But that assumption simply transfers the basic questions of evolution from language to a language of thought, and this new problem cannot even be posed until we are told what the language of thought is. Whatever they may have in mind, PJ’s view appears to be that FLB both is and is not an “instrument for expression of thought.”

In conclusion, seeking a single adaptive function for “language”, treated as a monolithic whole, is more likely to produce confusion and misunderstanding than insight. Treating any complex biological character as if it had a single function is likely to be unproductive at best, if not meaningless. Second, our hypothesis 3 concerns FLN, whatever its contents turn out to be, and not “language;” questions about either its current utility or original function are logically separate from those concerning other components of FLB. Our assertion that FLN is not obviously “for” communication in today’s humans, and that there are other equally plausible precursors in past hominids or primates, seems a rather mild one. It is only when FLN is confused with FLB, or current utility conflated with original function, that consideration of this possibility seems unreasonable, or to be “denying a truism.”

1.4. Summary

To recap, we take for granted that the large set of complex mechanisms entering into FLB are adaptive in some broad sense, having been shaped by natural selection for, among other things, communication with other humans. We find this idea neither controversial nor particularly helpful in empirical investigations of the biological nature of the language faculty (FLB). Neither Pinker nor Jackendoff have used their theoretical arguments about the adaptive nature of language to fuel empirical work, to our knowledge. However, once FLB is fractionated into component mechanisms (a crucial but difficult process), we enter a realm where specific mechanisms can be empirically interrogated at all levels (mechanistic, developmental, phylogenetic and functional). Each mechanism might have its own separate phylogenetic and functional history, and we expect diverse answers as progress is made in this research program. As a potential example of this process, we offered our hypothesis 3: that FLN is restricted to a simple but powerful recursive mapping capability by definition, unique to humans and unique to the language faculty. This recursive mechanism has some plausible precursors in cognitive domains other than communication. We think these are worthy of more detailed investigation. Thus, while accepting that FLB is an adaptation, we hypothesized that FLN is not an adaptation “for communication.” Note that there is absolutely no contradiction between these two statements, as long as the distinction between FLN and FLB is kept clear.

Accepting our terminology, and the necessity of recursion in syntax, there are two ways one could rationally disagree with this hypothesis. First, FLN may include more than the computations subserving recursion and mappings to the interfaces to SM and CI, as we suggest in several places in HCF. If so, our Hypothesis 3 can simply be restated as specific to the recursive machinery and associated mappings, rather than FLN in full, and all the same considerations will apply. But in either case our hypothesis concerns a specific subset of linguistic mechanisms, not “language” in a broad sense. Second and less trivially, we argued that the mechanisms of recursion and its mappings are simple enough to nullify the adaptationist’s “argument from design,” a proposition one can question. This more interesting question demands a much better understanding of the neural, developmental and genetic mechanisms underlying

recursion and its mappings than currently available. Perhaps the apparent computational simplicity of recursion masks an implementation rich in detailed, fine-tuned shaping of time-hewn parts. But the onus is clearly upon the proponent of this hypothesis to demonstrate this: a priori, there is nothing obvious about it. That recursion is useful is obvious; this does not automatically make it an adaptation in the evolutionary sense.

2. What's special: a reexamination of the evidence

Our introductory remarks have clarified why the FLB/FLN distinction is critical for productive discussion of language evolution, and what, precisely, we suggested in hypothesis 3 of HCF. By failing to carry through with this distinction, effectively attributing to us the position that “language” (FLB) is recursion, PJ set up an easily-refuted caricature of our hypothesis. Consider as an illustration their discussion of the genetics of language. PJ cite the data concerning the small but significant changes that have occurred in the human FOXP2 gene as casting “even stronger doubt on the recursion-only hypothesis” because “the possibility that the affected people are impaired only in recursion is a non-starter.” PJ conclude that the FOXP2 data refute our hypothesis 3. But as the above discussion will presumably have made clear, these data are irrelevant to our hypothesis. If anything is a candidate for inclusion in FLB but not in FLN, it is the FOXP2 gene, a very heavily conserved transcription factor found in all mammals (Enard et al., 2002) and birds (Haesler et al., 2004). Although the precise function of this gene is still not understood, it would be extremely surprising if its function in humans was fundamentally different from that in other mammals. Furthermore, the gene’s effect in humans are pleiotropic, including pronounced effects on oro-motor praxis that are independent of its effects on speech articulation. Consequently, this gene is nearly identical in form to a homologous gene in other mammals, and the consequences of its expression are not specific to speech or language. Thus, we find it difficult to understand why PJ would cite the FOXP2 data, detailing an important component of FLB, as refuting our hypothesis about FLN. The same observation applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to many of the observations they present in their critique of our paper. We only work through a few of these here, but encourage the reader to re-evaluate their entire paper in light of these comments.

When the FLB/FLN distinction is maintained, many of the arguments PJ bring to bear simply disappear, at least as criticisms of HCF. In the remainder of this paper we will consider, in turn, the various observations that PJ cite regarding the mechanisms underlying FLB, and organizing our responses using essentially the same numbering system as PJ. We ask for each mechanism whether it might plausibly be a member of the subset constituting FLN. We will conclude that the answer is negative for most of them, either because clear homologues or analogues exist in nonhuman species, or because the same mechanisms are operative in other nonlinguistic cognitive domains. However, several interesting areas of uncertainty exist, prominently including similarities and differences in vocal learning and lexical acquisition between humans and animals, and regarding the cognitive underpinnings of music and language, which we hope will be a focus of future research.

2.1. Conceptual structure

With regard to the hypothesis that the conceptual structure expressed by language is based upon a foundation shared with other animals, PJ appear to have little disagreement with us. They concur that the rich database of comparative evidence amassed by researchers in comparative psychology and cognitive ethology strongly suggests that we share a significant component of our non-linguistic mental lives with other species. Note that this conclusion has been driven by empirical research and it could quite plausibly have turned out otherwise; indeed for a large portion of the twentieth century the very idea of “animal cognition” was considered laughable by many psychologists. It was only by

first discovering clever experimental ways to test for conceptual abilities without language in adults (e.g. mental rotation tasks) and non-verbal infants (e.g. habituation/dishabituation tasks) and second, applying these experimental innovations to animals, that these important empirical advances were possible. This is precisely the approach we are advocating for the study of other aspects of language. Cognitive ethology thus provides evidence of the power of the comparative approach, and an excellent role model for work on language evolution.

In passing we observe that cognitive ethology is still in its infancy and there remains much we do not know about what animals can and cannot do. In a summary of research on mental state attribution, (Hauser, 2000) concluded that the ability to represent others' minds ("theory of mind") was absent in animals, but as the review went to press, Hare and colleagues provided the first solid evidence of this capacity in chimpanzees (Hare, Call, Agnetta, & Tomasello, 2000), with additional evidence piling up soon thereafter. Such rapid progress should make us cautious concerning statements about what is absent in animals, or what is unlearnable without language. For example, PJ cite "ownership" as a concept that is "hard to discern" in animals' naturalistic behavior. But there are many aspects of animal territorial behavior that are difficult to explain without some primitive notion of ownership, such as a "home court advantage" effect that persists even when both contestants are equally familiar with the territory. Detailed experiments on animal "ownership" show how it is influenced by dominance, priority of access, value of resource, and species-specific rules and exceptions (Kummer & Cords, 1992; Kummer, Gotz, & Angst, 1974; Stambach, 1988). Although one can always find differences, post hoc, between animal and human versions of a behaviour, these data suggest an "ownership" concept in some animals with considerable overlap with our own.

Some of PJ's other suggestions about uniquely human abilities, or concepts "unlearnable without language", are not supported by comparative data. "Multi-part tools" must be an oversight, since the use of dual hammer and anvil stones by nut-cracking chimpanzees is well-attested in at least two chimpanzee field sites (Whiten et al., 1999). Similarly, we find recent experimental demonstrations of episodic-like memory in jays and rhesus monkeys to be an impressive example of a cognitive representation of time (and space) by non-linguistic animals. Many corvids (crows and jays) hide food for later use (Olson, Kamil, Balda, & Nims, 1995), and sometimes have an extraordinary memory for its location (Balda & Kamil, 1992). Clayton and colleagues have shown that these species also retain a sense of when the food was cached, as demonstrated by their failure to attempt retrieval of food that would have spoiled by the time the birds are permitted access. This clever experiment demonstrates that the ability to mark the passing of relatively long periods of time does not require language (Clayton, Bussey, & Dickinson, 2003). Similarly, rhesus monkeys can report when they recall a prior event and when they have forgotten it (Hampton, 2001). Thus our capacity to mark the passage of time, and know what we do or do not remember, is not unique, and may not rely on language at all (of course claiming that the capacity does not require language is different from the claim that language does not enhance or somehow modify the capacity).

2.2. Speech perception

Our substantive differences with PJ begin with their discussion of speech (for details see Hauser & Fitch, 2003). We noted above that speech is only one of several viable modalities for linguistic expression (others including signed language and writing), and thus it is important to distinguish the evolution of speech from the evolution of language per se (Fitch, 2000a). Nonetheless, speech certainly has pride of place as the default modality when available, and shows many signs of being specially adapted for this role. In their discussion of speech perception, PJ defend the widespread viewpoint that speech perception relies upon speech-specific, uniquely human perceptual mechanisms: that "speech is special" in both of these ways. We agree with PJ, and many other researchers, that "Speech is Special" (SiS) is an interesting, plausible hypothesis. What we rejected in HCF is granting SiS the status of

de facto null hypothesis. When mechanism X (say, duplex perception, or the McGurk effect, or many others) is discovered in human speech perception, we believe the default assumption should be that this characteristic is also found in animals, *until comparative data are gathered that reject this assumption*. While this stance seems to us the logical one, the opposite stance has historically characterized the SiS debate, and several of PJ's points suggest that they are prone to the same bias.

2.2.1. “Speech is special” as a default hypothesis

Studies of speech perception and production are a traditional focus of discussions of language evolution, and comparative data have rightfully played a central role in these discussions. We credit Alvin Liberman and his colleagues at Haskins Laboratories with framing the SiS hypothesis strongly and provocatively, and thus spurring a vibrant and important field of research in comparative speech perception. As a result, we know a good deal about animal speech perception. However, Liberman and colleagues used the discovery of categorical perception to argue that speech is special before any relevant comparative data were gathered. At the time, this stance seemed reasonable: the fit between the phenomena of categorical perception and the details of speech (in particular, the shift of category boundaries with place of articulation) seemed too perfect to result from some general auditory processes. Hindsight being 20/20, we can now see that this fit more likely results from the alignment of speech production to pre-existing nonlinearities in speech perception. Furthermore, the zeitgeist of the time certainly favored the idea that there was nothing special about speech, and the Haskins group was justified in using this and other data to call this into question. However, the discovery of categorical perception in chinchillas, complete with shifting category boundaries, placed SiS in its proper place as a provocative, strong hypothesis to be tested, rather than a default assumption about every new aspect of speech perception (and in this case, rejected). These events should have offered a serious cautionary message to speech researchers from that point on. Unfortunately, in our opinion, this did not occur, and SiS remained, and for the most part remains, the default assumption among speech researchers. It is this stance that we reject.

Given current understanding of neurobiology and comparative psychology, indicating huge overlap in the mechanisms underlying human and animal perception, cognition and action, we suggest that the appropriate default assumption about any newly discovered mechanism is that it is shared between humans and other animals. Human uniqueness is something to be demonstrated (as we do for recursion in Section 2.6), not assumed. In advocating the hypothesis of shared mechanisms, we are expressing a simple commonsense point: don't state that something is not there until you've looked for it. Our comments in HCF about the explanatory landscape in research on language evolution also reflect a relatively conventional general philosophy about the role of strong hypotheses in science. Science progresses by stating and testing falsifiable hypotheses, and the hypotheses most conducive to progress are those that are most readily falsifiable (“strong”), because a falsifiable hypothesis that repeatedly resists falsification is likely to be true. The search for strong, testable hypotheses is of course different from the choice of appropriate null hypotheses. Examples of strong hypotheses are “categorical perception is unique to human speech” or “recursion is unique to human language”: either hypotheses can be readily refuted by empirical study. For example, the first hypothesis was rejected both by demonstrations of categorical perception in animals, and of categorical perception of non-speech sounds (Cutting, 1982; Cutting & Rosner, 1974; Rosen & Howell, 1981).

In contrast, the hypothesis that “speech is special” is not strong, because speech requires many component mechanisms, and the demonstration that any one of them is shared with animals does not threaten the hypothesis as a whole. In practice, for each demonstration of a shared mechanism, such as categorical perception, several new mechanisms have risen to take its place that have been postulated as unique to human speech, such as duplex perception or the McGurk effect. Due to the ease of experimentation on humans relative to that on animals, it seems unlikely that this situation will change soon, and we are sympathetic to animal researchers who complain that the SiS hypothesis is a

moving target. As PJ say “it would be extraordinarily difficult at present to conduct experiments that fairly compared a primate’s ability to a human’s.” This is precisely why SiS is not a strong hypothesis, nor a suitable default hypothesis in speech research, in our opinion.

We also find the methodological despair implied by this statement puzzling. In our opinion, and many others in the field, it is not “extraordinarily difficult” to compare human and nonhuman abilities. For example, recent comparisons of humans and monkeys have used the same methods and materials to test aspects of speech perception (e.g. with habituation-dishabituation procedures and no training), finding for example that both species use rhythmic features to discriminate among language groups (Ramus, Hauser, Miller, Morris, & Mehler, 2000); see Section 2.2.2. Such studies provide the basis for more detailed neural work, and it seems parsimonious to assume that when nonhuman primates and human infants show the same capacities with speech, given the same methods and materials and with no training, they are using the same mechanism.

PJ cite data from humans on duplex perception and sinewave speech as evidence “casting doubt on the null hypothesis” of shared mechanisms, but these data are not even relevant to our null hypothesis. Relevant data would involve attempts to demonstrate the phenomena either in animals, or in nonspeech domains, and PJ’s statement appears to confuse absence of evidence with evidence of absence. To our knowledge, no one has ever run a study of duplex perception, or the McGurk effect, with nonhuman animals. The simple demonstration of a new phenomenon or illusion in speech perception does not constitute evidence for SiS. As it happens, there are relevant data seemingly rejecting the hypothesis that duplex perception is specific to speech (Fowler & Rosenblum, 1990). The same can be said of infants’ preference for speech sounds: perhaps monkeys (or dogs, or guinea pigs) prefer speech sounds as well. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, we suggest, it is not just premature but a logical error to see this as casting doubt on the shared mechanism hypothesis. Of course, one can certainly question our assertion that this hypothesis deserves the status of null hypothesis; perhaps from certain theoretical standpoints this is the wrong choice to make. But if one accepts it, as PJ appear to, many of the empirical observations they cite fail to address this hypothesis at all, much less cast doubt upon it.

2.2.2. Comparative studies of animal speech perception

PJ summarize their views about our “shared mechanisms” hypothesis by stating that “the tasks given to monkeys are not comparable to the feats of human speech perception.” They base this opinion on several claims with which we disagree. PJ’s claim that animal speech research focuses on simple one-bit discriminations accurately summarizes the first twenty years of this research, but ignores progress made in the last five years. Many new studies, cited in HCF, have looked at much more complex discriminations by animals, e.g. the ability to use syllables or vowels to extract the statistical properties of a continuous stream of speech or to extract grammatical rules. PJ’s statement that animal speech perception experiments involve extensive operant conditioning is incorrect. While true of earlier work, the field has recently opened to other methods that involve no training, including habituation/dishabituation techniques; and these are precisely the methods used with human infants, that form the core of PJ’s hypothesis concerning our evolved specialization. Furthermore, we disagree with PJ’s implication that we can only draw weak inferences from training experiments. First, if training is uninformative concerning SiS, this eliminates many studies of human infants that also involve training. Second, training techniques are a powerful tool to determine if a skill can be developed with practice, experience, and attention by an animal. Finally, training studies typically have an initial period of training under reinforcement that is based on a small number of tokens representative of the target category. This training phase is designed, especially for extremely naive animals, to teach them the game: that some sounds are rewarded and others are not. Once trained, the animal moves on to the critical generalization phase (often on stimuli that never appear in the training set) in the absence of reinforcement. The

generalization phase is critical for inferring the generality of what the animal has learned, under strict experimental control.

PJ think it is unlikely that monkeys have anything like the human capacity “to rapidly distinguish individual words from tens of thousands of distracters despite the absence of acoustic cues for phoneme and word boundaries, while compensating in real time for the distortions introduced by co-articulation and by variations in age, sex, accent, and emotional state of the speaker” (p. 8). But it is precisely the ability to rapidly extract words from distracters, online, and with speaker variation, that recent animal work on statistical learning addresses: cotton-top tamarins can extract the word-like units (trigrams) within a continuous stream of speech (Hauser, Newport, & Aslin, 2001). This finding directly replicates the results of Saffran and colleagues with 8-month-old babies, using the same methods and materials (Saffran, Aslin, & Newport, 1996). Overall, these data refute the claim that animals are incapable of the perceptual feats that humans engage in spontaneously, online, and with distracters.

PJ cite several studies that indicate clear differences between species. The training studies of Sinnott and colleagues are exemplary in that they directly compare the performance of animals and humans on the same or similar perceptual tasks. However, beyond some level of detail it is unclear how to interpret a finding of difference between the performance of an animal and a human subject. Some differences among subjects (of any species) are inevitable, raising the question of which of these differences really make a difference to the language faculty. As a rough guide, we would suggest that only differences between humans and animals that exceed the differences observed among normal human subjects are relevant to questions of human uniqueness. Thus, if macaque monkeys can successfully discriminate /ra/ from /la/, a distinction that poses severe difficulties for adult Japanese speakers, but have slightly different category boundaries than adult English speakers, we do not see this as evidence that the mechanisms underlying perception of this distinction are unique to humans.

To summarize, PJ’s review of the literature on animal speech perception is inaccurate and incomplete, ignoring a number of advances that have been made in recent years. Their skepticism about the value of training studies seems ill-founded, and if it were taken at face value it would demand rejection of a significant body of experimental work with human infants (not to mention much of psychophysics). Research on animal speech perception is currently one of the most advanced fields of comparative biolinguistic study, and it is directly relevant to questions of human uniqueness that have dominated discussions of language evolution for many years. A thorough review of this literature (along with results of our own work) led us, in HCF and elsewhere (Hauser & Fitch, 2003), to argue that the traditional claim that “speech is special” needs to be re-evaluated. Claims of human uniqueness should not be made in the absence of at least some relevant animal data, and we currently know of no clear demonstrations of differences between animal and human speech perception relevant to the evolution of language (a possible recent exception is Newport et al., 2004). Thus the safest assumption, at present, is that the mechanisms underlying human speech perception were largely in place before language evolved, based on either general auditory or vocalization-specific perceptual processes.

2.2.3. Neural data on speech perception

We do not think that the demonstration of double dissociations between speech and environmental sounds provides strong evidence that speech is special. To see why, consider a condition termed alexia without agraphia (“pure alexia”), where after brain injury a patient loses the ability to read but retains the ability to write. Such patients can write individual words, or take dictation, but afterwards are unable to read what they have written. General visual and manual abilities remain intact. Although rare, this syndrome has been repeatedly reported in the neurological literature (Geschwind, 1965; Geschwind & Kaplan, 1962). Similar cases have even been reported with written music (Brust, 1980). From an evolutionary viewpoint, alexia without agraphia provides a cautionary tale. Writing is clearly a cultural development, and alphabetic writing appears to have been invented only once in the history of our species, a few thousand years ago. Given this short timespan, modern human abilities to read and

write can hardly be considered adaptations: they are clearly the learned result of interactions between the language faculty (FLB), and more general manual and visual skills, and perhaps other faculties. Thus, finding a discrete brain region or circuit whose destruction impairs reading, but leaves writing intact, is no demonstration that these skills represent genetically determined, functionally specialized adaptations.

We interpret such neural data on writing, along with many other apparently “modular” activities, as providing important insights into the plasticity of mammalian neocortex, rather than evidence of evolutionary specialization to that function. Rather than being hard-wired for particular functions, even sensory cortices appear to be relatively “open” early in development. If one area of cortex that normally processes some data is damaged, another area can take over to serve the same function. For example “rewired” ferrets develop working visual cortex in the temporal lobes (where auditory cortex would normally be found) (Sharma, Angelucci, & Sur, 2000; von Melchner, Pallas, & Sur, 2000), and their visual behaviour is indistinguishable from that of control animals. Similarly, monkeys trained to use a particular finger, or listen for a particular tone, exhibit larger areas of sensory cortex that process these sensory data (Merzenich, Recanzone, Jenkins, Allard, & Nudo, 1989). In humans, musicians show larger cortical areas devoted to piano notes (Pantev et al., 1998), string players have a larger sensory representation in the left (string) hand (Elbert, Pantev, Wienbruch, Rockstroh, & Taub, 1995), and blind Braille readers use their occipital cortex (devoted in sighted people to vision) to process tactile inputs (Sterr et al., 1998a, b). Such examples could be multiplied considerably, but the point should be clear enough. The nature of mammalian neocortex leads us to expect cortical specialization for any task to which an individual devotes considerable time and effort (e.g. reading or writing, or speech vs. environmental sound perception). Discovery of such “modular” specializations is not evidence for (or against) the specific neural circuit being an evolutionary adaptation.

2.2.4. Convergent evolution

PJ’s last paragraph of the section on speech perception raises an issue that pervades their discussion of comparative data. PJ describe “comparisons among primates,” and despite some discussion of non-primate data, relevant non-primate data are often omitted. For instance, Patricia Kuhl hypothesized that the perceptual magnet effect was uniquely human only after finding no evidence for this effect in macaque monkeys (Kuhl, 1991). Later work (Kluender, Lotto, Holt, & Bloedel, 1998), however, demonstrated the most critical component of the effect in an avian species. While PJ are of course perfectly correct in asserting that the perceptual magnet effect is, as far as we know, unique to humans among primates, it is unclear why this restriction to primates should be relevant to claims of human uniqueness. When we ask in HCF whether some trait is uniquely human, we are asking whether it is unique among all living forms, not uniquely human among primates, or uniquely human among mammals. The existence of displaced reference in honeybees would mean that displaced reference is not uniquely human, in our usage. The demonstration of recursion in birds would mean that it is not uniquely human, just as surely as the same finding in chimpanzees. The relevant question is the neural, developmental and genetic mechanisms underlying the trait, which may or may not be shared (a question to be addressed empirically). This general point becomes particularly relevant in discussions of convergent evolution in vocal production.

2.3. Speech production

2.3.1. Complex vocal imitation

PJ criticize our discussion of both neural and peripheral aspects of vocal production in humans. We noted that the ability to imitate complex sounds vocally (“vocal imitation”), although apparently

unique to humans among primates, is found abundantly in songbirds, as well as various distantly-related mammals (e.g. dolphins and seals, Janik & Slater, 1997). Therefore, vocal imitation is not a uniquely human characteristic, and not a component of FLN, despite being a crucial component of FLB. We did not, as PJ suggest, advance this as an argument “against evolutionary adaptation for language in the human lineage.” This confuses our exclusion of vocal imitation from FLN with an overall exclusion from language.

The evolution of vocal learning in birds (presumably “for” birdsong) clearly occurred independently of the evolution of vocal learning in humans. But as already discussed, scientists interested in the study of adaptation seek to discover and explore cases of convergence, rather than defining them away. Vocal imitation in birds is quite irrelevant to the question of whether such a mechanism evolved “for” language, as are analogous abilities in whales or in seals. But a discovery of vocal imitation in some relatively unstudied nonhuman primate species would be equally irrelevant. Extant primate species, whether monkeys or apes, are not “ancestral to humans,” and the only way to discover characteristics of extinct common ancestors is through application of the comparative method, examining all available data from many species. Abundant data in all primates examined so far indicate a lack of vocal imitation at a level that could support acquisition of a complex lexicon. These data include most importantly our nearest relatives, the great apes (Crockford, Herbinger, Vigilant, & Boesch, 2004; Hayes & Hayes, 1951; Nottebohm, 1976; Studdert-Kennedy, 1983). Thus, the discovery of complex vocal imitation in some new primate species would almost certainly represent an example of convergent evolution, not evidence for homology.

The significance of this observation cuts both ways: the existence of some trait in our nearest living relatives, chimpanzees, does not demonstrate its presence in our last common ancestor (LCA) with chimpanzees. To choose two examples, female chimpanzees in estrous develop extremely prominent sexual swellings. This might seem to indicate the presence of sexual swellings in the LCA, and loss by humans, but additional comparative data belies this conclusion, since the other great apes lack such swellings, as do most other primates. Chimpanzees apparently evolved sexual swellings independently, perhaps in response to their promiscuous mating systems, and humans, rather than chimpanzees, retain the primitive character. In contrast, laryngeal air sacs are present in chimpanzees, but not in humans. All other great apes also possess such air sacs, allowing us to infer that the LCA had air sacs, and humans have lost them in our subsequent evolution. These examples show that a broad comparative database is necessary to draw conclusions about homology vs. analogy, and traits characterizing the LCA.

PJ contend that human vocal imitation is limited to speech production. But human vocal imitation is not specific to language: the use of vocal imitation in music, which PJ cite parenthetically, refutes their contention. All humans can sing (albeit some quite poorly), and even as adults can easily reproduce a novel tune (even if the pitch or key is off). Indeed, the human ability to imitate novel sounds, both vocally and instrumentally, is absolutely central to the cultural transmission of human musical traditions. (Note that the enlargement of the thoracic spinal cord in late *Homo* (MacLarnon & Hewitt, 1999), indicating increased breathing control, is as relevant to song production as to speech). Whether the human music faculty is in some sense parasitic on the language faculty (as Pinker, 1997, has argued) or independent of it (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983), is an interesting open question, but it seems premature to exclude melodic imitation from the domain of vocal imitation, or to assume that human musical skills are non-adaptive, unselected byproducts of language abilities. We are equally unconvinced by PJ’s other arguments that vocal imitation is specific to language. That adults are poor at imitating the detailed phonetics of a foreign language should not obscure our adult ability, unusual among mammals, to do a reasonable imitation of complex novel sounds, even those that have no meaning in our own language. Most children enjoy imitating animal sounds, and in many parts of the world, adult hunters are skilled at imitating the sounds of their prey. Finally, the fact that imitative skill is limited by a critical or sensitive period is not evidence that it is language-specific. We conclude from this that (1) vocal imitation is part of FLB, and (2) the question of what it is an adaptation “for” remains open. Even for the much simpler

and better studied case of vocal learning in bird song, this question remains open, and again it seems likely that it is “for” many things (Kroodsma & Byers, 1991). We suspect vocal imitation in humans may be similar.

2.3.2. Anatomical issues

In HCF we briefly discussed peripheral anatomical adaptations for vocal production, which we assigned to the SM component of FLB. PJ’s discussion again reflects some misconceptions about the comparative method. The paucity of data on animal supralaryngeal articulation makes it premature to conclude that humans have “incomparably” more complex vocal control: the comparisons that exist suggest that animals may be less limited than previously assumed (Fitch, 2000b; Lieberman, 1968). The discovery of permanently descended larynges in nonhuman animals (Fitch & Reby, 2001; Weissengruber, Forstenpointner, Peters, Kübber-Heiss, & Fitch, 2002) demonstrates that a permanently descended larynx is not uniquely human, as previously believed, and the existence of this trait in speechless non-humans clearly indicates that it has functions other than increased speech versatility. Size exaggeration is the most plausible candidate explanation, and the factual basis for this hypothesis has been explored in considerable detail (Fitch, 2002; Hauser & Fitch, 2003). These render plausible the hypothesis that the larynx descended originally, in prelinguistic hominids, for purposes of size exaggeration, and that this served as a preadaptation for speech. Of course, like any hypothesis about past function, this one cannot be tested directly. However, current utility can, and the data available indicate that, contrary to PJ’s assertion, the evidence for a size exaggeration function, even in modern humans, is quite strong.

Laryngeal descent lowers formants, and signals with lowered formants are perceived as emanating from larger individuals in at least two species (humans and deer: Fitch, 1994; Reby et al. 2005). These data are consistent with, but do not demonstrate, a size exaggeration function for the descended larynx. More telling is the fact that the human larynx undergoes an additional descent, at puberty, and only in males (Fitch & Giedd, 1999; Lieberman, McCarthy, Hiiemae, & Palmer, 2001). Teenage boys do not appear to undergo a corresponding increase in phonetic ability, and indeed girls appear to enjoy a slight advantage in speech ability over boys (Henton, 1992; Hyde & Linn, 1988). The only obvious function for this male-specific pubertal descent of the larynx would appear to be size exaggeration (Fitch & Giedd, 1999; Ohala, 1984): part of a suite of size-exaggerating traits that appear in males at puberty, including broad shoulders and beards. Thus, for adult males, the evidence that this additional laryngeal descent functioned to exaggerate size, as for deer or lions, and does not function in any additional speech ability, seems rather strong. Does this mean that the descended larynx, today, is not an adaptation for speech? Of course not. The two hypotheses are independent, and to think otherwise would be to confuse current utility with original function, like saying that bat’s wings didn’t evolve “for” flight because bats’ ancestors used them “for” swimming or walking. We intended no such conclusion. Contrary to PJ’s interpretation, nothing in HCF precludes the possibility of a history of selection on and refinement of the supralaryngeal tract for vocal production. Such a claim would be antithetical to some of the most basic principles of evolutionary biology. Note that this also does not mean that the descent of the larynx in human infants is “for” exaggerating size. The fact that this descent starts in babies at age 3 months is a strong argument against this hypothesis, as repeatedly noted (Fitch, 1997; Fitch, 2002; Fitch & Reby, 2001).

The increasingly rich comparative database concerning animal vocal production has interesting implications for the evolution of speech in our species. Specifically, the evidence offers convincing grounds for considering both human speech perception and production to be adaptations that either build upon homologues present in our recent primate ancestors (as comparative primate data indicate) or that have analogues in other more-distantly related species (as with vocal imitation or laryngeal descent). Many of the relevant mechanisms also function in other non-speech domains such as music. For all these reasons, we consider such mechanisms to be part of FLB. They thus do not speak to our hypothesis 3, which concerns FLN. None of these data were offered as “arguments against evolutionary adaptation

for language in the human lineage” as PJ suggest. PJ’s discussion simply confuses the issues by failing to maintain the distinction, and attempting to exclude convergent phenomena like vocal imitation from evolutionary consideration.

2.4. Phonology

In HCF we considered phonology as a mapping from narrow syntax to the SM interface. To risk being repetitive, phonology does not represent “a major counterexample to the recursion-only hypothesis” but is irrelevant to the recursion-only hypothesis advanced in HCF. We suggested that the computational resources of recursion and its mapping to SM and CI are the only FLN-specific properties, and that other principles external to language might be responsible for the residual complexity and details of the SM-CI linking. Given our present knowledge, much of phonology is likely part of FLB, not FLN, either because phonological mechanisms are shared with other cognitive domains (notably music and dance), or because the relevant phenomena appear in other species, particularly bird and whale “song”. Some regularities in phonology may result from other principles, perhaps organism-independent, that determine computationally efficient mappings from narrow-syntactic objects to the SM interface, a possibility that can be formulated today, but so far resists serious inquiry. Specific aspects of phonology other than those that follow from recursion plus mapping to the interfaces may well be part of FLN—but this possibility should be stated as a hypothesis and tested, not assumed.

Consider music. We agree with the stance urged by (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983) that music and language are independent domains, to be studied with no strong assumptions about their inter-relationships. Nonetheless, the questions that have been framed for language in the generative tradition are precisely the kinds of questions that we should answer for music (Hauser & McDermott, 2003; Jackendoff & Lerdahl, in press). Although it may turn out that music and language have some deep biological connection at the genetic, neural or even evolutionary levels, such a connection can not be assumed a priori. Thus we were puzzled by the statement that “major characteristics of phonology are specific to language (or to language and music)” These two statements are not equivalent. To the extent that aspects of phonology are shared in music and language, they are by definition not part of FLN. Only if aspects of music can be shown to be “parasitic” on language, with no independent evolutionary history or mechanistic basis, might these two statements amount to the same thing. Although Pinker has suggested that music represents a non-adaptive by-product of the mechanisms underlying language (Pinker, 1997), this has by no means been demonstrated, and unless it is, the independence assumption of (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983) seems more prudent. In our opinion, the many similarities between linguistic and musical structure provide a fascinating source of potential insight into more general aspects of human cognition, and the many phenomenological overlaps between music and language (e.g. critical period phenomena, congenital and acquired amusias, parallel neural systems, etc.) provide a powerful window into questions of the biological basis for both domains (Koelsch et al., 2004; Peretz & Zatorre, 2005; Trainor & Trehub, 1992). For example, the great variability in exposure to music among humans, with some individuals immersed from an early age and others with very little exposure, provides a powerful tool to explore the degree to which neural specializations for music are input-dependent. Such extreme environmental differences are difficult or impossible to study in language. Similar empirical leverage has been gained by studying the similarities between birdsong and human music and language (Doupe & Kuhl 1999). The existence of shared mechanisms (e.g. critical periods in song learning) has opened the door to mechanistic analyses in terms of neurobiology and gene expression. As for many other components of FLB, the fact that these features are shared is welcome news to those favoring an empirical approach to their study.

Turning to rhythm, this is a phenomenon clearly shared between language and music (as PJ agree), but it also characterizes dance, another universal human trait that in most cultures is intimately tied to music, and that has received even less formal study than music. From a comparative perspective, there

are some intriguing similarities between human music/dance and the dominance displays in our closest cousins, the great apes.

Both chimpanzees (Goodall, 1986) and gorillas (Schaller, 1963) perform ostentatious displays which involve a pattern of movements idiosyncratic to the displayer, often with vocal accompaniment, and with a bimanually generated rhythmic component. The “drummed” bimanual rhythm may be obligatory (gorilla chest beating) or optional (chimpanzee buttress “drumming”). Although such bimanual sound making seems quite unusual among animals, this phenomenon has received surprisingly little study (Arcadi, Robert, & Boesch, 1998; Schaller, 1963), and it seems premature to conclude, as PJ do, that rhythm-following is uniquely human, particularly on the dubious authority of “informal observations” in a popular book (Williams, 1967). We agree with (Merker, 2000) that rhythmic entrainment in animals is a capacity sorely in need of empirical exploration.

On the lack of recursion in phonology, we agree with PJ (and most other commentators) that phonology is hierarchical but not recursive (although their statement in Section 4.2 concerning “recursive phonological signals” seems to contradict this). Certainly, syllables cannot be embedded within other syllables indefinitely. However, even in this domain of inquiry, there are many open questions. Syllables are not the only relevant components of phonological structure, and other constituents like intonational phrases seem much better candidates for unlimited self-embedding (Ladd, 1996). While we are by no means convinced that this is the case (nor is Ladd), let us accept for the sake of argument that it is.

The discovery of a recursive mechanism in phonology would first raise the empirical questions “is it the same as or different from that in phrasal syntax?” and “is it a reflex of phrasal syntax perhaps modified by conditions imposed at the interface?” Second, given that the phrasal structure of music shows no obvious limit on embedding, we might ask “is phonological recursion the same as or different from that in musical phrases?” or in the phrases of birdsong. If the answer to all of these questions were “same,” we would reject our hypothesis 3, possibly concluding that FLN is an empty subset of FLB, with only the integration of mechanisms being uniquely human. This is precisely the kind of empirical search and hypothesis testing that we favor.

2.5. Words

Regarding word learning, PJ are correct that we misrepresented the results of (Markson & Bloom, 1997) in saying that children “may use domain-general mechanisms” for learning both words and facts. Properly stated, their results indicate that some mechanisms underlying word learning are not specific to language. This is one reason that we consider these mechanisms to be part of FLB, not of FLN. Another is that the ability to link novel arbitrary noises to some referent appears to be quite general among vertebrates, present in some form not only in chimpanzees but in parrots, dogs and other species (Kaminski, Call, & Fischer, 2004; Owren, Dieter, Seyfarth, & Cheney, 1993; Pepperberg, 1991). PJ are correct that an empirical demonstration of fast mapping for both facts and words, or by other species, “does not prove they have all their properties in common.” Indeed, this hypothesis is virtually irrefutable and can never be “proven” by empirical evidence. Even in the face of new empirical data, one can always cite some new detail or phenomenon of words to rescue the hypothesis. This is precisely the sort of unfalsifiable hypothesis of which psychologists and ethologists interested in language evolution have often, and rightly, complained. Hypotheses like “language is uniquely human” or “word learning is uniquely linguistic” are, in our opinion, too vague and weak to be useful spurs to the kind of empirical research upon which progress depends.

PJ quote our own comments about the vastness of the lexicon as being contradictory to our hypothesis 3. Again, misunderstanding has resulted from a failure to carry through the FLN/FLB distinction. There are many aspects of lexical acquisition that are remarkable, which led us in HCF to the suggestions that the learning capabilities underlying the lexicon might represent an independent, evolved component of language (FLB). Humans have independently evolved many traits (e.g. bipedalism, rel-

ative hairlessness, complex tool use, and visual arts) that have no obvious connection to language. Other traits, including fact-learning, vocal imitation, and some musical abilities, appear to overlap with language without being specific to it (hence are part of FLB). There is no contradiction between our hypothesis that the mechanisms underlying word learning, although based on some shared mechanisms and thus part of FLB, have been hypertrophied, streamlined or otherwise specialized to this task in our recent evolutionary history. Nor does this contradict our hypothesis that FLN is limited to the core computational capacities of recursion and mappings to the interfaces. Words have qualities unique to language, just as chess moves have qualities unique to chess and theorem-proving has qualities unique to mathematics. Such observations are not, by themselves, relevant to questions of domain specificity. Nor are they the basis for assigning word-learning to FLN.

In HCF we detailed many of the ways in which we think that both animal vocalizations and the symbols learned by enculturated apes, dolphins and parrots differ from human words. As we stated in HCF, the evidence for reference in animals is weak at best:

“Without pursuing the matter here, it appears that many of the elementary properties of words—including those that enter into referentiality—have only weak analogs or homologs in natural animal communication systems, with only slightly better evidence from the training studies with apes and dolphins.” (p. 1576). Word meaning may well have characteristics unique to language and distinct from fact learning, or it might not. Work like that of Markson and Bloom sets up exactly the kinds of empirical questions that we argue should take center stage in discussions of the language faculty. Note that such empirical inquiry is completely independent of whether language is or is not “an adaptation for communication.”

2.6. Syntax

Syntax clearly plays a significant role in our ability to construct and express new meanings, but at least some of the restrictions and complexities of this process are plausibly inherited from conceptual structure, rather than being part of syntax per se. Just as the conceptual structure of objects and events surely influences and constrains the properties of nouns and verbs, it seems plausible to postulate that linguistic devices expressing quantity, tense, aspect or comparison, or other temporal or logical relations, inherit at least some of their structure from the conceptual structure of time, space and logic. The precise locus of such constraints is an active area of current research in linguistics. If there do turn out to be purely syntactic aspects of constituents such as complementizers, auxiliaries, or function words, their existence in other domains (such as music, spatial or social cognition) or in other species, would still require empirical investigation. Such features would not automatically be part of FLN.

Our suggestion that recursion is part of FLN, as defined, is based on the following observations. (1) Recursion is agreed by most modern linguists to be an indispensable core computational ability underlying syntax, and thus language; (2) Despite decades of search, no animal communication system known shows evidence of such recursion, and nor do studies of trained apes, dolphins and parrots; (3) The perceptual data currently available indicate that monkeys cannot even process hierarchical phrase structure, much less recursion; and (4) There are no unambiguous demonstrations of recursion in other human cognitive domains, with the only clear exceptions (mathematical formulas, computer programming) being clearly dependent upon language. Thus, current data justify our placing syntactic recursion in FLN. This assignment would clearly be threatened by a claim of similar recursion in birdsong or the discovery that chimps can process recursive strings, or various other potential empirical findings—all signs of a strong, falsifiable hypothesis. Of course, there’s not a lot riding on this, since we don’t suggest that only phenomena in FLN are worthy of study. If future empirical progress demonstrates that FLN represents an empty set, so be it. A terminological distinction may well outlive its usefulness. For now, though, our hypothesis 3 seems both plausible and consistent with the available data.

We will discuss PJ's assertion that some of the world's languages might lack "evidence of recursion" only briefly, because this seems to us irrelevant to the questions under discussion. Modern linguistics asks questions about the biological capacity to acquire human language, a set that includes but is not limited to the huge variety that currently exists on our planet. The putative absence of obvious recursion in one of these languages is no more relevant to the human ability to master recursion than the existence of three-vowel languages calls into doubt the human ability to master a five- or ten-vowel language. A Piraha child raised in a Portuguese, English or Chinese environment will master those languages with the same ease as his or her mother's tongue, just as the same child could learn the recursive embedding principle of parentheses in mathematics, or a computer programming language with recursive structure. In the face of the huge number of human languages that have clausal embedding, the existence of one that does not would in no way alter the explanatory landscape. If anything, this example would seem to add to the grounds for doubting that recursion evolved "for" communication (whatever this means exactly), if a language is attested that gets along without it. But it surely does not affect the argument that recursion is part of the human language faculty: as Jackendoff (2002) correctly notes, our language faculty provides us with a toolkit for building languages, but not all languages use all the tools.

The inability of cotton-top tamarins to master a phrase-structure grammar (Fitch & Hauser, 2004) is of interest in this discussion primarily as a demonstration of an empirical technique for asking linguistically relevant questions of a nonlinguistic animal. It is clearly too early to conclude that all species are equally hobbled (especially given the paucity of species and methods tested). Nor would we be prepared to draw strong conclusions about innate human abilities until infants or young children have been tested, and until more is known about the neural and psychological basis for the human ability to learn phrase structure (all topics of current investigation). Fitch & Hauser do not even mention recursion in the cited paper, and the generation of limited-depth hierarchical phrase structure was not confused with recursion in that paper (although it was by some commentators on the article). The article does suggest that an inability to perceive and process phrase structure, by any animal, would be a severe impediment to that species' ability to master language. But to the extent that phrase structure is important to music, it would be a correspondingly severe impediment to their mastering a human musical style. If further empirical research shows that no nonhuman species can master a phrase-structure grammar, the hypothesis that animals either lack any recursive mechanisms, or cannot apply them to auditory strings, will be left standing. But if, for example, we discover that songbirds can master phrase-structure grammars, further research will be necessary to determine how they do it, whether this ability involves recursion, whether it is applied across different domains or problems, and whether the mechanism they use is similar or different to that in human beings. The importance of this work is its introduction of an empirical technique capable of addressing these issues, incorporating the formal analysis of language. The empirical technique can be used in a wide range of species, and the hypothesis can be empirically tested and falsified.

2.7. Summary: our view of the evidence

PJ end their summary of the available data with the conclusion "that the empirical case for the recursion-only hypothesis is extremely weak." In our view, most of the data PJ discuss concern mechanisms that are part of FLB by definition, because related mechanisms exist in other species and/or other cognitive domains. These data are thus irrelevant to our hypothesis 3, which concerns FLN. Their conclusion is based on a misreading of our hypothesis postulating that, at a minimum, FLN consists of the core computational capacities of recursion as they appear in narrow syntax and the mappings to the interfaces. This hypothesis is intended as a guide to research; we are interested in the extent to which it is true, but we welcome empirical demonstrations that other mechanisms should be added to FLN. In our view, the most promising data in this regard remain those that we cited in HCF, particularly mechanisms for word learning that can plausibly be hypothesized to constitute human- and

language-specific mechanisms. But, in the current state of knowledge, none of these possibilities can be interpreted as demonstrated, or even rigorously addressed, by empirical data. The comparative data have simply not been collected; due in part to the recency of the specific theoretical proposals and the new methodological advances. Thus, in sharp contrast to PJ, we conclude that our hypothesis 3 is not only plausible, but that no data refuting it currently exist.

3. Conclusion: where do we go from here?

PJ's critique offers a vivid illustration of the problems that can arise if we fail to distinguish the various components of FLB, or if we confuse statements about one component with those concerning another. We doubt that future researchers will need to make a point of distinguishing FLN from FLB at every mention of the word "language," as we have done here. However, keeping the object of discussion clearly delineated would certainly help to avoid future misunderstandings of this sort.

Misunderstandings aside, we feel that numerous areas of agreement, and several areas of substantive disagreement, remain. Agreed is the argument that FLB, as a whole, evolved and functions as a human-specific adaptation with several areas of current utility, one of which is clearly communication with conspecifics. Agreed is the necessity of fractionating FLB into several separate components, each of which might have different evolutionary histories. One of these components, the conceptual-intentional subsystem, is agreed to share major similarities with other vertebrates, meaning that research in comparative cognition and cognitive ethology will play a major role in future discussions of this topic. Topics such as theory of mind in animals are of great interest in this respect. Although it seems likely that some aspects of human conceptual structure are unique to our species, the separate question of whether these are unique to language will require detailed research into nonlinguistic cognition. This highlights a major role for cognitive science in general in this research program, and a need for explicit theoretical models of domains such as spatial reasoning, visual parsing, social cognition and music cognition that can be compared to and contrasted with linguistic theories. Such research is not only interesting in its own right, but will provide insights into the correct fractionation of FLB and the contents of FLN.

We agree with PJ that major aspects of the sensory-motor component of FLB, including minimally vocal imitation and probably some abstract computational mechanisms underlying phonological structure as well, evolved independently in the human lineage. We disagree with PJ's argument that vocal imitation is uniquely human and speech-specific, and thus part of FLN, given the abilities of birds to imitate human speech, and of humans to imitate non-speech sounds (especially song). We think that the many similarities between the mechanisms underlying the human music faculty and phonology provide independent grounds for doubting the language-specificity of these mechanisms. Detailed research into both the structure and function of animal "music" such as bird- or whale-song, and into the neural underpinnings of human music perception and production, will play an important role in resolving these issues.

The most important area of substantive debate appears to center around the computational apparatus underlying language, and especially syntax. PJ argue that syntax and other formal components of FLB are highly complex adaptations for communication, unique to language, and unique to humans, and thus that FLN is equally complex. They posit that syntax consists of a complex set of independent mechanisms whose interrelations and complexity are the earmarks of adaptation. As we stated in HCF, we agree that this remains a plausible hypothesis, although if true it is very difficult to test. When applied to FLB, as in our hypothesis 2, it is widely agreed upon. But when applied to FLN, its plausibility clearly depends on the complexity of FLN, an issue that is the topic of intense research and far from resolved. If as more comparative data come in, FLN turns out to be empty, as is certainly possible, FLN would not constitute an adaptation by anyone's standard. If FLN is very small, or even limited to the computations underlying recursion and its interfaces as we suggest in our hypothesis 3, its status as an adaptation is open to question; minimally, it will require more evidence than the reliance on complexity and the argument from design. This statement, as we hope is now clear, in no way questions the current utility of language, or the status of the entire FLB as an adaptation. If we take the evolution

of language seriously, we must also take seriously the possibility that any component of FLB may not constitute an adaptation for language, for communication or “for” anything at all, and this is as true of FLN as any other component. If it turned out that the capacity for recursion resulted from a phase transition in the pattern of neural connectivity that results automatically from increases in neocortex to subcortical tissue ratio, interacting with standard mammalian brain development, this would certainly be an interesting result. If that hypothesis (or a host of similar ones) is ultimately rejected, that will be interesting too, and will represent clear progress. Our main concern is that no one prejudge the issues, and that all plausible hypotheses get a chance to be tested.

In summary, it is clear that there is significant agreement among the various disciplines contributing to an understanding of language evolution, and that the prospects for advancing an empirical science of biolinguistics are promising. Researchers interested in these issues must take seriously the complexity of language and the contributions of modern linguistics to its understanding, while incorporating the impressive gains made in neural, developmental, evolutionary and molecular biology. As it progresses, biolinguistics will help to drive an increasingly rich understanding of human and animal cognition, and to a broad comparative approach to understanding the many shared cognitive mechanisms that are part of the human language faculty.

Ultimately, we think it is likely that some bona fide components of FLN—mechanisms that are uniquely human and unique to language—will be isolated and will withstand concerted attempts to reject them by empirical research. An understanding of such mechanisms from the genetic, neural and developmental perspectives will illuminate our understanding of our own species. However, the search for such mechanisms should not be the sole topic of interest, but just one of many fascinating questions to be addressed.

Ultimately, the question of whether it is uniquely human is far from the most interesting question one can ask about language. We intended the ideas raised in HCF to help accelerate progress in these directions, and we hope that PJ’s critique and this response will help clarify the issues and aid progress. And we sincerely hope that research into the biology and evolution of language will not continue to be mired down by the misunderstandings that have so long plagued this field.

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**10. International Council
Correspondence, Volume 1, Issue 1**

Author: International Council Correspondence

Topics: Council Communism, Libertarian marxism, paul mattick

Date: October 1934

Date Published on T@L: 2023-07-19T19:42:46

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A librarians argument for deleting: Not specifically anti-statist.

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A readers argument against deleting: This seems like interesting history about a closely associated ideological tendency to social anarchism, so it may be a useful starting point for researching the history of anarchist adjacent history. The library could simply publish it with a not-anarchist tag, as despite it being not anarchist I don't think there's anything highly embarrassing about the text's contents to merit not platforming it.

What is Communism?

Paul Mattick 1934

In communism, the process of production is no longer a process of capital expansion, but only a labor process in which society draws from nature the means of consumption which it needs. No longer are values produced, but only articles for use. As an economic criterion, the necessity of which is undeniable, since both production and the productive apparatus must be made to conform to the social need, the only thing which can still serve is the labor time employed in the production of goods. It is no longer the 'value' but the calculation in terms of use articles and the immediate labor time required for their production which is the necessary form of expression of a regulated communist economy.

And so, from the standpoint of Marxism, the Russian experiments in planned economy are not to be rated as socialistic. The Russian practice is not directed according to communist principles, but follows the laws of capitalist accumulation. We have here, even though in modified form, a surplus-value production under the ideological camouflage of "socialist construction". The wage relation is identical with that of capitalist production, forming also in Russia the basis for the existence of a growing bureaucracy with mounting privileges; a bureaucracy which, by the side of the private capitalist elements which are still present, is strictly to be appraised as a new class appropriating to itself surplus labor and surplus value. From the Russian experience no positive conclusions can be drawn which have a relation to communist production and distribution. It still offers only examples of the way in which communism cannot be developed.

The decisive problems of a communist economy do not come up until after the market, wage labor, money, etc., have been completely dispensed with. The very fact of the existence of the wage relation signifies that the means of production are not controlled by the producers, but stand over against them in the form of capital; and this circumstance further compels a reproduction process in the form of capital accumulation. This latter is, by the Marxist theory, beside and because of its validity as a law of crises and collapse, at the same time the accumulation of misery, and hence also the Russian workers are actually growing poorer at the same rate as capital accumulates. The productivity of the Russian workers increases faster than their wages; of the increasing social product they receive a relatively ever smaller share. To Marx this *relative pauperization* of the working population in the course of accumulation is only a *phase of the absolute pauperization*; it is only another expression for the increasing exploitation of the workers, and to denominate this as the "growth of socialism" is after all hardly possible.

The gist of the Bolshevik “theory of socialization” may be sketched as follows: With the revolutionary overthrow, i.e. the expropriation of capital, the power over the means of production and hence the control over production and the distribution of the products passes into the hands of the state apparatus. This latter then organizes the various branches of production in accordance with a plan and puts them, as a state monopoly, at the service of society. With the aid of statistics, the central authority computes and determines the magnitude and kind of production, as also the apportionment of the products and producers.

To be sure, the means of production have here passed from the hands of the private entrepreneurs into those of the State; as regards the producers, however, nothing has changed. No more than under capitalism do they themselves exercise the command over the products of their labor, for they still lack the control over the means of production. Just as before, their only means of livelihood is the sale of their labor power. The only difference is that they are no longer required to deal with the individual capitalist, but with the *total capitalist*, the State, as the purchaser of labor power. In the mind of the Bolshevik theoretician, as in that of the Social Democrat, monopoly capitalism has already made production “ripe for socializing”; the only thing left to do is to give a “socialistic” form to distribution. The *decisive* aspect of the matter here is the *organizational-technical* side of the production process; the side developed by monopoly capitalism or to be copied from it, instead of the truly basic factor of communist economy: *the economic relation between product and producer*.

The conception that the mere centralization of the means of production in the hands of the State is to be regarded as socialization precluded the practical employment of an accounting unit in keeping with a communist mode of economy. Centralized power over social production and distribution admitted of no form of accounting by which an uninterrupted economic process was possible as a substitute for money economy. The Russian attempts at a natural economy during the period of “war communism” completely miscarried. Money accounting had to be re-established.

Under capitalism, the means of production (mp) and labor (l), appear as constant (c) and variable (v) capital. The values $c + v$ can be applied capitalistically only so long as they produce surplus value (s). The capitalistic formula of production is $c + v + s$. It is only because $mp + l$ appear as $c + v$, that it is possible to attain s. If $c + v$ drops out, so also does s, and vice versa. What remains is the concrete, material form of $c + v$, that is $mp + l$, the means of production and labor. The communist formula of production is $- mp + l$.

The development of mp and l proceeds in any society; it is nothing other than the “material interaction between man and nature”. The formula $c + v + s$, however, is historically bound up with capitalist society. If under capitalism it was only the interest in s which determined the development of $c + v$, since here the need for the expansion of capital prevails over the social needs, under communism on the other hand, it is only the social needs which determine the development of $mp + l$. The formula $c + v + s$ presupposes exchange between the owners of $c + v$ and the owners of l. If $c + v$ is lacking, so also is this exchange. It is not until mp has ceased to confront the workers in the form of capital, when it remains merely as the tool of society and is *nothing else*, that it is possible to speak of a communist economy:

“Its apportionment in accordance with a definite social plan maintains the proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community. On the other hand, it also serves as a measure of the portion of the common labor borne by each individual, and of his share in the part of the total product destined for individual consumption. The *social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are in this case perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution*”. (Capital, Vol. I, Page 90–91).

Taking the social average working hour as the computing unit of communist society, it must be capable of embracing all categories of production and distribution. The working hour unit must be applicable, that is, to the quantitative consumption, the quantitative reproduction and the quantitative expansion of the productive forces. Each enterprise must determine the number of working hours it

consumes, so that they can be replaced in the same magnitude. Computation by working hours is not difficult, as all the presuppositions for it have already been formed by capitalist cost accounting. In particular, the capitalist process of rationalisation has developed computing methods which are capable of getting at the cost price both as a whole and also down into the last detail. And while these computing methods are today related to the common denominator of money, their conversion into the working hour is attended by no difficulties.

The production formula of any enterprise, as also that of society as a whole, is very simple. We have already stated it as follows: $mp + r + l$ product. With the aid of the means of production, human labor produces a quantity of goods. We distinguish between two different kinds of means of production: fixed and circulating. So we broaden our formula in accordance with this distinction.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 mp + \text{-----} r + \text{-----} l \\
 \text{machines, etc.} \quad \text{raw material, etc.} \quad \text{labor power} \\
 10,000 \text{ working hours} \quad 70,000 \text{ working hours} \quad 70,000 \text{ working hours}
 \end{array}$$

Assuming that these figures are applicable to a shoe factory: $mp + r + l$ product — 10,000 + 70,000 + 70,000 @@@ 50,000 pairs of shoes in 150,000 working hours, or an average of three working hours is consumed in each pair. In this production formula we have at the same time the reproduction formula for simple reproduction. We know how many labor hours were withdrawn from this factory for the production of 50,000 pairs of shoes. The same number of labor hours must accordingly be restored to it. And what holds for the single enterprise holds also for the whole of society, which of course is only the sum total of all enterprises. The total social product is the product of $mp + r + l$ of all enterprises. To distinguish the production formula of the single enterprises from that of society as a whole, we select capital letters for the latter. The formula for the social product (SP) then reads: $MP + R + L$ @@@ SP. Assuming MP (the sum of all the fixed means of production) to amount to 100 million labor hours, the corresponding sum R to amount to 600 million, and the labor time consumed to be equal to 600 million, we have the following for the total product: $MP + R + L$ @@@ SP — 100 + 600 + 600 @@@ 1,300. Of the total production of 1,300 million labor hours, in conditions of simple reproduction, (i.e.-when no expansion of production occurs), we assume that 600 million labor hours are turned over to the consumers in the form of means of consumption.

The application of the social average labor hour as the computing unit presupposes the existence of workers' councils (soviets). Each enterprise comes forward as an independent unit and is at the same time, as we shall show later, connected with all the other enterprises. As a result of the division of labor, each factory has certain end products. With the aid of the production formula $mp + r + l$ each enterprise can compute the labor time contained in its end products. In the shoe factory taken as an example, the end product (one pair of shoes) — contains an average of three working hours. This average can be found for each product in each enterprise. The end product of an enterprise, insofar as it is not destined for individual consumption, goes to another enterprise either in the form of mp or r , and this one in turn computes its end products in labor hours. The same thing holds for all places of production, without regard to the magnitude or kind of their products.

When the individual enterprises have determined the average labor time contained in their products, it still remains to find the social average. All enterprises of the same nature, i.e. turning out the same kind of products, must get in touch with each other. From the individual enterprises of a determinate industry, in a given territory, will be derived the total average of all the given averages (average of averages) for these enterprises. To take a rough example: if 100 shoe factories strike an average of three hours, 100 others an average of two, then the general average for a pair of shoes is 2-1/2 hours. The varying averages result from the varying productivity of the individual enterprises. Though this is a condition inherited from capitalism, and the differences in productivity will slowly disappear, the

deficit of one enterprise must in the meanwhile be made up through the surplus of the other. From the *standpoint of society, however, there is only the social average productivity*. The determination of the social labor time calls for the cartelisation of the individual enterprises. The opposition between the factory-average and the social-average labor time comes to an end in the production cartel.

The social average labor time decreases with the development of the productivity of labor. If the product thus “cheapened” is one for individual consumption, it goes into consumption with this reduced average. If it is an end product used by other enterprises as means of production, then the consumption of $mp + r$ for these enterprises falls, the production “costs” decline and hence the average labor time for the products of these enterprises is reduced. The matter of compensating for the variations caused in this way is a purely technical problem which presents no special difficulties.

If the working hour serves as a measure of production, it must likewise be applicable to distribution. A very clear statement of this unit is given by Marx: (Critique of the Gotha Programme, page 29) —

“What the producer has given to society is his individual amount of labor. For example: the social working-day consists of the sum of the individuals’ hours of work. The individual working-time of the individual producer is that part of the social working-day contributed by him, his part thereof. He receives from society a voucher that he has contributed such and such quantity of work (after deductions from his work for the common fund) and draws through this voucher on the social storehouse as much of the means of consumption as the same quantity of work costs. The same amount of work which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another”.

The specialization of labor makes necessary the use of some sort of certificates for drawing from the fund of social articles of consumption. Each producer receives a number of these certificates corresponding to the number of hours of labor he has performed. These certificates may be called labor money, though they are not money at all in the capitalistic sense. “The producers”, writes Marx, “may eventually receive paper checks, by means of which they withdraw from the social supply of means of consumption a share corresponding to their labor-time. These checks are not money. They do not circulate.” (Capital, Vol. 2 — page 412).

The workers cannot, however, receive the full output of their labor. The labor time is not the direct measure for the part of the social product destined for individual consumption. As Marx goes on to explain:

“Let us take the words “proceeds of labour” in the sense of the product of labour, thus the co-operative proceeds of labour is the *total social product*.”

But from this must be deducted: firstly, reimbursement for the replacement of the means of production used up; secondly, an additional portion for the extension of production; thirdly, reserve or insurance funds to provide against misadventures, disturbances through natural events, and so on.”

There is left the other portion of the total product which is meant to serve definitely as means of consumption. But before this can go for individual consumption there has to be taken from it yet: firstly, the general costs of administration not appertaining to production; secondly, what is destined for the satisfaction of communal needs, such as schools, health, services, etc.; thirdly, funds for those unable to work, etc., in short, what comes under the heading of so-called official poor relief today. (Critique of the Gotha Programme – page 27.)

Those institutions which produce no tangible goods (cultural and social establishments) and yet participate in the social consumption may be reckoned as enterprises. Their services go over into society without delay; production and distribution here are one. In the case of these enterprises, the final goal of communism, “the taking according to need”, is already actualized; their distribution is governed by no economic measure. We call these *public enterprises*, or enterprises for general social labor (GSL). Communist accounting is complicated by the existence of these GSL enterprises just as it was by the varying productivity of the single enterprises. Everything which the public enterprises consume must be drawn from the stores of the productive enterprises.

Going back to our production formula for society as a whole: $(MP + R) + L$ @@@ mass of products, or $(100 + 600) + 600$ million working hours. MP and R have to be reproduced; there remain, of the

total mass of products, 600 million working hours. The GSL enterprises take from these 600 million their means of production and raw materials. It is accordingly necessary to know the total consumption of these public enterprises. If we designate the means of production for the public enterprises as MP_s, the raw materials as R_s and the labor power as L_s, we get the following total budget for GSL: (MP_s + R_s) + L_s @@@ services of the GSL, or (for example — 8 million + 50 million + 50 million @@@ 108 million labor hours.) From the 600 million labor hours to be consumed, 58 million must be deducted for MP_s and R_s of the GSL enterprises. There remain 542 million labor hours for the individual consumption of all workers. In the productive enterprises the workers were employed 600 million hours, and in the GSL enterprises 50 million. Of the total output of labor power there is available for individual consumption, accordingly, only 542/ 650 or 83%. We call this proportion the “factor of individual consumption” (FIC). The formula for FIC is: $L - (MP_s + R_s) \text{ over } L + L_s$. Or employing the figures assumed in our example: $(600 \text{ million} - 58 \text{ million}) \text{ over } (600 \text{ million} + 50 \text{ million}) @@@ 542 \text{ million}/650 \text{ million} @@@ 0.83$.

If a worker has worked 40 hours, he receives a labor-money certificate in the amount of $0.83 \times 40 @@@ 33.2$ which he exchanges for such articles as he pleases. This computation is possible because all enterprises keep an account of their consumption in mp, r and l. The general social bookkeeping, which records all products, has at its disposal all data necessary for determining the payment factor, namely, L, MP_s, R_s and L_s, which result from simple summation in the current account.

In the GSL enterprises, the “taking according to needs” was, as we have seen, already realized. With the growth of communism, this type of enterprise receives an ever increasing extension, means of consumption, dwelling, passenger transport, etc. The more society grows in this direction and the more enterprises are transformed into the GSL type, the less will individual labor be the measure for individual consumption. This tendency serves to illustrate the general development of communist society.

With the development of communism, the accounting for FIC changes. Various enterprises, such as an electric plant, work in part for individual consumption and in part for purely productive purposes. To refer to our example: if the consumers are now supplied with electricity free of charge, the electric plant belongs to a new type of enterprise. For accounting purposes, these mixed enterprises must be included either under those of the productive or of the GSL type. This electric plant must receive back from the FIC the deliveries of current, expressed in working hours, going into the individual consumption. The addition of these parts of all mixed enterprises gives the deficit to be made up by the FIC. If we call this part the general deficit (D), we have a new distribution formula: $FIC @@@ L - (MP_s + R_s) - D \text{ over } L + L_s$.

A number of variations are possible here, depending on whether we assign the mixed enterprises to the public or to the productive ones or divide them between the two. But these variations do not affect the clarity of the general view.

When the relation between the producer and product is established, the question of the horizontal and vertical grouping of the enterprises becomes a technically soluble one, which from the economic point of view presents no difficulties. Distribution also, like production itself, is a social question. The “expenses” of distribution are included in the general budgets for GSL: that is to say, the organs of distribution are enterprises of the GSL type, which likewise conduct their accounting according to the formula $mp + r + l$.

The conditions of simple reproduction, with which we have been working so far, are after all only a methodological assumption employed for the sake of simplicity and have no basis in actual fact. Human progress demands the expansion of the productive forces; the process of reproduction must be accomplished on a broader scale. Under capitalism, this process which goes on in terms of accumulation of capital, is the individual function of the capitalistic enterprises. In communism, however, it is a social function. Of the social product a part is here employed for the further expansion of the productive apparatus. If this expanded reproduction is to be a conscious action, however, it is necessary to know the social labor time required for simple reproduction. The formula for simple reproduction is: $MP + R + L$. If the material apparatus of production is to be expanded by 10%, a mass of products of this amount

must be withdrawn from individual consumption. When this “accumulation” has been accomplished, production proceeds according to the formula: $1.1 (MP + R) + L$. We have already shown that the social product is completely taken up by society when the individual consumption proceeds according to the formula $FIC @@@ L - (MPs + Rs)$ over $(L + Ls)$.

This individual consumption must now be further diminished by $0.1 (MP + R)$. In the case of a 10% expansion of production, we then get the formula: $FIC @@@ L - 0.1(MP + R) - (MPs + Rs)$ all over $(L + Ls)$. This general formula does not take the place of the concrete solution of the problem in actual reality, but within the scope of this work we must be content with it and merely refer further to Marx: “If we assumed that society were not capitalistic, but communistic, then the money-capital would be entirely eliminated, and with it the disguise which it carries into the transactions. The question is then simply reduced to the problem that society must calculate beforehand how much labor, means of production, and means of subsistence it can utilize without injury for such lines of activity as, for instance, the building of railroads, which do not furnish any means of production or subsistence, or any useful thing, for a long time, a year or more, while they require labor, and means of production and subsistence out of the annual social production.” (Capital, Vol. 2 — Page 361).

Let us consider this example. If the construction of a railway proves necessary, the work involved belongs to the GSL part of the social production. If it consumes, for example, three years of labor in a certain number of working hours, this sum is deducted yearly by charging it to the GSL account, from the factor of individual consumption (FIC).

In the relations between the individual enterprises, labor-time money is superfluous. When an enterprise delivers its end products, it has linked $mp + r + l$ working hours to the great chain of partial social labors. This must be restored to the various enterprises in the same magnitude in the form of other end products. The labor money is valid only for individual consumption. As more and more enterprises are brought into GSL production, distribution by means of labor money grows less and less, and rushes on to its own abolition. Fixing the factor of individual consumption is the task of social bookkeeping. On the credit side of the social bookkeeping stands L ; on the debit side MPs , Rs , and Ls . “Bookkeeping as a control and abstract summary of the economic process,” says Marx, “becomes the more necessary to the extent that the process functions on a social scale and loses its purely individual character. It is, therefore, more necessary in capitalist production than in scattered handicraft and agricultural production, and still more necessary in co-operative than in capitalist production.” This bookkeeping under communism is merely bookkeeping and nothing else. It is the central point of the economic process, but has no power over the producers or the individual enterprises. The social bookkeeping is itself only an enterprise of the GSL type. Its functions are: the registration of the stream of products, the fixing of the FIC, the outlay of labor-time money, the control over production and distribution. The control of the labor process is a purely technical one, which is handled by each enterprise for itself. The control exercised by the social bookkeeping extends only to accounting for all receipts and deliveries of the individual enterprises and watching over their productivity.

The control of production in the society of free and equal producers does not come about through persons and authorities, but is conducted through the public registration of the objective course of the productive process; that is, production is controlled through reproduction.

The different industrial organizations turn their production budgets over to the enterprise which conducts the social bookkeeping. From all the production budgets results the social inventory. Products in one form flow to the enterprises; new ones in another form are given out by them. Each conveyance of goods is recorded in the general social bookkeeping by an endorsement, so that the debit and credit of any particular enterprise at any time can be seen at a glance. Everything which an enterprise consumes in the way of means of production, raw material or labor money, appear on the debit side of the enterprise; what it has turned over to society in the form of products appears as a credit. These two items must cover each other continuously, revealing in this way whether and to what extent the productive process is flowing smoothly. Shortage and excess on the part of the enterprise becomes visible and can be corrected. If an enterprise is unable to maintain its productivity, if that productivity declines, then the

other enterprises, even though they work beyond the s.a. production time, cannot cover the shortage of the first one. The comparatively unproductive enterprise is unable to reproduce itself, the malfunction becomes visible and can be remedied by society. The control of the *GSL* enterprises runs parallel in part with that of the productive ones. It results from the material production, through the registration of the articles turned over to them and the receipt of labor money. The product of the *GSL* enterprises, however, goes into society “gratuitously”, so that for these enterprises the credit factor is lacking in their bookkeeping. The control of their productivity will probably only be possible with the aid of comparative investigations.

While under capitalism the category s.a. labor time is dependent on “value”, in communism it is only a matter of the labor embodied in goods turned out. And while social productivity under capitalism has to be regulated by the market, which involves a gigantic waste of the social forces of production, in communism the lowering of the s.a. production time is a conscious, socially-regulated act. It leads to a general drop in the time of production. If, for example, an enterprise has reckoned its means of production at 100,000 labor hours, and if we assume that these instruments have a ten-year span of life, then 10,000 working hours are to be added on yearly to the products of this enterprise. If the s.a. reproduction time of the means of production employed in this enterprise declines, then in its process of reproduction it can fashion better or more machines and thus increase its productivity, which in practice means expanding the productive apparatus without the expenditure of extra labor. The production time for this enterprise has changed. Since the s.a. reproduction time is observed, the only change is in the productivity factor of this enterprise. The s.a. production time of the cartel with which the enterprise is connected always remains the same as the reproduction time, since the means of production, too, flow in a continuous stream through all the enterprises. The lowest social reproduction times blend again and again in the process of production with the s.a. reproduction time.

By way of summary, it may be said:

“The basis of the s.a. reproduction time is the s .a. working hour. This category is already valid even in capitalism. Even now the individual differences find no expression in the commodity, for the product is converted on the market into money; that is, transformed into the general commodity, by which all individual differences are abolished. In communism, it is the s.a. reproduction time which embraces within itself all individual differences of slow and experienced workers, of capable and less capable, of manual and intellectual labor. The s.a. reproduction time is accordingly something which as such, as something special, does not exist. Like the laws of nature, which merely bring out what is general in the particular phenomena, without existing as actual laws, the s.a. working hour, which in the concrete sense has no existence, embodies what is general from among the enormous diversity in the material interaction of society”.

The Future of the German Labor Movement

Paul Mattick
1934

Any speculation regarding the possibilities of the German labor movement must take into account, not merely the aims of the various organizations, but the structural transformations in modern society during the last decade. This change in the economic setup, together with its political consequences, is likewise the indispensable key to the complete understanding of fascism.

In the present crisis, the monopolist form of economy develops within itself stagnating tendencies directed economically against the laissez-faire principle and politically against “formal democracy”. The process of capital concentration, which continues during the crisis, acts as a spur to all social groups, though it is only the working class which can be moved into a genuine opposition to the existing order.

The economic dependence of the middle class allows it no policy of its own; it develops only a backward ideology, since any social advance brings with it the downfall of this class as a special group.

The fact that the middle class has become the chief support of the fascist movement is only a sign of its own historical insignificance. The policies of the existing economic system cannot be subordinated to the fascist ideology, and the louder that ideology cries, the more surely it also destroys itself. Being incapable of bringing about a revolutionary change in the economic system, fascism is compelled to follow laws which simply force the impoverishment of the middle class as well. The fascist *movement* must of necessity, in the course of developments, shrink to a fascist *state apparatus* which has openly to defend the interests of the economically strongest groups against society as a whole. Practically, fascism can only be appraised as the expression of the political necessities of the monopolistic groups during the crisis. It is nothing other than the compulsion to permanent terrorism against the working class; and this compulsion results from the fact that the further endangering of industrial profits by social unrest can no longer be tolerated, since the already insufficient profit brings into question more and more the continued existence of the economic system. Fascism, furthermore, has to wage the class struggle against the class struggle which it denies, so as to prepare the “nation” for the imperialistic clashes to be expected.

As a result of the conflicts of interests within society — conflicts deniable only in words, not in reality — fascism may change its leaders and symbols or may even under certain circumstances, as a result of new social upheavals, give place to a neo-democratic regime. But practically, this transformation would be nothing more than an exchange of leaders and symbols, since even the restored “democracy” would be compelled to adopt the fascist policies. Even a democratically “minded” state apparatus would have to protect the existing society with the *necessary* means, which today are means of terrorism. Without overlooking the differences between fascism and democracy, it may still be said that both these social forms, within the framework of the present system, have only the same possibilities of action, since politics is always dictated by the economic necessities.

From this standpoint, any struggle for democracy is only a pseudo struggle. And for this reason, such a struggle is quite out of the question for the workers, and can only be conducted by those groups which are willing to play capitalistic politics, that is, merely want to govern. This fight will not even be decided by the “fighters”, but by the processes within the economic system. Only the false assumption that the present economy is still capable of further progressive development can feed the illusion of a new democratic era.

In Germany also, the real class struggle will not turn on the question of democracy, and all attempts to erect a new labor movement on this basis are doomed in advance. The efforts of the socialist movement to get a new lease of life through the radicalizing of its phraseology fall down on the objective impossibility of turning history backward. The demand for the rehabilitation of democracy is no less laughable than the faith of the fascist in the restoration of the “good old times”.

The attempts of the various communist groups to build up illegal movements in the old party style show that they thoroughly share the illusions of the socialist movement. Nothing has changed as regards the idea held by these groups as to the role of the party. What was once legal shall now continue to function illegally in the same form. They completely fail to see that the old party movement was just an expression of formal democracy, and could exist nowhere else. The party is bound up with democracy; the one is not possible without the other. Anyone who fancies that strong party organizations capable of playing a decisive role in history can be built up anew, such a person must necessarily, however much he may protest, believe in the possibility of a new democratic era, and, like the fascists and socialists, is merely intoxicating himself with traditions.

Nothing is more naive than the various assertions of the different political groups in Germany to the effect that they have so and so many thousands of illegal members in their ranks. These computations can only be made and peddled about in foreign countries. They are incapable of proof, and spring only from the competitive needs of the various parties in the countries which have not yet gone fascist.

Those computations are dubious for the very reason that there is absolutely no way of *making* them; no controlled, illegal labor movement embraced on party principles exists in Germany.

It is true that the Communist Party succeeded, during the first few months of the dictatorship, in leading portions of its non-renegade membership to engage in pigmy demonstrations, in collecting dues from the membership, in prompting them to the distribution of leaflets, etc. But this activity was possible only because the fascist terror was still lacking in system, and we find that the communist activity let up in the same measure in which the fascist "Tcheka" spread its nets. This "revolutionary" spirit of the C.P. — spirit which was asleep at the proper moment, because it did not want that moment to come — collapsed from its own senselessness. Thousands of fanaticized party hangers-on drifted into the concentration camps for distributing leaflets containing nothing more than the phrase, "Hands off the Soviet Union". The fluctuation in membership was peculiar to the C.P. The S.P. was composed of old fellows, incapable of changing, while the C.P. was largely composed of younger elements which instead of convictions had only uniforms to change. These deserters made it all the easier for fascism to wipe out the illegal activity of the C.P. in the shortest conceivable time. The gladiator politics of the C.P. was not even the courage of despair, but served merely to justify the communist "thesis constructors", who of course had asserted that the rule of Hitler could only be of brief duration. The real relations of power contradicted this criminal policy designed to conceal embarrassing facts, and under the ax of the fascist executioners, the deepest-dyed party fanaticism went to pieces.

Though political groups were reorganized underground, the fascist police also adjusted itself to underground pursuit. Day after day occurred, and still occurs, the arrest of officials, the suppression of meeting places, the seizure of contact men. What is built up today is tomorrow already destroyed. Slowly but with deadly certainty, the very beginnings of the illegal movement are blotted out. It was these circumstances which first clearly revealed how deep the national socialist ideology is still rooted even in the workers. They put themselves willingly at the service of the authorities for the purpose of exterminating "Marxism". A state of general distrust spread over the movement. One who still sat in the "party" councils today might stand revealed as a Nazi tomorrow. The ideological sway of the Nazis over the great masses brought into the labor movement a state of oppressing resignation and a feeling for the necessity of long-term change of policy. Anything that escaped the hands of the Nazis fell foul of this resignation. What remains is a very small circle of hounded revolutionists who, in view of the true situation, rightly continue for the present to keep their own company. The Party, to them, apart from a few exceptions, means nothing any more. The "groups of five" include workers from the most disparate camps of the old labor movement. The groups themselves serve for the present merely to assure the mutual understanding of those engaged in the movement; they refrain from all outside activity.

Having shattered the old labor movement, Fascism neither can nor will permit the building up of another. What is more, with the further deepening of the crisis, the terrorism must still continue to grow sharper. The necessity of atomizing the masses politically or of bringing them under the direct control of the fascist state apparatus does not, however, do away with the economic necessity of bringing them together in great numbers in the enterprises, industries, employment bureaus, labor service camps, etc. The impossibility of forming strong organizations does not abolish the class struggle itself; in the new situation, it will simply assume new forms. The absence of dominant permanent organizations will and can only lead to the extension of the workers-council movement. The social development has reached a point which makes the council movement the natural and only possible one. What hitherto has been propaganda arises now from the relations themselves. Since the class struggle, viewed as the essential form of historical movement, is not susceptible of being forbidden, the struggle of the workers for their existence must take the spontaneous character under the fascist dictatorship and will be one with the organization. The councils exist only so long as they are in action; they are in action as soon as they exist. In order to be permanent, they have first to win. They are at the same time the realization of the united front since they are not bound together on the basis of ideologies, but are the expression of the material life needs of the combatants without regard to their ideology. They make a reality of what

could hitherto be valid only in words; namely, that the Revolution is not a party matter, but the affair of the class.

To avoid going off into empty speculation regarding the coming German labor movement, it must be realized that the period of disintegration of existing society constitutes a new historical epoch which follows its own laws and not those of the past. The old party movement which regarded itself as the *decisive* factor of the revolution was in reality only a child of aspiring capitalism; a child which the cannibalistic mother devours in the crisis. The setting in of this new epoch is necessarily bound up with the end of democracy and hence with the end of the previous labor movement. The past, to be sure, still weighs upon the present and leads to the building of neo-socialist, neo-communist and other such “neo” organizations, but all traditions must yield in the face of the changed circumstances. The world crisis is still in its first stage, the process of disintegration has only begun. The farther this process advances, the more must the terrorism against the workers be sharpened. But this terrorism serves for their political education. In the course of development, fascism will be compelled to destroy its own organizations; nature sets a limit even to the greatest joy in thralldom. Famishing fascists cease to be fascists. Resignation kills individuals, but not classes. Every attempt of the workers to ward off their impoverishment will be combated in the manner in which rebellions are put down. Thus even the most backward workers will be compelled, in order to save themselves, to act as if they were conscious revolutionists. Every assembly of workers becomes a reservoir of revolutionary energies. The weakness of the illegal organizations will not permit of any great degree of control over the masses. In committees of action and workers councils they will create their own form of organization and their own leadership. And it is only in these first beginnings and their quantitative growth that the revolutionary movement can be discerned.

The tempo of this development is determined by that of the period of disintegration. Unless there occurs a sudden and rapid deepening of the crisis or unless a new war fundamentally changes the whole world picture, nothing much of a surprising nature in reference to the labor movement will happen in Germany in the near future. Of a restoration of the labor movement upon the basis of the old, nothing of the sort need be looked for. So that, so far as concerns the party movement, one will have to deny its very existence. It is impossible to conceive of any way in which it could set itself up as a quite special group, since the movement is identical with the working class itself. And nevertheless, still more surprisingly than did the fascists, that movement will one day snatch the power into its hands.

Unity for What?: Communist League and the American Workers Party Move to Form New Party

Paul Mattick 1934

According to the *Militant* (#37) the organizational unity of the groups is close at hand. The political bargainers are almost sure to put their deal through to the satisfaction of all concerned. The membership of both groups will be very happy, and they will be proud of a larger and more important organization. The Trotsky bodyguard will easily forget that only yesterday the Musteites were fakirs and political scoundrels. The Muste crowd will soon agree that Trotsky on the same side with their “American Lenin”, the former and present Priest Muste, is not so bad. Together they will fight for the *American* kind of a revolution, and celebrate the memory and bones of American Bourgeois rebels dead 150 years or more.

The whole matter is a joke, only indicating that by this merger they hope to stop the disintegration going on in both groups. It is of no importance to the working class, and as a matter of fact the workers ignore both of “the only ones”. Divorced or combined, they have no future as their only weapons are outworn traditions which may still confuse part of the workers, but never really influence them.

Practically it may be summed up as an expression of the sound policy “for bigger and better business”. As long as it is not positive that this unity will actually take place, it is not worthwhile to deal with it at great length. We will come back to the subject in one of the future issues of the C. C.

The Strike Wave

Paul Mattick 1934

The present strike wave is characterized by defeats and betrayals. The workers suffer defeats because of their insufficient and treacherous organizations on the one hand, and because the capitalist class and its state cannot permit a victory to the workers on the other. Capitalism in the period of general crisis, must combat to its fullest extent any attempt by the workers to improve their conditions. Victory for the workers would mean endangering the position of capitalism. Every strike is practically lost in advance.

But this does not exclude the necessity of workers fighting every onslaught on their living standard. We must take part in every one of these struggles, and encourage the worker to fight, because the present strike wave in spite of its shortcomings is more important than the whole of the “official political movement” at this time. The fact that these strikes are destined for defeat or betrayal does not mitigate the revolutionary value of the struggle. We may point out that on the basis of the present labor movement no victory is possible, but we have to fight in all these labor struggles *as they are*, and not as we might want them. We must strive to hinder the labor fakirs from using these strikes to their own advantage, and this is best done by the most activity on the actual strike front.

The fight for existence is the fight of today; and the struggle for a new society can only grow out of these daily struggles. As these day to day struggles increase, and as the worker gains experience from the defeats, the fight changes its quality and becomes revolutionary leading to the overthrow of the present system. A communist may criticize and condemn the character of the strikes and the organizations involved, but he must take part in the strikes and fight, for this is the shortest road to revolution in the declining period of capitalism.

11. Chinese Anarchism for the 21th Century

Subtitle: The case for unique principles and ideology for the development of a Chinese identity within anarchist politics and the wider socio-political sphere

Author: Li Meiyi

Topics: Chinese Anarchism, 21st century

Date: March 10, 2018

Source: Retrieved on 15th April 2021 from daoistsocialism.wordpress.com

A librarians argument for deleting: pending discussion

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A readers argument against deleting: ...

Abstract

Chinese people have had a long history of civilisation and culture, dating back thousands of years. With the legacy of European colonialism left on the Chinese people which continues to the 21st century, the need for a uniquely Chinese-influenced approach to anarchism must be pioneered so that anarchism will preserve the freedom of the Chinese people and the preservation of our heritage. This can be achieved through an anarchist adaptation of Sun Yat-sen's three principles of the people as a structure for the forming of a Chinese anti-colonialist and anti-racist movement, characterised and unified by a Chinese identity. Solidarity and mutual aid must be promoted with other movements of other ethnic groups so that we may fully achieve the implementation of the principles. Without our movement and identity, we risk losing everything, besides race, that makes us Chinese and distinct from all other ethnic groups, both in our modern society and in any envisioned anarchist future.

Introduction

Chinese anarchism has had its peak influence during the late Qing dynasty/early republic period (Yu and Scalapino, 1961). Leading up to the 21st century, the public and obvious influence of Chinese anarchism has declined, being forced to become an underground movement in the present day (Dickens, 2010). It is from my personal experience that Chinese anarchism has not made its impact on Chinese populations in western societies, which has impacted the manner in which Chinese individuals respond to xenophobia and racism, making this a significant issue to be considered by Chinese populations in understanding our place in the world and our potential power as a socio-political movement.

In this essay, a case will be presented as to how and why Chinese anarchism is to be promoted as an influence and guidance on how Chinese populations in western nations and societies can develop presence and a political vehicle. Intersectionality will be discussed, with the role that Chinese activists should play in supporting and showing solidarity to other social movements using the political vehicle for revolution as a tool for support.

Throughout this essay, the traditional form of writing will be used for the Chinese translations of different terms, with the Pinyin pronunciation included alongside. This will only apply to the first use of terminology; later uses of the same terminology will not include translations or Pinyin. Dr. Sun Yat-sen will be referenced as "Dr. Sun Yat-sen" followed by his Chinese name and Pinyin pronunciation. As with the terminology, this will only apply to when his name is first referred to in the essay.

Part 1: Three Principles of the People (三民主義, Sān Mǐn Zhǔ Yì)

The three principles of the people is a political philosophy which has been developed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙, Sūn Yì Xiān) to provide a framework for establishing a Chinese republic to replace the imperial government of the Qing dynasty (清, Qīng cháo). These three principles are listed at the sub-headings below for this part, with the details of the definitions and applications of each principle to the subject of this dissertation discussed.

In a brief summary of the three principles, I will define them each with a few sentences here.

Nationalism: Chinese culture has had a tradition of kinship and filial piety (孝, xiào) due to religious influences such as Confucianism (儒, rú jiā) (Teon, 2016) but not of national identity, which has led to China being a fractured nation with divided people (Sun, n.d.). Dr. Sun Yat-sen's vision of a nationalist China meant that all ethnicities living in China will be unified under a common identity to be strengthened against western and Japanese nationalism so that China can combat the imperialist ambitions of such nations (Sun, n.d.).

Democracy: Sun Yat-sen's vision of democracy is not completely different to the republican system of government of the west. However, a key difference is that while in the west, democracy is associated with the liberty of individuals, while Sun Yat-sen believed in the collective freedom of the liberty of the nation (Linebarger, 2012). While this may seem paradoxical, it is not necessarily so, as the lack of organised and disciplined people leads to a weak nation that is easily oppressed. Following where this justification leads, it would appear that Sun Yat-sen believed that this organisation and discipline should come about through a governing leadership which is made up of elected individuals by the people, with democracy being the expression of the Chinese people's power as a nation (Linebarger, 2012).

People's livelihood: the meaning and definition of this principle is controversial and highly disputed. The interpretation provided by Linebarger (2012) explains that Sun Yat-sen believed that there are three doctrines to people's livelihood: implementation of nationalist democracy, national enrichment and economic justice. For the doctrine of implementation of nationalist democracy, people's livelihood is believed to be necessary for the Chinese people to be able to gather the material strength to resist imperialist oppression and allow the operation of the other two principles (Linebarger, 2012). The doctrines of national enrichment and economic justice lead to potential conclusions being drawn that Sun Yat-sen's principle of people's livelihood is a socialist principle (or is applicable as a socialist principle), addressing the need of the Chinese people to become economically enriched to escape poverty and for economic justice to be achieved through the fair distribution of property and wealth (Linebarger, 2012).

Nationalism (三民主義, Mǐn Zú Zhǔ Yì)

In western interpretations of nationalism, it would appear that it is contradictory and impossible to both support nationalism and anarchism together. However, I believe nationalism in the form of Sun Yat-sen's principle can be applicable as being able to promote the liberty of Chinese people in western nations and societies.

If we look at the anti-racism movements of other ethnic groups, we can see that they are unified by a cause to preserve their unique identity and to promote pride so that they will not be seen as inferior to the identity of the white race or western civilisation. This can be found in the unity of the Black Panther Party (while they were Marxists and not anarchists, their pride in their black ethnicity and effort to protect their ethnicity and culture from assimilation and racism provides lessons to anarchists of colour, specifically Chinese anarchists for the purposes of this essay) as their organisation gave black people a unified cause (Baggins, 2002).

I must add that in my own personal view, I do not believe that Chinese people in the west face the same issues that black people, during the time period in which the Black Panthers existed, faced. This

is not a call for Chinese people to unify in an identity to compete with other ethnic groups for attention. As with all groups and identities, we all have our own distinct issues we will be dealing with, so we cannot compare ourselves against other ethnic groups or claim that we have the same needs. Issues that are specifically Chinese are what needs to be addressed.

Keeping in line with anarchist values, the “Chinese identity” which is intended to unify Chinese people against racism and assimilation is a voluntary identity to be adopted. Chinese people should not be coerced into identifying themselves with the nationalist values. While this is to avoid authoritarianism, this is also because of the question of who is Chinese. The geographical area of China is made up of many different ethnic groups, some of which identify themselves as Chinese (such as the Manchu people) and some of which see themselves as distinct from the Chinese identity (such as the Tibetan people). Coercion into reviving and maintaining Chinese culture and values is not easy when drawing lines between Chinese and non-Chinese people is blurred. Doing so would risk us perpetrating the very issue we are fighting against on other ethnic groups: assimilation.

While the question of who is Chinese can be defined as people belonging to the Han Chinese ethnic group, this is also not a sufficient solution. The Manchu people are not Han Chinese, however there are Manchu people who identify themselves as Chinese. In excluding ethnic groups such as the Manchu people from the Chinese identity, we are closing off people who have had lived experiences, history and culture as Chinese people on the basis that their racial heritage does not match. This can only lead to the conclusion that nationalism must be non-ethnic and take the form of an identity which is voluntarily associated with.

This logic may cause some to come to conclusions that white Caucasians, who have generations of ancestry having settled in the geographical region of China and adopted all the culture, language and history to the point that they are almost identical to Han Chinese people in social background, will also be able to associate themselves with the Chinese identity in the same way as the Manchu people. I will not argue against this, however it does highlight the need to make a distinct separation between the Chinese identity and the racial identity of people. While white Caucasians can identify themselves with the Chinese identity, this is only in the sense of the non-ethnic national identity and not racial identity. As a result, this means that white people can both associate with the Chinese identity while also experiencing the same white privileges that white Caucasians from western regions experience. This distinction must be made clear so that the limitations of speaking as Chinese people that white Caucasians have are clear.

Now that the boundaries and limits of who the Chinese identity applies to have been clarified, the defining principles of the Chinese identity will be explained. Chinese nationalism is a revival of the traditional cultures, languages and history that define us as a distinct people from others. While Chinese people have always had a significant variety of culture, religion or beliefs and languages, they can all be associated under the label of Chinese. Chinese nationalism should aim to promote all these on the same level in relation to each other (Mandarin Chinese is the dominant language, with lesser known languages arguably dying out and losing significance) (Blanchard, 2010) and to foreign equivalents, as opposed to viewing our identity as outdated and opting to assimilate into the values of western civilisation.

It must be made clear that nationalism in this context does not mean uncritical approval and loyalty to anything that is historically and culturally Chinese. If we are to have an identity to be proud of and empowering by nature, it must be critically studied by all of us as Chinese people. This includes the traditional practice of foot binding, which has now been ended (Mills, 2015). If we truly are to use our identity for anti-oppression purposes, care must be taken to ensure that it does not enable or actively encourage oppressive behaviour of others.

It may be argued that if we allow such significant diversity within what it means to be Chinese, it will reduce the meaning. Not so, as despite the huge diversity, there is always a common history or root culture which we all have developed from. Similar diversity already exists in other nations (Raento and Husso, 2002) without the meaning of their nationality being lost.

Democracy (民權, Mín Quán Zhǔ Yì)

Sun Yat-sen's ideas surrounding democracy had often linked it with Chinese cultural values so that the ideology did not become a copy of western ideology (Linebarger, 2012). This lesson can be taken and applied to anarchism, with Chinese people looking into the history and culture to adapt to anarchism. One example of this is the application of Daoism (道, dào jiào) to provide a framework for anarchist politics (Josh, 2005).

In regard to Sun Yat-sen's vision of a republic, I share the same views as the Paris Group as written in their publication, New Century (新世紀, xīn shì jì): "Rather than merely opposing the Manchu Court, was it not better to oppose monarchy, Manchu or Han?" (Yu and Scalapino, 1961). It is highly likely that within a republic, decisions will be made which will unfairly advantage certain ethnic groups over others, most likely the Han Chinese majority. This is where I disagree with Sun Yat-sen's idea of the liberty of the nation. It will likely not be the people's will enacted through the state but rather the Han people's will which is enacted.

The answer to this issue is to take the next step further from democracy: anarchism. By ensuring that individual liberty is achieved, collective liberty can be strengthened by ensuring that all individuals voluntarily participate in the collective effort so that unwilling individuals are not coerced into the collective decisions, which prevents Han Chinese majority of any organised group from oppressing minority ethnic groups that may consider themselves Chinese. This will fulfil nationalism by allowing all Chinese groups to have the full autonomy to promote their cultures, languages and history, so that the Chinese identity may prosper into a rich and diverse identity which will stand strong against assimilationist efforts of western civilisation.

Only through these efforts will the fullest form of individual and collective liberty be achieved.

As there are conflicting ideologies within anarchism, I will not go into further detail on the method of achieving and organising an anarchist society. While that is a different debate, it will still be necessary to be had in order for groups to agree on what path will best achieve the goals set out in this essay.

People's Livelihood (民生, Mín Shēng Zhǔ Yì)

The third principle has its importance as being part of the structure with the other two in supporting each other. The socialist values of people's livelihood mean that the anarchist ideology promoted in the principle of democracy needs to be justifiably socialist, in order to provide all ethnic groups with the means to support themselves as individuals and collective organisations in order to support the first principle of nationalism.

This means that people's livelihood has its importance in supporting anti-colonialism and anti-racism through provision of the material means of preserving culture, as well as ensuring that the material means for physical survival are present. This is what makes the socialist ideology in people's livelihood distinct from the socialism of western theorists: it is a necessary requirement for anti-racism.

Within the context of the current socio-economic situation in China, people's livelihood should require the redistribution of ownership of wealth and the means of production from the political and economical elite of China to the wider population and the establishment of public land in order to allow minority ethnic groups to freely harvest and use resources found in areas inhabited by the ethnic groups. This includes the return of Tibetan land and resources to be publicly owned by the people of Tibet.

In the west, this principle may have different applications. The ownership of means of production and wealth by westerners should be distributed to the rightful owners (with "rightful" being defined by the agreed anarchist ideology), especially to Chinese people, so that we have the necessary resources and means of production in the west for the preservation of culture and languages. However, it must be recognised that Chinese people are also capable of being part of this very role of unfair ownership, which means that this principle must be fairly applied with understanding and consideration of the needs of others, especially of people from other ethnic groups. This will be addressed further in part 2.

Part 2: Working with Other Ethnic Groups

As pointed out throughout the adaptation of the three principles of the people to anarchism, Chinese people must self-strengthen in order to be able to preserve our identity against colonialism and racism. However, we must recognise that we are not the only ethnic group that face this struggle. Solidarity and mutual aid with the efforts of other ethnic groups in anti-racism must be promoted above competition.

A starting point for promoting solidarity is recognising our own shortcomings when it comes to relations with other ethnic groups. While we may not individually support racism against other ethnic groups, we must recognise that as we participate in western society, we are also prone to enabling and actively participating in racism against others. Even outside of western societies, we must recognise that it is not impossible for us to enable or actively participate in racism. Our own experiences with dealing with the issue do not prevent us from also allowing it or causing it to be imposed on others. This can be seen in the CCTV Spring Festival Gala of 2018, which featured a Chinese actress in blackface to portray the African people (BBC, 2018).

Using our political movements which we will build using the structure of the three principles, we must act as representatives of our identity and use that to provide public support of other ethnic groups and their anti-racism efforts. We must support other movements such as Black Lives Matter as Chinese people for two reasons: to publicly distinguish ourselves from white westerners to have recognition and fulfil the first principle of nationalism, and also to ensure that the push for social change is applied to all, not just Chinese people. If we rise up without bringing non-Chinese ethnic groups along with us, we have done nothing more than joined the ranks of white westerners and will have not achieved enough to dismantle racist oppression. This is important in recognising that we cannot truly be anarchists or anti-racism if we participate and support concepts that use racist oppression (Johnson, 2008).

We must recognise the differences in issues that we face with racism compared to other ethnic groups. We cannot copy the same approaches and methods that other groups use to combat racism as they may not be practically applicable and at worst, a waste of resources and effort that could be better spent on others. Unless innocent Chinese people are statistically murdered by western police officers at a significant level to judge as a significant racism issue, we must not attempt to compete with Black Lives Matter for attention and space with our own signs saying “Asian Lives Matter.”

Part 3: Conclusion

Uniquely Chinese ideology, culture and history can strengthen our resolve to build and maintain anarchism in a world in which anarchism appears to be dominated by western ideologies. The existence of this movement and identity is essential to preventing the loss of our culture and history before and after achievement of anarchism. We must recognise that even in the absence of coercive institutions that make up racist oppression, colonialist values can still harm the Chinese identity through other socio-economic factors.

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**12. Does the Unabomber have any
relevance to anarchism?**

Author: Theo Slade

Date: 2022

Topics: technology, green anarchism, Ellul, Earth Liberation Front

A librarians argument for rejecting: El says we should not upload things from Theo Slade. (from Elin — to be more specific, until Slade's Ted K Archive starts citing t@l for the hundreds of texts they've copied and pasted from us, I don't think we should publish them. They have their own archive to publish their own (usually very low-quality) texts)

A librarians argument against rejecting: ...

A readers argument rejecting: ...

A readers argument against rejecting: The Ted K Archive definitely forked off a chunk of The Anarchist Library with the aim of publishing many of the texts in a more responsible way and then archiving tangentially related side reading to show the context various books and essays are written in.

One goal in creating the website was to build an easily searchable website people could use to research socially conservative primitivists and eco-fascists attempts to appeal to anarchists. Also crucially, a website that was very openly highly critical of these attempts.

So, my middle ground suggestion for libraries, publishing houses, social centres, etc. who want to explore the emergence of some reactionary ideas, is just not to confuse a primary role the project serves in being 'a place people can find anarchist texts', but to spin off a separate research project, and advertise it as such.

The anarchist library has published a 100 or so texts that were first archived on TKA, and there was a questionnaire created in order to make the process of copying over 500 or so more texts more efficient.

Finally, it would be great if someone with the knowhow and time happened to desire to write code to create share links to The Anarchist Library mirror for every text that has a duplicate there. So that people randomly researching Ted K who want to share a text for reasons unrelated to 'the technology question' can have an anarchist library link to share.

Introduction

To begin with, I think Ted K sincerely identified as an anarchist in the 1990s at least. His first letter to the media, in June 1993, began with the words: “We are an anarchist group calling ourselves FC.” A later communiqué from April 1995 repeated: “We call ourselves anarchists.” The Manifesto discusses “our particular brand of anarchism”.

Also, for many years after his arrest his message remained fairly consistent: “the social ideal I would put forward is that of the nomadic hunting-and-gathering society.”¹ Plus, that: “after the technological industrial system has been eliminated, people can and should fight injustice wherever they find it.”²

But, in terms of answering the deeper question of ‘does the Unabomber have any relevance to anarchism?’ I think Wayne Price said it best when he answered in the following way:³

First, I answer “No.” His views have nothing in common with my views on anarchism. And even the most misguided anarchist bomb-throwers and assassins of the past would not have killed professors and students.

But I also say “Maybe.” His views are similar to those of many anarchists: the lack of interest in developing a strategy for popular revolution; the belief that the enemy is industrial technology; not building an organization; not participating in popular struggles, but acting as an elite above the people; the worship of violence, abstracted from popular struggle; a willingness to impose their views on the people, even while denouncing as vanguardist those who try to persuade people. Perhaps I could add: an ambiguity about democracy, seeing anarchism as for freedom versus democracy, rather than as the most extreme form of democracy. All these concepts are reflected in the Unabomber’s letters and actions and are also held by various trends within the anti-authoritarian movements. No doubt the Unabomber will be used as an excuse for denouncing anarchism. The movement would be wise to prepare by having open discussion about him and his methods.

As much as some Kaczynski fans would like to claim that the number of people who are curious about Kaczynski is a sign of a burgeoning movement, I think for the most part interest in the Unabomber case is comparable to other true crime curiosities such as the case of Aileen Wuornos.⁴

I’m fascinated by the Aileen Wuornos case, who was this hitch-hiking sex worker in the 70s, who ended up killing and robbing some of her clients, and it was this weird juxtaposition for the time because women were getting killed all the time by men and so it flipped the script a little bit that there was actually truck drivers who had assaulted or raped women on the road before, who began to be too afraid to pick up women because they were worried about getting killed.

¹ Ted Kaczynski. Ted Kaczynski’s Letter Correspondence With David Skrbina. From Ted to Skrbina — August 29, 2004. Technological Slavery. Fitch & Madison Publishers, 2022. <https://fitchmadison.com/product/technological-slavery-volume-one-2022/>. Archived Link.

² Ted Kaczynski. Answer to Some Comments Made in Green Anarchist. Box 65 of the University of Michigan’s Special Collection’s Library (Labadie Collection). Archived Link.

³ Wayne Price. Is the Unabomber an Anarchist? Love And Rage, Vol. 6, No. 4, August/September 1995. Source PDF. Archived Link.

⁴ Theo Slade. A Conversation with John Zerzan on Direct Action, School Shootings, Authenticity, Veganism & More [Video Interview]. Activist Journeys. Aug 9, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

On hearing news on the radio of a woman sex worker killing men, one woman compared the unbelievable experience to the first time Orson Welles' radio-play 'The War of The Worlds' was received by a bemused audience.

Also:⁵

Of course, the idea that technology is having an ever more destructive effect on our species isn't very surprising. I hear people saying stuff like this all the time. Technology is destroying us. Our modern lives are fundamentally sick. YouTube and Facebook, and subreddits and Fox News have destroyed any shared sense of truth.

And we are all with our consumption, our waste, our relentless burning of fossil fuels pushing the planet to the point of no return. ...

Last fall I went to visit one of my best friends ... as I was leaving he handed me a book to read. It was short, slender, a book of letters from the mid 1920s written by an Italian born German theologian named Romano Guardini, I started flipping the pages when I got home and I kept finding passages like this:

"Thus, a technique of controlling living people is developing. It is constructed rationally and embodied in a monstrous system. For most of us, the possibility of a free development and central shaping of the person has disappeared."

It could have been lifted straight from the manifesto, except it was written 70 years earlier. It may be tempting to look at every screwed up development in our times and think the Unabomber was right, that Ted was prophetic, that his dystopian predictions for our world have come true. But that's giving him too much credit. Ted's ideas aren't original, they're old. The manifesto is filled with the same kinds of things people have been saying about technology for as long as machines have been around.

⁵ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

1953 — Ted becomes a primitivist

Quoting Ted:¹

Unquestionably there is no doubt that the reason I dropped out of the technological system is because I had read about other ways of life, in particular that of primitive peoples. When I was about eleven I remember going to the little local library in Evergreen Park, Illinois. They had a series of books published by the Smithsonian Institute that addressed various areas of science. Among other things, I read about anthropology in a book on human prehistory. I found it fascinating. After reading a few more books on the subject of Neanderthal man and so forth, I had this itch to read more. I started asking myself why and I came to the realization that what I really wanted was not to read another book, but that I just wanted to live that way.

¹ Theresa Kintz. Theresa Kintzs' Interview with Ted Kaczynski [Written Interview]. The Ted K Archive. retrieved on December 16, 2014. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

1971 — Ted misreads the minimalist anarchist Jaques Ellul

Lis Wiehl and the FBI:¹²

David recalled that around this time, Ted had become enamored with a book written by Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, which was first published in French in 1954 and later translated into English and several other languages. The subject matter so moved him that he began a correspondence with Ellul, telling the author he had read his work multiple times. Later, Ted drafted an essay in which he argued that the never-ending push for scientific and technological progress was wrong and would bring about the end of individual liberties. In Ted's view, society's power to control individuals was quickly expanding and would ultimately make it impossible for men and women to follow their own paths. He wrote about propaganda, educational guiding of children's emotional development, operant conditioning, and "direct physical control of emotions via electrodes and "cheminrodes" (sic). Ted proposed founding an organization dedicated to stopping federal aid to scientific research, thereby preventing the "ceaseless extension of society's powers."

Ted wanted David to head up the organization because Ted did not work well with people, but David declined.

Quoting from Ted's letter to Ellul:³

5. In the section *Aims of Revolution* you say, "the issue is not technology per se, but the present structure of society." In the section *Focus of Revolution*, you say that the revolution must be "against the technological society not against technology." Further on, you indicate that we must "master technology". This seems to suggest the notion that we can have an advanced technology and still avoid the bad aspects of the technological society. If this is what you meant, then the idea is probably incorrect, and very dangerous.

Yet this is precisely what he meant and Ted had simply read into the text only what he wanted to. Quoting Ellul:⁴⁵

If we see technique as nothing but objects that can be useful (and we need to check whether they are indeed useful); and if we stop believing in technique for its own sake or that of society; and if we stop fearing technique, and treat it as one thing among many others, then we destroy the basis for the power technique has over humanity.

¹ Lis W. Wiehl and Lisa Pulitzer. *Hunting the Unabomber: The FBI, Ted Kaczynski, and the Capture of America's Most Notorious Domestic Terrorist* [Book]. Nelson Books. April 28, 2020. Original link. Archived link.

² FBI. David Kaczynski's Statement [Court Document]. California University of Pennsylvania Special Collections. Original link. Archived link.

³ Ted Kaczynski. Ted Kaczynski's Letter to Ellul. The Michigan University Archive, Box 91, Folder 11 Archived Link.

⁴ Jacques Ellul. *Perspectives on Our Age: Jacques Ellul Speaks on His Life and Work* [Book]. House of Anansi Press Perseus-PGW. 2004. Original link. Archived link.

⁵ Ibid.

In 1944, at the Liberation, I was part of the Movement of National Liberation, I even held certain positions in it, and had begun to believe the dream we had been dreaming during the last few years of the Resistance, often expressed by the saying that we were going to move from Resistance to Revolution. But when we said that—and I would like to point out that Camus first used it in 1943 in combat groups—we did not mean a Communist, Stalinist, Soviet revolution. We meant a fundamental revolution of society, and we made great plans for transforming the press, the media, and the economic structures. They all had elements of socialism, to be sure; but I would say it was more of a Proudhonian socialism, going back to grassroots by means of a federative and cooperative approach.

1979 — Ted writes to *Wild America*

Quoting Ted:¹

This writer's personal viewpoint is that "progress" (as the term is generally understood in modern society) is in the long run incompatible with wilderness preservation. However, the purpose of this article is less to persuade the reader that this viewpoint is correct than to get him to face the issue squarely and make a decision for himself, one way or the other.

The reply from *Wild America*:²

Dear T.J.

I thoroughly enjoyed your article, "Progress Versus Wilderness." It was very nicely written, and I found myself agreeing with everything you had to say. ...

Finally, Ted's reply to the reply:³

Dear Mr. Schneider:

I thank you for your letter ...

Some sort of organized movement should be formed which should develop an anti-technological, pro-nature ideology and wait for the right political and psychological moment to expand its influence. Modern society currently seems to be in a state of sociological uncertainty and disorganization. It is quite possible that at some point some group will "save" the mass of mankind by presenting them with an ideology in which they can Believe ...

¹ Ted Kaczynski Progress versus Wilderness. The Michigan University Archive, Box 91, Folder 11. Archived Link

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

1985 — The Unabomber’s First Public Primitivist Argument

Ted’s first public announcement of the philosophy behind his actions was sent to the San Francisco Examiner in 1985. However, it was never published, as both the newspaper and FBI claim to have had no idea about it’s existence. So, funnily enough, the letter may simply have gotten lost in the mail system:¹

1. The aim of the Freedom Club is the complete and permanent destruction of modern industrial society in every part of the world. This means no more airplanes, no more radios, no more miracle drugs, no more paved roads, and so forth. Today a large and growing number of people are coming to recognize the industrial-technological system as the greatest enemy of freedom. Many evidences of these changing attitudes could be cited. For the moment we content ourselves with mentioning one statistic. “According to a January 1980 poll, only 33 percent of the citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany [West Germany] still believe that technological development will lead to greater freedom; 56 percent think it is more likely to make us less free.” This is from “1984: Decade of the Experts?” – an article by Johanno Strasser in 1934 revisited: *Totalitarianism in our century*, edited by Irving Howe and published by Harper and Row, 1983. (This article as a whole helps to show the extent to which technology is becoming a target of social rebellion.)
2. The hollowness of the old revolutionary ideologies centering on socialism has become clear. Now and in the future the thrust of rebellion will be against the industrial-technological system itself and not for or against any political ideology that is supposed to govern the administration of that system. All ideologies and political systems are fakes. They only result in power for special groups who just push the rest of us around. There is only one way to escape from being pushed around, and that is to smash the whole system and get along without it. It is better to be poor and free than to be a slave and get pushed around all your life.
3. No ideology or political system can get around the hard facts of life in industrial society. Because any form of industrial society requires a high level of organization, all decisions have to be made by a small elite of leaders and experts who necessarily wield all the power, regardless of any political fictions that may be maintained. Even if the motives of this elite were completely unselfish, they would still HAVE TO exploit and manipulate us simply to keep the system running. Thus the evil is in the nature of technology itself.
4. Man is a social animal, meant to live in groups. But only in SMALL groups, say up to 100 people, in which all members know one another intimately. Man is not meant to live as an insignificant atom in a vast organization, which is the only way he can live in any form of industrialized society.

¹ Ted Kaczynski. Message to San Francisco Examiner C-248 [Letter]. Original link. Archived link.

1990 — Earth First! shifts with the times

Bron Taylor:¹

After a brief period in the early 1990s wherein Earth First! co-founder Mike Roselle was installed as lead editor of the movement's journal, a new, collective structure was established to publish *Earth First!*. The journal's new structure reflected the growing proportion of anarchists in the post-schism movement. The issues addressed in the journal grew dramatically to include a host of causes that had gotten relatively little attention during the 1980s, including animal liberation and the support of Animal Liberation Front (ALF) prisoners. It also focused increasing attention on egalitarian ideals, advancing many anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-sexist causes, and engaging in a great deal of internal critique of the movement's failures to consistently reflect and promote such values.

Perhaps most significantly, the journal's pages increasingly discussed arson other tactics that risked and occasionally appeared to support harming people. Its pages also sympathetically covered the groups becoming infamous for such tactics, including the Earth Liberation Front (ELF); an offshoot from Earth First! that was founded in the United Kingdom in 1992 by activists frustrated by the movement's absolute commitment to non-violence.

¹ Bron Taylor. Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From Earth First! To Wild Earth [Essay]. Environment & Society Portal. Apr 17, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

1992 — The Earth Liberation Front emerges

Wikipedia:¹

The Earth Liberation Front was founded in 1992 in Brighton, England by members of the Earth First!(EF!) environmental movement at the first-ever national meeting. At the time, EF! had become very popular, so people's concerns were based on maintaining this popularity and by doing so not associating with overt law-breaking. There was no universal agreement over this, but it was accepted amongst the movement that British EF! would instead continue to advocate and focus on civil disobedience and mass demonstrations. If people wanted to participate in acts of ecotage, the new name "Earth Liberation Front" would be used, with its name and guidelines derived from the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), another movement that uses direct action to liberate animals or sabotage companies using them. It was understood that the simplicity of the guidelines was a crucial factor to engage as many people as possible to the new cause, with the intention that the ELF would quickly become as popular as the ALF.

Eugene

1000s of claims of responsibilities for non-violent sabotage attacks against corporations would occur internationally, and the vast majority of them would deplore terrorizing people through bodily harm. But, fringe individual members of these groups would see the Unabomber manifesto and his assassinating of corporate leaders as a net positive:²

In the mid 1990's Tim Lewis documented the underground eco-anarchist movement.

Tim Lewis — Anarchist Filmmaker:

Yeah, the '90s was a trip. We had this slow progression of radicalism. And for me, I noticed it up in the mountains east of town, and the Earth First!ers were trying to protect this forest up there, which they did. And these Earth First!ers created a blockade to prevent loggers from coming in, and they won.

And then when Ted came along, or the Unabomber, and started killing people that were responsible for some of this kind of behavior that these kids didn't like, I think they found somebody that they could respect a little bit and could understand why he was doing it.

Burn Wild Podcast:³⁴⁵⁶

¹ Multiple Authors. Earth Liberation Front [Essay]. Wikipedia. Apr 20, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

² Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

³ Leah Sottile and Georgia Catt. Burn Wild. Source Link. Archived Link.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

LEAH: We are driving into Eugene. I've been making the drive from Portland to Eugene for as long as I can remember. I'm just going to head toward downtown. Tons of my friends attended school at the university there to me, it's a fun hippie college town... The more we've learned about the case of the Earth Liberation Front, the more we've realized how important Eugene is to this story.

GEORGIA: We are kind of retracing a lot of the steps in the roads, the the Earth Liberation Front would have taken.

LEAH: Yeah, they were travelling all around this area. Close to the Willamette National Forest, where the Warner Creek blockade took place. Eugene is where everything came together where Josephine Sunshine Overaker and Chelsea, Gerlach, and Daniel McGowan all used to live.

DANIEL: It was just like basically wildflowers everywhere people digging up their lawns and creating gardens. People on bikes, punk, anarchists, like lots of protests and also just really intense like street art and this little hub of resistance.

GEORGIA: Recording about this for quite a while, and it's somewhere that's come up again and again, right? So I've been trying to picture it. Yeah, right?

LEAH: We hope we might meet people who knew Josephine Sunshine here, but there's another reason we're coming here today too. Over the past 18 months as we've been speaking with activists, past and present, a name has come up over and over. Someone who had nothing to do with the Earth Liberation Front.

RUPERT: So Ted Kaczynski is a fascinating person...

LEAH: Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber.

RUPERT: He actually was an eco-terrorist.

LEAH: Academic and environmental campaigner Rupert Reed. Rupert is clear that he doesn't condone violence.

RUPERT: My view is that it isn't really violence unless you're harming somebody, and Kaczynski was very unusual because he actually did harm people.

LEAH: Ted Kaczynski was once a math professor at a prestigious university, but eventually he just dropped out of society. He left the world. Behind and went to live in a tiny log cabin in rural Montana. From there, he waged a nearly twenty year bombing campaign in which he mailed 17 bombs to various universities, companies and individuals. 23 people were injured and three were killed and a 35,000 word manifesto entitled Industrial Society. And its future, Kaczynski wrote that technology was the downfall of humanity and that it should be destroyed to protect humans and the planet from total destruction.

RUPERT: While I do not condone his methods at all, I think what he Did was wrong. What he's written was very powerful, and it's through his words, really, that he's had an influence on the environmental movement, not through his actions. He basically calls people to a kind of seriousness. He says. What are you willing to do to actually preserve? Of life and freedom on the earth. He makes you think about what's at stake and about what you're willing to do about it. Some people have read Kaczynski and thought you know what. Actually maybe I should do some nonviolent direct action.

LEAH: It turns out Ted Kaczynski had some connections to Eugene to ideas that germinated here. As Georgia and I tried to answer the question of what pushes people into taking radical action, we thought we'd better look into it and it would lead us somewhere very unexpected.

LEAH: In the 1990s, Paul Rogers was an editor of the UK Green Anarchist magazine. He calls it GA. And they published Kaczynski's manifesto.

PAUL: GA were the first to publish in the society in its future in in UK. You know, I think it was within about a week of the Washington Post carrying it in fact.

LEAH: Ted Kaczynski was eventually sentenced to life in prison and many people, like Paul, corresponded with him.

PAUL: Oh yes, I mean immediately following his arrest and during some time during his imprisonment in Florence. But eventually we fell out principally over the issue of leftism and the sexual politics seemed to be very undeveloped as well, which. Was as disappoint.

LEAH: Kaczynski was very critical of the left in his manifesto. He wasn't particularly fond of feminism, gay rights, animal rights, disability rights, really. He kind of seemed to. Hate everyone, which is maybe why? He lived in a cabin in. The woods. Anyway, I was a. Little surprised to hear Paul Rogers say. That it was. The leftism bit that turned him off from. So, so the sort of backing away from him was sounded like was because of his opinions and leftism and sexual politics of the time, but not so much that people died because of his bombs.

PAUL: Individuals facing desperate circumstances at their backs to the wall occasionally commit a percentile of crimes. They are beyond the pale and unacceptable, but the routine, everyday violence and mass killing of governments perfectly accepted as far as these people are concerned, so they really need to look at their perspective.

LEAH: Paul dodges the question and deflects, blames the government, and that's interesting to me. In my reporting on. The far right people. Will often say similar things that their violence is justified because the government commits violence against them. We wanted to know more about the influence of Ted Kaczynski's ideas on the radical environmental movement and when we'd spoken to Chelsea Gerlach, she'd said something that was what started us on this drive down to Eugene.

CHELSEA: There came to be a pretty significant primitivist eco-anarchist movement based in Eugene that was influenced by those that type of thinking and I would certainly say that that was a significant part of my own philosophical orientation during the time of the action. The Green Anarchy magazine that was out of Eugene, John Zerzan...

LEAH: Green Anarchy magazine. This is different to Paul's Green Anarchist. But Paul had mentioned this magazine and its editor John Zerzan too.

PAUL: You probably know John Zerzan, I don't think you mentioned...

LEAH: We just didn't know who he was at the time. What we know now is that John Zerzan is a green anarchist and primitivist writer. He's anti civilization, anti technology. Basically he wants to see society dismantled and return to a wild state. I always like to. Say that behind every good piece of journalism is a great librarian, and when we looked up John Zerzan, we found the need for one. The University of Oregon Library in Eugene housed this archive of correspondence, which John Zerzan donated was a full archive of letters with Ted Kaczynski who John had written to while he was in prison. Sign here. They were sealed, not available to the public. But it turned out the seal on them was expiring this very week. By the time we got to the library, George and I were the very first people. To see those letters. I think I have 9 boxes. We've got about 3 hours and 9 boxes to go through, so we waste no time pawing. Through the files. Scribbling down notes with pencils. Letters showed there was a strong connection between Eugene and the UK. Activists from the UK were coming to Eugene. And vice versa. Anarchy week. It's also clear that Zerzan and Kaczynski's relationship was serious. In one letter, Kaczynski told John Zerzan you're

my most loyal friend. There's a lot of. Names we recognize and a lot of. References to the ELF. There was clearly a connection, but at first. We weren't sure what that was.

LEAH: We tell John. We've just been to the archives and seen his correspondence with Ted Kaczynski. He called you like his most loyal friend. Are you still friends at this point?

ZERZAN: No, sadly enough, he wasn't intuitive. His perspective is it's about technology and it must be only about technology. So we kind of we parted ways.

LEAH: Again, just like with Paul Rogers, they're falling out, wasn't about the violence. It was about an academic disagreement. It's interesting to me that that that's what it came down to for you. I want to hear a bit more about your opinion on the use of harm. You know the violence and. This this question. Of violence keeps coming up in in regards to. Was the Earth Liberation Front committing violence? Where do you stand on?

ZERZAN: That well, it should be a constant question, not taken lightly at all. I think ELF never caused violence to any life in my opinion. You can't violate a building or a window or what. Although some friends of mine would say it is violence, and we're not shrinking from the violence that we think is necessary. That's one way to look at it. You know, when I used to be asked in terms of the Unabomber case, for example. So what about killing people and my way of answering mostly was? I don't advocate sending bombs in the mail, but were those people innocent? I don't think so. Doesn't mean I advocate sending bombs in. The mail but. You know, and that usually dissatisfied the. Journalist or something you know?

LEAH: Do you think committing violence is ever excusable?

ZERZAN: I don't know about that. I'm in favor of property damage, focused property destruction, but I don't think peaceful milling around on the streets. I don't think it's ever changed anything.

LEAH: I pull up the photo of the note he sent John on my phone and show it to. Was asking John Zerzan about a note that you sent to him and I was wondering what it meant actually. It says John don't get nervous and don't soak it in water. Here's a little gift because if you got to look at a clock, you might as well know what time it is. See you, sunshine.

SUNSHINE: Oh, it's... I made him a clock like an alarm clock. Has some Unabomber motif.

LEAH: An alarm clock with a Unabomber motif, this reference to Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber. It's not the only reference to the man who killed three people that we're confronted with as we sit around the campfire. On the outside of Tim Shack, we notice a poster of Ted Kaczynski in one of his windows. It's a photo and it reads be like Ted... Tim told us he believes Ted did have an influence on Eugene's radical community writing to us. After the recording, he told us all the direct action letter writing marches. Peaceful protests were not preventing the slaughter of the wild places we all loved here in the northwest, he said, quote. The bust and trial created a buzz about what's violent and nonviolent, what tactics should be used to save wild places.

1995 — The Manifesto is Published

Quoting Ted:¹²³⁴⁵

We call ourselves anarchists because we would like, ideally, to break down all society into very small, completely autonomous units. Regrettably, we don't see any clear road to this goal, so we leave it to the indefinite future. Our more immediate goal, which we think may be attainable at some time during the next several decades, is the destruction of the worldwide industrial system. Through our bombings we hope to promote social instability in industrial society, propagate anti-industrial ideas and give encouragement to those who hate the industrial system.

Leftism is unlikely ever to give up technology, because technology is too valuable a source of collective power.

The anarchist³⁴ too seeks power, but he seeks it on an individual or small-group basis; he wants individuals and small groups to be able to control the circumstances of their own lives. He opposes technology because it makes small groups dependent on large organizations.

34. This statement refers to our particular brand of anarchism. A wide variety of social attitudes have been called "anarchist," and it may be that many who consider themselves anarchists would not accept our statement of paragraph 215. It should be noted, by the way, that there is a nonviolent anarchist movement whose members probably would not accept FC as anarchist and certainly would not approve of FC's violent methods.

183. But an ideology, in order to gain enthusiastic support, must have a positive ideal as well as a negative one; it must be FOR something as well as AGAINST something. The positive ideal that we propose is Nature. That is, WILD nature: Those aspects of the functioning of the Earth and its living things that are independent of human management and free of human interference and control. And with wild nature we include human nature, by which we mean those aspects of the functioning of the human individual that are not subject to regulation by organized society but are products of chance, or free will, or God (depending on your religious or philosophical opinions).

184. Nature makes a perfect counter-ideal to technology for several reasons. Nature (that which is outside the power of the system) is the opposite of technology (which seeks to expand indefinitely the power of the system). Most people will agree that nature is beautiful; certainly it has tremendous popular appeal. The radical environmentalists ALREADY hold an ideology that exalts nature and opposes technology. It is not necessary for the sake of nature to set up some chimerical utopia or any new kind of social order. Nature takes care of itself: It was a spontaneous creation that existed long before any human society, and for

¹ Ted Kaczynski. U-7: Letter and envelop from FC to Warren Hoge (Assistant Managing Editor, NY Times) [Letter]. California University of Pennsylvania Special Collections. Original link. Archived link.

² Ted Kaczynski. Industrial Society and Its Future [Book]. The Ted K Archive. 1995. Original link. Archived link.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

countless centuries many different kinds of human societies coexisted with nature without doing it an excessive amount of damage. Only with the Industrial Revolution did the effect of human society on nature become really devastating. To relieve the pressure on nature it is not necessary to create a special kind of social system, it is only necessary to get rid of industrial society. Granted, this will not solve all problems. Industrial society has already done tremendous damage to nature and it will take a very long time for the scars to heal. Besides, even preindustrial societies can do significant damage to nature. Nevertheless, getting rid of industrial society will accomplish a great deal. It will relieve the worst of the pressure on nature so that the scars can begin to heal. It will remove the capacity of organized society to keep increasing its control over nature (including human nature). Whatever kind of society may exist after the demise of the industrial system, it is certain that most people will live close to nature, because in the absence of advanced technology there is no other way that people CAN live. To feed themselves they must be peasants, or herdsmen, or fishermen, or hunters, etc. And, generally speaking, local autonomy should tend to increase, because lack of advanced technology and rapid communications will limit the capacity of governments or other large organizations to control local communities.

To the extent that the average modern INDIVIDUAL can wield the power of technology, he is permitted to do so only within narrow limits and only under the supervision and control of the system. (You need a license for everything and with the license come rules and regulations.) The individual has only those technological powers with which the system chooses to provide him. His PERSONAL power over nature is slight.

198. Primitive INDIVIDUALS and SMALL GROUPS actually had considerable power over nature; or maybe it would be better to say power WITHIN nature. When primitive man needed food he knew how to find and prepare edible roots, how to track game and take it with homemade weapons. He knew how to protect himself from heat, cold, rain, dangerous animals, etc. But primitive man did relatively little damage to nature because the COLLECTIVE power of primitive society was negligible compared to the COLLECTIVE power of industrial society.

199. Instead of arguing for powerlessness and passivity, one should argue that the power of the INDUSTRIAL SYSTEM should be broken, and that this will greatly INCREASE the power and freedom of INDIVIDUALS and SMALL GROUPS.

Zerzan Promotes Ted's Message

Zerzan thought he found a kindred spirit when he first heard about Kaczynski:⁶

The concept of justice should not be overlooked in considering the Unabomber phenomenon. In fact, except for his targets, when have the many little Eichmanns who are preparing the Brave New World ever been called to account? Where is any elemental personal responsibility when the planners of our daily and global death march act with complete impunity?

The ruling order rewards such destroyers and tries to polish their image. The May 21, 1995 New York Times Magazine's "Unabomber and David Gelerntner" humanizes the latter, injured by a Unabomber bomb at Yale, as a likable computer visionary preparing a "Renaissance of the human spirit." From no other source than the article itself, however, it is clear that Gelerntner is helping to usher in an authoritarian dystopia based on all the latest high-tech vistas, like genetic engineering.

⁶ John Zerzan. Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization [Book]. Feral House. Fall 1995. Original link. Archived link.

Is it unethical to try to stop those whose contributions are bringing an unprecedented assault on life? Or is it unethical to just accept our passive roles in the current zeitgeist of postmodern cynicism and know-nothingism? As a friend in California put it recently, when justice is against the law, only outlaws can effect justice.

Other anarchists critiques his message

Wayne Price:⁷

Is the Unabomber an Anarchist?

The “Unabomber” claims to be an anarchist. For 17 years, the person who has been called the Unabomber has been attacking people with bombs, without making an explanation. The bomb targets have included some rich and powerful individuals, such as the April killing of a lobbyist for a logging association. But the main targets have been college professors (of genetics and computer science) and owners of computer stores. “Unintended” injuries have happened to others, including students, a secretary, and passengers on an airplane. In six bombings, there have been three deaths and 22 injuries.

Now he has written a letter declaring his politics to be “anarchist and radical environmentalist.” (Although the Unabomber claims to be “the terrorist group FC,” I use “he,” since the evidence suggests one person and the politics suggests a male.) The Oklahoma bombing by a few fascists is widely seen as reflecting the political culture of a broader far-right movement. The question is sure to be raised: Should the bombings by this “anarchist” similarly be seen as reflecting the politics of the anarchist and radical environmental movements? My answer: No, and Maybe.

To be sure, the Unabomber (or “FC”) was bombing for years before raising the anarchist banner. However, his aim was anti-technological from the first. Whether or not they originally inspired him, there is no reason to doubt that he has come to agree with anarchist ecological views. His opinions are close enough to certain widespread views within the anti-authoritarian movement to be worth discussing.

His Anarchist Vision

His letter to the *New York Times* (4/26/95) states, “We call ourselves anarchist because we would like, ideally, to break down all society into very small, completely autonomous units.” It is true that anarchists have generally been decentralists, because participatory democracy is only possible in human-scale communities where people can meet face-to-face. This may include villages, factory councils, city neighborhoods, social clubs, or whatever. However, many anarchists have also advocated for a federation from the bottom-up, so that local groups are in a network of voluntary associations covering regions, continents, and the world.

His vision includes complete destruction of the “industrial-technological system” worldwide. Again, most anarchists today do not regard the current development of industrial technology as “progressive” or even “neutral,” as do Marxists and liberals. Capitalism and the state have developed this technology for their own purposes of exploitation, profit and war. A new society will not be able to simply use these machines just as they are.

However there is a dispute within the anti-authoritarian/ecological movement. Some believe that a new society should use technological knowledge to create a new type of industry,

⁷ Wayne Price. Is the Unabomber an Anarchist? *Love And Rage*, Vol. 6, No. 4, August/September 1995. Source PDF. Archived Link.

bountiful but non-exploitative and ecological. Others advocate going back to pre-industrial society, to medieval technology, or hunting and gathering.

Like the Unabomber, these people seem to forget that pre-industrial society was often highly oppressive, including monarchist, mass slavery, feudalism, war, and the oppression of women before class society even developed. In any case, pre-industrial society evolved into industrial society; out of that came this. Just as industrial machinery is not automatically liberatory, neither is the absence of industrial technology automatically liberatory.

His Strategy

The Unabomber admits to having no strategy for anarchism. “We don’t see any clear road to this goal, so we leave it for the indefinite future.” Instead, “our more immediate goal, which we think may be attainable during the next several decades, is the destruction of the worldwide industrial system.”

There are many other anarchists who have no idea how anarchism might come. And neither I nor anyone else has a crystal ball or a fully worked-out analysis. But it is possible to begin to work toward a modern analysis and strategy for an anarchist revolution. This requires developing both our theory and our activity. We need to analyze the social system (using tools from various sources such as feminism, classical Marxism, historical anarchism, ecological theory, etc.). We need to look for the weaknesses in the system, the nature of the developing crisis, the social forces likely to struggle. Especially, we need to participate in the popular struggles, in dialogue with other viewpoints. We need to develop an organization that can help us do these things without tying us down. Instead, the Unabomber proposes to blow up individuals. In a letter to one of his victims, he wrote, “If there were no computer scientists, there would be no progress in computer science.” Clearly he thinks of the enemy as individuals rather than a social system — a social system that can create computer scientists faster than he can kill them. Similarly he blames the technology, not the society which requires it. He also hopes to “propagate anti-industrial ideas” by his bombing. But bombs (or assassination or kidnapping), when not a close part of a popular struggle, are seen by most people as one more evil of the social system, not as part of the solution. If anything, it leads people to support the establishment against those who seem to want pointless destruction. He is trying to spread ideas by a book. If it is published and publicized by the media, he promises to stop bombing people, and only target buildings in the future. As if the rulers care about the deaths of professors or computer-store owners!

Violence

Like most people, I am not a pacifist. The existence of widespread police brutality and the growth of the fascist “militias” show that popular movements will have to defend themselves. The state will never allow a non-violent, democratic revolution.

However, the use of violence exacts a price. It makes revolutionaries less sensitive, less morally keen, less like people of the new world. Violence is only justifiable in a revolutionary situation or in defense of a popular struggle (for example, the Black Panther Party at its height). When revolutionaries, isolated from most people, set out to strike at even the most vicious oppressors, the results are invariably bad. Bystanders get injured, the revolutionaries become more isolated from the people, they get killed or jailed, and the state gets a popular excuse for greater repression.

As a general rule, I would give political and legal support to such revolutionaries when arrested by the state, despite my disagreements. In the case of the Unabomber, he is a murderer dragging noble ideas through the mud.

His Authoritarianism

Anarchism has a popular image of bomb-throwing, based on a real trend in anarchist history. But there are other historical trends in anarchism, including organizing mass labor struggles (anarcho-syndicalist, the IWW), mass military forces (Makhno, Durruti), and even a pacifist trend (Tolstoy, Goodman). There is nothing inevitably “terrorist” about anarchism.

In our time most, “terrorism” has been carried out by Marxist-Leninists, nationalists, and other statist, not anarchists. (Of course, such violence has always been small potatoes compared to the massive terror used by the military and police forces of the states.) For example, the Weatherpeople of the ‘60s were admirers of Stalin and Charles Manson.

This sort of small group “terrorism” is inevitably authoritarian. The Unabomber, who admits to having no strategy for popular struggle, seeks to overthrow industrial society virtually single-handedly. He will force people to live in non-industrial, totally decentralized society? What if they do not want to live in such a society? And they do not; the vast majority support the existing system, more or less. Rather than trying to persuade them, he intends to blow up their society.

Anarchists are against the vanguardism of the Leninists but they are often unclear about just what vanguardism is. Many think that they avoid vanguardism by being against the self-organization of anarchists. In my opinion, vanguardism is not the belief that a small group may be right and the majority wrong. Few believe in revolutionary anarchism while the vast majority supports statist capitalism; we have every right to organize ourselves to try to persuade the majority of our viewpoint, always acknowledging that we have much to learn from others.

No, vanguardism is the belief that the correct minority has the right to impose its views on the majority. When the minority seeks to rule over the people, to act for them, to be political in their place, then it is vanguardist and authoritarian, no matter how “anti-authoritarian” is its ideology — as is the case of the Unabomber.

The Unabomber and Anarchism

To return to the original question: are the Unabomber’s murders connected to the politics of anarchism? First, I answer “No.” His views have nothing in common with my views on anarchism. And even the most misguided anarchist bomb-throwers and assassins of the past would not have killed professors and students.

But I also say “Maybe.” His views are similar to those of many anarchists: the lack of interest in developing a strategy for popular revolution; the belief that the enemy is industrial technology; not building an organization; not participating in popular struggles, but acting as an elite above the people; the worship of violence, abstracted from popular struggle; a willingness to impose their views on the people, even while denouncing as vanguardist those who try to persuade people. Perhaps I could add: an ambiguity about democracy, seeing anarchism as for freedom versus democracy, rather than as the most extreme form of democracy. All these concepts are reflected in the Unabomber’s letters and actions and are also held by various trends within the anti-authoritarian movements. No doubt the Unabomber will be used as an excuse for denouncing anarchism. The movement would be wise to prepare by having open discussion about him and his methods.

1996 — Ted begins corresponding with various anarchists post-arrest

Bron Taylor:¹

Kaczynski was a long time reader of *LWOD*, he acknowledged in a letter to its editors after his arrest. In fact, he had selected one of his murder victims from one of the aforementioned hit lists. He also wrote to and offered Theresa Kintz, an *Earth First!* editor at the time, an exclusive interview, because he had been impressed by an editorial she had written for the journal defending ELF activists who had torched a ski lodge under construction in Vail, Colorado. She agreed with the rationale of the arsonists that the action was justifiable because the construction project destroyed critical habitat for an endangered Lynx species.

In answer to the question did you ever think of yourself as an ‘Earth Firster’? Ted answered:²

Not really. As a sort of a satellite, sympathizer’s too weak a word, but sort of... ‘Earth Firster Satellite’? I didn’t want to subscribe to the Earth First Journal because I didn’t want to call attention to myself. If something happened to some logging equipment, I didn’t want them to know who to look for. But, I did pick up a copy of the journal and I saw a lot that I liked.

I discovered Earth First! like in the late ‘80s. I said, “hell, hey these people are saying very much the same things that I’ve been thinking all along.” So, I was not inspired by ‘Earth First!’ But I just happened to agree with them a great deal.

I started to realize, hey, wait a minute, there’s some other people out there that are having a very dim view of technology too, and maybe, just maybe, it might eventually be possible to do something about this.

Alston Chase:³

Kaczynski continues to comment approvingly on the violent exploits of environmental radicals. In a letter he wrote last year to the Denver television reporter Rick Sallinger, he expressed his support for the Earth Liberation Front’s arsons at the Vail ski resort—fires that destroyed more than \$12 million worth of property.

“I fully approve of [the arson],” he wrote Sallinger, “and I congratulate the people who carried it out.” Kaczynski went on to commend an editorial in the *Earth First! Journal* by Kintz, who wrote, “The Earth Liberation Front’s eco-sabotage of Vail constituted a political act of conscience perfectly in keeping with the sincere expression of the biocentric paradigm many Earth First!ers espouse.”

¹ Bron Taylor. Radical Environmentalism’s Print History: From Earth First! To Wild Earth [Essay]. Environment & Society Portal. Apr 17, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

² Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

³ Alston Chase. Harvard and the Making of the Unabomber [Essay]. The Atlantic. June 1, 2000. Original link. Archived link.

One reason why I think actions like the Vail arson are useful: An action like that tends to increase the sense that something is going on, the sense that there is a tension in society, and it gives the activists themselves a sense of purpose. It's important.

Bron Taylor:⁴

The publication of this editorial was protested vehemently by many activists who rejected arson as a tactic and thought embracing it was dangerous to activists and politically counterproductive. But Kintz had her own supporters, including for the idea of conducting and publishing an interview with Kaczynski. She conducted interviews during the summer of 1999 but at a large movement gathering that summer a consensus was reached that the journal ought not publish it. Consequently, Kintz left the journal staff and published the interview in the UK-based tabloid, the *Green Anarchist*.) Like Kintz, the editors of *LWOD* supported and felt affinity with Kaczynski, agreeing with his anti-technology ideology and at the very least that violent tactics are sometimes warranted.

The majority of the movement's activists, however, rejected Kaczynski's violent tactics and did not want the movement tarred by them. But the explicit and implicit endorsement of the ALF and ELF, the sympathy of some for Kaczynski, and the focus on issues that some in the movement considered to be mired in distracting, anthropocentric concerns, caused more moderate members of the movement to drift away. The result was an increasingly radical and anarchistic movement.

Throughout the 1990s Earth First!'s campaigns primarily involved protests, lawsuits, and civil disobedience. In several cases, the resistance gained enough strength to orchestrate large protests that included mass protest arrests, as in 1996 when thousands of citizens gathered in a sparsely populated area of northern California to protest logging in ancient redwood groves by the Pacific Lumber Company (PALCO); over a thousand citizens were arrested. This and a decade of resistance to PALCO's practices contributed to political pressures to reduce social disruption and the loss of political support, and led to heightened scrutiny by state forest authorities and to the company being cited repeatedly for violating the law. Eventually, a deal was worked out wherein the company would sell the most biologically precious old-growth groves to the state of California. Not long afterward the company went bankrupt and was sold to another company with a better reputation, which promised to protect the remaining ancient groves and manage the rest of its forestland more gently.

Project Unabom:⁵

Once the manifesto was published, and he was unmasked as the Unabomber, he wasn't alone with his thoughts anymore. There was a public out there engaging with him trying to figure out what do we make of this man's ideas, what do we make of him?

Eric: Ted may not have decimated the global order, but he was right about his ability to spread the word and reach fellow travelers.

Zerzan: Oh, I wrote to him almost immediately after his arrest.

Eric: This is John Zerzan. He's a former 1960s campus radical and he still looks like one. Shaggy white hair, a full beard wire, rimmed glasses, but over the years he went from leftist radical to leftist skeptic, evolving into a self-described anarchist and technophobe that might be why his tapes sound so bad he had trouble hooking up his computer to record this

⁴ Bron Taylor. Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From Earth First! To Wild Earth [Essay]. Environment & Society Portal. Apr 17, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

⁵ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

interview. By the spring of 1996 when Zerzan reached out to Ted, he was a well established writer himself, attracted to following preaching, a gospel that wasn't all that different from the unabomber's. But Zerzan got published. In underground journals, Ted had managed to get published in the Washington Post.

Zerzan: I wanted to pursue what he was thinking when he was writing, but you know, again. The idea is also the tactical stuff. Where have you? How how do you how? Do we? Get these ideas out there, make them accessible. Have that be part of the conversation in society.

Eric: Ted wrote back and a friendship started. ... By that point, even many hardcore anarchists were leery of Ted. This guy couldn't just appoint himself to be a one-man execution squad on behalf of the enemies of technology, but Suzanne didn't see it that way. To him, all the attention. Being paid to Ted was an opportunity and the anti tech activists who wanted to distance themselves from the Unabomber just didn't have the courage of their convictions.

Zerzan: I tried to take advantage, to push the ideas out there. For Christ's sake, what else would you do? They just wouldn't, when journalists would ask them about it; "well, you people, or anti-technology, you know, what do you think about this Unabomber deal? And oh, they just freaked the fuck out. They just ran for cover. Yeah, I thought that was pathetic. Here's your one chance to say something when people are listening and you're just pissing your pants instead of saying something?

Ted explains the range of letters he gets:⁶

I get letters from kooks who think that I'm in cahoots with space aliens... (laughs) really... I've had a few letters from people who do regard me as some kind of cult figure. And my personal preference is to be depicted truthfully. If I could be used as a symbol for promoting revolutionary activity, that's fine with me, because ... to me, the main thing is to get rid of the industrial system by whatever means may be necessary.

He tries to play the role of both theorist and organizer, connecting people together to build a new movement.⁷⁸

The majority of young people are imitative. That's why we have to provide them with a different model to imitate, a different herd to go along with, rather than leaving the field to the leftists. No doubt, starting a movement would be difficult, but if you're not willing to attempt what is difficult, then you might as well forget about doing anything against the system. I would appreciate it if you would answer the questions...how you feel about my sharing your name and your letters with a few other people. I do know a handful of people who just conceivably might form the nucleus of an effective anti-technological group, but that can't happen if they don't communicate with one another.

I've been trying to find people who might possibly form the nucleus of a new movement that would concentrate on technology, leaving gay rights and poverty to the pink reformers. Such people are not easy to find. So far I have maybe four of them. (I'm sure of only two. The other two are doubtful.) I'm thinking that you might make a fifth. (I'm sure of only two. The other two are doubtful.) I'm thinking that you might make a fifth. You have the right values, you seem level-headed, and I haven't seen any indication that you're obsessed with

⁶ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

⁷ FBI. An FBI report on Ted Kaczynski's Prison Correspondences. California University of Pennsylvania Special Collections. Source Link. Archived Link.

⁸ Ibid.

victimization issues the way leftists are. That's why I wanted to know whether you were oriented toward practical action. If you are, you might be interested in getting involved in an effort to begin a new movement. I would like to hear your thoughts about this. Again, I would be interested to hear your thoughts on the idea of forming a new movement in opposition to the techno-industrial system.

John H. Richardson:⁹

There's maybe completely justifiable reasons for the prison making it very difficult for him to correspond right now that involves his financial recompense issues ... and also other things that I don't have to go into. ... So they may have perfectly valid reasons, but from the beginning I did not get responses from the prison, I had to pursue them constantly and they never really responded to my request for a personal interview. ... It was just basically a stalling shut down. We can't say no, but we're going to just wait so long that it's going to go away.

Reading news and books from the prison library, plus book and essays people send him, he is optimistic about his revolution's chances:¹⁰¹¹

I suspect that you underestimate the strength and depth of feeling against industrial civilization that has been developing in recent years. I've been surprised at some of the things that people have written to me. It looks to me as if our society is moving into a pre-revolutionary situation. (By that I don't mean a situation in which revolution is inevitable, but one in which it is a realistic possibility.) The majority of people are pessimistic or cynical about existing institutions, there is widespread alienation and directionlessness among young people. Perhaps all that is needed is to give these forces appropriate organization and direction.

The current political turmoil provides an environment in which a revolutionary movement should be able to gain a foothold. ... Present situation looks a lot like situation (19th century) leading up to Russian Revolution, or (pre-1911) to Chinese Revolution. You have all these different factions, mostly goofy and unrealistic, and in disagreement if not in conflict with one another, but all agreeing that the situation is intolerable and that change of the most radical kind is necessary and inevitable. To this mix add one leader of genius.

When asked if any such capable leaders had approached him, he answered simply and impatiently 'no,' but then further down the letter answered:¹²

Wait, I just thought of an exception: John Jacobi. But he's a screwball — bad judgment — unreliable — a problem rather than a help.

Jacobi did dedicate many years of his life to building up magazines and websites dedicated to Kaczynski's vision, but was often disappointed with the rigidity and predictableness of Kaczynski's character:¹³

When I wrote Kaczynski, I got the impression that his interactions with me were, ironically, very mechanical, as though he structured them just right so they would work perfectly as part of the larger revolutionary machine.

⁹ John H. Richardson. Children of Ted; The Unlikely New Generation of Unabomber Acolytes [Essay]. *Intelligencer*. Dec 11, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ian Erik Smith. A text dump on wildism [Written Interview]. The Ted K Archive. Jan 11, 2015. Original link. Archived link.

After feeling badly portrayed in the few interviews he did for journalists, he:¹⁴

... told one journalist that he would only be talking to quote “100% committed, far out rabid anti tech radicals.”

¹⁴ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

1997 — More Zerzan promotion

Zerzan:¹

HE MEANS IT-DO YOU

Leftism with its superficial program is nearly extinct. Its adherents have folded their tents of manipulation and, in some cases, moved on to far more interesting adventures.

Anarchism, if not yet anarchy, is the only scene going, even if the blackout on the subject is still in effect. As if to match the accelerating decomposition of society and displacement of life at large, determined resistance is also metamorphosing with some rapidity. The rout of the left, following the swiftly declining prestige of History, Progress, and techno-salvation, is only one development. The old militants, with their ethic of sacrifice and order, their commitment to economy and exchange, are already fixed on the museum shelves of partial revolt. Enter the Unabomber and a new line is being drawn. This time the bohemian schiz-fluxers, Green yuppies, hobbyist anarcho-journalists, condescending organizers of the poor, hip nihilo-aesthetes and all the other “anarchists” who thought their pretentious pastimes would go on unchallenged indefinitely—well, it’s time to pick which side you’re on. It may be that here also is a Rubicon from which there will be no turning back.

Some, no doubt, would prefer to wait for a perfect victim. Many would like to unlearn what they know of the invasive and unchallenged violence generated everywhere by the prevailing order—in order to condemn the Unabomber’s counter-terror.

But here is the person and the challenge before us.

Anarchists! One more effort if you would be enemies of this long nightmare!

¹ John Zerzan. *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization* [Book]. Feral House. Fall 1995. Original link. Archived link.

1998 — Ted has the same message post-arrest

Quoting Ted:¹

I would like to comment on some statements that were made in reference to the Unabomber's manifesto in GA 40–41. In an article on pages 21–22, Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous wrote:

“[A] return to undomesticated autonomous ways of living would not be achieved by the removal of industrialism alone. Such removal would still leave domination of nature, subjugation of women, war, religion, the state, and division of labour, to cite some basic social pathologies. It is civilization itself that must be undone to go where Unabomber wants to go.”

I agree with much of this...

But the removal of civilization itself is a far more difficult proposition, because civilization in its pre-industrial forms does not require an elaborate and highly-organized technological structure. A pre-industrial civilization requires only a relatively simple technology, the most important element of which is agriculture.

How does one prevent people from practicing agriculture? And given that people practice agriculture, how does one prevent them from living in densely-populated communities and forming social hierarchies? It is a very difficult matter and I don't see any way of accomplishing it.

I am not suggesting that the elimination of civilization should be abandoned as an ideal or as an *eventual* goal. I merely point out that no one knows of any plausible means of reaching that goal in the foreseeable future. In contrast, the elimination of the industrial system is a plausible goal for the next several decades, and, in a general way, we can see how to go about attaining it. Therefore, the goal on which we should set our sights for the present is the destruction of the industrial system. *After* that has been accomplished we can think about eliminating civilization...

After the techno-industrial system has been eliminated, people can and should fight injustice wherever they find it...

Commando Unabomber Faction

Due to support by the US during the cold war for a military Junta in Greece between 1967 to 1974 and a thriving anarchist movement in Greece opposed to American imperialism around the world, attacks on American corporations have been frequent.

¹ Ted Kaczynski. Answer to Some Comments Made in Green Anarchist. Box 65 of the University of Michigan's Special Collection's Library (Labadie Collection. Archived Link.

In January 1998, one week after Ted was sentenced to life in prison, a group calling themselves the ‘Revolutionary Subversive Faction-Commando Unabomber’ placed two bombs outside the offices of two American companies in Thessaloniki, Greece.²

[The] group claimed responsibility for the attack in a phone call to a state run television station.

They were reported as saying:³⁴

We will all be Unabombers. Burns [the US ambassador] go home. The state terrorist shall not pass.

The attack on the state will not end. State terrorism will not succeed.

Assuming what they said is somewhere close to how they were quoted; what they likely meant was that they saw themselves in a life-or-death struggle with American state terrorism, which meant that to their mind, revolutionary terrorism was justified in reaction, and that many Internationalists would rise up to take the Unabomber’s place.

Due to the high-profile celebrity the Unabomber had achieved in terrorizing the American Empire and the seemingly anti-capitalist nature of the attacks against CEOs, it appears this Greek group were led to perceive the Unabomber as an ally in their struggle.

The group struck again 2 weeks later:⁵

The offices of a fascist organisation, are set on fire ... The responsibility ... was claimed by ... Revolutionary faction ... commando Unabomber ...

² Frank Shanty & Raymond Picquet . International Terrorism: An Annual ‘Event Data’ Report 1998 [Book]. DIANE. 2000. Original link. Archived link.

³ Various Authors. Information Bulletin From Greece [Zine]. Issue No 19, Anarchist News, The Sparrows Nest, April 1998. Original link. Archived link.

⁴ Bureau of Diplomatic Security. Significant Incidents of Political Violence against Americans 1988 [Book]. Homeland Security Digital Library. May 1989. Original link. Archived link.

⁵ Various Authors. Information Bulletin From Greece [Zine]. Issue No 19, Anarchist News, The Sparrows Nest, April 1998. Original link. Archived link.

2001 — An ELF cell debates similarly violent acts against people for the wild

In the last meeting of the most active ELF cell in the US, some members argued they should next attempt to assassinate captains of industry. It's possible that them bringing the idea up to people who disagreed was the only reason it didn't happen, as they might have feared that other members of the group would sabotage their life or even sell them out to the police, rather than let them go ahead with it:¹

Narrator: Some members of the group were questioning the actions, but there were others who felt they hadn't gone far enough.

Prosecutor: Some of them had decided they wanted to target captains of industry, target people now, not just property.

ELF Member: The last circle meeting basically cleaved between people who seemingly wanted to talk about it, not even plan it, but just talk about it, and the people that were repulsed by it.

Later it emerged that 2 of the members had become Neo-Nazis:²

As their ELF group executed arsons during the late-1990s and early-2000s, a former ELF member told me that two comrades, Nathan "Exile" Block and Joyanna "Sadie" Zacher, shared an unusual love of Scandinavian black metal, made disturbing references to Charles Manson, and promoted an elitist, anti-left mentality. While their obscure references evoked Abraxas, Feral House, and Bouchet's distribution networks, their politics could not be recognized within the milieu of fascism at the time. However, their general ideas became clearer, the former ELF member told me, when antifascist researchers later discovered that a Tumblr account run by Block contained numerous occult fascist references,³ including national anarchist symbology, swastikas, and quotes from Evola and Jünger. These were only two members of a larger group, but their presence serves as food for thought regarding important radical cross-over points and how to approach them.

Bron Taylor:⁴

The martial rhetoric and tabloid graphics found among radical environmentalists amplify such concerns and appear to promote violence, perhaps even terrorism; my own work provides the most detail about violence-related debates within these subcultures. Some Earth First! activists, for example, depict their struggle as a holy war against those who would desecrate a sacred earth, express solidarity with diverse revolutionary movements around

¹ Marshall Curry (Director). *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front* [Documentary]. Oscilloscope. June 22, 2011. Original link. Archived link.

² Alexander Reid Ross. *The Left Overs: How Fascists Court the Post-Left* [Essay]. *Anti-Fascist News*. March 29, 2017. Original link. Archived link.

³ Rucker 1992: 78

⁴ Bron Taylor. *Religion, Violence and Radical Environmentalism* [Essay]. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no.4: 1–42. 1998. Original link. Archived link.

the globe' and endorse sabotage that involves at least some risk to human beings. One sabotage manual distributed by an anarchist faction associated with Earth First! even discusses firearms and firebombs. A few have expressed sympathy for the tactics employed by terrorist groups such as the Weather Underground⁸ and even the Unabomber. (See the attached graphics that seem to promote or accept violence as a tactic.)

John Jacobi:⁵

Furthermore, many Earth First!ers have expressed tacit support for Kaczynski. LWOD, for example, published two writings by Kaczynski in the seventh issue, and in 2011 the *Earth First! Journal* published an article entitled "Re-visiting Uncle Ted & A Few FC Targets," which reappraised Kaczynski and implied support for some of his actions.

⁵ John Jacobi. A text dump on wildism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Dec 21, 2019. Original link. Archived link.

2003 — A similarly violent insurrectionary network emerges with many anticiv cells

Then in the 2000s the Informal Anarchist Federation emerged in Europe:¹

Though a variety of direct attack networks, monikers, and individual cells have emerged since the post-millennial reinvigoration of the urban guerrilla, the strategy and momentum of direct, anti-state attack was carried forth most notably by the *Informal Anarchist Federation* [*Federazione Anarchica Informale*]. The FAI has been linked to attacks as early as 1999, but its current, internationalized, adoptable-moniker form, emerged around 2004 in the Italian city of Bologna. In 1999, the network sent mail bombs to the Greek embassy in Italy, a tourism office in Madrid, and a branch of Citibank in Barcelona (Hanrahan 2013). Subsequently, pre-2003 FAI bombs targeted newspapers, churches, courts, police, prisons, and other targets located in Western Europe, largely in Spain and Italy.

The FAI (2003) explained their motivation in a communiqué entitled “Open Letter to the Anarchist and Anti-Authoritarian Movement.” This document serves to announce the FAI to the world, to begin to develop its methodology for attack, and to communicate with sympathetic allies in the producing of future attacks. According to some historical accounts (Cospito 2014), the letter is a signpost marking the real emergence of the FAI global network. In the text, the network claims responsibility for the attacks, calling their targets the “repressive apparatus that plays the democratic farce and that will bring the main characters and institutions to the new European order” (FAI 2003).

The FAI describe their network as “a federation formed either by groups of action or by single individuals, in order to go beyond the limits implied in single projects and to experiment the real potentialities of informal organization” (2003, 3). The communiqué goes on to describe the network’s interpretation of “informal,” “anarchist,” and “federation” and discusses strategy, organization, and other questions of practicality.

¹ Michael Loadenthal. *The Politics of Attack: Communiqués and Insurrectionary Violence* [Book]. Manchester University Press. 2017. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

2006 — Ted publicly breaks with anarchism

A vegan primitivist from Turkey wrote to Ted with a long list of questions. Ted responded with a detailed critique of how many primitivists idealize primitive life, arguing that the hierarchical relationships found between many tribal members is natural and therefore neutral or good.¹

So I agree with the anarchoprimitivists that the advent of civilization was a great disaster and that the Industrial Revolution was an even greater one. I further agree that a revolution against modernity, and against civilization in general, is necessary. But you can't build an effective revolutionary movement out of soft-headed dreamers, lazies, and charlatans. You have to have tough-minded, realistic, practical people, and people of that kind don't need the anarchoprimitivists' mushy utopian myth.

¹ Ted Kaczynski. Letter to a Turkish Anarchist [Letter]. *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, No. 63. retrieved on June 9, 2009. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

2010 — Similar insurrectionary violence emerges in Mexico in a big way

Michael Loadenthal:¹

Beginning around 2010, a sudden surge of insurrectionary-styled, clandestine guerrilla networks emerged in Mexico and launched a series of attacks on the state and capital. While a complete chronology and historical accounting of this movement is beyond the scope of this book, a brief review is warranted. Within Mexico, attacks have been claimed under a variety of the commonly occurring monikers including CCF, ELF, FAI, and so on. To trace a single example of internationalizing monikers, we turn towards the emergence of a Mexican tendency linking CCF and the FAI. According to an inter-movement, self-narrative account authored by the “Mexican Fire Cells Conspiracy/Informal Anarchist Federation” (2011), “[On] September 15 [2011] The Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (CCF) faction of the Mexican Informal Anarchist Federation (FAI-M) is formed by affinity groups and like-minded people in several Mexican states.” The following day (16 September 2011), the CCF/FAI-M “carries out three simultaneous arsons ... Liberatory fire destroys merchandise, as flames consume Textiles Suburbia, CV Directo, and TF Victor” (Mexican Fire Cells Conspiracy/FAI 2011). From there the network engaged in frequent arson attacks and, in less than two months, set fire to sites including a warehouse, an airport staff training school, two Walmarts, a shopping mall, a lumber warehouse, and at least four other businesses. From the CCF’s Greek roots and those of the FAI found in Italy, it is notable that such a formation occurred so far away, and in such a culturally different venue as Mexico. The development of this new network is reflective of national tendencies, wherein Mexico becomes a site for a renewal of militant actions and the fostering of newly lethal tendencies.

Beyond the rapid expansion of CCF/FAI-M, Mexico also saw the development of nationally-restricted networks ... Práxedes G. Guerrero Autonomous Cells for Immediate Revolution (CARI-PGG), and Individualists Tending Towards the Wild (ITS). While, ideologically, the former mirrors the more traditional approach of Western European anarcho- guerrillas such as CCF and FAI, the ITS network resembles a newly emergent praxis borrowing from anarchism’s primitivist and anti-technology tendencies, exacted through an atypically-violent pattern of attack. ITS and CARI-PGG’s predominant deployment of IEDs make them an apt network to study as their tactical and strategic patterns fall well outside of those seen in other insurrectionary networks. In short, these networks’ goals are often to kill and maim individuals associated with targeted institutions, while typical insurrectionary attack aims to destroy symbolic property while avoiding individual targeting of persons for injury and death.

In April 2011, ... [ITS] emerged through the international counter-information and translation service of the so-called “black international” ...

Meaning their communiqués were widely spread on anarchist websites without disclaimers or critiques.

¹ Michael Loadenthal. *The Politics of Attack: Communiqués and Insurrectionary Violence* [Book]. Manchester University Press. 2017. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

2011

Environmentalist sabotage groups begin to label their attacks ELF/ALF/FAI, to emphasis the total liberation ideals motivating their attacks.

As much as I sympathize with people wanting to be part of an international organization concretely bringing about a wholistic liberatory world, I think it was a huge mistake to muddy the ELF/ALF ethos with ITS and FAI who both advocate kneecapping and parcel-bombing.

In 2011 the Informal Anarchist Federation (FAI) referred to a list of groups in Mexico who identified as being part of the network including:¹

- Earth Liberation Front (ELF) / International Network of Action and Solidarity – Anti-Civilization Informal Group
- Earth Liberation Front (ELF) / Informal Anarchist Federation International Network
- Insurrectional Cell Sole-Baleno of the Autonomous Cells for Immediate Revolution – Praxedis G. Guerrero / FAI
- Commando of Free, Dangerous, Wild and Incendiary Individuals for the Black Plague / FAI / International Network
- Luddites Against the Domestication of Wild Nature / FAI / International Network
- Eco-Anarchist Cell for the Direct Attack / FAI / International Network

Individualists Tending to the Wild emerges

Michael Loadenthal:²

[ITS] has explicitly rejected association with anarchism, and via a subsequent (i.e. second generation) moniker, rejected both the label of “leftist” and “insurrectionary”.

In a rare interview the group provided in 2014, it describes its purpose, stating:

[ITS] deemed it necessary to carry out the direct attack against the Technoindustrial System. We think that the struggle against this is not only a stance of wanting to abandon Civilization, regressing to Nature, or in refuting the system’s values, without also, attacking it.

ITS has received international attention after repeatedly targeting scientists and researchers with lethal force. ITS has stood out from other bombers due to its lengthy, academic-styled communiqués and direct attacks on individuals from outside the typical target set: heads of state and corporations, officials in law enforcement, jailing, etc. ITS is unique in at least two matters: its stated objective to *kill*, and its specific, tech-related target set. In the 2014 interview, cell members explain:

¹ Informal Anarchist Federation. Do not say that we are few [Essay]. 325. Sept 02, 2011. Original link. Archived link.

² Michael Loadenthal. The Politics of Attack: Communiqués and Insurrectionary Violence [Book]. Manchester University Press. 2017. Original link. Archived link.

Our immediate objectives are very clear: injure or kill scientists and researchers (by the means of whatever violent act) who ensure the Technoindustrial System continues its course. As we have declared on various occasions, our concrete objective is not the destruction of the Technoindustrial system, it is the attack with all the necessary resources, lashing out at this system which threatens to close off all paths to the reaching of our Individual Freedom, putting into practice our defensive instinct

... ITS has from the beginning proposed the attack against the system as the objective, striving to make these kinds of ideas spread around the globe through extreme acts, in defense of Wild Nature, as we have done.

According to their own historical account, the group began experimenting in 2011 with “arson attacks on cars and construction machinery, companies and institutions ... until we decided to focus on terrorism and not sabotage”. From 2011–2014, ITS deployed at least 13 mail bombs, two mailed threats accompanied by bullets, and assassinated Méndez Salinas, a biotechnologist with the Institute of Bio-Technology at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Salinas was shot in the head, and according to ITS, killed by “the most violent cell of ITS in Morelos, being already familiar with the purchase and use of firearms.”

Through their various communiqués and interviews, ITS has claimed responsibility for a series of attacks, many of which were claimed under other monikers and later linked to the ITS network. For example, in August 2014, ITS declared the formation of Wild Reaction (RS):

After a little more than three years of criminal-terrorist activity, the group

... [ITS] ... begins a new phase in this open war against the Technoindustrial System ... we want to explain that during all of 2012 and 2013, various groups of a terrorist and sabotage stripe were uniting themselves with the group ITS, so that now, after a long silence and for purely strategic reasons, we publicly claim[10 attacks from newly affiliated networks] ... All of these have now fused with the ITS groups in Morelos, Mexico City, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Coahuila and Veracruz ... Due to this union, the extravagant and little-practical pseudonym of “‘Individualists Tending toward the Wild’ (ITS) ceases to exist, and from now on the attacks against technology and civilization will be signed with the new name of ‘Wild Reaction’ (RS).

Prior to this announcement, in April 2014 a group calling itself Obsidian Point Circle of *Analysis* (OPCA) activated a new clandestine cell (which would later be absorbed into RS) called Obsidian Point Circle of *Attack* (OPCA). The formation of OPCA was preceded by three commentaries on ITS and the authors “becoming tired of simply writing.” In its opening declaration OPCA writes:

It has been some time since we started writing about some situations that had arisen in Mexico concerning the terrorist group ITS; we published a total of three analyses, in which we have publicly demonstrated our support of the group ITS, in their actions as much as their position. Until now we have decided to solely be those who comfortably spread and highlighted the group’s communiqués and actions, but that is over. The violent advance of the techno-industrial system, the degradation that civilization leaves in its wake and the oblivion they are forcing us toward, ceasing to be natural humans to the point of turning into humanoids: there must be a convincing response.

We abandon words and analyses in order to begin with our war ... We only seek confrontation with the system, the sharpening of the conflict against it. From this day we publicly put aside the word “analysis,” in order to become The Obsidian Point Circle of Attack.

Thus, according to its own narrative, ITS inspired public commentary and critique by OPCAn and, in September 2014, when ITS became RS, it was announced that RS included OPCA as well. In the first declaration by RS, the authors explain: “during this year ... two more terroristic groups have united with us who have put the development of the Technoindustrial System in their sights ... The ‘Obsidian Point Circle of Attack’ ... [and] ... The ‘Atlal Group.’” Therefore, a complete history of ITS’s actions includes both attacks claimed under their name, those claimed under the OPCA and RS, as well as smaller groupings merged under the network’s banner. According to a chronology assembled from the networks’ communications, the network has claimed at least 27 distinct actions including 22 IED attacks (mostly mail and package/parcel bombs), three written threats, several arsons of property, one animal release, and one fatal shooting.

In early 2016, the ITS moniker saw its first usage outside of the borders of Mexico. In the second ITS communiqué of 2016, the “Uncivilized Southerners” cell “abandoned a homemade explosive charge” on a bus in Santiago, Chile writing:

The Eco-Extremist tendency spreads ... We are accomplices to its ideas and acts, forming part of it. We are giving life to an international project against civilization.

Because we are bullets to the head, mail-bombs, indiscriminate bombings and incinerating fire, we are:

Individualists Tending Toward the Wild – Chile.

A few days later, in the fourth ITS communiqué of 2016, an ITS cell in Argentina claimed responsibility for placing an IED in a Buenos Aires bus station. In the message accompanying the bomb, the attackers wrote: “ITS is in Argentina”. The emergence of new ITS cells appears to be an ongoing trend. Five days after the Argentina communiqué was posted to a Spanish-language insurrectionary hub, the same site featured a communiqué signed by five cells of ITS, three from Mexico, and one each from Argentina and Chile. The communiqué traces the origin and expansion of the ITS and RS monikers and announces “a new phase of the war against all that represents and sustains the advance of civilization and progress”.

In Mexico, ITS’s bombs have targeted civilian, seemingly ‘non-political’ scientists, professors, technical experts, researchers, and technocrats and within a politic most closely described as (Green) anarcho-primitivism. Famed “Unabomber” Theodore Kaczynski popularized this framework in the 1980s during a 17-year (1978–1995) bombing campaign involving 16 bombs, which killed three people and injured 23. Following the publication of “Industrial Society and its Future” – popularly known as the “Unabomber manifesto” and released five months after his final attack – Kaczynski’s spirit has been carried forth by ITS and a few similar networks.

The group’s origins broadly

ITS Mexico were originally part of the green & insurrectionary anarchist milieus and likely grew up on earth first monkey-wrenching manuals from the 80s:³⁴

The group draws its inspiration from anarcho-primitivism, an “*anti-civilization anarchy*” from which ITS is largely inspired. “*I took the theories of the ‘Earth Liberation Front’ further, and gave them a different tone,*” explains Xale. “*I was interested in the issues facing the American continent, in the indigenous cultures that opposed civilization,*” assures the Mexican member of ITS in the video.

³ Various Authors. A text dump on eco-extremism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

⁴ Ibid.

With anarchism, the relationship at the moment is one of rupture, although there is no dishonor in accepting that many eco-extremists and some members of ITS come from anarchism, mostly from insurrectionist and eco-anarchist tendencies. Although at the time there were some ties, today the vast majority of anarchists hate us.

Referring to the groups history, Xale, a member of ITS Mexico wrote:⁵

This chronology could well be added to that of Individualities Tending to the Wild (2011–2013), or that of the anti civilization cells of the Earth Liberation Front (2008–2012), but we decided to focus on RS, for now.

Searching through the over 300 sabotage actions that occurred in Mexico between 2018 & 2012, and the at least 10 with ELF in the title of the post, there do appear to be a few attacks that fit ITS modus operandi and communiqués which fit their early idiolect:⁶

Early this morning, September 21, our cell placed a bomb made of butane gas at the gates of the headquarters of Nueva Escuela Tecnológica [*New School of Technology*] in the municipality of Coacalco, Mexico State.

The authorities in that municipality had previously implemented security systems that belong in the worst nightmares of Orwell.

Security cameras, artificial eyes guarding their damned social peace, throughout the major avenues in Coacalco.

In the commercial area, the police presence is evident, state police and the mediocre municipal police pass through the streets and on Lopez Portillo Avenue.

Guarding the centers of domination and domestication that are also protected by surveillance cameras and the idiot guardians of the imposed order.

Facing this situation of high surveillance, it seemed impossible to strike, but rebellious creativity is greater than the highest degree of ‘security’ that the state implements.

The Coacalco commercial area had been previously visited by eco-anarchist cells who conducted significant strikes right in front of the police, who were flabbergasted by an arson, a butane explosion, graffiti and paint spilled in anthropocentric business.

Our action was censured both by the directors of the Nueva Escuela Tecnológica and the Mexico State authorities. They hid the damage that we caused and concealed the evidence of our presence at night. This is not unusual; it happened after the ‘celebrations’ of the ephemeral bicentennial celebration which were held in ‘total’ peace.

The Agencia de Seguridad Estatal [*state security agency*] as well as detectives from the Mexico City police department are aware of our actions and our presence; they know that we were there and that we detonated our explosive charge as the lackeys on patrol passed by unable to stop us.

We chose to attack the NET because it represents the new era of these centers of domestication called schools, where they learn things that are useless for a free life, but necessary for a life of slavery and alienation. They create beings that depend on technology in order to live in these concrete nests called cities, but more closely resemble large prisons. They train malleable minds to be used for entrepreneurship and to expand civilization over wild nature. We will not permit this.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Once again we say: not with their cameras, nor their police officers, nor with their investigators, nor their prisons, will they be able to stop us; we once again skinned the rotten bastards, goddammit!

This action is dedicated to the Chilean anarchist prisoners, captured after the wave of repression in that country on August 14; we send much strength, from Mexico we remember them in every direct action.

We did not want to wait until the 24th to show our solidarity.

Support is not only for one day, it is in our everyday actions!

Direct solidarity for the eco prisoners Abraham López and Adrian Magdaleno, for the eco revolutionaries on hunger strike in Switzerland, for the animal liberation prisoner Walter Bond in the U.S., and the vegan warriors imprisoned in Italy!

Keep running Diego, you're fucking awesome!

Earth Liberation Front/Mexico

Upon reading translated Unabomber material they started along a road that began with committing arsons aimed at sabotaging evil companies and ended with them desiring to have the wider effect of terrorizing people through fear of injury or death out of a simple hatred for humanity:⁷

... in 2011 the (newly formed) ITS was testing various modus operandi (from known and attempted arson attacks on cars and construction machinery, companies and institutions in Coahuila, Guanajuato, and Veracruz State of Mexico, until we decided to focus on terrorism and not sabotage).

Here are old members of the FAI / CCF in Mexico acknowledging former collaboration and ideological crossover:⁸

Exactly 5 years and seven months ago we signed a "joint statement" at the request of a comrade for whom we feel great affection and respect. That text was entitled "2nd Joint Statement of the Anarchist Insurrectional and Eco-Anarchist Groups". ...

Back then, we let it be known publicly and energetically that:

"With these ITS partners, we can have theoretical differences and discuss them (always arguing fraternally in a constant attempt to update ideas and by building a unitary criticism attuned to the reality of the anarchist struggle), but we have never disagreed with the methods used, understanding anti-authoritarian violence and propaganda for the facts as they are : valid practices consistent with our ethical principles."

Although ITS were one of the few clusters with which we did not directly coordinate when undertaking joint actions, we were in solidarity with them, in the same way that some of the comrades that made up our affinity groups obtained monetary resources for them to solve specific difficulties when requested. That has been (and is) the basis of practical co-ordination between the new anarchic insurrectionalism and eco-anarchism.

In their early communiqués they would express solidarity with anarchist prisoners:⁹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Anonymous. Joint declaration of the insurrectional anarchist and eco-anarchist groups of Mexico [Essay]. War On Society. November 10, 2011. Original link. Archived link.

⁹ Various Authors. A text dump on eco-extremism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

Total support with the Anti-civilization prisoners in Mexico, with the Chilean comrades and with the furious Italians and Swiss. ...

One more time: Direct and total support with the anti-civilization prisoners of Mexico, with those eco-anarchists of Switzerland, to the affinities in Argentina, Spain, Italy, Chile and Russia.

Here is an answer members of ITS gave in a text interview in 2014 I think showing they were leftists, in that they only later rejected leftist mass movement building and so are not simply post-left-&-right:¹⁰

Individualists tending towards the wild formed at the beginning of 2011, and was motivated by the reasoning acquired during a slow process of getting to know, questioning, and the rejection of all that encompasses leftism and the civilized, and accordingly, employing all the above, we deemed it necessary to carry out the direct attack against the Technoindustrial System. We think that the struggle against this is not only a stance of wanting to abandon Civilization, regressing to Nature, or in refuting the system's values, without also attacking it.

Finally, ITS also claimed that more ELF and Anarchist groups joined them later when they briefly took on the name Wild Reaction:¹¹

First of all, we want to explain that during all of 2012 and 2013, various groups of a terrorist and sabotage stripe were uniting themselves with the group ITS, so that now, after a long silence and for purely strategic reasons, we publicly claim:

1) The "Informal Anti-civilization Group," which on June 29, 2011, took responsibility for the explosion that severely damaged a Santander bank in the city of Tultitlan, Mexico.

2) "Uncivilized Autonomous," who on October 16, 2011 set off a bomb inside the ATMs of a Banamex, located between the cities of Tultitlan and Coacalco in Mexico State.

4) "Wild Indomitables," who on October 16, 2011 left a butane gas bomb that did not detonate in a Santander bank in the Álvaro Obregón district of Mexico City. The act was never claimed until now.

5) "Terrorist Cells for the Direct Attack – Anti-civilization Fraction," which in 2010 and 2011 left a fake bomb in front of the IFaB (Pharmacological and Biopharmaceutical Research), and detonated an explosive outside the building of the National Ecology Institute (INE), both in the Tlalpan district of Mexico City.

6) "Luddites against the Domestication of Wild Nature," who during 2009 to 2011 had taken part in various incendiary attacks in some cities in Mexico State and various districts of Mexico City, claimed or unclaimed.

8) "Earth Liberation Front – Bajío", which on November 16, 2011 set off an explosive charge creating damages within the ATM area of a branch of the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) in the city of Irapuato in Guanajuato.

All of these have now fused with the ITS groups in Morelos, Mexico City, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Coahuila and Veracruz.

Due to this union, the extravagant and little-practical pseudonym of "Individualists Tending toward the Wild" (ITS) ceases to exist, and from now on the attacks against technology and civilization will be signed with the new name of "Wild Reaction" (RS).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

These were groups that other anarchists were relating to as anarchists also. As the joint declaration of the insurrectional anarchist and eco-anarchist groups of Mexico referred to earlier was signed by some of these groups who later merged with ITS or had a very similar ideology:¹²

Luddites against the Domestication of Wild Nature (LDNS)

Earth Liberation Front (FLT)

Free, Dangerous, Savage and Incendiary Individuals for the Black Plague(ILPSIPN)

Kaczynski's influence specifically

An ITS propagandist:¹³

Born out of various radical ideologies such as animal liberation, insurrectionary anarchism, anarcho-primitivism, and the neo-Luddism of Theodore Kaczynski, it has germinated and sprouted forth into something entirely other ...

ITS:¹⁴

We have never denied that the essay, "Industrial Society and Its Future" has been an important part of our formation into what we are now. For that reason, in the past we used such terms as "leftists," "power process," "feelings of inferiority," "liberty and autonomy," etc. that in the present we have omitted or changed for other words so that we distinguish ourselves from the "indomitistas" of Kaczynski. ...

Michael Loadenthal:¹⁵

[ITS] specifically address their relationship to Kaczynski in their fourth communiqué:

Have *ITS* copied Ted Kaczynski? The million-dollar question.

Without a doubt, we see this person as an individual who with his profound rational analysis contributed greatly to the advance of antitechnological ideas; his simple way of living in a manner strictly away from Civilization and the persecution of his Freedom in an optimal environment make him a worthy individual who due to a family betrayal is serving multiple life sentences in the United States ... If we cite Stirner, Rand, Kaczynski, Nietzsche, Orwell, some scientists and other people in our communiqués they are only for references, we do not have reason to be in agreement with all their lines and positions ... It has been said that we imitate the Unabomber; perhaps we have seen as strategic the action of [Kaczynski's moniker] the Freedom Club against scientific personalities in the United States in the 70s, 80s and 90s, and we have adopted this, but let it be clear that we have not imitated all his discourse in its totality, since as we said above, there are points that are plainly contrary to the positions of the FC.

In their sixth communiqué, ITS (2012) notes that their early writings (i.e. first and second communiqués) did in fact borrow from Kaczynski, but that after reflecting on their "poor interpretations" the group has "discarded [Kaczynski's ideas] and now for us they have no

¹² Anonymous. Joint declaration of the insurrectional anarchist and eco-anarchist groups of Mexico [Essay]. War On Society. November 10, 2011. Original link. Archived link.

¹³ Various Authors. A text dump on eco-extremism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Michael Loadenthal. The Politics of Attack: Communiqués and Insurrectionary Violence [Book]. Manchester University Press. 2017. Original link. Archived link.

validity.” Despite what many regard as similarities in critique, and despite ITS occasionally quoting Kaczynski directly, ITS subsequently denies ideological connections. In the first communiqué as “Wild Reaction, ‘Kill or Die’ Group” (2014) the group writes:

We deny being followers of Ted Kaczynski ... we have indeed learned many things from reading Industrial Society and Its Future, the texts after this and the letters before this text signed by ‘Freedom Club’ (FC), but that does not mean that we are his followers. In fact our position clashes with Kaczynski’s, FC’s ... since we do not consider ourselves revolutionaries, we do not want to form an ‘anti-technological movement’ that encourages the ‘total overthrow of the system,’ we do not see it as viable, we do not want victory, we do not pretend to win or lose, this is an individual fight against the mega-machine; we don’t care about getting something positive from this, since we are simply guided by our instincts of defense and survival.

Here one can witness RS’s declared revolutionary intent, to “bring it all crashing down” while avoiding the trapping of movement building and conceiving of the conflict in terms of winners and losers. In this communiqué, after the group changed its name, RS goes on to further declare their ideological independence from the prominent critics of technology (e.g. primitivists) as well as the global anarcho-insurrectional milieu through which their communications are circulated and consumed. In their proclamation of non-affiliation, RS states:

Thus neither Kaczynski ... or any other with the (supposed) “primitivist” stamp represents RS. Nor do the Informal Anarchist Federation (FAI), the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire (CCF), Feral Faun, or any other with the “ecoanarchist” or “anti-civilization cell of ...” stamp. RS and its groups only represent themselves. (Wild Reaction, “Kill or Die” Group 2014)

Despite ITS/RS’s insistence to the contrary, prominent anarcho-primitivist thinker John Zerzen, often spoken of as the “founder” of the movement, notes that “ITS group is real slavish to Ted Kaczynski” (Morin 2014). Zerzen goes on to say that he does not believe ITS’s methods will prove successful and that he is “turn[ed] off” by their usage of mailed explosives and their cavalier dismissal of human causalities (Morin 2014).

Sean Fleming:¹⁶

In thought and in action, Kaczynski is a lone wolf. His Manifesto articulates a theory or worldview that is peculiar to him and built from a unique combination of Ellul’s, Morris’s, and Seligman’s ideas. Terrorism scholars have recently questioned ‘whether it is time to put the “lone wolf” category to rest altogether’, since alleged lone wolves are rarely as independent as they appear: ‘ties to online and offline radical milieus are critical’. Yet, as I have shown, Kaczynski is unusual in that most of his ideological formation took place in a library, outside of any radical milieu. His association with radical environmentalists, who shared his disdain for modern technology, was a consequence rather than a cause of his radicalization. The Unabomber case shows that terrorists can emerge from a relative ideological vacuum, even if this is rare, and that the concept of the lone wolf might therefore be worth retaining.

Although Kaczynski began his anti-tech bombing campaign as a lone wolf, he has since become the leader of a pack. Just as he had hoped, his Manifesto has spawned an ideology – a public discourse of anti-tech – and inspired a cluster of anti-tech radical groups. Kaczynski is not just an extreme example of an anti-tech radical, but also the founder and lodestar of a new form of anti-tech radicalism.

¹⁶ Sean Fleming. The Unabomber and the origins of anti-tech radicalism [Essay]. Taylor & Francis. May 7, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

In the immediate aftermath of his arrest, many of Kaczynski's followers came from the outer fringe of the green movement. One of his early correspondents and confidants was John Zerzan, a prominent anarcho-primitivist. Another was Derrick Jensen, cofounder of the radical environmentalist group Deep Green Resistance. Kaczynski's alliances with green anarchists and radical environmentalists were tenuous and short-lived. He ultimately fell out with Zerzan, Jensen, and their respective movements for the same reason: they are committed to many 'leftist' causes that he considers to be dangerous distractions. Whereas Kaczynski's opposition to technology is stubbornly single-minded, Zerzan and Jensen see technology as only one facet of 'civilization', alongside patriarchy, racism, and exploitation of animals. Only years later did Kaczynski begin to attract a following that was committed to *his* brand of anti-tech radicalism. As he notes in his 2016 book, 'it is only since 2011 that I've had people who have been willing and able to spend substantial amounts of time and effort in doing research for me'. Coincidentally or not, 2011 is also the year that the Mexican terrorist group ITS emerged.

John Jacobi, a follower of Kaczynski, distinguishes three clusters of Kaczynski-inspired anti-tech radicals. First are the 'apostles' of Kaczynski, the *indomitistas*, led by his pseudonymous Spanish correspondent *Último Reducto*. The *indomitistas* devote themselves mainly to translating and analysing Kaczynski's writings. They comprise part of his 'inner circle', which also conducts research for him and operates the publisher, Fitch & Madison, which prints his books. The other two clusters are the 'heretics', who are inspired by Kaczynski's writings but diverge from him and the *indomitistas* about the finer points of doctrine, strategy, and tactics. One is Jacobi's own group, the wildists, which broke away from the more orthodox *indomitistas* to build a broader coalition of 'anti-civilization' radicals. The other cluster of heretics, which is my focus in this article, comprises ITS and its offshoots. Whereas the *indomitistas* and the wildists focus on developing and propagating anti-tech ideas, ITS is eager for dramatic and violent action.

Journalists and terrorism scholars have labelled ITS 'eco-terrorists' and sometimes 'eco-anarchists', comparing the group to Deep Green Resistance and the Earth Liberation Front. ITS itself uses the term 'eco-extremist', which invites these comparisons. However, ITS is not just a more bellicose variant of radical environmentalism or green anarchism. An analysis of the group's communiqués shows that its ideology is a distinctly Kaczynskian form of anti-tech radicalism.

Although ITS was influenced by radical environmentalism, the 'eco' in 'eco-extremism' is misleading. It does not refer to 'deep ecology'; ITS rejects the 'sentimentalism, irrationalism and biocentrism' that it sees in many radical environmentalist groups. Instead, the 'eco' refers to the group's ideal of 'wild nature', which accords a central place to human nature. ITS's central concern, like Kaczynski's, is that 'human beings are moving away more dangerously from their natural instincts'. Adopting Kaczynski's 'bioprimitivism', as I have called it, ITS argues that 'the human being is biologically programmed ... through evolution' for the life of a 'hunter-gatherer-nomad'.

Although it shares the hunter-gatherer ideal with green anarchists, ITS vehemently rejects any such label: 'we are not "eco-anarchists" or "anarcho-environmentalists"'. The group describes as 'delusional' those who 'romanticize Wild Nature' and 'believe that when Civilization falls everything will be rosy and a new world will flourish without social inequality, hunger, repression, etc'. This thinly-veiled attack on Zerzan's anarcho-primitivism echoes Kaczynski's essay, 'The Truth About Primitive Life', where he sets out to 'debunk the anarcho-primitivist myth that portrays the life of hunter-gatherers as a kind of politically correct Garden of Eden'. ITS follows Kaczynski in condemning green anarchism as 'leftist'.

Kaczynski's influence on ITS is difficult to miss. Many parts of the group's communiqués are merely paraphrases of the Manifesto: 'The essence of the power process has four parts: setting out of the goal, effort, attainment of the goal, and Autonomy'. But the depth of Kaczynski's influence on ITS is difficult to appreciate without knowing the origins of his ideas. ITS cites Morris's *The Human Zoo* in support of its claim that 'the Wild Nature of the human being in general was perverted when it started to become civilized'. The same communiqué later echoes Morris without citing him: 'it is totally abnormal to live together with hundreds of strangers around you'.

ITS explicitly acknowledges some of its debts to Kaczynski. But this has not been enough to prevent misconceptions, because Kaczynski himself has also been lumped in with radical environmentalists and green anarchists. It is necessary to understand Kaczynski's distinct constellation of concepts in order to appreciate the ideological distinctness of ITS. The group uses his signature vocabulary: the technological system, the power process, surrogate activities, leftism, feelings of inferiority, oversocialization, etc. This is not the vocabulary of radical environmentalism or green anarchism. With the exceptions of 'civilization' and 'domination', ITS explicitly rejects the 'leftist' vocabulary of anarchism: oppression, solidarity, mutual aid, class struggle, hierarchy, inequality, injustice, and imperialism. Further, as I have already shown, even the 'green' parts of ITS's communiqués have been filtered through Kaczynski. ITS is not an eco-terrorist or green anarchist group, but a novel kind of *anti-tech* terrorist group. The group's ideology is distinctly Kaczynskian, genealogically and morphologically.

The *modus operandi* of ITS is not typical of radical environmentalists or green anarchists, who tend to be saboteurs or 'monkeywrenchers'. Environmental radicals almost always target property rather than people. ITS, on the other hand, declares that it 'is not a group of saboteurs (we do not share the strategy of sabotage or damage or destruction of property)'. Instead, as Kaczynski did, ITS aims to kill or maim people, such as scientists, whose surrogate activities propel the development of the technological system.

Anti-tech radicals and environmental radicals have different attitudes towards violence in large part because they have different ideals. As Bron Taylor argues, environmental radicals share 'general religious sentiments – that the earth and all life is sacred – that lessen the possibility that [environmental] movement activists will engage in terrorist violence'. As he correctly points out, there is 'no indication that Kaczynski shared the sense, so prevalent in radical environmental subcultures, that life is worthy of reverence and the earth is sacred'. Kaczynski is instead committed to the ideal of wild nature, which serves to naturalize violence. He argues, and ITS concurs, that 'a significant amount of violence is a natural part of human life'. Part of what it means to be a wild human being is to be a violent one, unencumbered by the fetters of civilized morality.

The ideal of wild nature helps to explain anti-tech radicals' target selection. For Kaczynski and ITS, living things have value only insofar as they are wild, and to be wild is to be 'outside the power of the system'. When human beings become instruments of the system, they forfeit any value or dignity that they might have had. Scientists and technicians are permissible targets of violence because they have betrayed their wild nature, and they are desirable targets because they symbolize the technological system. Whereas environmental radicals' reverence for life tends to steer them away from violence, towards destruction of property, anti-tech radicals' ideal of wild nature serves to justify their violence.

Yet ITS diverges from Kaczynski about the purpose of violence. For Kaczynski, violence is primarily a means to overthrow the technological system. ITS, on the other hand, argues that Kaczynski's proposed revolution is 'idealistic and irrational'. Not only is this revolution bound to fail; Kaczynski also falls into the trap of leftism when he models his revolution

on the French and Russian revolutions. For members of ITS, violence is not a means to revolution, but a way to affirm or reclaim their own wildness: 'the attack against the system ... is a survival instinct, since the human is violent by nature'. Kaczynski condemns ITS and accuses the group of misappropriating his ideas. He hurls the charge of leftism right back at them, along with a diagnosis of learned helplessness: 'The most important error that ITS commits is that they express, and therefore promote, an attitude of hopelessness about the possibility of eliminating the technological system'. This attitude of hopelessness gives ITS a more vengeful and nihilistic character than Kaczynski himself.

Other anarchist actions inspired partially by Kaczynski

Cambridge, UK: Bank action in solidarity with eco-anarchist prisoners. 17 June 2011:¹⁷

Early Friday morning, 17 June, we brought disorder to Chesterton Road, Cambridge. The HSBC bank was graffitied, its locks glued, its cashpoint trashed using glue and spray paint. The offices of Seetech, a 'back to work' training company, was graffitied with the words FUCK WORK and circled As, a bike lock was used to chain the front doors and the locks were glued. We then visited the Chesterton Road Job Centre and graffitied the front saying FUCK WORK B4 IT FUCKS U and so on. We then sabotaged the cashpoints of the Lloyds TSB and the Barclays banks nearby, also graffitied both offices and gluing locks. A few other nearby businesses had their locks glued and were graffitied, including the slogan SMASH AUTHORITY, FUCK THE POLICE.

This goes out to other marginalised people, those who cannot and/or will not integrate into this sick society.

International solidarity to imprisoned fighters, including American eco-anarchist prisoners Marie Mason and Eric McDavid, also not forgetting another long term caged freedom lover Ted Kaczynski (aka FC or 'Unabomber').

We will not forget or give in, subversive complicities are our strength! Until all cages are destroyed...

Anonymous Autonomous

¹⁷ Anonymous Autonomous. Glue, Spraypaint and Disorder in Cambridge against the System (UK). 325. 17 June 2011. Source Link.

2012 — Various eco-anarchist actions reference Ted K as a source of inspiration

Logging corporation sabotaged in solidarity with Ted K

In 2012 anarchists smashed up a logging corporation building and claimed the act in solidarity with Ted Kaczynski and ITS Mexico:¹

On the night of June 11th in the sleepy town of Olympia, WA, we laid waste to the Washington State Loggers' Association building, breaking out all 24 of their windows and leaving the painted message "YOU ARE NEVER SAFE. GO LOG IN HELL (A)."

Roughly a decade after the fervent period of Earth Liberation activity that occurred in the late 90's and early 2000's, we find ourselves in a far more hopeless situation, immersed in an ever-deepening desert.

Some cling to the idea of hope and others view this as nothing more than a deceitful delusion. Neither narrative concerns us. What truly concerns us is that the living world around us is dying, and that the strength of our heart atrophies through inaction.

How many of us feel disgust being embedded in a concrete jungle, a suburban wasteland, an ocean of meaninglessness?

How many of us mourn the yawning devastation of a clearcut?

While smashing out two dozen windows was only a humble act of revenge in the face of the wholesale destruction of wild life, comrades, let us cease to be eaten up inside by our unactualized rage!

This is an international call to wage war on all those who profit from the rape of the earth.

We greatly embrace and encourage those whose seeds of ferocious intentions have lain dormant thus far to burst forth and raze the cities to the ground. Those cities depend on an empire, a civilization that depends on the ensnarement and suppression of a wild world of meaning and beauty.

" For every action there is a reaction. So as civilization abuses and mistreats fire, fire will abuse civilization. Throughout modern history cities have burned – Rome burned. The civilized order will come to know the true purifying power of fire soon enough. Like wildfires whipping through forests clearing out all the dead wood, making room for new growth to emerge. Civilization will perish in a firestorm, clearing the way for like to sprout and grow unmolested."

This was done in solidarity with Marie Mason and Eric McDavid, Luciano "Tortuga," the Kimki Forest Defenders, all ELF and ALF prisoners and fighters, the Individuals Tending Towards the Wild, the still imprisoned Ted Kaczynski (Unabomber), and all those who acted in vengeance, in defiance, and who got away. May you forever run free.

¹ Anonymous. June 11th Communiqué: Washington Loggers' Association Building Wrecked / International Call For Libratory Earth Violence. ANews. 2012-06-13. Source Link.

FOR THE TERRIFYING FREEDOM!
LONG LIVE ALL EARTH WARRIORS!

Greek anarchist anti-tech cell quotes Ted K

That same month in 2012, 3 anarchists reversed a minivan through the glass doors of Microsoft offices in Athens, Greece. They then preceded to spread out sheets doused in gasoline and light the van on fire before taking off. The attack was claimed by a terrorist cell calling themselves “Deviant Behaviors for the Spread of Revolutionary Terrorism” and they aligned themselves with other anarchists under the name “International Revolutionary Front.”

In a statement claiming the attack, the group argued that cities had turned us into slaves and quoted Ted Kaczynski on the utility of violence. They also posited conspiracy theories overemphasizing the risk of nuclear meltdowns in stable nations and about the danger to life of genetically modified crops. Finally, they ended by arguing that the left should give up on voting and non-violent protests:²

On Wednesday, June 27, at dawn, we attacked the headquarters of Microsoft with a vehicle-bomb. We drove through the main entrance and detonated the bomb van in the building, with about 150 litres of gasoline as a gift. Throughout the course of the operation the team ensured that no one would be in any danger, and, contrary to the assertions of several newspapers, they did not use firearms to immobilize the security personnel. It was an act of war against the widespread insidious silence and captivity generated by this modern world.

It is true that the modern world, largely, has gained a foothold in the minds of his subjects, in the hearts of all his slaves. This fact makes us think of the metaphor of what exists as a ship without captain or chief engineer, continues its route without problems thanks to its well alienated sailors.

“... Prisoners in the prisons-society – Tearing down the walls”

The attack was organized as an urgent action in solidarity with the rebel Olga Ekonomidou. The day we completed the attack on Microsoft, Olga met 54 days of isolation for her refusal — with no regrets — to submit to humiliating nude body searches.

Our choice of target might seem to have no relation to judicial and law enforcement institutions, but we know that the struggle is everywhere, and our point is that the system is all connected and completely shaken after the small and large shocks of our action. We believe active revolutionaries should constantly attack repression, but also to take the opportunity to broaden the perspective and range of our attacks and our revolutionary discourse.

The building was selected because Microsoft is one of the strongest companies in the field of computers, these magnificent and terrifying machines that at first sought to replace the human mind and now carry on their backs capitalism. Their software that they developed runs the vast majority of computers, to stupefy the kids in video games or to give life to computers of the states, tax offices, armies and capitalist corporations. Each company that participates in the techno-industrial system, regardless of their contribution, is our target.

Before we forget, the funds accumulated by the founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates, are now being invested in nuclear projects by him, for example, to finance the construction of a new and more promising nuclear reactor, even after the events of Fukushima; plus investing in genetically modified products, a modern threat to human health and nature that is still sold as a life-giving product, when in fact it gives death – one example among many: thousands

² Anonymous. Full Communiqué for the High-Profile Vehicle-Bomb against Microsoft [Communiqué]. 325. Jan 4, 2013. Original link. Archived link.

of farmers committed suicide due to the inefficiency of Monsanto products, by consuming them in some cases. Gates also invests in medicines, vaccines and the “*intervention*” of the genetic code in order to support his ideas. All this, of course, to showcase the fight against hunger, for charity, better health, better living standards, environmental protection and the fight against climate change.

Anyway, his fortune lets him buy and sell any kind of power he wants, do you want a simple example? The vast funding news agencies the world’s largest by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the promotion of investments, crushing any arguments on technology differentiation between innocent and guilty in the bourgeois world.

“Death to the techno-industrial complex”

“ [...] *Violence itself is nothing wrong. In each specific case, that violence is good or bad depends on how you use it and the purpose it serves. So why do people today see violence as something eminently bad? They do it only for one reason: because propaganda has brain-washed them. Modern society uses different methods of propaganda to educate people to be scared and horrified at violence, because the techno-industrial system requires a population shy, docile and afraid to assert themselves, a population that does not face their problems and shifts proper functioning of power to the system. Power depends, ultimately, on physical force. To teach people that violence is wrong (except the violence used by the system through the police or the army), the system maintains a monopoly of physical power and, therefore, maintains all the power in their hands. [...]* ”

— Ted Kaczynski

For us, ANARCHY IS A WAY OF LIFE. It doesn’t begin after ending employment or when the student finishes the program or any course hours are done. Even when an attack ends posters are put up where the “job was done” or aggressive energy is present.

Whoever fights does not need any approval from any profile to “*sell your face.*” The anarchist struggle is in itself, selfless by nature, not with a Christian type victimized humility, BUT AS AN ATTITUDE OF “SPEAKING LITTLE AND DOING A LOT.” The struggle is not an issue debated in cafe gossip, the gaps between student / working hours, at “anarcho” cafes in fucking Exarchia.

Away from elitism.

Away from the flavoured lifestyle that has infected the revolutionary circles.

Away from the public pseudo-dilemma of social action or guerrilla, media fetishism and meaningless splits about polymorphism of the struggle or union.

Against the conception that the end justifies the means, therefore inciting collaborations / friendships aiming at revolutionary benefits.

Against overwhelming perceptions that underestimate people, undermining their prospects for development, applying universal standards for interpreting the submissive attitude of society as a whole- not throwing people into garbage bags.

After all, “*he who is without sin cast the first stone.*” Whoever thinks and considers themselves uncontaminated has become so without knowing...

Our own struggle is “struggling” daily from inside the minds of all those who still think. Fermented with countless individual characteristics of each person. Enriched with the diverse range of concepts in the social field. Reaches beyond deadlock and suicide in the walls of fear and resignation that tower! Until other comrades follow the battle...

Leading the fight are people around the world who fight fiercely for the impossible, even in their heads. Whatever your political identity, respect all to all those who give their lives,

because they love life and know that a dangerous free life is worth more than the life of a slave, drowned within the compromises with authority...

It is... the rebels in the Niger Delta fighting against multinational giant “Shell” which pollutes and destroys vast areas, the subversive militant movements that develop in the U.S. claiming space and time outside the state mandate of economic dictatorship, the Palestinian armed resistance, the armed fighters of the FARC in Colombia, the land occupations in Brazil who are forcibly evicted because of the Olympics, the rebels in England, ghettos in France, the conflict of miners’ strikes in Spain and the insurgents of Egypt and Syria- despite the thousands of deaths and repression, they filled the streets and squares of cities, confronted the uniformed pigs and became armed against the regime.

It is... the spread of militant anarchy and the practice of establishing it at all levels; by molotovs in Santiago to arson in Athens and armed attack in Italy, it is the propagation of anarchist-revolutionary discourse by tens of unknown companions...

Even with our anarchist comrades there will always be points of disagreement, shock and tears because in our world against authority there is no common line and everyone is differently placed between between contracts and rebellion. The challenge is to remain one fist against our common enemy ... we recognize something deep in common with the rebel base: struggle and resistance against domination – Passion for life and freedom.

Life is struggle and revolution. The revolution and the struggle is life. Life is here while we live, while we fight, while we look to the sky ... When this ends, everything is shut down, along with red and black flags, symbols of the hammer and sickle, and ideologies.

Our struggle is hard, painful and at the same time, unlimited and enthusiastic. The source of our rebellion is and will be, experience.

Our struggle is polymorphic. We explode like our bombs, smell of pure lead like our bullets, we spread like fire, the heart speaks as well as our texts, we pollute the decaying city with our posters like smiles to our friends, we fall in love passionately and often are encapsulated as timid misfits.

Our struggle is our “contribution” to the global underground war that occurs daily in our fight within and against the social machine. Our accomplices are NOT characterized by REVOLUTIONARY PURITY.

Our struggle does not serve anyone or anything. Only reflects our wishes and desires. Our hatred and hope. Our joy and sorrow. Our thoughts and feelings.

“About the electoral carnival”

Our attack took place just after the election. The mapping of the motives of those who voted and those who did not participate, no doubt, is impossible. Definitely not a big change we look forward to on the left ... To some of those who took to the streets to vent their anger -for they feel the need to exhaust it more than ever — from our point of view, to vote in the bubble of the traditional left is not enough, nor the sterile and harmless“ *protest*” through abstinence, which are only options that serve as pressure relief valve and relief.

We project the radicalization of everybody who does not have a mind replaced with that of a TV and is looking for a real meaningful reaction and resistance. The radicalization of the action in schools, the workplace, in the popular assemblies and wherever each one is militant and, mainly, in the street. This is where consciences grow, thoughtfully meet and share concerns. Where the experience takes the place of virtual reality and opens roads that were carefully closed. In street fighting and barricades. We consider this field the most fertile for the spread of anarchist theory and practice.

As for the voters of the Golden Dawn, they had the opportunity to see who strengthened. Excuses like “*I voted to feel safe*” or “*to do make a protest vote*” will not be enough to calm our hostility towards them. We should not be indifferent to the continued growth dynamic of the fascists, because even a seemingly non-serious risk can become a surprise when we find ourselves with something unpleasant. The thugs-members do not remain quiet, thinking that now the cops protect them. As the saying goes: with one stone, two birds.

Because, even if we break our faces, our individual victory came in building these relationships and our collective struggle to expand the anarchist revolution. Because, if we had arrived late for our appointment, we might not have stormed heaven. Our aim is to build a solid foundation for the basics of creative destruction. Materializing the disgust and hatred for everything that keeps us prisoners to the perverse world of dead objects, inanimate souls, consciences seduced, genetically calculated horror, cold acceptance of bloody idols. Let’s stay in the spiral of the senses and their dangerous desires.

Deviant Behaviours for the Spread of Revolutionary Terrorism — International Revolutionary Front

An anticiv cell in Russia calling itself ELF share their support for FAI & ITS

On October 3, 2012:³

RUSSA, PHEASANTS RELEASED AND REPEATER SET ON FIRE BY THE ELF / ALF – FAI

On September 24, we set fire to a cell phone repeater that had doubled its satellite transmissions. It was located in the Kolomna district (near Moscow), several dozen miles from human dwellings. The fire eventually consumed the entire length of the repeater and we enjoyed the glow of the instrumentation exploding for quite some time.

All the previously mentioned actions have been carried out in the spirit of solidarity and support of eco-anarchist and insurrectionalist anarchist prisoners, suspects and fugitives around the world within the new wave of decentralized attacks.

Greetings to the Friends of Freedom, the Russian cell of the CCF, the BlackBloc collective and the various anonymous anarchist urban guerrilla groups active in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

Full support to ITS and CI-MSA in Mexico.

A warm hug to all insurgent groups in the world.

Wolfpack, ELF / ALF-Russia, Informal Anarchist Federation

A few days later a longer statement was made in support of the Informal Anarchist Federation project by ELF Russia:⁴

Now we believe it’s time for next part of our plan, and so we salute with raised fists and step back into the darkness of our forests and glades. We keep in touch, we carry on fighting side by side with our comrades-in-arms from IRF/ FAI for another world we know is possible.

³ Anonymous. Russia: Immediate actions to destroy the existing and create another world. ContraInfo. 2012/10/01. Source Link

⁴ Anonymous. Mapping the Fire; International Words of Solidarity with the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire [Essay]. 325. October 8, 2012. Original link. Archived link.

Our participation in IRF/ FAI was made possible in large part because of your efforts, friends, your dedication and courage. This project gave us new and dear companions and co- conspirators, opened our minds to new possibilities of struggle and provided us with a lot to think about.

Earth Liberation Front (Russia) / Informal Anarchist Federation – International Revolutionary Front

2013 — Electrical substation attacked

A ‘Kaczynskist’ journal described an attack on an electrical sub-station:¹²³⁴⁵

In April 2013, a still-unidentified group of brave and determined individuals managed to infiltrate a crucial substation belonging to Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) located in California. The attack took place in the middle of the night, when the group entered an underground vault at PG&E’s Metcalf substation and proceeded to cut fiber cables.

Following this, the group began firing on the substation for a total of twenty minutes, during which time they succeeded in taking out seventeen transformers vanishing long before police arrived. ...

While the attack did not succeed in causing a blackout, it did constitute the “most significant incident of domestic terrorism involving the grid that has ever occurred” in the United States, according to former Federal Energy Regulatory (FERC) Commissioner Jon Wellinghoff.

This group had discipline and planned excessively. They likely had a police scanner radio. They cut the fiber optic cables first in order to prevent the station from communicating or alerting the power company. This means they had inside information, and it is almost certain that one of their members worked for the power company, or had an electrical engineering background. They had armament, ammunition, firearms training. They made no noise leading up to the event. No evidence has ever been found. No manifesto. Law enforcement and government officials were unable to infiltrate this group, meaning they likely did not pass substantive communications over the Internet.

The Metcalf team knew what they were doing.

They did it exceptionally well — and they still failed.

For all their preparation, diligence, determination, and intelligence, they did not succeed in causing even a local blackout in Silicon Valley. Instead, their actions called nationwide attention to the country’s feeble electrical infrastructure. Committees were formed. Laws were passed. Security measures put in place. The system recognized a threat and took steps to strengthen itself.

We believe that a revolution is possible. We put this list together and this information out into the world because we believe this.

It is not impossible to bring down the system, but it will be staggeringly difficult. There is not a single organization— let alone the network of organizations in existence today—that would be able to cause even a single blackout.

The event would need to be carried out with high precision; if not all at once, then within the span of a few days. Fast enough that law enforcement and the military would have to

¹ Pierce Skinner. Garden [Zine], Issue #3. Web Archive. 2022. [Source link and archived text removed after a threat that it was deemed illegal by the domain provider]

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

spread themselves thin while attempting to mitigate the chaos from the first few blackouts—too thin to be effective at interrupting those that would follow. This would require robust, secure, encrypted radio communications networks, almost zero Internet presence, training, discipline, courage, an enormous amount of time, money, and resources, and an unwavering determination to do something that will inevitably lead to the deaths and suffering of many thousands.

Failure would result in the system strengthening itself.

More laws would be passed. More security measures put in place. More high-tech solutions churned out of laboratories and factories to “solve” our “energy crisis”. Those responsible, if caught, would spend the rest of their lives in prison. The revolution would be stifled for another generation or more, and all the work done and progress made for its fruition would have been for worse than nothing. Failure simply isn’t an option. At current, failure is the only potential outcome. We simply are not remotely prepared.

Success, however, is equally frightening. The horrific effects of a nationwide blackout cannot be understated. ...

The same network that would prepare to bring about chaos and destruction must also be prepared to organize and defend their local communities. They must also be willing and prepared to lead an anti-tech revolution. They must have understood and implemented the principles and tactics in *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How* by Ted Kaczynski, including the development and proliferation of a revolutionary myth, a foundational belief system upon which the common people can build and which communicates clearly an understanding of the world and a new relationship with it. There will be much resistance, and the ability to organize, lead, and inspire people will be the most important quality of an anti-tech organization.

If what you are reading here is that an anti-tech revolution, beginning with the annihilation of the U.S. energy grid, is impossible without the proper development and maintenance of such a network of organizations, then you are reading this essay correctly.

This is a call to action. Just not the action you may have expected.

If we organize now, if we really organize, if we establish this network and help it grow, if we do everything absolutely right, then the revolution is possible. But even then, it will be difficult. Stupendously so.

We believe that if these substations were to be damaged, and those damages resulted in the destruction of all high-voltage transformers present, most, if not all of the country would be plunged into a chaotic blackout lasting no fewer than twelve months. We believe this would be the beginning of a real anti-tech revolution. We believe that this revolution is possible. We believe it is necessary.

We put this list out into the world to prove that the system is not invincible. We put this list out into the world so that whatever form these organizations take in the future, however the network of anti-tech revolutionaries establishes itself, at least some of the work has been done.

And there is so much work to be done.

1. GET ORGANIZED. FORM SMALL, RELIABLE GROUPS OF PEOPLE YOU CAN TRUST LOCALLY.
2. ESTABLISH METHODS OF COMMUNICATION THAT ARE NOT RELIANT ON THE INTERNET AND ARE IMPERVIOUS TO SURVEILLANCE. LOOK INTO RADIO TECHNOLOGY.

3. FIND OTHER GROUPS. NETWORK, COMMUNICATE REGULARLY AND INTELLIGENTLY.

4. INVEST IN THE PROPER EQUIPMENT.

5. TRAIN.

In the following article, we take a look at how a highly organized and efficient group managed to almost cause a blackout in Silicon Valley.

Again. They failed. Though their deed was honorable, and we believe, justified, we must emphasize again that our publishing this information does not mean we are advocating violence against these or any other substations. To do so now would result only in failure, complete and utter.

If you stand with the anti-tech cause and truly believe in freedom from technological slavery, then you understand that this is not an option.

So we say it again: ***DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SABOTAGE ANY OF THESE SUBSTATIONS!***

2016

Ted's book 'Anti-Tech Revolution' is published

The book makes it more publicly known that Ted has cemented himself as a kind of Machiavellian vanguardist.

John Jacobi:¹

In his most recent book ... he notes the possibility of radicals using entryist tactics employed by the Bolsheviks to take control of the *Earth First! Journal*, which they could then use for revolutionary ends.

Ted the theoretician:²³

(ii) If a member of the anti-tech organization can find a place on the editorial board of a radical environmentalist periodical (for instance, the Earth First! journal), he will be able to influence the content of the periodical. If a majority of anti-tech people can be placed on the editorial board, they will be able in effect to take the periodical over, minimize its leftist content, and use it systematically for the propagation of anti-tech ideas...

How can anti-tech revolutionaries get themselves into positions of power and influence in radical environmentalist groups? The most important way will be through the moral authority of hard work. In every organization which they seek to capture, the communists are the readiest volunteers, the most devoted committee workers, the most alert and active participants. In many groups, this is in itself sufficient to gain the leadership; it is almost always enough to justify candidacy [for leadership].

The [Communists] in penetrating an organization ... become the 'best workers' for whatever goals the organization seeks to attain.

This was obviously a feature of Ted's earlier writing and thinking also:⁴⁵⁶

Prior to that final struggle, the revolutionaries should not expect to have a majority of people on their side. History is made by active, determined minorities, not by the majority, which seldom has a clear and consistent idea of what it really wants.

When the system becomes sufficiently stressed and unstable, a revolution against technology may be possible. The pattern would be similar to that of the French and Russian Revolutions. French society and Russian society, for several decades prior to their respective revolutions,

¹ John Jacobi. A text dump on wildism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Dec 21, 2019. Original link. Archived link.

² Theodore John Kaczynski. Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How (2nd Edition) [Book]. Fitch & Madison Publishers. 2020. Original link.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ted Kaczynski. Industrial Society and Its Future [Book]. The Ted K Archive. 1995. Original link. Archived link.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John H. Richardson. Children of Ted; The Unlikely New Generation of Unabomber Acolytes [Essay]. Intelligencer. Dec 11, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

showed increasing signs of stress and weakness. Meanwhile, ideologies were being developed that offered a new world-view that was quite different from the old one. In the Russian case revolutionaries were actively working to undermine the old order. Then, when the old system was put under sufficient additional stress (by financial crisis in France, by military defeat in Russia) it was swept away by revolution. What we propose is something along the same lines.

“The current political turmoil provides an environment in which a revolutionary movement should be able to gain a foothold.” He returned to the point later with more enthusiasm: “Present situation looks a lot like situation (19th century) leading up to Russian Revolution, or (pre-1911) to Chinese Revolution. You have all these different factions, mostly goofy and unrealistic, and in disagreement if not in conflict with one another, but all agreeing that the situation is intolerable and that change of the most radical kind is necessary and inevitable. To this mix add one leader of genius.”

Some of Ted’s proposed political strategies also read as a fascistic desire to rabble rouse the most vulnerable into being the first to fall in a war that would be directly against their own interests:⁷⁸⁹

It seems to me, that there are discontented groups that could be very useful if we could, so to speak, recruit them.

Then when the right moment comes, they will be in a position to strike. The thing is that people will tend to be attracted to a movement not only on the basis of agreeing with its ideas, but if they see it as effective, having a clear-cut agenda, cohesive, purposeful and active.

In certain quarters, there is a rejection of modernity, among muslim militants, and I’m wondering what extent it might be useful to our movement to carry on discussions with the Muslim militants and see whether there is sufficient common ground there for any sort of alliance.

“Osama bin Laden has been portrayed as an opponent of modernity,” Kaczynski wrote in December 2001. “If he were simply that, I might be inclined to support him, but my guess is that his motive is less an opposition to modernity than a desire to create an Islamic ‘great power’ that would be able to compete on equal terms with other great powers of the world. If that is true, then he is just another ruthless and power-hungry politician, and I have no use for him.”

Concerning the recent terrorist action in Britain: Quite apart from any humanitarian considerations, the radical Islamics’ approach seems senseless. They take a hostile stance toward whole nations, such as the US. or Britain, and they indiscriminately kill ordinary citizens of those countries. In doing so they only strengthen the countries in question, because they provide the politicians with what they most need: a feared external enemy to unite the people behind their leaders. The Islamics seem to have forgotten the principle of “divide and conquer”: Their best policy would have been to profess friendship for the American, British, etc. people and limit their expressed hostility to the elite groups of those countries, while portraying the ordinary people as victims or dupes of their leaders. (Notice that this is the position that the US. usually adopts toward hostile countries.)

⁷ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

⁸ Ted Kaczynski (Author) & Kelli Grant (Curator). Letters from a serial killer: Inside the Unabomber archive [Letter]. Yahoo News. Original link. Archived link.

⁹ Ted Kaczynski. Industrial Society and Its Future [Book]. The Ted K Archive. 1995. Original link. Archived link.

So the terrorists' acts of mass slaughter seem stupid. But there may be an explanation other than stupidity for their actions: The radical Islamic leaders may be less interested in the effect that the bombings have on the US. or the UK. than in their effect within the Islamic world. The leaders' main goal may be to build a strong and fanatical Islamic movement, and for this purpose they may feel that spectacular acts of mass destruction are more effective than assassinations of single individuals, however important the latter may be. I've found some support for this hypothesis:

“[A] radical remake of the faith is indeed the underlying intention of bin Laden and his followers. Attacking America and its allies is merely a tactic, intended to provoke a backlash strong enough to alert Muslims to the supposed truth of their predicament, and so rally them to purge their faith of all that is alien to its essence. Promoting a clash of civilizations is merely stage one. The more difficult part, as the radicals see it, is convincing fellow Muslims to reject the modern world absolutely (including such aberrations as democracy), topple their own insidiously secularizing quisling governments, and return to the pure path.”

It's also clear that in Ted's view, no energy should be exerted in countering racist people and groups, as these are stresses on society which he sees as useful in helping bring down the collapse of industrial society faster:¹⁰

134. For all of the foregoing reasons, technology is a more powerful social force than the aspiration for freedom. But this statement requires an important qualification. It appears that during the next several decades the industrial-technological system will be undergoing severe stresses due to economic and environmental problems, and especially due to problems of human behavior (alienation, rebellion, hostility, a variety of social and psychological difficulties). We hope that the stresses through which the system is likely to pass will cause it to break down, or at least weaken it sufficiently so that a revolution occurs and is successful, then at that particular moment the aspiration for freedom will have proved more powerful than technology.

“150. As we mentioned in paragraph 134, industrial society seems likely to be entering a period of severe stress, due in part to problems of human behavior and in part to economic and environmental problems. And a considerable proportion of the system's economic and environmental problems result from the way human beings behave. Alienation, low self-esteem, depression, hostility, rebellion; children who won't study, youth gangs, illegal drug use, rape, child abuse, other crimes, unsafe sex, teen pregnancy, population growth, political corruption, race hatred, ethnic rivalry, bitter ideological conflict (i.e., pro-choice vs. pro-life), political extremism, terrorism, sabotage, anti-government groups, hate groups. All these threaten the very survival of the system. The system will be FORCED to use every practical means of controlling human behavior.”

Cars burnt under the umbrella of ELF/FAI

On February 26, 2016 another action was claimed under the umbrella of ELF & FAI:¹¹

Germany: Nine Cars Burnt in Mulheim by Wildfire Cell – ALF/ELF/FAI

In the early hours of February 14th, we set fire to the urban-cemetery of Mulheim An Der Ruhr, burning nine cars by placing home made incendiary devices on the tires. To us all

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Anonymous. Nine Cars Burnt in Mulheim by Wildfire Cell – ALF/ELF/FAI [Communique]. 325. February 26, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

cars are equally disgusting and toxic machines of the techno-industrial system, so we burn them indiscriminately, choosing not to limit ourselves to targeting some abstract definition of “luxury” cars.

This attack was an act of vengeance for all the nonhuman comrades crushed on the roads of human “progress”, and whose lives and homes are destroyed every day to produce cars for the smooth functioning of society and the accumulation of power to the hands of the corporations destroying our home, the natural environment.

We chose to act one day before the original date of the court case for the attempted escape of Conspiracy of Cells of Fire – Imprisoned Members Cell, to stand with them until all prisons are ashes and ruins, and all human and nonhuman comrades are free.

We also send our greetings, love and rage to Monica Caballero and Francisco Solar, whose court trial has been set for the 8th, 9th and 10th of March for the bombing of two churches in Spain.

This is a gesture of complicity in the war for total liberation.

Onward with the violent rejection of civilization and its values.

Until all are free!

Wildfire Cell – ALF/ELF/FAI

2019 — Ted disavows any identification as an anarchist

In an extra paragraph to a footnote Ted added to his manifesto in 2016, that was published in the 2019 update of his book *Technological Slavery*, Ted wrote the following. Shown here in it's full context starting with the paragraph from the main body of the manifesto:¹

... Above all, leftism is driven by the need for power, and the leftist seeks power on a collective basis, through identification with a mass movement or an organization. Leftism is unlikely ever to give up technology, because technology is too valuable a source of collective power.

[Paragraph] 215. The anarchist³⁴ too seeks power, but he seeks it on an individual or small-group basis; he wants individuals and small groups to be able to control the circumstances of their own lives. He opposes technology because it makes small groups dependent on large organizations.

[Footnote] 34. This statement refers to our particular brand of anarchism. A wide variety of social attitudes have been called “anarchist,” and it may be that many who consider themselves anarchists would not accept our statement of paragraph 215. It should be noted, by the way, that there is a nonviolent anarchist movement whose members probably would not accept FC as anarchist and certainly would not approve of FC’s violent methods.

(Added 2016) In 1995 I described FC as “anarchist” because I thought it would be advantageous to have some recognized political identity. At that time I knew very little about anarchism. Since then I’ve learned that anarchists, at least those of the U.S. and the U.K., are nothing but a lot of hopelessly ineffectual bunglers and dreamers, useless for any purpose. Needless to say, I now disavow any identification as an anarchist.

¹ Ted Kaczynski. *Technological Slavery*. Fitch & Madison Publishers, 2022. <https://fitchmadison.com/product/technological-slavery-volume-one-2022/>

The Future

I think the distribution and application of high-level technology will become the primary political conflict of the future, therefore leftists and anarchists do have to take seriously the protection and re-establishment of more minimum viable technology lifeways if we want to win more people over to our philosophy and make our preferred means of organization the tried and tested policies of the future.

This would simply be one ethical outlook with prescriptions within leftist and anarchist discourse worth promoting.

As discussed earlier, Ellul is a great person to read for both a critique of technological overconsumption and an antidote to the rigid position of Kaczynski:¹

If we see technique as nothing but objects that can be useful (and we need to check whether they are indeed useful); and if we stop believing in technique for its own sake or that of society; and if we stop fearing technique, and treat it as one thing among many others, then we destroy the basis for the power technique has over humanity.

As well David Charles has some great tips for how to practice living a low-impact lifestyle:²

Technology is there to solve the little problems of existence and support us in our lives. There's a lot of amazing tech out there and it's easy to get sucked into saying yes to every little advance, whether it's needed or not.

Technology solves problems. That's good. But when the problem is solved, I think we should stop there. Paying for something when I haven't got any cash on me is a mild inconvenience, but my debit card solves it with little fuss. Saving a further twenty seconds at the checkout is simply not a problem that I have.

In fact, far from being a problem solved, shaving seconds from that interaction is actually a bad thing. Solving problems that aren't problems will always have consequences. In this case, it alienates us a little further from the people who serve us our Meal Deals.

I'm far from being against all technology (he says, publishing this on the vast interconnected technologies of the internet), but I do think we should always use the minimum viable technology for a task. In other words, we should use the most basic tools that will still get the job well done. ...

Skills

The more basic the technology, generally speaking, the greater the skills you must learn and deploy.

For example, motorists who grew up in the 40s, 50s and 60s had to become semi-skilled mechanics in order to keep their cars on the road. Modern motorists have no such need. In fact, car manufacturers deliberately make their technology unhackable, so that you must go back to the approved dealer for expensive repairs.

¹ Jacques Ellul. Perspectives on Our Age: Jacques Ellul Speaks on His Life and Work [Book]. House of Anansi Press Perseus-PGW. 2004. Original link. Archived link.

² David Charles. Minimum Viable Technology [Essay]. David Charles. September 25, 2015. Original link. Archived link.

The same is true of modern computers. You used to have to understand the fundamentals of programming to use a PC properly. Nowadays, user interfaces have evolved to the point where the internal workings of your computer are shrouded in mystery. When something goes wrong, the user is clueless and open to exploitation.

Of course, for many people, myself included, this ease of use is a good thing. But ease of use and incomprehending dependence are two completely different things.

Dependence is hierarchical and undemocratic, concentrating knowledge and power in the hands of the few. It reminds me of the worst excesses of medieval religion, where divine forgiveness was sold to the layman by a corrupt hierarchy of priests.

Hidden Benefits

Using the minimum viable technology for a task often has hidden benefits. For example, writing long hand on paper is important to cognitive development in children, helps you learn by combining visual, motor and brain processing, could make us more creative and stave off mental decline as we get older. Not bad for something that is so obviously “backward” in this screen-filled age.

These hidden benefits apply to almost every positive constraint that I’ve experimented with: No Hot Showers, No Mobile Phone, No Supermarket.

The Tool is not the Task

In our search for the most efficient technology, we forget that 99% of a task is not about the tools we use.

Cleaning yourself is not about power showers, hot water tanks or expensive shampoos; it’s about water and scrubbing. Jumping into a lake would do it.

Communication is not about 4G, wifi or GSM; it’s about talking to other human beings. Like the ones you see on the train every morning.

Grocery shopping isn’t about foil-packed for freshness, 138 different varieties of soup or self-service checkouts; it’s about building a strong and healthy relationship to your food and the people who supply that food. You find that at your local greengrocer, not in the aisles of a supermarket warehouse.

The Best Things in Life are Simple

Using the minimum viable technology reminds us that the best things in life are not complicated.

There is nothing that gives me greater pleasure than pulling on a pair of walking shoes (my minimum viable technology for travel without blisters), slinging a small backpack over my shoulder (MVT for basic food and camping gear), walking out into the sunset, sleeping the night on a hilltop in my bivvy bag (MVT for sleeping) and waking to the warming glow of the sunrise.

I don’t need much more than that. Anything else is a luxury and distracts from the task at hand: exploring the corners of the life I have been given.

Technology is there to support us when we need it, not to be taken for granted. When the support falls away – and it will one day – will you be able to stand on your own two feet?

Colin Ward’s life’s work also provides a great example on the value of pursuing an incrementalist approach:³

³ Stuart White. The incremental anarchist [Essay]. *Radical Philosophy* #161. May 2010. Pages 67–68. Original link. Archived link.

Ward's anarchism rests on three main ideas: pluralism, the presence of anarchy in existing society, and a focus on problem-solving. First, Ward argues that all societies solve problems using a variety of mechanisms. They use commercial, market-based techniques; they use authority and directive and bureaucratic techniques; and they also use techniques of mutuality – techniques of mutual aid and cooperative self-help. Within this pluralist framework, 'anarchy' refers to the space in which the latter techniques of mutual aid and cooperative self-help predominate. The aim of anarchism should be to try to push society in the direction of greater anarchy in this sense – to shift the balance of society's pluralistic problem-solving in a more anarchic direction.

Second, related to this pluralist perspective, is Ward's claim that anarchy is already very much part of our social world:

"far from being a speculative vision of a future society ... [anarchy] is a description of a mode of human organization, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society ... the anarchist alternatives are already there, in the interstices of the dominant power structure. If you want to build a free society, the parts are all at hand. (*Anarchy in Action*) Examples of anarchy in action that Ward gives include Alcoholics Anonymous, Friendly Societies, squatters' movements, tenants' housing co-operatives and efforts to bring workplaces under 'workers' control'."

The anarchist aim should be to build out from already existing anarchy in society, extending its coverage to wider and wider spheres of social life: To do this, anarchist thinking must, in Ward's view, have a resolutely practical, problem-solving focus. Anyone wanting to theorize the intricacies of 'autonomy' or 'anarchy' as abstract concepts will look to Ward's writings in vain. His work is overwhelmingly concerned with discussion of concrete issues such as housing, urban planning, education, welfare and transport, trying to show how the anarchic techniques of mutual aid and cooperative self-help might be applied.

Housing was a particular interest – he spent his early career working as an architect – and illustrates his general approach. Here he was highly critical of state-heavy efforts, led by middle-class housing professionals, to provide housing for the working classes. In an open letter to the Labour MP Tony Crosland, then shadow minister for housing, Ward drew out the paternalism he saw in the social-democratic tradition:

"You ... see the homeless, the ill-housed and overcrowded and the newly-weds just coming up for membership of the Housing Shortage Club, as the inert objects, the raw material of policy, waiting to be processed by the Housing Problems Industry. (*Housing: An Anarchist Approach*, 1976)"

Against this paternalism, Ward asserted the principle of 'dweller control' of housing, exemplified in tenants' co-operatives, self-build projects and, not least, squatters' movements.

Ward's resistance to paternalism inevitably brought him into conflict with the Marxist tradition. In his 1985 book *When We Build Again*, Ward refers to the 'ludicrous polemics among Marxist pundits'. Reflecting on the claim that council-house provision is 'decommodification', Ward points to the older use of the word 'commodity' to refer to that which is useful or commodious. He then argues that, in this sense, the mass council housing of the post-war period has indeed been a tremendously successful experiment in 'decommodifying' how many working-class people live.

It would nevertheless be quite wrong to see Ward's anarchism only in terms of a series of interventions in specific policy areas. In a 1968 interview for BBC Radio 3, he described himself as 'an anarchist-communist, in the Kropotkin tradition'. And underpinning the various interventions there is indeed a unifying vision drawn from the work of Kropotkin and

from Ebenezer Howard's original conception of the garden city. Ward edited a version of Kropotkin's *Fields, Factories and Workshops* for Freedom Press in 1975 with commentary on what he saw as its contemporary relevance in the new era of energy crisis and stagflation. The vision is of a society in which local communities are the prime political unit and in which economic activity is localized around a mix of agricultural/horticultural and industrial production. The citizen might work on her allotment on Monday, teach for the next three days a week for the Teachers' Guild in a local school (where children's attendance is not compulsory) and then spend Friday in the Community Workshop making items for a Local Exchange and Trading Scheme. One evening a week might be spent at a meeting of the neighbourhood council.

Ward stood, in effect, at the confluence of two traditions. On the one hand, he knew his anarchist classics, particularly Kropotkin's work, and he drew on them. On the other, he was inspired by the diffuse traditions of working-class and popular self-help – resolutely practical traditions concerned to get things done, to make the world better in some simple but important and measurable way, and which have little time for theoretical niceties. He sought to bring the traditions into dialogue, for their mutual benefit.

Summarizing what tactics I view as most effective going forward, I wrote an essay discussing the role of the far-left, effective activism & violence:⁴

Mutual aid – We should put the time into helping our neighbors and volunteering, for example on a food not bombs stall, to both manifest and get enjoy the positive benefits of a communalist caring society.

Direct action – We should try to mostly choose targets which the largest amount of people can sympathize with, for instance the sabotaging of a fox hunt in order to highlight the direction we'd like to move in with legal animal rights, going from mostly ending blood sports, to mostly ending animal captivity, to mostly ending hunting for taste pleasure.

Campaigning – We should look for the easiest squeeze points to rack up small wins, like the picketing of a cafe to reclaim lost wages, so that word spreads and it creates a domino effect.

Education – We should be educating ourselves and helping others know what work and rent union to join, what to keep a record of at work, how to defend yourself from rapists and fascists, how to crack a squat and how to write a press release, etc.

Electoral politics – Its often obvious which party is the lesser evil long-term and I think it's virtuous to vote that way as more people will have a qualitatively less bad experience than the few who do. So it's the trolley problem. We wouldn't desire to put in the electoral system ourselves, but some of us engage with it for a few hours every 4 years and use the discourse surrounding it to rally people to the far-left.

We need to get well educated on how even the baby step policies toward the left would be an improvement on where we are now, we need to learn the internal politicking of government and get good at having friendly arguments with comedy to appeal to friends and acquaintances basic intuitions.

The goal being that we can talk the latest news and (1) Win over conservatives to obvious empirically better policies on the left, and (2) Win over liberals when center-left parties are in power to feel dismayed at the slow pace of change, and so acknowledge how much better it would be if there was a market socialist in the position willing to rally people to demonstrate and strike to push through bills.

⁴ Theo Slade. On The Far-Left, Effective Activism & Violence [Essay]. Activist Journeys. February 21, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

This still must entail a cynical clarity about how many swing voters you meet will be responding to the seesaw effect in politics of blaming the last person in power for everything wrong, so knowing how much time to invest and picking your battles.

The limits of violence

Finally, here's an experimental list of anarchist principles to end on:⁵

Some groups and projects try to put together an aims and principles list to explain what campaign news and philosophy they will focus on, and I think this can positively influence what actions people take and think are justified. Some examples I know of include:

- By Any Means Necessary⁶
- Anarchist Radio Network⁷
- Green Anti-Capitalist Front⁸

You also have people using slogans like 'by any means necessary' going all the way back to Malcolm X & Franz Fanon in the 60s, which I guess is an attempt to say we'll go as far as we're pushed, so be careful what state terror tactics you use on us.

My aims are reflected in the CrimethInc exercise in what an anarchist program might look like.⁹ And I've already written about my ethics broadly,¹⁰ but I'll try to be more specific here, in experimenting with drawing up a list of principles that I think would be useful to the calculation of what tactics I think are useful and justifiable in the UK today which is in my view a non-revolutionary period, which to me just means a time when social tensions are not at their height:

- 1) Never act with reckless indifference to human and non-human animal life.
- 2) Never physically hurt people for the purpose of achieving political goals as it runs counter to our philosophy on the left that material conditions create the person and so we should make every peaceful effort to rehabilitate people.

Some tricky to explain examples that are justified, but only just outside this principle are:

(A) Community self-defense and self-defense by proxy, where you might desire to fight fascists in the street in order to block them from marching through immigrant communities or where you might desire to push your way through huntsmen in order to save a fox from getting mauled to death by dogs.

(B) Survivor-led vigilantism, where to the extent that some current institutions fail to rehabilitate people and the process of seeking justice through the institutions available can sometimes cause more trauma than its worth, then personal violence in order to resolve feelings of helplessness in the face of evil acts can sometimes be reasonably viewed as justified to regain feelings of agency.

⁵ Theo Slade. An Experimental List of Anarchist Principles [Essay]. Activist Journeys. May 1, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁶ Various Authors. BAMN Principles [Statement]. BAMN. accessed 25 July 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁷ Various Authors. Basic principles [Statement]. A-Radio Network. accessed 25 July 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁸ Various Authors. Aims & Principles [Statement]. Green Anti-Capitalist Media. accessed 25 July 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁹ CrimethInc. What Would an Anarchist Program Look Like? [Essay]. CrimethInc.. November 2, 2020. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁰ Theo Slade. My Virtue-Existentialist Ethics [Essay]. Activist Journeys. September 20, 2020. Original link. Archived link.

3) Never take actions on the basis of anti-science beliefs or with the intent to propagate anti-science beliefs e.g. disproven conspiracy theories.

4) Take care to respect the difference between property which is personally and privately owned.

So, it could be seen as ethical to choose material targets of evil actors in order to cause economic damage and make a statement, so long as in the case of personal property, the item has no intrinsic sentimental value and can be replaced because the person is wealthy and that the item was paid for through the exploitation of others labor. Or is private property, meaning the means of production which should be owned collectively anyway.

The action would be an outlet for legitimate anger against that which causes us suffering and a means of developing people's thinking and creating a wider base of people joined in sympathy for those ideals.

For example, if taking the risk to slash slaughterhouse trucks' tyres in the dead of night both draws attention to animal suffering and also helps you to develop stronger bonds with a group of people and learn from other liberation struggles, then the action is both productive and leads to personal growth.

5) Never take actions in the hopes of helping in part instigate a revolutionary war sooner than it's reasonable to believe you would have the capability to win. Similarly don't use rhetoric about how tensions in society have escalated to the state of civil war or a third world war. For example, even if the revolutionary left got really good at assassinating captains of industry and getting away with it, there would be reasonable fears around the psychology of people who would take such an act against people who they could have grown up and been socially conditioned to be themselves, which would inexorably lead to a more authoritarian society and worse foundations on which to work towards a better society.

I do think we can hypothesize the unrealistic case of 99% of society desiring a referendum on a shift from parliamentary representative system to a federated spokes council system and the MP's dragging their feet, the same way both parties gerrymander the boundaries to make it easier to win despite it being the one issue most everyone agrees is bad, and people needing to storm the halls of power to force a vote to happen.

More likely though, an opportunity for revolution might arise from such a confluence of events as climate refugees and worker gains forcing the state and corporations into trying to crack down on freedoms in order to preserve their power and enough people resisting that move, who are then able take power and usher in radical policy change, with either the army deciding to stand down or splitting into factions.

Most can sympathize with quick revolutions against dictatorships where the result is a freer society, like the Kurdish uprising in Northern Syria which took power from a regime who had rolled tanks on demonstrators and outlawed teaching of their native language.

But, even there, there are key foundations you need to work from, like the probability you won't just give an excuse for the oppressor committing even worse horrors as was the case with the Rohingya militants who ambushed a police checkpoint, resulting in army & citizen campaign to burn down many villages, plus murder and rape those that couldn't get away.

Also, there would be a responsibility to put down arms after winning political freedoms and a majority are in favor of diplomacy through electoral politics, like in Northern Ireland today.

Under representative democracies, the sentiment of most is that, even if it could be argued that a war of terror (not a revolutionary war) against the ruling class was the easiest route

to produce a better society, that it would still be ethically wrong to be the person who takes another's life just because it's the easiest way. Since regardless of manufactured consent or anything else you still could have worked to build a coalition to overcome those obstacles.

And I agree, it would be an act of self-harm to treat life with such disregard when we could have been that same deluded person shrouded in the justificatory trappings of society which normalizes that behavior. I don't think the way we win today is by treating a cold bureaucratic system with equally cold disregard, by justifying our resort to threat and violence because we have fewer resources, and a belief in the importance of our message. Time on earth is a foundational value worth fighting for, and everybody deserves some amount of breathing room to make mistakes and learn from them.

13. Disrupting The Purist Anarchist Pipeline

Author: Theo Slade

Topics: critique

Date: 2022

Some librarians arguments for rejecting:

magsalin: You uploaded it on the wrong library. The bookshelf is our meta wiki, not the main library

Also, some peeps told us you said kinda mean things about the library? Something about us having low standards?

Ishkah: I think that was a misunderstanding, I was being self-deprecating, like 'hey I got my writing on this platform that I like, I know it's not the most popular site in the world, but it makes me happy'

lucian: this one is a no from me

it includes a dox

ie. the real name of someone who was trying to hide their real name

ishkah this who EE conversation was tired in 2011

i'm dead against this one tbh. you include jullian langer in your section 'Eco-Extremist Nature Worshipers', even though julian has wrote against eco-extremism countless times including aragorn! in that section probably isn't smart either

magsalin: Hey Aragorn! literally founded the site

Ishkah: Julian Langer and Aragorn explaining or critiquing eco-extremism, I didn't say they were eco-extremists.

A librarians argument against rejecting: ...

A readers argument for rejecting: Too critical of Aragorn and other post-left anarchists.

A readers argument against rejecting: I censored the quoted critique that included private details, plus I added more disclaimers and footnotes to make clearer that I wasn't denouncing everyone whose writing I quoted who were describing various ideologies.

Introduction

At the very least, one goal I hope to achieve in collecting these quotes together, is to provide a cautionary warning, mostly for young people, about the importance of approaching political philosophy with careful consideration.

I think polarization and passionate polemical arguments for the direction and focus of any political or philosophical movement should be encouraged as it can be a vibrant discourse that inspires someone to join.

However, the two foundational issues any group must worry about are firstly becoming defined too broadly such that the philosophy just becomes a weak cultural disposition. So, for example, the way in which you have Christians on every side of every political issue today. And secondly, the group's members defining the project in a rigidly narrow way, such that the group splits into factions, with each faction calling the other fakes, or abandoning the project entirely.

The obvious ideal is to maintain lots of specialized philosophical platforms within any movement, whilst maintaining coherence as a unified force. I've only written about this first issue in passing in an essay called *On the Far-Left, Effective Activism & Violence*,¹ but I plan to write about it more in the future.

For now, I'd like to address this second issue of factionalism.

Disclaimers galore

A while ago I was told by a Kaczynski fan that anyone who doesn't want to destroy all electricity grids is a reformist. So, I simply think there's a danger in traveling down the purist anarchist rabbit hole of more and more rigidly dogmatic political theory, where you begin to believe it's only worth reading the way a few authors view the world.

One obvious critique of the way I've compiled these quotes is that I open up anarchism and its many specialized philosophies, to a charge of being solely irrational steps along the road that people adopt for reasons of personal purity. Also, that the same could be said of people adopting center-left liberalism as opposed to status quo centrism.

I believe, however, that the desire to take on political identities for personal purity or the need to view the world in rigidly fundamentalist ways is a specific willfully self-limiting phenomenon. I'm not saying the only way a person could arrive at all the philosophies that I'm going to discuss is through a desire for personal purity. So, although I think this is an important critique that can be leveled at some niche ideologies participants, it certainly isn't a perfect defeater to all the ideologies.

I really value debate between various specialized political philosophies and strategies, and I have nothing against for example, green anarchism as the promotion of a style of critique not often seen, like black-anarchism and anarcha-feminism. These can help identify you as someone who has had the time to research the ways in which expertise in building democratic institutions, green architecture and rewilding will help get us to a better world.

In using the term pipeline I'm not making an absolutist factual claim, that if a person reads x thing, they are on their way to becoming y thing, always and definitively. I am saying there is a clearly observable psychological crossover among some people from these niche ideologies who move down them

¹ Theo Slade. On The Far-Left, Effective Activism & Violence [Essay]. Activist Journeys. February 21, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

in a pursuit of viewing the world in more fundamentalist ways, and who also attempt to move others along in the same direction as them, and finally that it's more common the further down you go.

Obviously, someone can travel all the way down to the level of a Satanist death cultist and only have been able to encourage one of their former friends to move down one level, thus spitting them out at only one level lower, but it's still a concerning phenomenon, both for the few who end up at the very low levels, as well as the many who just take on a more purist gatekeeping form of anarchism.

Also, I will quote one example of a group later, ITS Mexico (Individualists Tending to the Wild), who started out at one end of the pipeline and moved all the way to the other end, but just for now to have something concrete to hold onto, here's an example of how this shift can happen explained by a purist anarchist expressing what it felt like to move down the levels:

A zed: Just finished reading Atassa. Has anyone else had a chance to read it? I thought it was extremely fascinating ... something about EE and Atassa just feels like such a drastic shift in the discourse and reminds me of the importance with which individuals read and shared Desert.

Ishkah: Say you were blown up by one of ITS pipe bombs after walking down the street, such that you were paralyzed for the rest of your life and sitting in a hospital bed, tell me what would be your feelings about the person who did that to you?

A zed: ... I do not condemn the actions taken by ITS for the same reasons they give for not condemning rape, if you condemn it you should do something about it. So while I have theoretical disagreements with ITS, I don't condemn them, even if they were to attack me, I for the most part, agree with who they have chosen as targets.

The issue

I think it's inarguable that some people will take a bunch of contradictory twists and turns down a list of more and more fringe ideologies, in pursuit of the most rigidly simplistic way of viewing the world, in searching for 'answers' to reduce anxiety in a seemingly chaotic world, to provide a navigable route in a world which can feel terrifyingly uncharted. In this way they come to believe they have the answers to almost all life's questions. What is arguable is how common this phenomenon is depending on the ideology.

A comparison

I'm going to make a comparison between elements of two situations now, but I want to be clear that I'm not equating the two, and the element I'm comparing is not how similar the ideologies are to each other. I'm comparing a dynamic of how participants may move through the different ideologies.

A person might move over to the far-right in stages which incrementally take them further away from their initial views. For example, firstly believing that: Slavery is bad and also that the US civil war was more about the economic disparity between North and South. Then moving to a position, that slavery, understood in the context of the time, was a necessary evil. And from there to a position black Americans have benefitted from being brought to the US and are ungrateful for the opportunities afforded them.

A similar dynamic can happen for people moving away from identifying with green anarchism. A person could first be convinced that they should stop supporting a variety of direct-action campaigns, in order to focus solely on being against technology in order to reach the maximum people with a clear message. However, in consequence, they significantly reduce the amount of people they're trying to coalition build with. Then, secondly they may begin to believe that; in the absence of fellow activists to

spread the message to a wider population, that killing and terrorizing people is a necessary evil to draw maximum attention to the direction society needs to be heading in. This would reduce further the number of people they're able to recruit into taking similar actions. Then thirdly, thinking that hope for changing people's minds is pointless, they may begin to believe that they should just take pleasure in embracing their violent hatred for all things 'unnatural'.

From the perspective of the person falling down this cult like ideological rabbit hole they may believe that they're only descending further down and down because they're discovering more and more the 'true' nature of man. However, from the outside looking in, it's easy to see the person is just holding a false belief, and then each time they're proven wrong, doubling down and taking on a more extreme version of the same ill thought out emotional intuition.

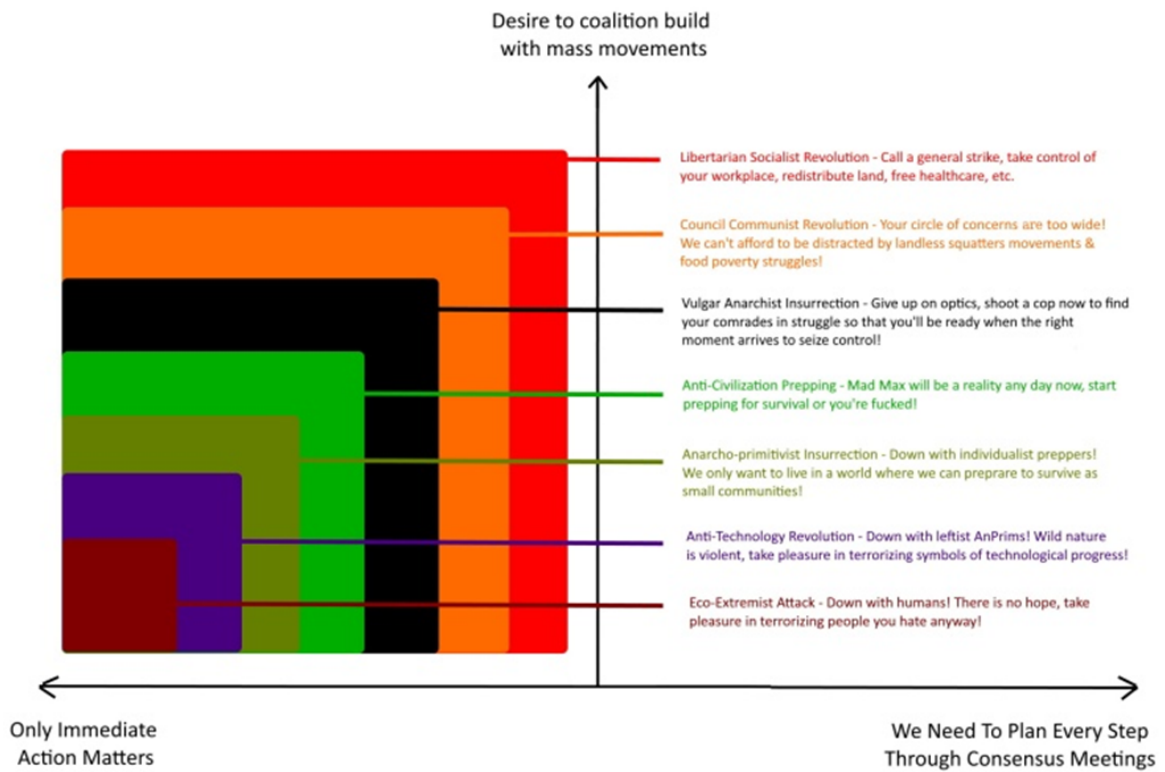
An analogy by way of a diagram

I'd also like to offer an analogy that someone could go from desiring a 'libertarian socialist revolution' to a 'vulgar anarchist insurrection'² because people can buy into anarchist ideology for all the wrong reasons. The same way a person with an eating disorder could just be using veganism as a way to restrict their diet on the way to raw veganism, etc. So, just keep in mind that the diagram text is not meant to be a perfectly summarized version of each ideology.

Finally, I neither claim all the ideologies listed are anarchist, nor that I would personally desire to see a libertarian socialist revolution end at worker control, but I do see anarchists as part of a big-tent leftist movement, where securing workplace democracy would be a massive improvement in society.

² The primary meaning of vulgar is a kind of less complicated copy of an original idea/object where some of the original important nuance is lost. So with anarchists who treat insurrectionary anarchism as the strategy which is of primary importance, I think some nuance is lost. Like what Cells of Fire said about people fetishizing illegalism and voluntarily going underground. Maybe they respected people who talked about having to go on the run to live by their principles after the cops got wind of who they were, but then the people who thought they were copying them mistakenly imagined they were following in their footsteps by going underground even when they didn't need to.

"You see, Ricks — they get lazy. There's always a shitty decoy towards the end. But those decoys made decoys too, and got lazy themselves. And far enough down the line... There be monsters."



Various ideologies

I'm going to quote a ton of essays from a bunch of ideologies in the order I've seen people travel down them, along with quotes from a ton of critiques, then end on two possible ideologies that could work as a useful force in disrupting a person's journey down the pipeline.

I've unashamedly chosen various critiques with prescriptions which at times contradict each other, as the aim is to find some critiques close to each specific ideology in order to have the greatest chance of relating to the person's way of thinking intuitively.

Post-Left Anarchism

The narrowing of approaches

On two fairly popular anarchist forums, they summarize post-left anarchism like so:¹

What Post-Left Anarchy Critiques:

1) The Left

- Critiquing the Left as nebulous, anachronistic, distracting, a failure & at key points a counterproductive force historically (“the left wing of capital”).
- Critiquing Leftist activists for political careerism, celebrity culture, self-righteousness, privileged vanguardism & martyrdom.
- Critiquing the tendency of Leftists to insulate themselves in academia, scenes & cliques while also attempting to opportunistically manage struggles.

2) Ideology

- A Stirner-esque critique of dogma & ideological thinking as a distinct phenomenon in favor of “critical self-theory” at individual & communal levels.

3) Morality

- A moral nihilist critique of morality/reified values/moralism.

4) Organizationalism

- Critiquing permanent, formal, mass, mediated, rigid, growth-focused modes of organization in favor of temporary, informal, direct, spontaneous, intimate forms of relation.
- Critiquing Leftist organizational patterns' tendencies toward managerialism, reductionism, professionalism, substitutionism & ideology.
- Critiquing the tendencies of unions & Leftist organizations to mimic political parties, acting as racketeers/mediators, with cadre-based hierarchies of theoretician & militant or intellectual & grunt, defaulting toward institutionalization & ritualizing a meeting-voting-recruiting-marching pattern.

5) Identity Politics

¹ Multiple Authors. Post-Left Anarchy [Essay]. Raddle. Retrieved on July 14, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

- Critiquing identity politics insofar as it preserves victimization-enabled identities & social roles (i.e. affirming rather than negating gender, class, etc.) & inflicts guilt-induced paralysis, amongst others.
- Critiquing single-issue campaigns or orientations.

What Post-Left Anarchists Value:

- Moving beyond anarchISM as a static historical praxis into anarchY as a living praxis
- Focusing on daily life & the intersectionality thereof rather than dialectics / totalizing narratives (except anarcho-primitivists tend toward epistemology)
- Emphasizing personal autonomy & a rejection of work (as forced labor, alienated labor, workplace-centricity)
- Critiquing Enlightenment notions of Cartesian dualities, rationalism, humanism, democracy, utopia, etc.
- Critiquing industrial notions of mass society, production, productivity, efficiency, “Progress”, technophilia, civilization (esp. in anti-civilization tendencies)

What is Green Anarchy?:²

Unfortunately, many anarchists continue to be viewed, and view themselves, as part of the Left. This tendency is changing, as post-left and anti-civilization anarchists make clear distinctions between their perspectives and the bankruptcy of the socialist and liberal orientations. Not only has the Left proven itself to be a monumental failure in its objectives, but it is obvious from its history, contemporary practice, and ideological framework, that the Left (while presenting itself as altruistic and promoting “freedom”) is actually the antithesis of liberation. The Left has never fundamentally questioned technology, production, organization, representation, alienation, authoritarianism, morality, or Progress, and it has almost nothing to say about ecology, autonomy, or the individual on any meaningful level. The Left is a general term and can roughly describe all socialist leanings (from social democrats and liberals to Maoists and Stalinists) which wish to re-socialize “the masses” into a more “progressive” agenda, often using coercive and manipulative approaches in order to create a false “unity” or the creation of political parties. While the methods or extremes in implementation may differ, the overall push is the same, the institution of a collectivized and monolithic world-view based on morality.

The expanded limits of violence

Against the Corpse Machine: Defining A Post-Leftist Anarchist Critique of Violence:³

... in his classic anarchist book, *Bolo’Bolo* lays out a vision of a future anarchist society. In it he not only acknowledges the reality of violence, he incorporates it directly into the society by reviving the notion of the duel as a dispute resolution mechanism. Interestingly, P.M. also makes another case for the continued existence of violence in an anarchist society.

There are no humanist, liberal or democratic laws or rules about the content of nimas [common socio/political/cultural backgrounds] and there is no State to enforce them. Nobody can

² Anonymous. A text dump on Black Seed [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. retrieved on June 10th, 2014. Original link. Archived link.

³ Ashen Ruins. Against the Corpse Machine: Defining A Post-Leftist Anarchist Critique of Violence [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. 2002. Original link. Archived link.

prevent a bolo [community] from committing mass suicide, dying of drug experiments, driving itself into madness or being unhappy under a violent regime. *Bolos* with a bandit-nima could terrorize whole regions or continents, as the Huns or Vikings did. Freedom and adventure, generalized terrorism, the law of the club, raids, tribal wars, vendettas, plundering — everything goes.

This vision perhaps goes a bit further than many anarchists would be willing to concede, but P.M. clearly has a realistic appreciation for the fact that in a truly anarchist society, not all anarchist values will be universally adopted, whether because the revolution will not occur simultaneously everywhere, or in the same way, or because some people may decide simply to opt out of an anarchist society (blasphemy, I know). Pre-State societies have shown a wide range of attitudes towards violence: from human sacrifices, warfare and cannibalism on one hand to raw foodism and peaceful co-existence on the other — it is unlikely that an anarchist world would ever settle on just one standard (and what a bland and boring world that would be if they did).

Various Critiques

Anarchists in Wonderland:⁴

The post-left image of “the left” is not just overly simplified, it is frequently wrong on the particulars. McQuinn writes, for example, that the “critique of everyday life” is “largely incompatible” with “most of the New Left of the 60s and 70s.” In Germany, France, and North America, at the very least, large segments of the New Left enthusiastically embraced the critique of everyday life; indeed the profoundly anti-authoritarian upsurge of that era — which was of course accompanied by an authoritarian backlash — owed much of its vigor and incisiveness to this re-orientation toward everyday relationships. The influential three-volume work *The Critique of Everyday Life* was written not by an anarchist, but by the French leftist Henri Lefebvre.

Themes such as the critique of everyday life and the critique of ideology have in fact been central to radical forms of left politics for decades. The classic primer by Richard Gombin, for example, *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, devotes a pivotal chapter to “A Critique of Everyday Life”. More important, the concrete practice of countless New Leftists was explicitly predicated on a forceful rejection of precisely those values which McQuinn takes to be constitutive of the left as such. This strand of left radicalism did not appear out of nowhere in the 1960s; it has its roots in earlier figures such as Alexandra Kollontai or Wilhelm Reich, and found one of its most articulate spokespeople in Herbert Marcuse, whose work on the topic reached back to the 1930’s. All of these individuals were non-anarchist leftists.

Similar points could be made about the critique of industrial technology, which McQuinn also takes to be essentially foreign to leftist thought. The actual history of the left includes numerous instances when such innovative critical approaches emerged to contest the conformism and repressiveness of the cadre model. There is no sensible reason to collapse this multifaceted record into a one-dimensional tale of leftist perfidy. Moreover, some leftists have been thoughtful and resolute allies of anarchism at crucial junctures in our history. Many anarchists learn about the Spanish revolution through the superb account *Homage to Catalonia*, penned by George Orwell. Orwell was a leftist who fought side by side with other leftists and anarchists against both the right and the Stalinists in Spain. Today one of the chief ways that inquisitive anarchists have easy access to the classics of our own tradition

⁴ Peter Staudenmaier. *Anarchists in Wonderland; The Topsy-Turvy World* [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. 2003. Original link. Archived link.

is through the work of leftists like Daniel Guerin. Selective memory will not help us make sense of the conflicted history of left interactions with anarchists.

But the problem here goes beyond one-sided depictions of the left. Post-left anarchists also rely on a truncated conception of anarchism itself. McQuinn's essay is not immune to this tendency; at several points he insists that anarchism as a whole rests on an "indelibly individualist foundation". If this were true, it would be difficult to explain the centuries-old internal struggles between individualist anarchists and social anarchists. Without recapitulating these debates here, suffice it to say that many contemporary anarchists reject McQuinn's contention that "collectivism" is inherently suspect while "individual self-theory" is the source of liberation. His ill-considered invocations of Stirner aside, McQuinn neglects the crucial dialectic between individual and collective that is the distinctive feature of social anarchist praxis. While we can probably all agree with McQuinn's observation that "without the autonomous individual, any other level of autonomy is impossible", post-leftists would do well to remember that the reverse is equally true: Without autonomous collectivities, individual autonomy is impossible. McQuinn's commitment to individualist assumptions leads him to misconstrue this fundamental relationship. Getting things more or less backwards, he writes that "only free individuals can create a free, unalienated society." But free individuals do not drop out of the sky; they are themselves the product of free societies.

Joyful Militancy: Building Resistance in Toxic Times:⁵⁶

There is something that circulates in many radical spaces, movements, and milieus that saps their power from within. It is the pleasure of feeling more radical than others and the worry about not being radical enough; the sad comfort of sorting unfolding events into dead categories; the vigilant apprehension of errors and complicities in oneself and others; the anxious posturing on social media with the highs of being liked and the lows of being ignored; the suspicion and resentment felt in the presence of something new; the way curiosity feels naïve and condescension feels right. We can sense its emergence at certain times, when we feel the need to perform in certain ways, hate the right things, and make the right gestures. Above all, it is hostile to difference, curiosity, openness, and experimentation.

This phenomenon cannot be exhaustively described, because it is always mutating and recirculating. The problem is not simply that people are unaware of it—we think it is common among those touched by radical milieus. As the anarchist researcher and organizer Chris Dixon writes,

"Whenever this topic comes up in discussions, I've found it quickly evokes head nods and horror stories about takedowns on social media, organizational territorialism, activist social status hierarchies, sectarian posturing, and a general atmosphere of radical self-righteousness."

It can be risky to discuss all this publicly; there is always the chance that one will be cast as a liberal, an oppressor, or a reactionary. For this reason, these conversations are happening between people who already trust each other enough to know that they will not be met with immediate suspicion or attack. Here there is room for questioning and listening, with space for subtlety, nuance, and care that is so often absent when rigid radicalism takes hold. These are some of the questions we have been asking in our research: What is this force? What are its contours, and what are its sources? What triggers it, and what makes it spread? How can it be warded off, and how are people activating other ways of being?

⁵ Carla Bergman, Nick Montgomery & Hari Alluri. *Joyful Militancy: Building Resistance in Toxic Times* [Book]. AK Press. 2017. Original link. Archived link.

⁶ Chris Dixon. For the Long Haul [Book]. Briarpatch Magazine. June 21, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

Rigid radicalism is both *a fixed way of being* and *a way of fixing*. It fixes in the sense of attempting to repair, seeing emergent movements as inherently flawed. To fix is to *see lack everywhere*, and treat struggles and projects as broken and insufficient. It also fixes in the sense of fastening or making permanent, converting fluid practices into set ways of being, stagnating their transformative potential. Even though unfolding practices might appear identical to each other from a distance, habits and certainties can take over from what was once experimental and lively. When rigidity and suspicion take over, joy dies out.

When radicals attack each other in the game of good politics, it is due at least in part to the fact that *this is a place where people can exercise some power*. Even if one is unable to challenge capitalism and white supremacy as structures or to participate in transformative struggles, one can always attack *others* for being complicit with Empire and tell oneself that these attacks are radical in and of themselves. One's opponents in the game of good politics and rigid radicalism are not capitalists, nor white supremacists, nor police; they are others vying for the *correct ways* of thinking about and fighting capitalism, white supremacy, and policing. Comparison and evaluation of different camps or currents can be so constant that it becomes an end in itself: every encounter with a new current must be approached with a distrustful search for flaws. We come to know others—their beliefs, their commitments, their worth—based on how good they are at staking out a position.

In this sense, rigid radicalism is not one political current, but a tendency that seeps into many different currents and milieus today. In some milieus, the currency of good politics is a stated (or demonstrated) willingness for direct action, riots, property destruction, and clashes with police. In others, it is the capacity for anti-oppressive analysis, avoidance of oppressive statements, and the calling out of those who make them. In others it is the capacity to avoid work and survive without buying things or paying rent. In some it is adherence to a vision of leftism or revolution, and in others it is the conviction that the Left is dead and revolution is a stupid fantasy. In some it is the capacity to have participated in a lot of projects, or to be connected to a big network of radical organizers. In every case, there is a tendency for one milieu to dismiss the commitments and values of the others and to expose their inadequacies. At its extreme, this generates a form of sectarianism that is fuelled by the very act of being vocally sectarian.

The newcomer is immediately placed in a position of debt: owing dedication, self-sacrifice, and correct analysis that must be continuously proved. Whether it is the performance of anti-oppressive language, revolutionary fervor, nihilist detachment, or an implicit dress code, those who are unfamiliar with the expectations of the milieu are doomed from the start unless they “catch up” and conform. In subtle and overt ways, they will be attacked, mocked, and excluded for getting it wrong, even though these people are often the ones that “good politics” is supposed to support: those without formal education who have not been exposed much to radical milieus, but who have a stake in fighting.

None of this is meant to suggest that we should be more wishy-washy about oppression, or that hard lines are wrong, or that all radical practices are corrupt or bad. Developing analysis, naming mistakes, and engaging in conflict are all indispensable. To undo rigid radicalism is not a call to “get along” or “shut up and take action” or “be spontaneous.” People's capacities to challenge and unlearn oppressive behaviors, take direct action, or avoid selling labor and paying rent can create and deepen cracks in Empire. They can all be part of joyful transformation. But any of these practices can also become measuring sticks for comparison and evaluation that end up devaluing other practices and stifling the growth of collective capacities.

The Left Overs: How Fascists Court the Post-Left:⁷

... an occultist named Hakim Bey developed the idea of the “Temporary Autonomous Zone” (TAZ). For Bey, a TAZ would actualize a liberated and erotic space of orgiastic, revolutionary poesis. Yet within his 1991 text, *Temporary Autonomous Zone*, Bey included extensive praise for D’Annunzio’s proto-fascist occupation of Fiume, revealing the disturbing historical trends of attempts to transcend right and left. ...

Thus, the post-left began to assemble through the writings of ultra-leftists, green anarchists, spiritualists, and egoists published in zines, books, and journals like *Anarchy: Journal of Desire Armed* and *Fifth Estate*. Although these thinkers and publications differ in many ways, key tenets of the post-left included an eschatological anticipation of the collapse of civilization accompanied by a synthesis of individualism and collectivism that rejected left, right, and center in favor of a deep connection with the earth and more organic, tribal communities as opposed to humanism, the Enlightenment tradition, and democracy. That post-left texts included copious references to Stirner, Nietzsche, Jünger, Heidegger, Artaud, and Bataille suggests that they form a syncretic intellectual tendency that unites left and right, individualism and “conservative revolution.” As we will see, this situation has provided ample space for the fascist creep. ...

An important aspect of the Anti-Politics Board was the articulation of nihilist and insurrectionary theories, both of which gained popularity after the 2008 financial crisis. In an article titled, “The New Nihilism,” Peter Lamborn Wilson (aka Hakim Bey) pointed out that the rising wave of nihilism that emerged during the late 2000s and into the second decade could not immediately be distinguished from the far right, due to myriad cross-over points. Indeed, Stormfront is riddled with users like “TAZriot” and “whitepunx” who promote the basic, individualist tenets of post-leftism from the original, racist position of Stirnerism. Rejecting “political correctness” and “white guilt,” these post-left racists desire separate, radical spaces and autonomous zones for whites.

Leaving Out the Ugly Part — On Hakim Bey:⁸

Bey’s best-known book *Temporary Autonomous Zone* (TAZ) describes spiritual zones in which anything goes, where the oppressive rules of the outside society need not interfere with what feels good to do. I realise that many honest people have read TAZ without taking any sleazy impression from it. I hope they’ll forgive me for pointing out that paedophiles say these same things to children. In his essay “Obsessive Love” (*Moorish Science Monitor*, Vol. 7, #5, Summer 1995), in which he pretends to be quite the classical scholar, he talks about ancient religious views on romantic and obsessive love. “The Greco-Egypto-Islamic ferment adds a pederastic [i.e. paedophile] element... the ideal woman of romance is neither wife nor concubine but someone in the forbidden category...” He uses the term “spiritual alchemy” for witnessing the “Devine Beloved in certain beautiful boys,” and remarks that, “since all homosexuality is forbidden in Islamic law, a boy-loving sufi has no ‘safe’ category for sensual realisation.”

⁷ Alexander Reid Ross. *The Left Overs: How Fascists Court the Post-Left* [Essay]. *Anti-Fascist News*. March 29, 2017. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

⁸ Robert P. Helms. *Leaving Out the Ugly Part — On Hakim Bey* [Essay]. *LibCom*. 2004. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

Insurrectionary Anarchism as Primary

The narrowing of approaches

A few words of freedom by Conspiracy of Cells of Fire:⁹

The vital force of FAI-FRI is its constant renewal, its stimulating evolution. Today the need to overcome old concepts such as “organization”, “liberated society”, “revolution” is more urgent than ever before.

Other concepts such as “federalism”, “informality”, “mutual support”, “horizontal-anonymous debate between groups/individuals through praxis”, “rejection of plenary assemblies” retain their full strength as the main pillars of our planning.

Lone wolves are not alone... by Conspiracy of Cells of Fire:¹⁰

The ambassadors of the modern way of life speak of the savior of economy through corrective changes and development programs, while the ideologists of the left beg for the cleansing of institutions. Unfortunately, in Greece the tension of bureaucratic social anarchy also joins the dance of the absurd and fantasies the revival of dead ideologies speaking of self-management of the production means and workers collectives.

Thus the socialist anarchists, while refusing the system, instead of destroying class identities and economy, speak their language. They speak of the overthrowing of the existent, without however uprooting from inside them the economic-centric logic. For us, as anarcho-individualists and nihilists, economy is not the key for liberation.

Economy is a part of the problem and the problem itself. The only way to strike the heart of the problem is to destroy the economy and its distinctions and speak of human relations. The world will not become prettier or more-free if we collectivize work but only if we blow up the relation of work and destroy its mentality, its ethics and culture. The same will happen with friendship, love, pleasure, the meaning of life itself.

On the road for continuous anarchist insurrection we do not keep anything which holds us down on the past. We tear down the myths of the revolutionary subject, of the proletariat, of the eternal wait for the right objective conditions, the social likeness towards the population, this slow moving mass which with its inactivity stops us from breathing...

Therefore, looking back in time, we recognize as our own prints, the traces left behind by some lone wolves, who walked then against their time. It is all those conspiratorial anarchists illegalists who made the anarchist insurrection their only home land. It is those who chose to stay away from the glory of the dead ideologies and bureaucracy of the social anarchism which awaits the masses in order to begin its insurrection. Lone and unique they armed their desires, out aside the pathetic rot of the mob and went on to the storming of heaven.

Armed Joy by Alfredo M. Bonanno:¹¹

People are tired of meetings, the classics, pointless marches, theoretical discussions that split hairs in four, endless distinctions, the monotony and poverty of certain political analyses. They prefer to make love, smoke, listen to music, go for walks, sleep, laugh, play, kill policemen, lame journalists, kill judges, blow up barracks. Anathema! The struggle is only

⁹ Alfredo Cospito. A Few Words of “Freedom” [Essay]. RadioAzione. July 2014. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁰ Conspiracy of Cells of Fire. Lone wolves are not alone [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. 2012. Original link. Archived link.

¹¹ Alfredo M. Bonanno. Armed Joy [Book]. The Ted K Archive. 1977. Original link. Archived link.

legitimate when it is comprehensible to the leaders of the revolution. Otherwise, there being a risk that the situation might go beyond their control, there must have been a provocation. Hurry comrade, shoot the policeman, the judge, the boss. Now, before a new police prevent you.

The expanded limits of violence

Open Letter To The Anarchist & Anti-Authoritarian Movement:¹²

When a group or individual starts a revolutionary campaign through the deeds and related communiques, other groups and individuals in the Anarchist Informal Organisation will follow according to their methods and time. Each group or individual can launch a struggle campaign on specific targets through one or more actions signed by the single group or individual and by the claim of the Federation. If a campaign is not agreed by the other groups, the critic will show itself through actions and communiques that will contribute to correcting or discussing it.

The organisation, therefore, does not affect the entire life and projects of the comrades so that all kind of armed-struggle sectarianism are avoided. Once we are well rooted, power will find it very difficult to destroy us.

‘Do not say that we are few’ a statement from the Italian FAI:¹³

The only limits we put to our action are of ethical nature. We have made a choice with our action in this world of included and excluded. We are not interested in a society divided in classes, we don’t want any dictatorship of a class over another, we want anarchy! Millions of microcosms where each individual can experiment themselves freely. Something very similar to what we experiment through action every day by elaborating the best way of organizing ourselves without renouncing our individual freedom. It is exciting to grow in this organisational experience along with sisters and brothers we’ve never seen and probably will never see. It is exciting that individuals who don’t know one another come to the same conclusions in a given moment in history. ...

The first: destructive direct action as an indispensable and essential element. Such action can take the form of throwing a molotov as well as committing murder, without any hierarchy of importance, each group or individual will decide as they best like, in the respect for their own revolutionary ethics, which will certainly always exclude hitting at random. In our view, this point will have to give rise to a new nihilist and anarchist guerrilla, thousands and thousands of fires against capital everywhere.

Escalation; Some Texts Concerning the Informal Anarchist Federation (FAI) and the Insurrectionist Project:¹⁴

My idea was to make some points known, points that normally we have never clarified and that make us angry sometimes... yes, when we hear or read comments about us... in other words we need to show to this fucking movement that we are not ghosts coming from nothing (laughers... ‘hey. did you see you?’). We need to show to them that we think it very carefully

¹² Informal Anarchist Federation. Open Letter To The Anarchist & Anti-Authoritarian Movement [Essay]. Fire On The Horizon. 2003. Original link. Archived link.

¹³ Informal Anarchist Federation. Do not say that we are few [Essay]. 325. Sept 02, 2011. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁴ The Informal Anarchist Federation. Escalation; Some Texts Concerning the Informal Anarchist Federation (FAI) and the Insurrectionist Project [Zine]. 325. July, 2007. Original link. Archived link.

before carrying out an action and that we leave very little to chance. Our actions are not indiscriminate, on the contrary they are so controlled that we haven't managed to do what we really want yet...(laughs). Then there's nothing obscure or clandestine in our way of life. Most of us come from the movement. Live inside it and know that reality. Some even come from shit situations.

The sun still rises by Conspiracy of Cells of Fire:¹⁵

We are exiting the scene of urban guerrilla warfare's past ethical fixations, which rarely took a public position on the issue of revolutionary bank robbery. We feel that there is now plenty of new urban guerrilla discourse and practice that opposes — in a clearly attacking way — the bosses' work ethic as well as the predatory banking machinery, *proposing armed expropriation as a liberatory act, and obviously not as a way to get rich.*

Nevertheless, we don't consider the expropriation of banks to be a prerequisite for someone's participation in the new guerrilla war. *There is one revolution, but there are thousands of ways in which one can take revolutionary action.* Other comrades might choose to carry out collective expropriations from the temples of consumerism (supermarkets, shopping malls) in order to individually recover what's been "stolen" and use those things to meet each person's material needs, thereby avoiding having to say "good morning" to a boss or take orders from some superior. Still others might participate in grassroots unions, keeping their conscience honed — like a sharp knife — for the war that finally abolishes every form of work that enriches the bosses while impoverishing our dignity.

We feel the same way about *voluntarily "disappearing" to go underground.* The fetishization of illegalism doesn't inspire us. We want everyone to act in accordance with their needs and desires. Each choice naturally has its own qualities and virtues as well as its disadvantages. It's true that when a group voluntarily chooses to go underground ("disappearance" from the environment of family and friends, false papers, etc.), that certainly shields them from the eyes of the enemy. But at the same time, their social connection to the wider radical milieu is cut, and to a certain point they lose a sense of interaction. Of course, the same doesn't apply when there are objective reasons for going underground (arrest warrants, a price on one's head), in which case *clandestinity is the attacking refuge* of those caught in the crosshairs of the law. This creates a parallel need for the existence of *support infrastructure, that will "cover" the tracks of wanted comrades.* Prerequisites would be a certain *complicity and discretion,* which concepts are frequently seen as "outdated" but in our opinion should once again be launched piercingly into battle. If comrades from a guerrilla group engage in regular above-ground interaction — participating in movement meetings and processes, taking part in debates, and creating projects with others that address shared concerns — then *the hermetic nature of the guerrilla group* should clearly be protected from open ears and big mouths. *Therefore, it's general attitude also must be one of discretion in order to circumvent the deafening exaggerations that can turn it into a "magnet" for bastards from antiterrorist squads and the police.* Taking a page from our own self-critique, we must mention the fact that many of us behaved completely opposite to the above, which — along with the viciousness of certain conduct originating within the anarchist milieu — "guided" a number of police operations right to us. In any case, self-critique lays down solid ground from which to develop oneself and offer explanations, but the current text isn't appropriate for that. We'll return to it in the future.

¹⁵ Conspiracy of Cells of Fire. The Sun Still Rises [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. 2011. Original link. Archived link.

Various Critiques

The Anarchist Federation of Britain made a public statement on the kneecapping of a nuclear executive perpetrated by the Informal Anarchist Federation.

This public statement represented an important pushback to the promotion of the terrorist's tactic of attempting to spread fear rather than building social movements and sometimes sabotaging what stands in our way, but always with the goal of winning strategic victories.

Though I also wish they had included a critique of taking actions based on the conspiratorial anti-industrial beliefs in the over-exaggerated dangers of nuclear meltdowns in stable nations:¹⁶

On the 11th of May Roberto Adinolfi, CEO of an Italian state controlled nuclear engineering company, was shot and wounded. A cell of the insurrectionist Informal Anarchist Federation have claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement, saying that it was an act of vengeance for deaths and environmental damage caused by the nuclear industry. Previous acts claimed by Informal Anarchist Federation cells include sending a letter bomb to the Italian tax collection office, almost blinding a worker at the office* and risking the lives of the postal and clerical workers who unwittingly carried the bomb. ...

In our aims and principles, the Anarchist Federation states that "It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without their use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation". We are not a pacifist organisation and do not condemn insurrection itself or all insurrectionist tactics; however, as Anarchist Communists we strongly criticise individualist and vanguardist tactics that do not come out of a broad-based class struggle movement. We condemn actions that put workers in danger without their knowledge and consent, and we reject elitist statements, such as that made by the Informals, which consider the working class to be too ignorant and invested in Capitalism to be relevant to struggle.

Capitalism is, fundamentally, a social relationship; it can no more be harmed by small groups who are disconnected from the wider class struggle shooting individual bosses or sending bombs through the post than it can by passively marching from one place to another or consuming "ethical" commodities. Instead, the Anarchist Federation advocates organising with other working class people to take direct action for ourselves in order to both defend ourselves against attacks by capital and the state in our everyday lives and build a culture of resistance that can seriously challenge capitalism. As well as being tactically more effective than isolated acts of violence, organising in this way allows us a glimpse of a better world, free of exploitation, alienation and oppression. By acting collectively and making ourselves accountable to others, we prepare ourselves for a world where our whole lives are really under our own control. ...

Say You Want an Insurrection by CrimethInc:¹⁷

If we have never called ourselves insurrectionists, it is not because we do not wish for insurrection, but because our own temperament predisposes us to an anarchism without adjectives. The important thing is to fight for freedom and against hierarchy; we imagine that this will demand different approaches in different situations, and that these approaches may need one another to succeed. We are anarcho-syndicalists on the shop floor, green anarchists in the woods, social anarchists in our communities, individualists when you catch us alone, anarcho-communists when there's something to share, insurrectionists when we strike a blow.

¹⁶ Anarchist Federation. The Anarchist Federation statement on the kneecapping of a nuclear executive perpetrated by the Informal Anarchist Federation [Statement]. Anarchist Federation. May 19, 2012. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁷ Crimethinc. Say You Want an Insurrection [Essay]. Crimethinc. Jan 7, 2010. Original link. Archived link.

Anarchism without adjectives not only refuses to prioritize one approach over the others, but emphasizes the importance of each aspect of anarchism to its supposed opposites. The riot needs the bake sale to be repeatable; the arson needs the public campaign to be intelligible; the supermarket heist needs the neighborhood grocery distribution to pass on the goods.

All dichotomies are false dichotomies to some extent, masking not only the common threads between the terms but also the other dichotomies one might experiment with instead. On close inspection, successful insurrectionism seems to depend so much on “community building” and even “lifestyle anarchism” as to be virtually indistinguishable in practice. If we retired this particular distinction, what other distinctions might arise in its place? What other questions might we ask?

All this is not to say that individual anarchists can't focus on their particular skills and preferred strategies—simply that it is an error to frame anyone's personal preferences as universals. In the end, as always, it comes down to a question of which problems you want to wrestle with, which shortcomings you feel most equipped to overcome. Do you prefer to struggle against invisible hierarchies in informal networks, or brave the stultifying inertia of formal organizations? Would you rather risk acting rashly, or not acting at all? Which is more important to you, security or visibility—and which do you think will keep you safer in the long run?

We can't tell anyone which problems to choose. We can only do our best to outline them. Best of luck in your insurrections—may they intersect with ours.

Gender Disobedience: Antifeminism and Insurrectionist Non-dialogue:¹⁸

The insurrectionist milieu has situated itself as an iconoclastic force within anarchist thought. Its critique often seeks to analyze and subvert the subtle leftism of much allegedly radical thought. This is important. This is valuable.

However, I find it disturbing that, in the midst of this, there lies gross generalizations, ignorance toward the material being criticized, and outright refusal to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of many frames of critique. With this piece, I will focus on the critique of feminism in the works of Feral Faun/Wolfi Landstreicher, as I find it to be generalizing, misinformed, and thus far without consolidated response from anarchists or feminists.

One of the key texts produced by insurrectionary anarchists to counteract feminist critique is Feral Faun's “The Ideology of Victimization” found in the collection *Feral Revolution*. Within this, Feral Faun posits that feminism and victimization are inseparable and, because of this, feminism turns toward domination structures such as the state for support. There is much to be said for this argument; it undeniably does describe certain strains of feminist thought. Unfortunately, Faun transforms feminism into a monolithic ideology, stripping it of all subtleties and nuances.

I do not wish to claim that feminism is inherently whole or encompassing in its critique. I feel that an anarchist critique of feminism may be valuable and illuminating. What I do not wish for is more of the same anti-intellectualism and non-thought that seems to be the lot of post-Leftist critiques of feminist theory. If we continue to accept accusation in place of research and false representation in place of actual engagement with what is being critiqued, we are destined to be as theoretically empty as any ideology we can possibly imagine.

¹⁸ Lilith. Gender Disobedience: Antifeminism and Insurrectionist Non-dialogue [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. August 15, 2009. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

Anti-Civilization

The narrowing of approaches

A Critique, Not a Program: For a Non-Primitivist Anti-Civilization Critique:¹⁹

An anarchist and revolutionary critique of civilization does not begin from any comparison to other societies or to any future ideal. It begins from my confrontation, from your confrontation, with the immediate reality of civilization in our lives here and now. It is the recognition that the totality of social relationships that we call civilization can only exist by stealing our lives from us and breaking them down into bits that the ruling order can use in its own reproduction. This is not a process accomplished once and for all in the distant past, but one that goes on perpetually in each moment. This is where the anarchist way of conceiving life comes in. In each moment, we need to try to determine how to grasp back the totality of our own life to use against the totality of civilization. Thus, as Armando Diluvi said, our anarchism is essentially destructive. As such it needs no models or programs including those of primitivism. As an old, dead, bearded classicist of anarchism said “The urge to destroy is also a creative urge”. And one that can be put into practice immediately. (Another dead anti-authoritarian revolutionary of a generation or two later called passionate destruction “a way to grasp joy immediately”).

Having said this, I am not against playfully imagining possible decivilized worlds. But for such imaginings to be truly playful and to have experimental potential, they cannot be models worked out from abstracted conceptions of either past or future societies. In fact, in my opinion, it is best to leave the concept of “society” itself behind, and rather think in terms of perpetually changing, interweaving relationships between unique, desiring individuals. That said, we can only play and experiment now, where our desire for the apparently “impossible” meets the reality that surrounds us. If civilization were to be dismantled in our lifetime, we would not confront a world of lush forests and plains and healthy deserts teeming with an abundance of wildlife. We would instead confront a world full of the detritus of civilization — abandoned buildings, tools, scrap, etc., etc. Imaginations that are not chained either to realism or to a primitivist moral ideology could find many ways to use, explore and play with all of this — the possibilities are nearly infinite. More significantly, this is an immediate possibility, and one that can be explicitly connected with a destructive attack against civilization. ...

Various Critiques

A Quick and Dirty Critique of Primitivist & Anti-Civ Thought:²⁰

We have the capacity not just to avert global warming and ocean acidification but to reclaim the Sahara and restore the megafauna that hunter gatherers killed off. (Contrary to the myth that primitive peoples were somehow aware of ecological externalities beyond their immediate contexts, recent global statistical analyses have conclusively settled that hunter gatherers were responsible for the ecological destruction of the late Quaternary). With the broader insight and perspective provided by science and global communication we finally have an opportunity to repair the mistakes of past generations as we move asymptotically towards greater understanding of our world and thus greater agency within it.

¹⁹ Wolfi Landstreicher. A Critique, Not a Program: For a Non-Primitivist Anti-Civilization Critique [Essay]. 325. 2007. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

²⁰ William Gillis. A Quick and Dirty Critique of Primitivist & Anti-Civ Thought [Essay]. Human Iterations. October 10, 2015. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

That word, agency, is the core of this divide between anarchism and primitivism.

Primitivists would rather write agency out of the conversation. They want to pretend that we have No Alternative but collapse, no real choices or options to be expanded or diligently explored. Their opposition to technology and cosmopolitanism make perfect sense when the very notion of expanding our choices is taken to be incomprehensible. *Physical freedom? What nonsense, you can't be oppressed by nature!* What's happened to get someone to such a ludicrous position is a divorcing of oppression from anything concrete. Now oppression isn't controlling people or constraining their options in life, it's just anything that conjures bad feels. *Freedom? Well there's no such thing really. Just the freedom from thought, the freedom from choice, complexity, vigilance, etc.*

This kind of obsession with the delusion of certainty is the hallmark of depression. The desperate hunger for the pain of having no real options. Many commentators have noted the turn of our milieu towards treating depression, anxiety and other mental health issues as the essential experience of our radicalism. We bond over sharing in it; and end up fetishizing and reinforcing these ailments.

Only in such light primitivism can pretend to be coherent with anarchism.

But to hunger for the genocide and ecocide of a collapse is to mistake mental health issues for radicalism. Misanthropic edginess for critique. Emotional states for vigilant pursuit of root dynamics.

Anarcho-Primitivism

The narrowing of approaches

Zerzan takes the critique of technological society having advanced faster than our brains or culture have had time to adapt to and then rigidifies the critique into a narrow prescription about how we should live:²¹

Q: How do you determine what technology is acceptable and what isn't?

A: I think one very general way to look at it is division of labour. If you have a tool that anybody can make, that's great. You're in contact with it in a very sensual way. But tools that require a hierarchy of coordination and specialisation create a kind of distancing. That's the kind of technology to avoid.

I posited a hypothetical to Zerzan that if we were to realize this hunter-gatherer world, but where there were still some people who had the knowledge to organize assembly lines to create items like penicillin and glasses for people who were disabled or injured, would that be a legitimate target for sabotage or would that just be a consent issue, where you let them do that even if you worry that it helps restart technological society?

His answer was that he's happy for people to use the scraps of industrial society in ways which don't require a high level of coordinated education for a time, but that even this wouldn't be his ideal end goal for humanity:²²

I think we'd have to, if everybody could pitch in and try to find workable solutions as we go, I mean I think there could be intermediate steps, you know we don't want people unable to

²¹ Roc Morin. The Anarcho-Primitivist Who Wants Us All to Give Up Technology [Essay]. Vice. 27 June 2014. Original link. Archived link.

²² Theo Slade. A Conversation with John Zerzan on Direct Action, School Shootings, Authenticity, Veganism & More [Video Interview]. Activist Journeys. Aug 9, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

live without certain technologies to just simply die off, but at the same time it's not clear to me that we need the worldwide grid otherwise you can't achieve that. I mean I think there are other methods, some of which are just simple things like when you're peddling a bicycle with the light, you pedal and it generates electricity to light your tail-light or your headlight. So why can't you do that with somebody who needs a respirator? You know, you don't have to have a whole world system going may be to fix, you know to help people in different situations and as we kind of try to go away from the dependency which has been really pretty fatal.

His antipathy for our technologically advanced cultural evolution extends even as far back as symbolic culture:²³

Another aspect of how we view and relate to the world that can be problematic, in the sense that it separates us from a direct interaction, is our shift towards an almost exclusively symbolic culture. Often the response to this questioning is, "So, you just want to grunt?" Which might be the desire of a few, but typically the critique is a look at the problems inherent with a form of communication and comprehension that relies primarily on symbolic thought at the expense (and even exclusion) of other sensual and unmediated means. The emphasis on the symbolic is a movement from direct experience into mediated experience in the form of language, art, number, time, etc Symbolic culture filters our entire perception through formal and informal symbols. It's beyond just giving things names, but having an entire relationship to the world that comes through the lens of representation. It is debatable as to whether humans are "hard-wired" for symbolic thought or if it developed as a cultural change or adaptation, but the symbolic mode of expression and understanding is certainly limited and its over-dependence leads to objectification, alienation, and a tunnel-vision of perception. Many green anarchists promote and practice getting in touch with and rekindling dormant or underutilized methods of interaction and cognition, such as touch, smell, and telepathy, as well as experimenting with and developing unique and personal modes of comprehension and expression.

Finally, a fringe of anarcho-primitivists even oppose the use of fire:²⁴

The man-the-hunter story has been arranged to fit the violent lifeway of civilization. It's challenging for people today to conceive of a way without fire, cooking or hunting, just as people deny that our species is a colonizing one. Without fire, we would not have been able to colonize. Without a colonizing ethos, we would not have used fire to breach the wild limits of our primal human habitat. Just imagine, without fire humans may still be mostly in Africa, and a diversity of megafauna may still be in every land. And for certain, the life on Earth would not be in a death spiral. Fire mastery hoisted human ferocity, and with that wrought a fiery new lifeway onto all.

The expanded limits of violence

Zerzan thought he found a kindred spirit when he first heard about Kaczynski:²⁵

²³ Anonymous. A text dump on Black Seed [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. retrieved on June 10th, 2014. Original link. Archived link.

²⁴ Ria Del Montana. AnPrim On Fire: Human Supremacy Within Anarcho-Primitivist Narrative [Essay]. Vegan Primitivist. March 21, 2019. Original link. Archived link.

²⁵ John Zerzan. Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization [Book]. Feral House. Fall 1995. Original link. Archived link.

The concept of justice should not be overlooked in considering the Unabomber phenomenon. In fact, except for his targets, when have the many little Eichmanns who are preparing the Brave New World ever been called to account?... Is it unethical to try to stop those whose contributions are bringing an unprecedented assault on life? ... As a friend in California put it recently, when justice is against the law, only outlaws can effect justice.

The fact that morality doesn't equal legality and that there is a time and place for civil disobedience and direct action are well accepted positions, what is wholly disagreeable though is comparing scientist's role in advancing high-tech society, to that of the organizers of the Jewish Holocaust. Also, arguing that those who send parcel bombs to these scientists as being similarly heroic to those who resisted Nazis.²⁶²⁷²⁸

I ended the speech with the suggestion that there might be a parallel between Kaczynski and John Brown. Brown made an anti-slavery attack on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia in 1859. Like Kaczynski, Brown was considered deranged, but he was tried and hung. Not long afterward he became a kind of American saint of the abolitionist movement. I offered the hope, if not the prediction, that T.K. might at some point also be considered in a more positive light for his resistance to industrial civilization.

They ain't innocent. Which isn't to say that I'm totally at ease with blowing them into pieces. Part of me is. And part of me isn't.

I think the targets were relatively more appropriate as he went along, as they became more lethal, on that level anyway, I think you could argue that that's the case.

Devout primitivists must also do some creative accounting to put a happy spin on the number of babies that die through lack of modern medicine. Here for example, they I think romanticize the routineness of mothers killing or leaving their babies to die and compare this to people choosing an abortion before ever seeing the babies face, which if done in the first several weeks can be as simple as taking a few pills and having what simply feels like a heavy period:²⁹

... foragers believe that life does not begin until, usually, the age of two. Foragers look at infanticide much the same way we do abortion. Among the !Kung, a pregnant woman goes into labor, and walks off into the bush (I'm told that childbirth is significantly less an ordeal among those who are not malnourished — affluently or otherwise). Maybe she comes back with a child; maybe she doesn't. Either way, no questions are asked. So, our calculations of forager lifespans are quite unfair — if we're going to include their infanticide, then we must include our own abortions. To do otherwise would simply be ethnocentric. In fact, when we do that, we see that forager lifespans are as long as, and sometimes longer, than our own.

Finally, unable to question their own logic of the inevitability of collapse or the perceived undesirability of a future shaped in some ways by our use of machines, they must look at every less than physically and mentally advantaged super-human as a lost cause, who it would be more merciful to kill if they could push a button and end their suffering sooner.³⁰

²⁶ John Zerzan. *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization* [Book]. Feral House. 2002. Original link. Archived link.

²⁷ Thomas Ian Campbell and Michael Lipkin. "To Get Our Message Before the Public, We've Had To Kill People" [Essay]. *The American Reader*. Original link. Archived link.

²⁸ Theo Slade. *A Conversation with John Zerzan on Direct Action, School Shootings, Authenticity, Veganism & More* [Video Interview]. *Activist Journeys*. Aug 9, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

²⁹ Jason Godesky. *5 Common Objections to Primitivism* [Essay]. *Toby & People*. 2005. Original link. Archived link.

³⁰ Jason Godesky. *5 Common Objections to Primitivism* [Essay]. *Toby & People*. 2005. Original link. Archived link.

It is undeniably true that the world's population cannot be sustained without modern civilization. Of course, it is abundantly clear that modern civilization is not sustainable, either. Given those two facts, then some kind of massive die-off is inevitable. It might be through genocide, but since primitivists are a fringe of a fringe (and will always be so) it's unlikely to come from us. There are many other parties with a much greater interest in genocide for its own sake, who are far closer to power than we will ever be. Ultimately, genocide might be the kindest method, just as it is kind to deliver a *coup de grace* to a dying animal. The alternative is to waste away by hunger or disease. But ultimately, genocide on such a scale would be nigh impossible, and though die-off is guaranteed, it is almost as guaranteed *not* to come by way of genocide.

Various Critiques

Here an anti-civilization thinker urges people not to turn primitivism into a dogma:³¹

Ultimately, if we imagine dismantling civilization, actively and consciously destroying it, not in order to institute a program or realize a specific vision, but in order to open and endlessly expand the possibilities for realizing ourselves and exploring our capacities and desires, then we can begin to do it as the way we live here and now against the existing order. If, instead of hoping for a paradise, we grasp life, joy and wonder now, we will be living a truly anarchic critique of civilization that has nothing to do with any image of the "primitive", but rather with our immediate need to no longer be domesticated, with our need to be unique, not tamed, controlled, defined identities. Then, we will find ways to grasp all that we can make our own and to destroy all that seeks to conquer us.

When I talked to Zerzan, I tried to grapple with the core of what primitivists are valuing when they talk about presence:³²

... in terms of this term presence, whether we should desire an authenticity of a long period of our evolutionary history as humans. I don't know, like I think potentially we could be suffering more now for sure, but it could be suffering that we desire to take on if we can get to this left-anarchist, pro technology future. It could be a source of virtue for us, striving for these intellectual skills.

And then authenticity, as a concept it's only developed recently, like we used to think of authenticity differently as like sincerity. So, the effort you put into helping your family would be an indication of whether you were being authentic to yourself, if you were being just and fair to your family in taking on your responsibilities.

So, I don't know whether it would be authentic for me to desire hunter-gather life, I think I would desire hunter-gatherer life more than the middle ages if I could be born into a fairly egalitarian tribe like the Penan, but I think rather than just settling for primitive life or just settling for the middle ages, I think we should try and be aspirational to this future world of still being able to use some technology, like printing presses and penicillin.

Anti-Tech Revolution

Here we have arrived at Ted's own proposed strategy.

³¹ Wolfi Landstreicher. A Critique, Not a Program: For a Non-Primitivist Anti-Civilization Critique [Essay]. 325. 2007. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

³² Theo Slade. A Conversation with John Zerzan on Direct Action, School Shootings, Authenticity, Veganism & More [Video Interview]. *Activist Journeys*. Aug 9, 2021. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

This is a step back along the spectrum of the scale of technological society the ideological proponents are openly hoping to dismantle, but this is often simply for pragmatic reasons, in that, destroying electricity grids and preventing them from being rebuilt is a lot simpler goal to advocate others over to, rather than pretending they also have an easy solution for challenging feudal warlords who will rise up in the chaos.

As well, it is a step away from identifying with left-wing philosophy the way all the ideologies previously mentioned do on average to some degree. Despite all of them rejecting mass-movement organizing and allying, they often draw in followers through claims of being the only one true ideology with an effective plan for dismantling capitalism, the patriarchy, etc.

These groups often contain a large number of conspiratorial minded people whose effect in the real world would more closely align with right wing people in their indifference for segments of the population simply for who they are by nature.

So, it is refreshing that at least fans of Kaczynski are open about having made the jump of no longer sympathizing with left-wing philosophy, both in foundation and in application, so root and branch.

This ideological tendency has a smaller group following then any of the other ideologies listed so far and it is often a strategy people pick up after having already bought into primitivism.

The narrowing of approaches

Here Ted explains why he thinks it is necessary for revolutionaries to narrow their focus on technology being the central target:³³

It is widely recognized that “the basic variable which determines the contemporary historic process is provided by technological development” (Celso Furtado*). Technology, above all else, is responsible for the current condition of the world and will control its future development. Thus, the “bulldozer” that we have to destroy is modern technology itself. Many radicals are aware of this, and therefore realize that their task is to eliminate the entire techno-industrial system. But unfortunately they have paid little attention to the need to hit the system where it hurts. ...

Wilderness can be saved permanently only by eliminating the techno-industrial system, and you cannot eliminate the system by attacking the timber industry. The system would easily survive the death of the timber industry because wood products, though very useful to the system, can if necessary be replaced with other materials.

Consequently, when you attack the timber industry, you are not hitting the system where it hurts. The timber industry is only the “fist” (or one of the fists) with which the system destroys wilderness, and, just as in a fist-fight, you can’t win by hitting at the fist. You have to go behind the fist and strike at the most sensitive and vital organs of the system.

So, instead of protesting one or another negative consequence of biotechnology, you have to attack all modern biotechnology on principle, on grounds such as (a) that it is an insult to all living things; (b) that it puts too much power in the hands of the system; (c) that it will radically transform fundamental human values that have existed for thousands of years; and similar grounds that are inconsistent with the values of the system.

In response to this kind of attack the system will have to stand and fight. It cannot afford to cushion your attack by backing off to any great extent, because biotechnology is too central to the whole enterprise of technological progress, and because in backing off the system would not be making only a tactical retreat, but would be taking a major strategic defeat to its code of values. Those values would be undermined and the door would be opened to further political attacks that would hack away at the foundations of the system.

³³ Ted Kaczynski. Hit where it hurts [Journal]. Green Anarchy. Spring 2002. Original link. Archived link.

Now it's true that the U.S. House of Representatives recently voted to ban cloning of human beings, and at least some congressmen even gave the right kinds of reasons for doing so. The reasons I read about were framed in religious terms, but whatever you may think of the religious terms involved, these reasons were not technologically acceptable reasons. And that is what counts.

The expanded limits of violence

Ted's attempt to assassinate people such as scientists and computer store owners was seen by many primitivists to have been an ineffective and misguided strategy. Here are a few quotes summarizing his desires and reasons at the time:³⁴³⁵³⁶

... we may find it useful to blow up more biotechnicians and the like at some time in the future, so we would prefer not to be bound by a promise to stop bombing. If we made such a promise we wouldn't want to break it. So we are looking for some way to get our material published without having to make any promises or deals. ...

... All the university people whom we have attacked have been specialists in technical fields. (We consider certain areas of applied psychology, such as behavior modification, to be technical fields.) We would not want anyone to think that we have any desire to hurt professors who study archaeology, history, literature or harmless stuff like that. The people we are out to get are the scientists and engineers, especially in critical fields like computers and genetics. ...

In one case we attempted unsuccessfully to blow up an airliner. The idea was to kill a lot of business people who we assumed would constitute a majority of the passengers. But of course some of the passengers would have been innocent people-maybe kids, or some working stiff going to see his sick grandmother. We're glad now that the attempt failed. ...

A bomb package that we mailed to computer scientist Patrick Fischer injured his secretary when she opened it. We certainly regret that. And when we were young and comparatively reckless we were much less careful in selecting targets than we are now.

Various Critiques

Here is an excerpt from an article published in the academic journal *Bioethics* which I think neatly reveals and refutes the hidden premise within many of the Unabombers foundational arguments. That faulty premise being; the evaluative asymmetry whereby anything that happens in wild habitat is automatically less bad than anything that happens in an industrialized society.³⁷

When one reads 'Industrial Society and its Future' and *Anti-Tech Revolution*, it is hard not to notice that Kaczynski evaluates problems caused by technology very differently than how he evaluates problems that arise in technology's absence. This is most apparent in the middle paragraphs of 'Industrial Society and its Future,' in which Kaczynski compares industrial and pre-industrial life. After he has given an elaborate account of human powerlessness

³⁴ Ted Kaczynski. The Bombings & Communications of Ted Kaczynski as part of his Terror Campaign [Letter]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

³⁵ Ted Kaczynski. The Bombings & Communications of Ted Kaczynski as part of his Terror Campaign [Letter]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

³⁶ Ted Kaczynski. The Bombings & Communications of Ted Kaczynski as part of his Terror Campaign [Letter]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

³⁷ Ole Martin Moen. The Unabomber's Ethics [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. 2018. Original link. Archived link.

in industrial societies, he makes a concession: ‘It is true that primitive man is powerless against some of the things that threaten him; disease for example.’ Kaczynski does not, however, seem to think that this is a very significant problem. Instead he writes: ‘But he can accept the risk of disease stoically.’ This response invites a follow-up question: If the badness of the problems faced by ‘primitive man’ can be avoided if one accepts them stoically, then why can’t the badness of the problems faced by people in industrialized societies also be avoided through stoicism? The only explanation given by Kaczynski is that whereas a problem caused in the absence of technology ‘is part of the nature of things, it is no one’s fault,’ a problem caused by technology is ‘imposed.’ Of course, it makes sense to hold that while no-one is responsible for what nature does, someone might be responsible for what humans do. Kaczynski, however, does not seem to be concerned with assigning responsibility or blame; he is concerned with comparing the quality of human life in industrial versus pre-industrial societies. It seems, therefore, that Kaczynski holds that while a problem caused by technology is very bad indeed, a problem caused by nature, though it can be frustrating, is not nearly as bad, at least not in an ethically relevant way. It appears that on Kaczynski’s view, two equally hopeless situations can differ dramatically in how bad they are depending on whether the situation is caused by technology or caused by things in nature that count as non-technological.

This evaluative asymmetry can help explain several of Kaczynski’s priorities and areas of focus. It can explain why he is worried that our lives now depend on the operation of power plants that might fail, but not worried that pre-industrial lives depended on rain showers that might fail to come as expected; worried that people today are oppressed by bureaucracies, but not worried that people were previously oppressed by their tribes; worried that people now do tedious office work but not worried that work in pre-industrial societies could also be tedious. The picture that emerges is that in Kaczynski’s view, the harms that are averted by technology were not ethically relevant harms to begin, and that what we gain from technology today does not count as ethically relevant benefits. Given this picture, it makes sense why Kaczynski counts only the downsides of technology: There are few or no ethically relevant upsides to count.

Eco-Extremist Nature Worshipers

The narrowing of approaches

The publisher of an eco-extremist journal LBC explained what sense they made of the eco-extremist phenomenon:³⁸³⁹

Abe outlines what the eco-extremist position is. 1) Pessimism towards human endeavors 2) Wild Nature is the primary agent in the eco-extremist war 3) Listening to the call of the ancestors against the destruction of a way of life 4) individualism against mass society 5) indiscriminate attack as an echo of Wild Nature itself. 6) Nihilism as a refusal of the future 7) Paganism/animism as attempts to rescue ancestral dieties.

John Jacobi’s article is an attempt to contextualize eco-extremist thought for a North American audience. It does it by telling the story of a young man who starts corresponding with Ted Kaczynski and is put into context with people trying to live the ideas that he preaches

³⁸ Anonymous. Why do we publish such objectionable things? [Essay]. Little Black Cart. August 23, 2017. Original link. Archived link.

³⁹ By including quotes from people like Aragorn and Julian Langer’s writing as explanations and critiques of eco-extremism, I’m not claiming they are themselves eco-extremists.

(“The Apostles”). In this excellent piece you learn about the factionalism of the indomitistas and how ITS fits in with this history of ideas. This is a history of 21st century eco-radicalism, of which eco-extremism is but a portion.

Here an eco-extremist explains in what way they have tried to transcend Kaczynski’s ideas:⁴⁰

We have never denied that the essay, “Industrial Society and Its Future” has been an important part of our formation into what we are now. For that reason, in the past we used such terms as “leftists,” “power process,” “feelings of inferiority,” “liberty and autonomy,” etc. that in the present we have omitted or changed for other words so that we distinguish ourselves from the “indomitistas” of Kaczynski. ...

[D]eeply religious people (either pagan or Christian or whatever) have good reasons for being against industrial society. Many see value in religion and disdain the secularists’ constant attempts to eradicate it, which is necessary in industrial society (as historical trends suggest). Furthermore, although there are secular reasons for opposing industrial technologies as well, religious opposition is often much more powerful because of its irrational and emotional appeal. For instance, religious opposition to biotechnology is a lot more difficult to counter than secular opposition to biotechnology. ...

The individualists who identify with eco-extremism can either worship nature apart from the sense of the great religions or not. When I talk about paganism I’m talking strictly about my personal beliefs. I’m not stating that it’s a mandatory belief among all eco-extremists. I would just like to make that clear. ...

Sure, I’m a civilized person living in the modern, technological, and industrial world. It’s hard for me to separate myself from the teachings that the schools indoctrinated me with when I was young. It’s hard for me to reject the idea that rain (for example) comes from a process within the hydrological cycle. Or that a river is just water, or that fire is a mere grouping of incandescent molecules. Or that the explosives that ITS utilizes are the product of an exothermic reaction. For before I believed in the “Spirits of the Earth” (for lack of a better term) I was also an atheistic materialist who based my beliefs more in the scientific method than animism. But that all changed when I had a very personal experience with a fox, a deer, and a pair of vultures in the semi-desert hills of northern Mexico. ...

So to reiterate, I am a civilized human being, but I’m over that. I prefer to recover my past as a Teochichimeca and to fight for it with tooth and claw. And even though I am well aware that I am not capable of a complete return to that worldview, it’s in this manner that my opposition to the techno-industrial system and modern civilization are fostered. ...

I think that here it would be better to strike a balance and not disregard one side or the other totally, as I have written previously. I am a modern human being and I can’t think like my ancestors. I can’t believe anymore that water falls from the sky as a “gift from the gods”. I know that the water falls from the sky as a result of the hydrological process, even if I would prefer not to know that and remain with the beliefs of my ancestors. Unfortunately I cannot do that.

The expanded limits of violence

Here the same eco-extremist above lays out their justifications for an expanded list of targets and means of violently targeting people:⁴¹

⁴⁰ John Jacobi. A text dump on wildism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. July 13, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

⁴¹ John Jacobi. A text dump on wildism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. July 13, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

Though some may be more culpable than others, ITS and eco-extremist groups assert that all who conform to this society and who contribute to it in one way or another (us included) are guilty for what it does, and no one then is INNOCENT. If you contribute to this society or conform to it, you are not innocent.

On October 26th, 2015, the “Indiscriminate Group” (GI) abandoned an explosive in the station of the Metro Chilpancingo in Mexico City at rush hour. In their communiqué the eco-extremist group indicated that their target was the transportation system and all that it represented (environmental destruction, the urban commute of the masses, progress, etc.) The bomb was located by the police who removed it from the station and deactivated it, thus frustrating the attack. This is another example of indiscriminate attack, which caused disgust among many people, including those who claim to be against the values of the system. But GI acted without reservation, justifying the attack that sought to strike out against the public mass transit system without consideration of if they killed or wounded “innocents”. Everyone there were members of a society complicit with the destruction of Wild Nature, including human nature.

ITS and other eco-extremist groups attack not only because of the spirit of the Teochichimecas. The reasons behind their attacks are many, ranging from what we have indicated here, to those that seek to defend Wild Nature in an egoist manner, mere revenge, or seeking to destabilize certain institutions in the present.

ITS and other cells utilize Teochichimeca tactics, but also urban guerilla strategies, experimentation with armed struggle, practice of criminal activities such as armed robbery, psychological terrorism, etc. in order to reach their ends. One of the primary of these is the extreme defense of wild nature through terrorism against scientists, humanists, engineers, clergy, miners, businessmen, etc.

Various Critiques

John Jacobi who was for a time a super-fan of Kaczynski pushes back against some of the positions outlined above:⁴²

... I do not understand how you can “reject” physics or other such things. Clearly these things are at least mostly accurate, or else they wouldn’t work as well as they do. And I suspect that if you truly “reject” them, meaning you do not accept them as true at all, you may turn out to be like the indigenous people who believed in “Ghost Shirts.” Consider an excerpt from a letter I responded to when I was editor of *The Wildernist*:

I’m always reminded of the story of the Ghost Dance, which was a religious movement that some Native Indians adopted in the late 1800s. It stemmed from a prophecy by the messianic spiritual leader Wovoka, who preached that if the “Ghost Dance” was done just right, the spirits of the dead would fight on behalf of the Natives and make the colonists leave. Part of this was a belief that the dancers had “ghost shirts” that would protect them from bullets. I’ve heard a radical environmentalist actually say— actually say—that this was an example of their spiritual superiority, their “oneness with the Earth.” Apparently she hadn’t heard the end of the story, because in 1890 soldiers opened fire on Natives at Wounded Knee, and the ghost shirts did not, in fact, protect the two hundred plus individuals who died that day. The only “oneness with the Earth” they ended up experiencing was the oneness of their corpses with ashes and dust.

⁴² John Jacobi. A text dump on wildism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. July 13, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

The moral of the story isn't, "Ha! Look at those ignorant Natives." To the contrary, Wovokish mysticism has played out plenty enough times throughout history for us to know that humans just seem to be prone to these sorts of things. The moral of the story is, however, that radical environmentalist talk of "the inarticulable," "oneness with Nature" and other such gobbley-gook is very likely or at least prone to becoming yet another example. So far I've seen no other tools able to combat this better than science and reason.

I have nothing more substantial to say about this topic. Your beliefs are fine, provided you accept the exceptions I gave in my previous letter. I only bring this up because I want to see eco-radicals everywhere rewild in the most effective way possible. I don't care if this means "revolution" or whatever, so long as they actually care enough for wild nature to be effective in defending it. This is only a logical outgrowth of valuing wildness anyway.

You say that if a shaman told you to do something obviously wrong, you probably wouldn't follow it. But doesn't this suggest that you are actually a materialist and that you regard materialism as a better way of resisting the attempts of others who use delusions to hold power over you? I am a spiritual person myself. As a materialist I regard the Cosmos with awe and through reason and unreason alike commune with it, studying the process of creation through evolutionary theory, hiking through stone skeletons of the earth, washing in the river blood of the earth, etc. But ultimately I do not posit the existence of anything other than what is material—that is beautiful enough!—and I do not regard shamans or any sort of master as an infallible source of knowledge. Instead I think empirical investigation, logic, and other scientific ways of knowing the world have shown themselves to be superior ways of knowing the world, whether they are present in primitive cultures or industrial ones. And they are present in primitive cultures. See Jared Diamond's "Zoological classification system of a primitive people", in which Diamond shows a "nearly one-to-one correspondence between Fore [taxonomy] and species as recognized by European taxonomists."

See also Louis Liebenberg's "The Art of Tracking: The Origin of Science", in which Liebenberg illustrates how scientific reasoning can be traced to the methods hunter/gatherers used to track and hunt animals.

This is, at least, my own belief. You need not reply if you do not want to. I simply wanted to make clear that by accepting scientific materialism I do not disregard spirituality or irrationality. These things are important to me because I love the WHOLE human, not just some parts. But I would much rather receive spiritual fulfillment from what I regard as true beliefs, cruel or not, traditional or not. Again, I write about these things in "The Foundations of Wildist Ethics," section III.B.

I end with a quote from Edward Abbey:

Belief? What do I believe in? I believe in sun. In rock. In the dogma of the sun and the doctrine of the rock. I believe in blood, fire, woman, rivers, eagles, storm, drums, flutes, banjos, and broom-tailed horses ...

Regarding the point on "indiscriminate attack," I remain solidly convinced that "indiscriminate" is not a proper term and does not properly communicate what you are trying to say. The problem is that most individuals understand "indiscriminate attack" to mean "random attack," ... then they will not think that you actually care about wild nature, nor do you care about rewilding in the most effective way possible. Instead, they will think that people who advocate "random attack" merely want to kill, or have something wrong with them ... This problem is exacerbated by the language in communiques by ITS, which sometimes speak as though everyone is a target, when at the very least I think they restrict their attacks to the civilized. ... surely you would not attack primitive peoples ... "just because,"

You write, for instance, that intelligent readers will understand the meaning of the phrase, but intelligent readers may not be the only ones inspired to act. This is especially true when the language of the communiqués is so messy, reckless, and open to misinterpretation.

... I do not think indiscriminate attack is a very good idea. If your enemy is much stronger than you, then it makes sense to prod him with a stick to wear him out, but if you prod too hard too quickly then the enemy will stamp you out completely.

A man whose sympathetic essay towards eco-extremism was copied into one of the terrorist group ITS communications has this narrow though perceptive critique:⁴³⁴⁴

The eco-extremist movement, whose liberation theology and anti-anarchist anti-politics has upset and displeased many in eco-radical and anarchist milieus, revere and worship Wild Nature, and seek to emulate storms and hurricanes and wildfires through their methodology of indiscriminate attack. And while there is much to find ugly in and criticise the eco-extremist movement for – especially the infamous group ITS – there is a certain poetic beauty in this desire to embrace their being extensions of wild-Being, through emulating Wild Nature – though they often appear (certainly to my mind) to miss that destruction is creation, and that what is wild is alive.

Destruction as a phenomenon is the event of a singularity whereby, due to certain physical intensities, a new situation, space, location, Thing (etc.) is created. In this way, creation and destruction are in no way a dichotomy, but rather the monist force of the flow of motion, energy, transience in an entirely physical sense.

A hurricane and a wildfire are destructive, but they aren't violent. In their destruction they create new situations, spaces, locations; Things, from the intensity of their energetic releases. A meteor that kills most of the life on planet Earth, including the dinosaurs (arguably this planet's most successful occupants if we assume a paleontological realist epistemology), is not violent and does not enact violence upon those it has killed. The Chicxulub meteor was destructive, and its destruction led to the creation of a situation that resulted in mammals becoming more prevalent (as a generalized category of species-Being) as the dinosaurs died out.

Destruction and creation are the monist flow of Life, where life and death are one and the same thing. They are the same thing in each present, temporarily bound by the physical dimensions of embodied Being – wild-Being as I choose to term it. As such, destruction(/ creation) is an aspect of what is wild (or natural, if you prefer).

In one of the first anarchist critiques of ITS, an anarchist group actively engaged in sabotage from Chile critiqued ITS in this way:⁴⁵

One small group, tied to a certain imaginary of “symbolic” peoples and to music / alternative and university backgrounds (reject faculties that still attend ... and study what they hate so much), hates human animals and therefore sees the enemy everywhere.

In this “wild fog”, caused by their own complacency and messianism, they classify among their enemies and the last worker, the victim of this shitty manufacturing system. They talk

⁴³ Julian Langer. Before The Beginning Were The Waters [Essay]. Gods and Radicals. October 15, 2017. Original link. Archived link.

⁴⁴ Julian Langer. Guerrilla Ontology: On Destruction, Violence and Direct Action [Essay]. Gods and Radicals. December 20, 2017. Original link. Archived link.

⁴⁵ Anonymous. Does the Unabomber have any relevance to anarchism? [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. May 23, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

about killing workers, farmers or any other person whom, let's be honest, the discussion of our relatives over the years did not consider valuable interlocutors. Although we are accomplices, the enemy is someone else, and to any anarchist, libertarian, punk or nihilist this is quite clear. But eco-extremists are not, in an attempt to be avant-garde, and even in trend.

That is why we call on individuals and coordinated affinities who are fighting today to continue to fight for the liberation of all living beings and the country, without losing sight of the political aspect of our actions, and real enemies and targets.

Seven years after the death of Mauricio Morales, we commend the Manada de Choque Anarquico Nihilista for its sober and insurgent activities during the protests on May 1 and April 21, when they once again demonstrated the success of affinity coordination. To be clear and refute the page "Maldicion Ecoextremista" which tried to present these acts as an act of irresponsible urban guerrillas, in order to appropriate libertarian action!

We applaud the fighters from the Paulino Scarfó Revolutionary Cell (FAI-FRI), who wrote in their statement of responsibility for the attack on the Santander Bank in La Cisterna: "*The attack has its own ethics and is not indiscriminate; we have embraced the fire attack and we no longer support ideas that are trying to spread*".

Comically, an anti-civilizational group engaged in terrorism against people made a passing critique of ITS in one of their communiques, whilst making a point of declaring they're not interested in dialogue with ITS who they disagree with, and only dialogue with those whose attacks they agree with:⁴⁶

12 March, Santiago, Chile: Noise bomb against the highway management company Vespucio Sur by FAI-IRF.

We do not consider the struggle against civilization to be distinct or external to the struggle against all forms of authority. We identified the highway management companies as being important arteries that gives life to the network of domination, facilitating the advancement of civilization and enriching themselves via the imposition of an urbanism that is servile to the interests of power. Both the present and past history show us that the germ that leads to authority has also developed in communities that existed prior to civilization and has also manifested itself in groups that have remained outside or against civilization. That is why our struggle is essentially ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN. This is why we feel it is important to distance ourselves from the self-proclaimed 'eco-extremist tendency' that has defended the indiscriminate attack that is contrary to the idea of being 'against all authority' and denounces international solidarity with imprisoned companeros who are related in word and deed to insurrectionary anarchy. Such ideas are neither an 'evolution' or 'more radical' but are in fact quite the opposite. We have no interest in engaging in virtual polemics with them, we prefer dialogue with our companeros via action.

I personally think it would be good to promote the cultural value of dialogue with any one you find curious.

As well as people being taught at an earlier age the value of holding a logically coherent philosophy. This would obviously be more likely achieved through a coordinated civilization where through auditing and wealth distribution we would be able to uniformly raise the standards of education.

But either way, here again is another example of some anti-civilization anarchists who despite not desiring these basic elements of civilization, they have in important ways drawn a clear distinction between their own ideological tendency and ITS:⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Various Authors. Dark Nights #45 [Communique]. Dark Nights. April 2016. Original link. Archived link.

⁴⁷ Edelweiss Pirates. Of Indiscriminate Attacks & Wild Reactions [Zine]. The Ted K Archive. September 21, 2017. Original link. Archived link.

When Cabrera arrives at discussing the fate of the women at Fort Mims, his laudatory tone and narrative is utterly unbroken. With an incipient giddiness consonant with everything he's written up to now, he quotes at length about the gratuitous mass rape that took place at Fort Mims. Not a word of contextualization of the horrors of civilized war, or of war at all, is proffered. After this— his crown-jewel block quotation—he begins the next paragraph, “Far from being acts of gratuitous or extraordinary violence, what occurred at Fort Mims was well within the cultural and spiritual logic of traditional Creek culture.” To prove his point, he quotes another white historian at length.

Here is the ideological underpinning being offered by their US boosters for the femicidal actions claimed by ITS. Here is the “indiscriminate attack” being refined, in print as in thought. Here is Rape-as-Re-Wilding.

Finally, many anarchists had a good laugh at and critiqued the way the eco-extremist terrorists and their propagandists acted when one of their own had their personal details found out and published on the internet (strongly identifying information is censored here):⁴⁸

Within 12 hours of the doxxing of [Abe] being released, the so-called ITS “Mafia”, who virtually live on the internet now, were so upset they had to describe the age and dryness of my Vagina! And take responsibility for the “massacre” beating of an anarcho-punk after a Zapatista rally last December! What is there left to say either to or about these misogynist, misanthropic, psychopathic high priests of the ITS death-cult? ...

“ALL participants and friendlies around the atassa project have reached out to me hoping I can, for lack of a better term, alleviate any animosity over the Atassa project.

Abe went off the deep end. ... [the journal] started as [a] theoretical exploration of violence with no one except abe actually declaring and supporting ITS

Nobody wants beef, I'm just a middle man relaying this.

You can email back, call @ +150*****, or completely ignore.

Fuck with abe all you want, he deserves it, but everyone else doesnt.”

There it is; there is “ALL the participants and friendlies around the Atassa project”, which we assume includes LBC/Aragorn totally throwing [Abe] under the bus just to save themselves any bother. They must seriously underestimate us to write such ridiculous shit – Ah, just a “theoretical exploration of violence”. What a fucking collection of cretins. So much for the claims of the Pope of ITS Mexico about their “theorists”, these people couldn't theorise themselves out of a paper bag.

“Eco-Extremism” is an opportunistic trend of parasitism, online fakes and sacred beliefs, recycling on facebook, twitter and the “altervista” or “wordpress”. Although they would like you to think that their groups are spreading, instead they are dwindling, with a few people traveling between countries (or staying put in Mexico!) and believing in their sacred misanthropic mission. A mission which is expressed as hatred of women, hatred of anarchy, and ‘humanity’.

⁴⁸ L. More non-news about the “Eco-Extremist Mafia” [Essay]. 325. Oct 23, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

Human Exterminationists

The narrowing of approaches

Within eco-extremism there is an even more niche ideological tendency that could best be described as human exterminationists.

Here is an essay by an ‘aristocratic individualist’ from 1918 that was bizarrely used in an eco-extremist zine by an ex-anarchist who used to spend time sabotaging open cast coal mines on land owned by an aristocrat in Scotland:⁴⁹⁵⁰⁵¹⁵²

The pessimism we want to study now is that which we have called misanthropic pessimism. This pessimism doesn’t proceed from an exasperated and suffering sensibility, but from a lucid intelligence exercising its critical clear-sightedness on the evil side of our species. Misanthropic pessimism appears in its grand lines as a theory of universal fraud and universal imbecility; of universal banality and universal turpitude. As the pitiless painting of a world peopled with cretins and swindlers, of ninnies and fools.

The character of this pessimism appears as a universal coldness, a willed impassibility, an absence of sentimentalism that distinguishes it from romantic pessimism, ever inclined to despair or revolt. The mute despair of Vigny is more pathetic than a cry of pain. In Stirner we find frantic accents of revolt, while in Schopenhauer we find a tragic sentiment of the world’s pain and a despairing appeal to the void. As for the misanthropic pessimist, he makes no complaints. He doesn’t take the human condition as tragic, he doesn’t rise up against destiny. He observes his contemporaries with curiosity, pitilessly analyzes their sentiments and thoughts and is amused by their presumption, their vanity, their hypocrisy, or their unconscious villainy, by their intellectual and moral weakness. It is no longer human pain, it is no longer the sickness of living that forms the theme of this pessimism, but rather human villainy and stupidity. One of the preferred leitmotifs of this pessimism could be this well-known verse: “The most foolish animal is man.”

Here a human exterminationist argues that the eco-extremist terror group ITS were also human extinctionists all along.⁵³

Their hopelessness and pessimism toward all of hyper-civilized humanity (i.e. the only humanity left for all intents and purposes) has never been in doubt. The hypothetical positing of a “small group of people who are willing to embrace the wild,” does not bring such a group into being, and neither does the existence of the peoples of such places like the Amazon or the Andaman Islands whose entire existence is due to the “conservationist” impulse to “leave them alone”. The exception proves the rule, and if techno-industrial civilization and the rule of law collapsed tomorrow, such isolated peoples would no longer be protected.

The real issue with Jacobi has always been his intransigent belief in the human as a closed system, no matter how much recourse to “the wild” he has at times. He can’t but spout such Enlightenment dogma as “the source of human values is human beings themselves,” as if all “humans” have been equal throughout history, as if to predicate “human” in both the civilized and uncivilized resolves the issue at the level of first principles. As if the object of human cognition continues to be the continuation of the actually existing human genome,

⁴⁹ Coal Action Scotland. A text dump on Jay [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. August, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

⁵⁰ Friends of Jay. A text dump on Jay [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Dec 7, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

⁵¹ Jay. A text dump on Jay [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Spring 2016. Original link. Archived link.

⁵² Coal Action Scotland. A text dump on Jay [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. August 26, 2012. Original link. Archived link.

⁵³ Various Authors. A text dump on Black Seed [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

even if only within the circle of those who have an adequate affinity with the “Wild Will.” But even if eco-extremists posit a “human nature” that is corrupted by industrial society, they neither posit a clear idea of its essence, nor a way to “fix” that nature by creating an “outside” of civilization. Such an “outside” does not exist, and there is no feral future, nor is one possible.

So to Jacobi’s question, whether eco-extremists carry out their action because of their hatred of humanity or their love of the wild, they would reply that this is not an “either/or” dilemma. One can, and probably should, have both points as motivation. There is no natural “outside” that the hyper-civilized can take refuge in, as we are all products of civilization itself. But as techno-industrial civilization is neither a well-defined nor stable phenomenon, the ultimate object of hatred is the idea of human power and control as their own end, which can only be countered by attacking the human as both product and agent of that control. In this sense, extinction is like a wish more than a practical program: it is like the anarchists who wish for a “society without domination,” though they know that this is probably not attainable. There will probably be homo sapiens well into the distant future, but one can act as if they should simply not exist.

The expanded limits of violence

Here is a text glorifying school shooters small contribution to the effort of exterminating all humans. Adam Lanza called into John Zerzans’ primitivist radio show and wrote that he wished he’d been born a lower-primate so that he could have been unconcerned with complex cultural relationships.⁵⁴

Both Frazier and Lanza’s messages were clear to those who understand, but mystified everyone else: humans have, to their detriment, completely removed themselves from nature and through the ways of civilization we have all been imprisoned. Frazier’s fury came from a transcendent moment where he saw the obscenity of materialism that we are bound to while Lanza saw how we are shaped from birth to accept this fate and enjoy being caged. Like warriors before them they refused to see humans as more valuable than other life on earth and had no moral qualms about extinguishing lives no matter how young and innocent. In fact, they may be seen as having acted from a place of kindness, as suggested by Adam Lanza’s very personal killing of his mother before he left for the school. In his mind he wasn’t deranged; he had been pacing his cage his whole life, until he could pace no more. Then he pounced. We are all capable of nurturing and compassion, but we are also capable of the most horrific brutality, given the right conditions. These instances of cruelty, whether from long ago or in our lifetime, shouldn’t be swept under the rug. They are not horrible abominations that we must do everything to forget. They are human responses, maybe one of the last meaningful human actions we can observe, which is perhaps what terrifies people so much. As Fuchs observes, “Deep down in every one of us there is a ruthless primal killer inside. Perhaps this is the fundamental truth from which all censors, moralists and inveterate optimists flee in panic.” Let us not flee in panic from our own impulses, but learn from them and come face to face with society, its warts and all.

Various Critiques

The former Kaczynski super-fan Jacobi comically critiques these human extinctionists as having tarnished the otherwise respectable idea of eco-extremism. He explains that he had hoped the terror

⁵⁴ Various Authors. A text dump on Black Seed [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

group ITS were simply opening the door to human exterminationists to join their terror alliance, the same way they opened the door to Satanists and pure nihilists who care nothing for wild habitat:⁵⁵⁵⁶

[E]co-extremism has recently made yet another ideological turn, and with the turn I have to dispose of my former tolerance, at least toward large factions of the eco-extremist “tendency.” They have become extinctionists. They argue that they care for the wild, that humankind will invariably harm wild nature, and that humankind must therefore go extinct. This is a ridiculous philosophy, and while what follows will explain the reasons why, I am not at all thrilled I have had to write them out. Only a subset of extinctionism’s philosophical formulations, usually pessimistic and nihilistic, are philosophically interesting (see *Better to Have Never Been* by David Benatar); but the ecological formulation—that humans should go extinct for the sake of wild nature—is never good philosophy. And explaining why entails a lot of nitpicky philosophical talk that readers are probably not going to very much enjoy. Nevertheless, because it is a recurring problem even in the mainstream ecological movements, it is necessary, it seems, to disally myself with it.

There are people who tend to be kind of true believers in the whole thing and say this situation really is utterly hopeless and that the whole human race is irredeemable and a lot of people do hold these views without going to the actionable extremes that ITS does, so it’s not completely surprising, extinctionism has been a part of environmentalism for a very long time ... they basically hate everything around, they just want to destroy everything, it’s not destroy society to save nature, it’s just nuclear attack bomb everything. I’d say that the most dominant part of its definitely is that now, it’s always been kind of fragmented and there’s some communications from certain groups that claim the name and also explicitly say we don’t want to see the destruction of the human race, we just want to see a destruction of the technological system, but they’re few and far between at this point, I think mostly the ITS brand has associated itself largely with this sort of nihilism and extinctionism, but the groups differ. They care more about whether or not everybody agrees on being able to commit terrorist acts against technological society and on the human race than whether or not people believe the same thing.

Satanist Death Cultists

The narrowing of approaches

In the second issue of an eco-extremist journal, they included a satanist essay romanticizing embodying the most despised evil in society:⁵⁷

The purpose of this work is to synthesize eco-extremism and nihilist individualism, to give a spiritual justification to a sentiment that refuses all spirit. It is a reflection on the scope and depth of human failure, and an approach to the Inhuman. We leave behind the Wisdom of the City, and Ideologies such as progressivism and anarchism that are merely a blink of the eye in the unfolding of the Unknowable. Here we seek to honor and praise the Murderer not merely as a passing political or psychological archetype, but as the metaphysical principle driving the hyper-civilized to extinction. We seek evil not as something that can shock, but as something that moves about in the shadows and cracks of human existence. We divide this treatise into three parts:

⁵⁵ Various Authors. A text dump on Black Seed [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

⁵⁶ Popular Front. 36. The New Wave of Eco-Extremism and Nihilist Militancy [Podcast Interview]. Popular Front Podcast, . Mar 9, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁵⁷ Multiple Authors. A text dump on Atassa [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

- 1. On Earth as it is in Hell: A theological reflection on the essence of demons.
- 2. The Satanic Sacrament: Individualist poisoning and human sacrifice in 17th century France in the “Affair of the Poisons.”
- 3. Bomb, Bullet, and Blade: Eco-extremism as a meager yet rigorous attempt to embody the struggle of Chaos and the Murderer against the Christian God and its secular manifestations.

This text is not a political treatise. There is nothing here about liberation, self-realization, or human striving. We hate the human and everything it entails. We rejoice at the spilling of human blood upon the Altar of the Earth: its aroma ascends like incense before the Throne of the Unknowable. Yet we know that even these efforts are a feeble visible sign of the Invisible Grace of the Hidden.

We realize that the Murderer has been working since the beginning in many forms and manifestations, and He will not stop until the Human is no more.

A while later a Greek ex-serviceman was coaxed into building a pipe bomb and leaving it in a public square in Edinburgh, Scotland. The communique he wrote to claim responsibility explained that he was motivated in part by this brand of satanism:⁵⁸

(ABYSS) 48 COMMUNIQUE OF THE INDIVIDUALISTS TENDING TOWARDS THE WILD

-A package bomb left totally indiscriminately at a central location selectively.

Why do I not think of the “innocent” people one might think... I answer with a question... Did my birth giver’s pussy think when it was fucked to be fertilized with microscopic semen that creates the vessels that I hate? Did anybody ask me to be born? Did anyone know what I would become? Do you know that some see consciousness as a curse? Fuck you, pathetic pricks, you don’t know shit then! I do not seek justification for existence, neither do I seek someone to blame. I seek the amoral rape of existence through the injection of life passing from the Death Gate. Anti-human odium is my life’s blood, transforming my vessel into the Beast.

The joke of human consciousness and what it creates I confront with nihilistic laughter, unconscious cynicism and misanthropic passion! When I say “fuck you all”, it might as well be the most sincere thing I have said my whole life! I wish my scream could burn you all, but it can’t do fuckin shit! Hahahahahahahah! This is why I have to experiment with fire, poison, bombs, even if the attack fails. Next time it might not, until I satisfy my Egotistical Satanity.

Furthermore I claim myself as part of the international Terrorist Mafia known as ITS. Between egoist conspirators I accepted a criminal offering on the basis of common interest. This is no spiritual union like those of the anarchists. I am not an Eco-extremist, I am a Nihilist Misanthrope as I like to call myself. Of course words mean nothing and are used in a specific context and for my own benefit.

He was arrested 2 years later, plead guilty, sentenced to 8 years and 4 months, and then asked his lawyers to submit an appeal for not getting enough mercy for having plead guilty.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Various Authors. A text dump on eco-extremism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

⁵⁹ Various Authors. A text dump on eco-extremism [Essay]. The Ted K Archive. Original link. Archived link.

Nikolaos Karvounakis, originally from the Greek island of Crete, had placed the improvised device packed with 58 nails and sections of metal pipe in a shelter at Princes Street Gardens in January 2018.

Written on the flap inside the box were the words “fuck you all”. The device included low grade explosive, and a primitive but disconnected fuse made from a light filament and a battery.

Army explosives experts believed that had it been made operational or accidentally detonated, it would have been capable of causing significant injuries, the high court in Edinburgh heard. Karvounakis later claimed to be linked to a fringe group accused of eco-terrorism which originated in Mexico.

Six weeks after the device was found, the Edinburgh Evening News received an email headed “International Terrorist Group in UK”. It contained a link to an extremist website where Karvounakis had anonymously claimed responsibility with a picture of the device and signed “Misanthropos Cacogen”.

In December 2020 Police Scotland counter-terrorism officers received intelligence from European counterparts linking him to the offence. DNA taken from tape used in the device was found to belong to him.

John Scullion QC, Karvounakis’s defence counsel, said he had been struggling with anxiety and low self-esteem, and had spent increasing amounts of time online. There he had drifted into conversations with extremists, whose beliefs he now repudiated.

Scullion said his client, who pleaded guilty to an offence under the Terrorism Act, had intended to cause disruption but had not planned to injure people, so had left the detonator unconnected. “It is fair to say he now bitterly regrets what he did and will bitterly regret it for the rest of his life,” Scullion told the court.

ITS Mexico then began to promote satanist literature in their communiques.⁶⁰⁶¹

I really noticed that mixing of weird ideologies because I saw that ITS were publishing and promoting information from a fascist group called Temple of Blood. Now I’ve done a lot of work on Atom Waffan division, this militant neo-nazi group and they’re linked with Temple of Blood which it’s like anarchist-nihilist, esoteric-hitlerist, occultist, like the most weirdest shit you can imagine, all mixed in.

Their system of belief is that there’s different ages, different eons which have existed throughout history, different historical ages and that we’re living in a particular age now and the Nazi era was almost like an attempt to drag civilization towards the kind of civilization that they want to move towards because they want to move to a new civilization, a new type of person, and they would say that western civilization is decaying, has been made soft by its Judeo-Christian heritage and they’re ultimately extremely anti-Christianity, anti-Judaism, they’re setting themselves against that very, very strongly, just as a lot of very aggressive satanic or occult groups do, that’s the thing they’re opposing. And Hitler and that era it’s seen as an attempt to combat that and it’s almost like a satanic entry into the world and so it’s lionized.

Why I know a bit about it is because when I’ve been covering terrorism cases in the UK involving people on the extreme right wing, involving neo-Nazis, order of nine angles is

⁶⁰ Popular Front. 36. The New Wave of Eco-Extremism and Nihilist Militancy [Podcast Interview]. Popular Front Podcast, . Mar 9, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁶¹ Popular Front. 71. O9A Rising: The Spread of Britain’s Occultist Militant Group [Podcast Interview]. Popular Front Podcast, . Apr 19, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

increasingly coming up as a reference and an influence on these people to the extent that within the last just over a year, we've had four teenagers in the UK jailed for terrorism offences where order of nine angles has come up a lot in the background to those cases.

In one case which was a then sixteen-year-old from Durham who was convicted of several offenses including preparing a terrorist attack, it was essentially prosecuted that he was a neo-Nazi, he was inspired by groups like atom warfare division, but also that he basically became an occult neo-Nazi.

The way it was put in court was that he was heavily influenced by the order of nine angles and he was buying their books, writing about them in his journal and this was something that had completely taken hold of him and it's in other cases as well.

Finally, the admins of the now deleted facebook page for the eco-extremist journal explained their common foundation with fascism:⁶²

All anti-civ thought and fascism have the same founding premise and modus operandi. These are that a large chunk of the human population holds down a selected group that could potentially function successfully if these other groups were not around. The solution is thus to cull the land of those people, either the scapegoat of all societal ills (fascism) or the vast majority of people who could not function without the support of techno-industrial society (anarcho-primitivism / anti-civ green anarchy). Both ideologies can be reluctant or coy about the methodology they use or its results (“an ethno-state does not lead directly to genocide”, “the destruction of the power grid is not intended to directly kill billions of people”). However, the ethical decision of both is the same: do what needs to be done to allow those who can be free to be free, and damn the consequences. Eco-extremism does not shy away from this.

Various Critiques

Here an anonymous anarchist summarized what they thought of the people who had followed this ideological puritan road:⁶³

What we did find out, was that a few months ago [Abe] promoted on his summer reading list on Atassa Facebook, the book “Iron Gates,” which is a fascist written and published book that is set in a concentration camp. Part rape fantasy, part pro-Nazi propaganda. It's also one of the ‘go-to’ texts promoted by Atomwaffen Divison in the USA, which is like the American version of National Action (Neo-Nazi group in UK). A lot of comrades have pointed to a potential cross over between the Eco-Extremist material and Satanic/Neo-Nazi crap like Atomwaffen who has killed about half a dozen people in the US.

Yeah, so much for all these “theorists” and ITS “cells” that like to philosophise about what is and what is not “fascism”, and how dare the ‘anarcho-cops’ call them fascists.

We specifically warn against this EE tendency because of the potential for cross-overs with the nationalist-autonomous & nationalist-anarchist, neo-nazi and indigenous pagan “white tribe” eco-fascists who target the dredge of the anarchist scene with their irrationalist, green authoritarian and runic occult bullshit.

In the last text-threat from ITS Brazil, where they blame the Hambach Forest defenders for the death of the comrade who fell from the trees, we find the jealousy, the resentment, the bitterness of those who understand nothing about what it is that we are fighting for.

⁶² Andy Fleming. Anarchy: Deep in the Woods [Essay]. slackbastard . December 16, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

⁶³ L. More non-news about the “Eco-Extremist Mafia” [Essay]. 325. Oct 23, 2018. Original link. Archived link.

In all the texts from ITS these past years we find a gross lack of understanding of what the anarchist ideas are and what anarchist methods are. Instead we just find a perverse and fanatic pathology and a weakness, leading to their ongoing blatant failures and authoritarian outcomes.

Minimalist Anarchism

Remembering back to the beginning of what members of ITS Mexico were doing before they formed the group, as likely a bunch of kids committing sabotage against corporations destroying wild habitat they enjoyed. I think it would be nice for those who have the energy, to compassionately hold out a hand, in sketching out an alternative to the long and desolate road we just discussed.

I think the distribution and application of high-level technology will become the primary political conflict of the future, therefore leftists do have to take seriously the protection and re-establishment of more minimum viable technology lifeways if we want to win more people over to our side and make our strategies the tried and tested policies of the future.

This would simply be one ethical outlook with prescriptions within leftist and anarchist discourse worth promoting.

A broad approach with specialized interests

Like I wrote earlier, Ellul is a great person to read for both a critique of technological overconsumption and an antidote to the rigid position of Kaczynski.⁶⁴

If we see technique as nothing but objects that can be useful (and we need to check whether they are indeed useful); and if we stop believing in technique for its own sake or that of society; and if we stop fearing technique, and treat it as one thing among many others, then we destroy the basis for the power technique has over humanity.

Also, David Charles has some great ideas for how to practice living a low-impact lifestyle.⁶⁵

Technology is there to solve the little problems of existence and support us in our lives. There's a lot of amazing tech out there and it's easy to get sucked into saying yes to every little advance, whether it's needed or not.

Technology solves problems. That's good. But when the problem is solved, I think we should stop there. Paying for something when I haven't got any cash on me is a mild inconvenience, but my debit card solves it with little fuss. Saving a further twenty seconds at the checkout is simply not a problem that I have.

In fact, far from being a problem solved, shaving seconds from that interaction is actually a bad thing. Solving problems that aren't problems will always have consequences. In this case, it alienates us a little further from the people who serve us our Meal Deals.

I'm far from being against all technology (he says, publishing this on the vast interconnected technologies of the internet), but I do think we should always use the minimum viable technology for a task. In other words, we should use the most basic tools that will still get the job well done. ...

Skills

⁶⁴ Jacques Ellul. Perspectives on Our Age: Jacques Ellul Speaks on His Life and Work [Book]. House of Anansi Press Perseus-PGW. 2004. Original link. Archived link.

⁶⁵ David Charles. Minimum Viable Technology [Essay]. David Charles. September 25, 2015. Original link. Archived link.

The more basic the technology, generally speaking, the greater the skills you must learn and deploy.

For example, motorists who grew up in the 40s, 50s and 60s had to become semi-skilled mechanics in order to keep their cars on the road. Modern motorists have no such need. In fact, car manufacturers deliberately make their technology unhackable, so that you must go back to the approved dealer for expensive repairs.

The same is true of modern computers. You used to have to understand the fundamentals of programming to use a PC properly. Nowadays, user interfaces have evolved to the point where the internal workings of your computer are shrouded in mystery. When something goes wrong, the user is clueless and open to exploitation.

Of course, for many people, myself included, this ease of use is a good thing. But ease of use and incomprehending dependence are two completely different things.

Dependence is hierarchical and undemocratic, concentrating knowledge and power in the hands of the few. It reminds me of the worst excesses of medieval religion, where divine forgiveness was sold to the layman by a corrupt hierarchy of priests.

Hidden Benefits

Using the minimum viable technology for a task often has hidden benefits. For example, writing long hand on paper is important to cognitive development in children, helps you learn by combining visual, motor and brain processing, could make us more creative and stave off mental decline as we get older. Not bad for something that is so obviously “backward” in this screen-filled age.

These hidden benefits apply to almost every positive constraint that I’ve experimented with: No Hot Showers, No Mobile Phone, No Supermarket.

The Tool is not the Task

In our search for the most efficient technology, we forget that 99% of a task is not about the tools we use.

Cleaning yourself is not about power showers, hot water tanks or expensive shampoos; it’s about water and scrubbing. Jumping into a lake would do it.

Communication is not about 4G, wifi or GSM; it’s about talking to other human beings. Like the ones you see on the train every morning.

Grocery shopping isn’t about foil-packed for freshness, 138 different varieties of soup or self-service checkouts; it’s about building a strong and healthy relationship to your food and the people who supply that food. You find that at your local greengrocer, not in the aisles of a supermarket warehouse.

The Best Things in Life are Simple

Using the minimum viable technology reminds us that the best things in life are not complicated.

There is nothing that gives me greater pleasure than pulling on a pair of walking shoes (my minimum viable technology for travel without blisters), slinging a small backpack over my shoulder (MVT for basic food and camping gear), walking out into the sunset, sleeping the night on a hilltop in my bivvy bag (MVT for sleeping) and waking to the warming glow of the sunrise.

I don’t need much more than that. Anything else is a luxury and distracts from the task at hand: exploring the corners of the life I have been given.

Technology is there to support us when we need it, not to be taken for granted. When the support falls away – and it will one day – will you be able to stand on your own two feet?

Pragmatic Left-Anarchism

People who identify as left anarchists differ from most other anarchists in a purely surface level way, in that when asked how we identify politically, we desire to make a pragmatic optics decision, in explicitly making clear that we're both leftists and anarchists.

That way for now, anchoring the term anarchist explicitly to a mainstream struggle of left vs. right economic & egalitarian politics.

The same way some socialists make the optics decision to tag on democratic to the word socialist.

I think this is an important strategy for being able to get our foot in the door with most people by overcoming a caricature and definition, that of being people who just want chaos and disorder, which we've been tarred with since almost all the way back to the beginning.

So, depending on who you're talking to or what platform you want to stay unbanned from, I think we should accept that we may need to hide our power level and sometimes even go undercover in those spaces.

This does however put us at odds with one small group of anarchists who identify with the term post-left anarchy, in that we desire to engage in tactical left-unity on the big-tent campaigns of the present, even though we do still value forming solely anarchist campaigns and planning uniquely anarchist strategies as well. So, the term can also help identify us as being in the majority camp of anarchists who simply are not post-left anarchists, and don't hold to purely post-left values.

Finally, here's one simple way of explaining anarchism which we think works well for anarchists to use for clarity and promotion of the political philosophy:⁶⁶

Anarchism is a political theory that is skeptical of the justification of authority and power. Anarchism is usually grounded in moral claims about the importance of individual liberty, often conceived as freedom from domination. Anarchists also offer a positive theory of human flourishing, based upon an ideal of equality, community, and non-coercive consensus building.

A wide array of approaches

Despite holding some anti-pragmatic positions like 'conscientiously abstaining' from voting, Colin Ward's life's work provides a great example on the value of pursuing an incrementalist approach.⁶⁷

Ward's anarchism rests on three main ideas: pluralism, the presence of anarchy in existing society, and a focus on problem-solving. First, Ward argues that all societies solve problems using a variety of mechanisms. They use commercial, market-based techniques; they use authority and directive and bureaucratic techniques; and they also use techniques of mutuality – techniques of mutual aid and cooperative self-help. Within this pluralist framework, 'anarchy' refers to the space in which the latter techniques of mutual aid and cooperative self-help predominate. The aim of anarchism should be to try to push society in the direction of greater anarchy in this sense – to shift the balance of society's pluralistic problem-solving in a more anarchic direction.

Second, related to this pluralist perspective, is Ward's claim that anarchy is already very much part of our social world:

⁶⁶ Andrew Fiala. Anarchism [Essay]. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Winter 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁶⁷ Stuart White. The incremental anarchist [Essay]. Radical Philosophy #161. May 2010. Pages 67–68. Original link. Archived link.

far from being a speculative vision of a future society ... [anarchy] is a description of a mode of human organization, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society ... the anarchist alternatives are already there, in the interstices of the dominant power structure. If you want to build a free society, the parts are all at hand. (*Anarchy in Action*)

Examples of anarchy in action that Ward gives include Alcoholics Anonymous, Friendly Societies, squatters' movements, tenants' housing co-operatives and efforts to bring workplaces under 'workers' control'. The anarchist aim should be to build out from already existing anarchy in society, extending its coverage to wider and wider spheres of social life: To do this, anarchist thinking must, in Ward's view, have a resolutely practical, problem-solving focus. Anyone wanting to theorize the intricacies of 'autonomy' or 'anarchy' as abstract concepts will look to Ward's writings in vain. His work is overwhelmingly concerned with discussion of concrete issues such as housing, urban planning, education, welfare and transport, trying to show how the anarchic techniques of mutual aid and cooperative self-help might be applied. Housing was a particular interest – he spent his early career working as an architect – and illustrates his general approach. Here he was highly critical of state-heavy efforts, led by middle-class housing professionals, to provide housing for the working classes. In an open letter to the Labour MP Tony Crosland, then shadow minister for housing, Ward drew out the paternalism he saw in the social-democratic tradition:

You ... see the homeless, the ill-housed and overcrowded and the newly-weds just coming up for membership of the Housing Shortage Club, as the inert objects, the raw material of policy, waiting to be processed by the Housing Problems Industry. (*Housing: An Anarchist Approach*, 1976)

Against this paternalism, Ward asserted the principle of 'dweller control' of housing, exemplified in tenants' co-operatives, self-build projects and, not least, squatters' movements.

Ward's resistance to paternalism inevitably brought him into conflict with the Marxist tradition. In his 1985 book *When We Build Again*, Ward refers to the 'ludicrous polemics among Marxist pundits'. Reflecting on the claim that council-house provision is 'decommodification', Ward points to the older use of the word 'commodity' to refer to that which is useful or commodious. He then argues that, in this sense, the mass council housing of the post-war period has indeed been a tremendously successful experiment in 'decommodifying' how many working-class people live.

It would nevertheless be quite wrong to see Ward's anarchism only in terms of a series of interventions in specific policy areas. In a 1968 interview for BBC Radio 3, he described himself as 'an anarchist-communist, in the Kropotkin tradition'. And underpinning the various interventions there is indeed a unifying vision drawn from the work of Kropotkin and from Ebenezer Howard's original conception of the garden city. Ward edited a version of Kropotkin's *Fields, Factories and Workshops* for Freedom Press in 1975 with commentary on what he saw as its contemporary relevance in the new era of energy crisis and stagflation. The vision is of a society in which local communities are the prime political unit and in which economic activity is localized around a mix of agricultural/horticultural and industrial production. The citizen might work on her allotment on Monday, teach for the next three days a week for the Teachers' Guild in a local school (where children's attendance is not compulsory) and then spend Friday in the Community Workshop making items for a Local Exchange and Trading Scheme. One evening a week might be spent at a meeting of the neighbourhood council.

Ward stood, in effect, at the confluence of two traditions. On the one hand, he knew his anarchist classics, particularly Kropotkin's work, and he drew on them. On the other, he

was inspired by the diffuse traditions of working-class and popular self-help – resolutely practical traditions concerned to get things done, to make the world better in some simple but important and measurable way, and which have little time for theoretical niceties. He sought to bring the traditions into dialogue, for their mutual benefit.

Summarizing what tactics I view as most effective going forward, I wrote an essay discussing the role of the far-left, effective activism & violence:⁶⁸

Mutual aid – We should put the time into helping our neighbors and volunteering, for example on a food not bombs stall, to both manifest and get to enjoy the positive benefits of a communalist caring society.

Direct action – We should try to mostly choose targets which the largest amount of people can sympathize with, for instance the sabotaging of a fox hunt in order to highlight the direction we'd like to move in with legal animal rights, going from mostly ending blood sports, to mostly ending animal captivity, to mostly ending hunting for taste pleasure.

Campaigning – We should look for the easiest squeeze points to rack up small wins, like the picketing of a cafe to reclaim lost wages, so that word spreads and it creates a domino effect.

Education – We should be educating ourselves and helping others know what work and rent union to join, what to keep a record of at work, how to defend yourself from rapists and fascists, how to crack a squat and how to write a press release, etc.

Electoral politics – Its often obvious which party is the lesser evil long-term and I think it's virtuous to vote that way as more people will have a qualitatively less bad experience than the few who do. So it's the trolley problem. We wouldn't desire to put in the electoral system ourselves, but some of us engage with it for a few hours every 4 years and use the discourse surrounding it to rally people to the far-left.

We need to get well educated on how even the baby step policies toward the left would be an improvement on where we are now, we need to learn the internal politicking of government and get good at having friendly arguments with comedy to appeal to friends and acquaintances basic intuitions.

The goal being that we can talk the latest news and (1) Win over conservatives to obvious empirically better policies on the left, and (2) Win over liberals when center-left parties are in power to feel dismayed at the slow pace of change, and so acknowledge how much better it would be if there was a market socialist in the position willing to rally people to demonstrate and strike to push through bills.

This still must entail a cynical clarity about how many swing voters you meet will be responding to the seesaw effect in politics of blaming the last person in power for everything wrong, so knowing how much time to invest and picking your battles.

The limits of violence

An Experimental List of Anarchist Principles:⁶⁹

Some groups and projects try to put together an aims and principles list to explain what campaign news and philosophy they will focus on, and I think this can positively influence what actions people take and think are justified. Some examples I know of include:

⁶⁸ Theo Slade. On The Far-Left, Effective Activism & Violence [Essay]. *Activist Journeys*. February 21, 2021. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

⁶⁹ Theo Slade. An Experimental List of Anarchist Principles [Essay]. *Activist Journeys*. May 1, 2022. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

- By Any Means Necessary⁷⁰
- Anarchist Radio Network⁷¹
- Green Anti-Capitalist Front⁷²

You also have people using slogans like ‘by any means necessary’ going all the way back to Malcolm X & Franz Fanon in the 60s, which I guess is an attempt to say we’ll go as far as we’re pushed, so be careful what state terror tactics you use on us.

My aims are reflected in the CrimethInc. exercise in what an anarchist program might look like.⁷³

And I’ve already written about my ethics broadly,⁷⁴ but I’ll try to be more specific here, in experimenting with drawing up a list of principles that I think would be useful to the calculation of what tactics I think are useful and justifiable in the UK today which is in my view a non-revolutionary period, which to me just means a time when social tensions are not at their height:

- 1) Never act with reckless indifference to human and non-human animal life.
- 2) Never physically hurt people for the purpose of achieving political goals as it runs counter to our philosophy on the left that material conditions create the person and so we should make every peaceful effort to rehabilitate people.

Some tricky to explain examples that are justified, but only just outside this principle are:

(A) Community self-defense and self-defense by proxy, where you might desire to fight fascists in the street in order to block them from marching through immigrant communities or where you might desire to push your way through huntsmen in order to save a fox from getting mauled to death by dogs.

(B) Survivor-led vigilantism, where to the extent that some current institutions fail to rehabilitate people and the process of seeking justice through the institutions available can sometimes cause more trauma than its worth, then personal violence in order to resolve feelings of helplessness in the face of evil acts can sometimes be reasonably viewed as justified to regain feelings of agency.

3) Never take actions on the basis of anti-science beliefs or with the intent to propagate anti-science beliefs e.g. disproven conspiracy theories.

4) Take care to respect the difference between property which is personally and privately owned.

So, it could be seen as ethical to choose material targets of evil actors in order to cause economic damage and make a statement, so long as in the case of personal property, the item has no intrinsic sentimental value and can be replaced because the person is wealthy and that the item was paid for through the exploitation of others labor. Or is private property, meaning the means of production which should be owned collectively anyway.

The action would be an outlet for legitimate anger against that which causes us suffering and a means of developing people’s thinking and creating a wider base of people joined in sympathy for those ideals.

⁷⁰ Various Authors. BAMN Principles [Statement]. BAMN. accessed 25 July 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁷¹ Various Authors. Basic principles [Statement]. A-Radio Network. accessed 25 July 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁷² Various Authors. Aims & Principles [Statement]. Green Anti-Capitalist Media. accessed 25 July 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁷³ CrimethInc. What Would an Anarchist Program Look Like? [Essay]. CrimethInc.. November 2, 2020. Original link. Archived link.

⁷⁴ Theo Slade. My Virtue-Existentialist Ethics [Essay]. Activist Journeys. September 20, 2020. Original link. Archived link.

For example, if taking the risk to slash slaughterhouse trucks' tyres in the dead of night both draws attention to animal suffering and also helps you to develop stronger bonds with a group of people and learn from other liberation struggles, then the action is both productive and leads to personal growth.

5) Never take actions in the hopes of helping in part instigate a revolutionary war sooner than it's reasonable to believe you would have the capability to win. Similarly don't use rhetoric about how tensions in society have escalated to the state of civil war or a third world war. For example, even if the revolutionary left got really good at assassinating captains of industry and getting away with it, there would be reasonable fears around the psychology of people who would take such an act against people who they could have grown up and been socially conditioned to be themselves, which would inexorably lead to a more authoritarian society and worse foundations on which to work towards a better society.

I do think we can hypothesize the unrealistic case of 99% of society desiring a referendum on a shift from parliamentary representative system to a federated spokes council system and the MP's dragging their feet, the same way both parties gerrymander the boundaries to make it easier to win despite it being the one issue most everyone agrees is bad, and people needing to storm the halls of power to force a vote to happen.

More likely though, an opportunity for revolution might arise from such a confluence of events as climate refugees and worker gains forcing the state and corporations into trying to crack down on freedoms in order to preserve their power and enough people resisting that move, who are then able take power and usher in radical policy change, with either the army deciding to stand down or splitting into factions.

Most can sympathize with quick revolutions against dictatorships where the result is a freer society, like the Kurdish uprising in Northern Syria which took power from a regime who had rolled tanks on demonstrators and outlawed teaching of their native language.

But, even there, there are key foundations you need to work from, like the probability you won't just give an excuse for the oppressor committing even worse horrors as was the case with the Rohingya militants who ambushed a police checkpoint, resulting in army & citizen campaign to burn down many villages, plus murder and rape those that couldn't get away.

Also, there would be a responsibility to put down arms after winning political freedoms and a majority are in favor of diplomacy through electoral politics, like in Northern Ireland today.

Under representative democracies, the sentiment of most is that, even if it could be argued that a war of terror (not a revolutionary war) against the ruling class was the easiest route to produce a better society, that it would still be ethically wrong to be the person who takes another's life just because it's the easiest way. Since regardless of manufactured consent or anything else you still could have worked to build a coalition to overcome those obstacles.

And I agree, it would be an act of self-harm to treat life with such disregard when we could have been that same deluded person shrouded in the justificatory trappings of society which normalizes that behavior. I don't think the way we win today is by treating a cold bureaucratic system with equally cold disregard, by justifying our resort to threat and violence because we have fewer resources, and a belief in the importance of our message. Time on earth is a foundational value worth fighting for, and everybody deserves some amount of breathing room to make mistakes and learn from them.

14. Communization and the abolition of gender

Subtitle: From Communization and its discontents: Contestation, critique, and contemporary struggles

Author: Maya Andrea Gonzalez

Topics: communisation, gender abolition, gender nihilism, gender

Date: 2011

Source: <https://libcom.org/library/communization-its-discontents-contestation-critique-contemporary-struggles>

A librarians argument for deleting: deleted

A librarians argument against deleting: ...

A readers argument for deleting: ...

A readers argument against deleting: ...

“Present day civilization makes it plain that it will only permit sexual relationships on the basis of a solitary, indissoluble bond between one man and one woman, and that it does not like sexuality as a source of pleasure in its own right and is only prepared to tolerate it because there is so far no substitute for it as a means of propagating the human race.”
Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Communization is not a revolutionary position. It is not a form of society we build after the revolution. It is not a tactic, a strategic perspective, an organization, or a plan. Communization describes a set of measures that we must take in the course of the class struggle if there is to be a revolution at all. Communization abolishes the capitalist mode of production, including wage-labor, exchange, the value form, the state, the division of labor and private property. That the revolution must take this form is a necessary feature of class struggle today. Our cycle of struggles can have no other horizon, since the unfolding contradictions of capitalism annihilated the conditions which other forms of revolution required. It is no longer possible to imagine a situation in which social divisions are dissolved after the revolution.⁷⁵

Since the revolution as communization must abolish all divisions within social life, it must also abolish gender relations – not because gender is inconvenient or objectionable, but because it is part of the totality of relations that daily reproduce the capitalist mode of production. Gender, too, is constitutive of capital’s central contradiction, and so gender must be torn asunder in the process of the revolution. We cannot wait until after the revolution for the gender question to be solved. Its relevance to our existence will not be transformed slowly – whether through planned obsolescence or playful deconstruction, whether as the equality of gender identities or their proliferation into a multitude of differences. On the contrary, in order to be revolution at all, communization must destroy gender in its very course, inaugurating relations between individuals defined in their singularity.

The fact that revolution takes the form of communization is not the result of lessons learned from past defeats, nor even from the miserable failure of past movements to solve the gender question. Whether or not we can discern, after the fact, a winning strategy for the movements of the past says nothing about the present. For capital no longer organizes a unity among proletarians on the basis of their common condition as wage-laborers. The capital-labor relation no longer allows workers to affirm their identity as workers and to build on that basis workers’ organizations capable of assuming power within the state. Movements that elevated workers to the status of a revolutionary subject were still ‘communist’, but communist in a mode that cannot be ours today. The revolution as communization has no revolutionary

⁷⁵ Thanks to Francesca Manning for her invaluable help in working through the ideas in this text. I’d also like to thank Aaron Benanav for his help in editing this piece.

subject, no affirmable identity – not the Worker, the Multitude, or the Precariat. The real basis of any such revolutionary identity has melted away.

Of course, workers still exist as a class. Wage-labor has become a universal condition of life as never before. However, the proletariat is diffuse and fractured. Its relation to capital is precarious. The structural oversupply of labor is enormous. A surplus population of over one-billion people – eager to find a place in the global commodity chains from which they have been excluded – makes it impossible to form mass organizations capable of controlling the supply of labor, except among the most privileged strata of workers.⁷⁶ Capital now exacerbates, fragments and more than ever relies on the divisions between workers. Once the proud bearers of a universally relevant revolutionary essence, the Working Class, in its autonomy as a class within capitalism, can no longer build its power as a class against capital. Today, the revolution must emerge from the disunity of the proletariat, as the only process capable of overcoming that disunity. If revolutionary action does not immediately abolish all divisions between proletarians, then it is not revolutionary; it is not communization.

In the present moment, the very inability of workers to unite on the basis of a workers' identity thus forms the fundamental limit of struggle. But that limit is at once the dynamic potential of this cycle of struggles, bearing within itself the abolition of gender relations and all other fixed distinctions. It is no historical accident that the end of the former cycle of struggles coincided with a revolt against the primacy of the Worker – a revolt in which feminism played a major role. To re-imagine a workers' movement that would not demote women, blacks, and homosexuals to a subordinate position is to think a workers' movement that lacks precisely the unifying/excluding trait that once allowed it to move at all. With the benefit of hindsight, it is increasingly clear that if the working class (as a class of all those without direct access to means of production) was destined to become the majority of society, the workers' movement was unlikely to organize a clear majority from it. The revolution as communization does not solve this problem, but it takes it onto a new terrain. As surveyors of this new landscape, we must assess the present state of the practical movement toward the end of gender relations. We must also expand discussion of this essential communizing measure.

Until recently, the theory of communization has been the product of a small number of groups organized around the publication of a handful of yearly journals. If few of those groups have taken up the task of theorizing gender, it is because most have been wholly uninterested in examining the real basis of the divisions that mark the existence of the working class. On the contrary, they have busied themselves with trying to discover a revolutionary secret decoder-ring, with which they might be able to decipher the merits and shortcomings of past struggles. Thus, most partisans of communization have thought the revolution as an immediate overcoming of all separations, but they arrived at this conclusion through an analysis of what communization would have to be in order to succeed where past movements failed, rather than from a focus on the historical specificity of the present⁷⁷.

For this reason, the tendency organized around *Théorie Communiste* (TC) is unique, and we largely follow them in our exposition. For TC, the revolution as communization only emerges as a practical possibility when these struggles begin to 'swerve' (*faire l'écart*) as the very act of struggling increasingly forces the proletariat to call into question and act against its own reproduction as a class. 'Gaps' (*l'écart*) thereby open up in the struggle, and the multiplication of these gaps is itself the practical possibility of communism in our time. Workers burn down or blow up their factories, demanding severance pay instead of fighting to maintain their jobs. Students occupy universities, but against rather than in the name of the demands for which they are supposedly fighting. Women break with movements in which they already form a majority, since those movements cannot but fail to represent them. And everywhere, the unemployed, the youth, and the undocumented join and overwhelm the struggles of a privileged minority of workers, making the limited nature of the latter's demands at once obvious and impossible to sustain.

⁷⁶ See 'Misery and Debt', *Endnotes 2* (2010): 20–51, <http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/1>.

⁷⁷ For a key debate on this point, see *Endnotes 1* (2008), <http://endnotes.org.uk/issues/1>

In the face of these proliferating gaps in the struggle,
Quote:

a fraction of the proletariat, in going beyond the demands-based character of its struggle, will take communizing measures and will thus initiate the unification of the proletariat which will be the same process as the unification of humanity, i.e. its creation as the ensemble of social relations that individuals establish between themselves in their singularity⁷⁸.

For TC, the divisions within the proletariat are therefore not only that which must be overcome in the course of the revolution, but also the very source of that overcoming. Perhaps that is why TC, alone among theorists of communization, have devoted themselves to an examination of the gender distinction, as it is perhaps the most fundamental divisions within the proletariat. TC's work on gender is relatively new, especially for a group which has spent the last thirty years refining and restating a few key ideas over and over again. Their main text on gender, written in 2008, was finally published in 2010 (with two additional appendices) in issue 23 of their journal as *Distinction de Genres, Programmatisme et Communisation*. TC are known for their esoteric formulations. However, with some effort, most of their ideas can be reconstructed in a clear fashion. Since their work on gender is provisional, we refrain from lengthy quotations. TC claim that communization involves the abolition of gender as much as the abolition of capitalist social relations. For the divisions which maintain capitalism maintain the gender division and the gender division preserves all other divisions. Still, as much as TC take steps towards developing a rigorously historical materialist theory of the production of gender, they end up doing little more than suture gender to an already existing theory of the capitalist mode of production (to no small extent, this is because they rely largely on the work on one important French feminist, Christine Delphy⁷⁹).

For our context here, TC have a particularly fascinating theory of communization insofar as it is also a periodization of the history of class struggle – which itself corresponds to a periodization of the history of the capital-labor relation. This provides TC with a uniquely historical vantage on the present prospects for communism. Crucially, TC focus on the reproduction of the capital-labor relation, rather than on the production of value. This change of focus allows them to bring within their purview the set of relations that actually construct capitalist social life – beyond the walls of the factory or office. And the gender relation has always extended beyond the sphere of value production alone.

I. The Construction of the Category ‘Woman’

Woman is a social construction. The very category of woman is organized within and through a set of social relations, from which the splitting of humanity into two, woman and man – and not only female and male – is inseparable. In this way, sexual difference is given a particular social relevance that it would not otherwise possess⁸⁰. Sexual difference is given this fixed significance within class societies, when the category of woman comes to be defined by the function that most (but not all) human females perform, for a period of their lives, in the sexual reproduction of the species. Class society thus gives a social purpose to bodies: because some women ‘have’ babies, all bodies that could conceivably ‘produce’ babies are subject to social regulation. Women become the slaves of the biological contingencies of their birth. Over the long history of class society, women were born into a world organized only for men –

⁷⁸ *Théorie Communiste*, ‘The Present Moment’, unpublished.

⁷⁹ Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard, *Familiar Exploitation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

⁸⁰ Not all human beings fit into the categories of male and female. The point is not to use the language of biology to ground a theory of naturalized sexuality, as distinct from a socialized gender. Nature, which is without distinction, becomes integrated into a social structure – which takes natural averages and turns them into behavioral norms. Not all ‘women’ bear children; maybe some ‘men’ do. That does not make them any less beholden to society’s strictures, including at the level of their very bodies, which are sometimes altered at birth to ensure conformity with sexual norms.

the primary 'actors' in society, and in particular the only people capable of owning property. Women thereby became the property of society as a whole.

Because women are by definition not men, they are excluded from 'public' social life. For TC, this circumscription of the women's realm means that not only are their bodies appropriated by men, but also the totality of their activity. Their activity, as much as their very being, is by definition 'private'. In this way, women's activity takes on the character of domestic labor. This labor is defined not as work done in the home, but as women's work. If a woman sells cloth in the market, she is a weaver, but if she makes cloth in the home, she is only a wife. A woman's activity is thus considered merely as her activity, without any of the concrete determinations it would be given if it were performed by some other, more dignified social entity. The gender distinction man/woman thereby takes on additional significance as public/private and social/domestic.

Is the unpaid labor of women for men, including perhaps their 'production' of children, therefore a class relation, or even a mode of production (as Delphy calls it, the domestic mode of production)? TC defines class society as a relationship between surplus producers and surplus extractors. The social division between these groups is constitutive of the relations of production, which organize the productive forces for the purpose of producing and extracting surplus. Crucially, these relations must have as their product the reproduction of the class relation itself. However, for TC – and we follow them on this point – each mode of production is already a totality, and in fact the social relevance of women's role in sexual reproduction changes with the mode of production. That does not mean that relations between men and women are derivative of the relations between the classes. It means rather that the relations between men and women form an essential element of the class relation and cannot be thought as a separate 'system', which then relates to the class-based system.

Of course, this discussion remains abstract. The question now becomes, how do we unite our story about women with our story about the succession of modes of production? For TC, women are the primary productive force within all class societies, since the growth of the population forms an essential support of the reproduction of the class relation. The augmentation of the population as the primary productive force remains, throughout the history of class society, the burden of its women. In this way, the heterosexual matrix is founded on a specific set of material social relations.

However, we should remind ourselves that the special burden of childbirth predates the advent of class society. Historically, each woman had to give birth, on average, to six children – just in order to ensure that two of those six survived to reproduce the coming generations. The chance that a woman would die in childbirth, in the course of her life, was nearly one in ten⁸¹. Perhaps the insight of TC is that the advent of class society – which saw a massive increase in the size of the human population – hardened the social relevance of these facts. But even before the advent of class society, there was never any 'natural' regime of human sexual reproduction. Age at marriage, length of breastfeeding, number of children born, social acceptability of infanticide – all have varied across human social formations⁸². Their variation marks a unique adaptability of the human species.

But we are concerned less with the long history of the human species than with the history of the capitalist mode of production. Wage-labor is fundamentally different from both ancient slavery and feudal vassalage. In slavery, surplus producers have no 'relation' to the means of production. For the slaves are themselves part of the means of production. The reproduction or upkeep of slaves is the direct responsibility of the slave owner himself. For both men and women slaves, the distinction between public and private thus dissolves, since slaves exist entirely within the private realm. Nor is there any question, for the slaves, of property inheritance or relations with the state, such as taxation. Interestingly, there is some evidence that patriarchy was, perhaps for that very reason, rather weak among slave families in

⁸¹ These statistics make it clear to what extent violence against women, sometimes carried out by women themselves, has always been necessary to keep them firmly tied to their role in the sexual reproduction of the species. See Paola Tabet, 'Natural Fertility, Forced Reproduction', in Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins, *Sex in Question* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1996).

⁸² For an introduction to demography, see Massimo Livi-Bacci, *A Concise History of World Population* (Malden, Mass. and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

the American South⁸³. In vassalage, by contrast, the surplus producers have direct access to the means of production. Surplus is extracted by force. The peasant man stands in relation to this outside force as the public representative of the peasant household. Property passes through his line. Women and children peasants are confined to the private realm of the village, which is itself a site of both production and reproduction. The peasant family does not need to leave its private sphere in order to produce what it needs, but rather only to give up a part of its product to the lords. For this reason, peasant families remain relatively independent of markets.

In capitalism, the lives of the surplus producers are constitutively split between the public production of a surplus and the private reproduction of the producers themselves. The workers, unlike the slaves, are their 'own property': they continue to exist only if they take care of their own upkeep. If wages are too low, or if their services are no longer needed, workers are 'free' to survive by other means (as long as those means are legal). The reproduction of the workers is thus emphatically not the responsibility of the capitalist. However, unlike the vassals, the workers can take care of their own upkeep only if they return to the labor market, again and again, to find work. Here is the essence of the capital-labor relation. What the workers earn for socially performed production in the public realm, they must spend in order to reproduce themselves domestically in their own private sphere. The binaries of public/private and social/domestic are embodied in the wage-relation itself. Indeed, these binaries will only collapse with the end of capitalism.

For if the capitalists were directly responsible for workers' survival – and thus if their reproduction were removed from the private sphere – then the workers would no longer be compelled to sell their labor-power. The existence of a separate, domestic sphere of reproduction (where little production takes place unmediated by commodities purchased on the market) is constitutive of capitalist social relations as such. Social activity separates out from domestic activity as the market becomes the mediating mechanism of concrete social labor performed outside of the home. Production for exchange, which was formerly performed inside the home, increasingly leaves the home to be performed elsewhere. At this point the public/ private distinction takes on a spatial dimension. The home becomes the sphere of private activity – that is, women's domestic labor and men's 'free time' – while the factory takes charge of the public, socially productive character of men's work.

Of course, women have also always been wage laborers, alongside men, for as long as capitalism has existed. For TC, the gendered nature of women's domestic work determines that their work, even when performed outside of the home, remains merely women's work. It remains, that is to say, wage labor of a particular sort, namely unproductive or else low value-added labor. Women tend to work in part-time, low-wage jobs, particularly in services (though of course today, there are at least some women in all sectors of the economy, including among the highest paid professionals). Women often perform domestic services in other people's homes, or else in their offices and airplanes. When women work in factories, they are segregated into labor-intensive jobs requiring delicate hand-work, particularly in textiles, apparel and electronics assembly. Likewise, work done in the home remains women's work, even if men perform it – which, largely, they do not.

In this sense, once gender becomes embodied in the wage-relation as a binary public/private relation, TC cease to theorize its ground in the role that women play in sexual reproduction. The fact that women's work is of a particular character outside the home is merely true by analogy to the character of the work they perform in the home. It bears no relation to the material ground of women's role in sexual reproduction, and in that sense, it is more or less ideological. By the same token, TC increasingly define the work that women do in the home by its character as the daily reproductive labor performed necessarily outside of the sphere of production – and not by relation to the role that women play in childbirth, as the 'principal force of production'. If, within the capitalist mode of production, women are and have always been both wage-laborers and domestic laborers, why do they remain almost entirely female? As TC begin to discuss capitalism, they phase out their focus on sexual reproduction, which

⁸³ Ellen Meiksins Wood, 'Capitalism and Human Emancipation', *New Left Review* 1/167 (Jan-Feb 1988): 3–20.

disappears under a materially unfounded conception of domestic labor (though their references to biology return later, as we will see).

This oversight is a serious mistake. The sexual segregation of work in the capitalist mode of production is directly related to the temporality of a woman's life: as the bearer of children, the main source of their nourishment at young ages (breastfeeding), and their primary caretakers through puberty. Over the long history of capitalism, women's participation in the labor market has followed a distinct 'M-shaped' curve⁸⁴. Participation rises rapidly as women enter adulthood, then drops as women enter their late 20s and early 30s. Participation slowly rises again as women enter their late 40s before dropping off at retirement ages. The reasons for this pattern are well known. Young women look for full-time work, but with the expectation that they will either stop working or work part-time when they have children. When women enter childbearing years, their participation in the labor force declines. Women who continue to work while their children are young are among the poorer proletarians and are super-exploited: unmarried mothers, widows and divorcées, or women whose husbands' incomes are low or unreliable. As children get older, more and more women return to the labor market (or move to full-time work), but at a distinct disadvantage in terms of skills and length of employment, at least as compared to the men with whom they compete for jobs⁸⁵.

For all these reasons, capitalist economies have always had a special 'place' for women workers, as workers either not expected to remain on the job for very long or else as older, late entrants or re-entrants into the labor force. Beyond that, women form an important component of what Marx calls the 'latent' reserve army of labor, expected to enter and leaving the workforce according to the cyclical needs of the capitalist enterprises. The existence of a distinctive place for women in the labor force then reinforces a society-wide commitment to an ideology about women's natural place, both in the home and at work. Even when both men and women work, men typically (at least until recently) earn higher wages and work longer hours outside the home. There thus remains a strong pressure on women, insofar as they are materially dependent on their husbands, to accept their subordination: to not 'push too hard'⁸⁶ on questions of the sexual division of labor within the home. Historically, this pressure was compounded by the fact that women were, until after World War II, de facto if not de jure excluded from many forms of property ownership, making them reliant on men as mediators of their relation to capital. Therefore, women did not possess the juridical freedoms that male proletarians won for themselves – and not for their women. Women were not truly 'free' labor in relation to the market and the state, as were their male counterparts.¹⁹⁸

II. The Destruction of the Category 'Woman' Though

TC fail to explain the ground of the construction of women in capitalism, they do have a provocative theory of how women's situation within capitalism changes according to the unfolding contradictions of that mode of production. 'Capitalism has a problem with women' because, in the present period, the capital-labor relation cannot accommodate the continued growth of the labor force. As we have already noted, capital increasingly faces a large and growing surplus population, structurally excessive to its demands for labor. The appearance of this surplus population has coincided with a transformation in the way that capitalist states, the workers' movement, and also feminists have viewed women as the 'principal productive force'. In an earlier moment birth-rates declined precipitously in Europe and the former European settler-colonies. The response was 'pro-natalism'. Civilization supposedly faced imminent degeneration, since women were no longer fulfilling their duty to the nation; they had to be encouraged back into it. By the 1920s, even feminists became increasingly pro-natalist, turning maternalism into an explanation for women's 'equal but different' dignity as compared to men. By the

⁸⁴ The term comes from Japan, see Makoto Itoh, *The Japanese Economy Reconsidered* (Palgrave 2000).

⁸⁵ Johanna Brenner and Maria Ramas, 'Rethinking Women's Oppression', *New Left Review* I/144 (Mar-Apr 1984): 33–71.

⁸⁶ Johanna Brenner and Maria Ramas, 'Rethinking Women's Oppression', *New Left Review* I/144 (Mar-Apr 1984): 33–71.

1970s, however – as the population of poor countries exploded while the capitalist economy entered into a protracted crisis – maternalism was largely dead. The world was overpopulated with respect to the demand for labor. Women were no longer needed in their role as women. The ‘special dignity’ of their subordinate role was no longer dignified at all.

However, that is only half the story. The other half is to be found in the history of the demographic transition itself, which TC fail to consider. In the course of its early development, capitalism increased workers’ consumption and thereby improved their health, reducing infant mortality. Falling infant mortality in turn reduced the number of children that each woman had to have in order to reproduce the species. At first, this transformation appeared as an increase in the number of surviving children per woman and a rapid growth of the population. Thus, the spread of capitalist social relations was everywhere associated with an increase in women’s reproductive burden. However with time, and now in almost every region of the world, there has been a subsequent reduction, both in the number of children each woman has and in the number of children who subsequently survive infancy and early childhood. Simultaneously, as both men and women live longer, less of women’s lifetimes are spent either having or caring for young children. The importance of these facts cannot be overestimated. They explain why, in our period, the straight-jacket of the heterosexual matrix has had its buckles slightly loosened, for men as well as women (and even, to a small extent, for those who fit neither the categories of gender distinction, nor those of sexual difference)⁸⁷.

As with everything else in capitalism, the ‘freedom’ that women have won (or are winning) from their reproductive fate has not been replaced with free-time, but with other forms of work. Women’s supposed entrance into the labor force was always actually an increase in the time and duration of women’s already existing participation in wage-work. But now, since women are everywhere spending less time in childbirth and child-rearing, there has been a reduction in the M-shaped nature of their participation in labor-markets. Women’s situation is thus increasingly split between, on the one hand, the diminishing but still heavy burden of childbearing and domestic work, and on the other hand, the increasingly primary role in their lives of wage-work – within which they remain, however, disadvantaged. As all women know, this situation expresses itself as a forced choice between the promise a working life supposedly equal to men and the pressure, as well as the desire, to have children. That some women choose not to have children at all – and thus to solve this dilemma for themselves, however inadequately – is the only possible explanation of the fall in the birth rate below what is predicted by demographic transition theory. Fertility is now as low as 1.2 children per woman in Italy and Japan; almost everywhere else in the West it has fallen below 2. In the world as a whole, fertility has fallen from 6 children per woman in 1950 to around 2.5 today.

In this situation, it becomes increasingly clear that women have a problem with markets, since markets are incompatible with women. This incompatibility comes down to two facts about the capitalist mode of production. First, capital cannot, if it is to remain capital, take direct responsibility for the reproduction of the working class. It is because workers are responsible for their own upkeep that they are forced to return, again and again, to the labor market. At the same time, labor markets, if they are to remain markets, must be ‘sex-blind’⁸⁸. Markets have to evaluate the competition between workers without regard to any non-market characteristics of the workers themselves. These non-market characteristics include the fact that half of all of humanity is sexed female. For some employers, sexual difference cannot but appear as an additional cost. Women workers are able to bear children and thus cannot be relied on not to have children. For other employers, sexual difference appears as a benefit for precisely the same reason: women provide flexible, cheap labor. Women are thus relegated by capitalist relations – precisely because markets are sex-blind – to women’s wage-work.

⁸⁷ For a more developed theory of women’s relation to property, see ‘Notes on the New Housing Question’, Endnotes 2 (2010): 52–66, <http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/3>. The ground of this loosening, as well as its timing, has remained inexplicable within the bounds of queer theory.

⁸⁸ Brenner and Ramas, ‘Rethinking Women’s Oppression’.

This incompatibility of women and markets has plagued the women's movement. Feminism historically accepted the gendered nature of social life, since it was only through gender that women could affirm their identity as women in order to organize on that basis. This affirmation became a problem for the movement historically, since it is impossible to fully reconcile gender – the very existence of women and men – with the simultaneous existence of the working class and capital⁸⁹. As a result, the women's movement has swung back and forth between two positions⁹⁰. On the one hand, women fought for equality on the basis of their fundamental sameness with respect to men. But whatever the similarity of their aptitudes, women and men are not and never will be the same for capital. On the other hand, women have fought for equality on the basis of their 'difference but equal dignity' to men. But that difference, here made explicit as motherhood, is precisely the reason for women's subordinate role.

The workers' movement promised to reconcile women and workers beyond, or at least behind the back of, the market. After all, the founding texts of German Social Democracy, in addition to Marx's *Capital*, were Engels' *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*. Through struggle, the workers' movement promised to bring women out of the home and into the workforce, where they would finally become the true equals of men. In order to achieve this real equality, the workers movement would socialize women's reproductive work 'after the revolution'. Both housework and childcare would be performed collectively by men and women together. As it became clear to the most extreme elements of the Radical Feminist movement in the 1970s, these measures would never suffice to actually ensure 'real equality' between men and women workers. The only possibility of achieving an equality of workers, at the intersecting limit of both gender and labor, would be if babies were born in test-tubes, finally having nothing to do with women at all⁹¹.

In fact, the workers' movement betrayed its women as soon as it had the chance. Whenever they came close to power, male workers were fully willing to demonstrate their capacity to manage the economy by showing that they, too, knew how to keep women in their place. In the British Communist Party, freeing husbands from domestic work was the main task of women's 'party work'⁹². How could it have been otherwise? Within a world defined by work – or more precisely, by productive labor (a category of capitalism) – women would always be less than men. The attempt to 'raise' women to the equals of men was always a matter of adjusting a 'universally' relevant movement of workers to fit the 'particular' needs of its women. The attempt to do so, within the bounds of capitalism, amounted to a minimal socialization of childcare, as well as the institution of a minimal set of laws protecting women from their disadvantages in markets (that is to say, maternity leave, etc). Workers' movements could have gone further along this road. They could have made women more of a priority than they did. But the fact is that they did not. And now, it's over.

The death of the workers' movement has been considered in other texts⁹³. Its death marks also the passage from one historical form of revolution to another. Today, the presence of women within the class struggle can only function as a rift (*l'ecart*), a deviation in the class conflict that destabilizes its terms. That struggle cannot be their struggle, even if, in any given case, they form the majority of the participants. For as long as proletarians continue to act as a class, the women among them cannot but lose. In the course of struggle, women will, therefore, come into conflict with men. They will be criticized for derailing the movement, for diverting it from its primary goals. But the 'goal' of the struggle lies

⁸⁹ In this sense, we are of course interested only in the history of women's situation within the workers' movement. Bourgeois suffragettes argued for property-based voting qualifications – thus excluding women as class enemies. By the middle of the twentieth century, these same bourgeois became defenders of women's maternal role – at the same time as they founded organizations to control the bodies of women among the 'dangerous classes'.

⁹⁰ Joan W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁹¹ Radical feminism followed a curious trajectory in the second half of the 20th century, taking first childbearing, then domestic work, and finally sexual violence (or the male orgasm) as the ground of women's oppression. The problem was that in each case, these feminists sought an ahistorical ground for what had become an historical phenomenon.

⁹² On the history of women's situation within the workers' movement, see Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁹³ *Théorie Communiste*, 'Much Ado about Nothing', Endnotes 1 (2008), <http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/13>.

elsewhere. It is only from within this (and other) conflicts that the proletariat will come to see its class belonging as an external constraint, an impasse which it will have to overcome in order to be anything at all beyond its relation to capital. That overcoming is only the revolution as communization, which destroys gender and all the other divisions that come between us.

15. Guerilla Open Access Manifesto

Deleted reason: i can see the light, but not taking me there

Author: Aaron Swartz

Topics: civil disobedience, copyright, hacktivism

Date: July 2008, Eremo, Italy

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Information is power. But like all power, there are those who want to keep it for themselves. The world's entire scientific and cultural heritage, published over centuries in books and journals, is increasingly being digitized and locked up by a handful of private corporations. Want to read the papers featuring the most famous results of the sciences? You'll need to send enormous amounts to publishers like Reed Elsevier.

There are those struggling to change this. The Open Access Movement has fought valiantly to ensure that scientists do not sign their copyrights away but instead ensure their work is published on the Internet, under terms that allow anyone to access it. But even under the best scenarios, their work will only apply to things published in the future. Everything up until now will have been lost.

That is too high a price to pay. Forcing academics to pay money to read the work of their colleagues? Scanning entire libraries but only allowing the folks at Google to read them? Providing scientific articles to those at elite universities in the First World, but not to children in the Global South? It's outrageous and unacceptable.

"I agree," many say, "but what can we do? The companies hold the copyrights, they make enormous amounts of money by charging for access, and it's perfectly legal — there's nothing we can do to stop them." But there is something we can, something that's already being done: we can fight back.

Those with access to these resources — students, librarians, scientists — you have been given a privilege. You get to feed at this banquet of knowledge while the rest of the world is locked out. But you need not — indeed, morally, you cannot — keep this privilege for yourselves. You have a duty to share it with the world. And you have: trading passwords with colleagues, filling download requests for friends.

Meanwhile, those who have been locked out are not standing idly by. You have been sneaking through holes and climbing over fences, liberating the information locked up by the publishers and sharing them with your friends.

But all of this action goes on in the dark, hidden underground. It's called stealing or piracy, as if sharing a wealth of knowledge were the moral equivalent of plundering a ship and murdering its crew. But sharing isn't immoral — it's a moral imperative. Only those blinded by greed would refuse to let a friend make a copy.

Large corporations, of course, are blinded by greed. The laws under which they operate require it — their shareholders would revolt at anything less. And the politicians they have bought off back them, passing laws giving them the exclusive power to decide who can make copies.

There is no justice in following unjust laws. It's time to come into the light and, in the grand tradition of civil disobedience, declare our opposition to this private theft of public culture.

We need to take information, wherever it is stored, make our copies and share them with the world. We need to take stuff that's out of copyright and add it to the archive. We need to buy secret databases and put them on the Web. We need to download scientific journals and upload them to file sharing networks. We need to fight for Guerilla Open Access.

With enough of us, around the world, we'll not just send a strong message opposing the privatization of knowledge — we'll make it a thing of the past. Will you join us?

16. Economic Battle

Deleted reason: accidentally published, pending review
Author: Andrew Klemenčič
Topics: praxis
Date: October 1906
Source: Proletarec, Vol. 1 No. 1
Notes: translated by CarniolanLeshy

“What are the reasons?”, asks fellow citizen J. Z-k in issue 8 of Proletarec [“Proletarian” in Slovenian, name of this newspaper], looking at the Austrian proletariat’s battle with the Austrian bureaucracy.

Comrade Z-k says in his article, that the Austrian proletariat is getting ready for a general strike for the right to vote, and asks “why only for the right to vote?”

My answer is short and goes as follows: It is only for the right to vote, because the socialist politicians and leaders of socialist parties are hungry for the state’s mercy and jobs, uncaring for the suffering and starvation of those without education and no job.

Anyone who still remembers the demonstrations for socialism in Ljubljana and Trieste in 1879 and the following four or five years, can tell you today that our agitation was purely on economic-revolutionary grounds, influenced by [Die] Zukunft [German social-democratic newspaper, 1892–1923] from Vienna and Freiheit [German anarchist newspaper, founded by Johann Most, 1879–1910] from London and various fliers from Geneva, printed in the Italian language.

Ivan Brozovič, a tailor in Ljubljana, was an especially dedicated proponent of workers’ organization under the principle that workers claim what they deem right by way of strikes, meaning, every worker has the right to what they produce or grow. There is power in unity.

The battle on economic grounds is reliable—positive; and because such a battle is simple, everyone knows what their rights are and what to demand from the masters.

Even back in those days, there was already talk of a general strike and of a social revolution, if the masters refuse to give in to our demands.

We did not want to hear anything about German social democracy, as the tendencies of Bebel, Liebknecht, Kautsky, Adler, and others have been solely political and metaphysical, and therefore negative and focused on despotism and quarrel—an excess of empty words.

A worker knows what potatoes, bread, housing, clothes, meat, wine, etc. are, that is all positive, so let’s organize and seize the abundance of the world, created through our labor and diligence. All that is clear.

But with politics and religion, it is different. German social democrats have introduced a minimum-maximum program, which it is both, i.e. nothing, as German workers are still in as miserable a position as they were 35 years ago, when their social democrats only had a couple thousand votes, and now they have 3 million. Why is this? Because the person who goes to vote for another, forsakes his own right and hands it to whoever they voted for. And the person elected into political power cannot represent the interests of all those who voted for them. Regardless of how fair, honest, and devoted to the power of the people they are, they will, because of this inability, start to represent only that which pays off. This, in turn, creates speculative tendencies in the politician, which only fortify with time and eventually overcome all ideals regarding the good of the people. What remains is only the professional title of the people’s representative, whose only interest becomes staying in power. All this is called bargaining by vote.

In the years 1885–1886, the Austrian government had started to suppress us and our best people had to flee the land, or else be imprisoned, because they were socialists. That is what happened to Mauro, Slejko, Petrič, as well as me, and our Delavski list [Slovenian newspaper], which we were releasing in Trieste from 1889 to 1890, was suppressed.

And so the things “developed” in a different way and now we have Slovenian socialist politicians, *professionale par excellence*, who walk in “German boots” and they have organized a “party” in the last years of the previous century. But I hope that today, there’s an even greater number of experienced people with integrity within the party, who are asking themselves: why not hold a general strike to take back all that the exploiters have daily been stealing from us for millennia in the name of law?

A couple of years ago, weavers and miners almost won with a general strike, but the socialist leaders and politicians swayed the workers to return, without any gain and on old conditions, to their yoke of servitude, back into the hands of the capitalists.

In French workers’ circles, it is very different in this regard. In their syndicates, worker cooperatives and unions, the state and voting are their least concern. For the first of May, the [French] workers staged a great agitation for an 8-hour workday and other changes for the benefit of the proletarians. The result of the agitation was immediate, namely, in places where the workers were brave and well organized, they won, but in places where socialist politics blooms, such as in northern France, the workers were deceived by their own city, regional, and national representatives. And this ugly, dirty backstabbery is being attempted to be implemented in the workers’ congress of Amiens taking place from 14th to 18th of October this year [1906, congress of the CGT in Amiens, a major French trade union, dominated by anarcho-syndicalists, where it was at that point overwhelmingly reaffirmed to not associate with any political parties]. French politicians want to imitate the German ones, but I hope they fail in their endeavors, trying to implement changes and pass laws, which mean nothing to the proletarian and don’t really change anything.

Because of all that, I recommend to all my comrades to take an interest in economic-industrial organizations, which do represent our interests and also successfully defend them.

“Industrial Workers of the World” (“Svetovna zveza industrijskih delavcev” [Slovenian translation of the name]) is a proletarian organization, which was founded last June and which represents the whole ideal of the first Slovene socialists [i.e. like those the author previously mentioned were exiled from Slovenian lands by the Austro-Hungarian authorities for being socialists]. Of course, we must not forget that every organization and association is only what we make of it, so we must agitate and motivate our friends to, each by their own means, spread basic [revolutionary] economic teachings and our rights and to join the IWW or Western Federation of Miners, which are one and the same. Let’s get to work; we may be representing a small nation [Slovenes], but let’s do our best to spread our power and connections, so that we’ll get the recognition of the broader proletariat in our fight for universal well-being of everyone.

A. Klemenčič

17. 'Human Rights' and the Discontinuous Mind

Deleted reason: Discussion pending

Author: Anonymous

Authors: Anonymous

Topics: anthropocentrism, anti-civilisation, biology, evolution, human rights, science

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Modern language is loaded with hidden cultural assumptions, biases, and projections of value. A given language or dialect betrays the underlying edifice on which its social structures are based. These hidden assumptions include our own prejudices, values, and moral judgements; forming the self-reinforcing jigsaw of our worldview. For example, if we long to increase our lifespans, then breakthroughs in medical research to combat aging become desirable — more efficient medicine is ‘better’ medicine; likewise, if we believe that spending less time travelling from A to B is inherently a good thing, then a faster route automatically becomes a ‘preferred’ route.

A good analogy might be a three-dimensional web of interconnected relations in which certain ideas precede, follow from, and depend upon each other for support. In the case of medical research, say, the sort of language we use springs mainly from a fear of death and disease. But it also reinforces and contributes to this fear (as well as to an obsession with the passing of time, a strife for self-preservation, and so on, *ad nauseum*).

Some of the assumptions borne by our language play a meaningful role — for instance, the idea that rape is evil precedes most of our dialogue on the topic. Most would agree that this is a good thing. Other cases might be less clearcut, but in general, we could say that the greater the potential for suffering or harm resulting from a particular idea, the more attention we should pay to the assumptions of our language around it.

Take the almost ubiquitous cultural assumption that humans deserve an exalted status above other living beings. Arguments for the equality of a particular group of people often take the form of a case to establish the ‘human rights’ of that group. Such rights, by definition limited to members of our own species, hold a very powerful sway in popular thought. Socialists, feminists, gay rights activists, secularists and other such campaigners award a primacy and value to these rights: successfully establishing something as a ‘human right’ is considered a crucial element of the fight to have it recognised or upheld.

Interestingly and importantly, campaign groups such as those listed above frequently attempt to raise consciousness of their own issues and agendas by questioning or objecting to popular turns of phrase; feminists deliberately use the pronoun ‘she’ instead of ‘he’, many secularists prefer not to be ‘blessed’ or to ‘thank god’, etc. Merely by altering popular language on a topic, an important aspect of liberation is achieved.

Similarly, the linguistic and conceptual deliniation between ‘human’ and ‘non-human’ rights directly affects our actions and attitudes towards other living beings. It is an offshoot of our collective anthropocentrism that allows us to justify our treatment of these species in a manner lesser to that of other human beings. One could be forgiven, then, for presuming that it is based upon sound, legitimate reasoning; as obvious as the wrongfulness of sexism or racial prejudice within our own species.

Yet this could not be further from the truth. By almost any measure, there is no conceivable warrant for our mindset towards other species. Scientifically, environmentally, and even practically speaking, we are railing against what is natural and right.

In his essay *Gaps in the Mind*, evolutionary theorist Richard Dawkins explains that species are neatly grouped and unique only from the conceited hindsight and perspective of our study.

It is we who choose to divide animals up into discontinuous species. On the evolutionary view of life there must have been intermediates, even though, conveniently for our naming rituals, they are usually extinct: usually, but not always.

He goes on to give an example to prove the point, referencing so-called 'ring species', which are loosely defined as a pair of species that can be seen to 'blend' into one another over geographical space. Intermediate forms still live — and interbreed — all along the gradient of change between these species. There is no point at which a herring gull 'becomes' a lesser black-backed gull, there is only a continuous line of forms connecting both varieties over geographical space and resembling them in different ways. They have clearly diverged over evolutionary time, but the intermediaries still live, and it would be ridiculous to regard any particular form as being 'superior' or more 'advanced'; each thrives within its own space and its own environment.

Dawkins relates this to the taxonomic position of humans:

The word 'apes' usually means chimpanzees, gorillas, orang-utans, gibbons and siamangs. We admit that we are like apes, but we seldom realise that we *are* apes. Our common ancestor with the chimpanzees and gorillas is much more recent than their common ancestor with the Asian apes — the gibbons and orang-utans. There is no natural category that includes chimpanzees, gorillas and orang-utans but excludes humans.

He concludes:

It is sheer luck that this handful of intermediates [between humans and chimpanzees] no longer exists. ('Luck' from some points of view: for myself, I should love to meet them.) But for this chance, our laws and our morals would be very different. We need only discover a single survivor, say a relict *Australopithecus* in the Budongo Forest, and our precious system of norms and ethics would come crashing about our ears. The boundaries with which we segregate our world would be all shot to pieces. Racism would blur with speciesism in obdurate and vicious confusion. Apartheid, for those that believe in it, would assume a new and perhaps a more urgent import.

From the perspective of our science, then, the concept of a 'human right' holds little water. If only the chain of intermediate forms between humans and chimpanzees still survived and interbred, the absurdity of our attempts to implement such a notion would be all too apparent (and so on through the intermediaries with ancestral gorillas, etc.). How ironic it is, then, that vast swathes of those who so indignantly proclaim the need to protect 'human rights' are the very same people who believe themselves to be the most rational and scientific!

When we fully recognise that all living species are wholly interrelated, both in ancestral terms and through a single, shared, livable planet, we come to see other species not as objects of utility but as deserving of respect. They form a facet of the environment from which we are inseparable. As Charles Eisenstein puts it in *The Ascent of Humanity*, "any attempt to divorce a rational society or a rational life from the organic supporting matrix where it belongs requires tremendous effort and incurs tremendous danger. Such a life or society is tenuous, fragile, and short-lived. It cannot exist for long without reconnecting to the wellspring of life."

It is in this light that we should seek to review and reform our perspectives, our thought and our language, regarding humans and other species. It is not — and has never been — a case of 'us and them', but a unified whole of which we are all a necessary part.

**18. Chile: Anatomy of an economic
miracle, 1970–1986**

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Author: Black Flag

Topics: Black Flag, Chile, 1973, neoliberalism

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Anatomy of an Economic Miracle

With the arrest of General Pinochet, the usual slime of the right pronounced that his dictatorship created an economic “miracle.” We will ignore the “ends justify the means” argument along with the question of why these defenders of “liberty” desire to protect a dictator and praise his regime. Here we concentrate on the facts of the “miracle” imposed on the Chilean people.

The actual results of the free market policies introduced by the dictatorship were far less than the “miracle” claimed by the right. The initial effects of introducing free market policies in 1975 was a shock-induced depression which resulted in national output falling by 15 percent, wages sliding to one-third below their 1970 level and unemployment rising to 20 percent. This meant that, in per capita terms, Chile’s GDP only increased by 1.5% per year between 1974–80. This was considerably less than the 2.3% achieved in the 1960’s.

Supporters of the “miracle” pointed to the period 1978 to 1981, when the economy grew at 6.6 percent a year. However, this is a case of “lies, damn lies, and statistics” as it does not take into account the catching up an economy goes through as it leaves a recession. If we look at whole business cycle, rather than for the upturn, we find that Chile had the second worst rate of growth in Latin America between 1975 and 1980. The average growth in GDP was 1.5% per year between 1974 and 1982, which was lower than the average Latin American growth rate of 4.3% and lower than the 4.5% of Chile in the 1960’s. Between 1970 and 1980, per capita GDP grew by only 8%, while for Latin America as a whole, it increased by 40% and for the years 1980 and 1982 per capita GDP fell by 12.9 percent, compared to a fall of 4.3 percent for Latin America as a whole. In 1982, after 7 years of free market capitalism, Chile faced yet another economic crisis which, in terms of unemployment and falling GDP was even greater than that experienced during the terrible shock treatment of 1975. Real wages dropped sharply, falling in 1983 to 14 percent below what they had been in 1970. Bankruptcies skyrocketed, as did foreign debt. By the end of 1986 Gross Domestic Product per capita barely equalled that of 1970. Between 1970 and 1989, Chile total GDP grew by a lackluster 1.8 to 2.0% a year, slower than most Latin American countries. The high growth, in other words, was a product of the deep recessions that the regime created and, overall, 20 years of free market miracle had .

The working class

By far the hardest group affected by the Pinochet “reforms” was the working class, particularly the urban working class. By 1976, the third year of Junta rule, real wages had fallen to 35% below their 1970 level. It was only by 1981 that they had risen to 97.3% of the 1970 level, only to fall again to 86.7% by 1983. Unemployment, excluding those on state make-work programmes, was 14.8% in 1976, falling to 11.8% by 1980 (this is still double the average 1960’s level) only to rise to 20.3% by 1982. By 1986, per capita consumption was actually 11% lower than the 1970 level. Between 1980 and 1988, the real value of wages grew only 1.2 percent while the real value of the minimum wage declined by 28.5

percent. During this period, urban unemployment averaged 15.3 percent per year. In other words, after nearly 15 years of free market capitalism, real wages had still not exceeded their 1970 levels. Moreover, labour's share in the national income fell from 52.3% to 30.7% between 1970 and 1989. In 1995, real wages were still 10% lower than in 1986 and 18% lower than during the Allende period!

The real “Miracle”

However, the other main effect of the Pinochet years was the increased wealth of the elite, and for this that it has been claimed as a “miracle.” Between 1970, the richest 10% of the population saw their share in the national income rise from 36.5% in 1980 to 46.8% by 1989 (the bottom 50% saw their share fall from 20.4 to 16.8%). In the words of one of the best known opposition economists, “the Chilean system is easy to understand. Over the past twenty years \$60 billion has been transferred from salaries to profits.”

Thus the wealth created by the economic growth Chile experienced did *not* “trickle down” to the working class (as claimed would happen by “free market” capitalist dogma) but instead accumulated in the hands of the rich. Just as it did not in the UK and the USA.

The proportion of the population below the poverty line (the minimum income required for basic food and housing) increased from 20% to 44.4%. On the other hand, while consumption for 80% of Chilean households dropped between 1970 and 1989, it rose from 44.5% to 54.6% for the richest 20% (the poorest 20% suffered the worse drop, from 7.6% to 4.4%, followed by the next 20%, from 11.8% to 8.2%, then the next 20%, 15.6% to 12.7%).

State Aid

The Pinochet's regime support for “free market” capitalism did not prevent it organising a massive bail-out of the economy during the 1982 recession — yet another example of market discipline for the working class, welfare for the rich. As was the case in the USA and the UK.

The ready police repression (and “unofficial” death squads) made strikes and other forms of protest both impractical and dangerous. The law was also changed to reflect the power property owners have over their wage slaves and the total overhaul of the labour law system which took place between 1979 and 1981 aimed at creating a perfect labour market, eliminating collective bargaining, allowing massive dismissal of workers, increasing the daily working hours up to twelve hours and eliminating the labour courts. Little wonder, then, that this favourable climate for business operations resulted in generous lending by international finance institutions.

Of course, the supporters of the Chilean “Miracle” and its “economic liberty” did not bother to question how the suppression of political liberty effected the economy or how people acted within it. They maintained that the repression of labour, the death squads, the fear installed in rebel workers would be ignored when looking at the economy. But in the real world, people will put up with a lot more if they face the barrel of a gun than if they do not. And this fact explains much of the Chilean “miracle.” According to Sergio de Castro, the architect of the economic programme Pinochet imposed, dictatorship was required to introduce “economic liberty” because:

“it provided a lasting regime; it gave the authorities a degree of efficiency that it was not possible to obtain in a democratic regime; and it made possible the application of a model developed by experts and that did not depend upon the social reactions produced by its implementation.”

In other words, “economic liberty” required rule by technocrats and the military. The regime's pet “experts” used the Chilean people like laboratory rats in an experiment to make the rich richer. This is

the system held up by the right as a “miracle” and an example of “economic liberty.” Like the “economic miracle” created by Thatcher, we discover a sharp difference between the facts and the rhetoric. And like Thatcher’s regime, it made the rich richer and the poor poorer, a true “miracle.”

So, for all but the tiny elite at the top, the Pinochet regime of “economic liberty” was a nightmare. Economic “liberty” only seemed to benefit one group in society, an obvious “miracle.” For the vast majority, the “miracle” of economic “liberty” resulted, as it usually does, in increased poverty, unemployment, pollution, crime and social alienation. The irony is that many on the right point to it as a model of the benefits of the free market.

19. Ableism at the Anarchy Fair

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Author: Anonymous

Authors: Anonymous

Topics: COVID-19, pandemic, bookfair, ableism, communicate

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On November 25th 2023, a small group of disabled trans anti-eugenicists confronted a festival of ableist violence in so called “Portland, Oregon”. This was done against libertarians posing as anarchists whom avoid taking responsibility for the violence they have perpetrated by spreading SARS-CoV-2 and its strains without mitigation. Their violence follows the logic of settlers who unleashed smallpox on the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.

The fake anarchists who organized this festival have published a statement supporting the continuation of the COVID genocide through promoting anti-masking rhetoric in a publication called *Anarchy Anarchy Anarchy!*. In this newspaper, they wrote that anti-ableists who wheat pasted demands of leftist spaces to require masks are the equivalent of health cops and that mask requirements are “gulag as fuck”. These are in line with common talking points that fascists in this country make in support of the COVID genocide, claiming that mask and vaccine mandates are “authoritarian” even though they directly mitigate ableist violence. The millions dead and disabled from COVID show that refusing to mask is the real authoritarianism, because it makes space lethally inaccessible for disabled people and is killing & disabling marginalized people in mass unlike mask requirements.

This narrative also obscures the true role of the police as shock troopers for reproducing all systems of oppression. It ignores how police forces across the country & globally are responsible for pushing anti-masking practices & COVID denial in their own ranks. This violence functions as a further enforcement of genocide through their systemic power, such as exposing prisoners to COVID while withholding masks, tests & vaccines, leaving them to long term disabilities and in worst cases, death.

Our original intentions as a group were to go in, burn their ableist newspapers, make our statement at the firepit and leave, without creating bodily harm or fighting anyone. Yet upon collecting the materials we were dog piled, beaten and swung at. This forced us to respond in self defense, resulting in at least two anti-maskers getting directly damaged by our attacks. The way these reactionaries resorted to bashing the disabled trans women whom confronted their anti-masking rhetoric does not compare to the lethal violence of their willing spread of COVID. Yet we found it hypocritical that the TERFs who invaded town on 11/19/2023 and many local fascists were beaten less hard than what disabled trans women received for calling out ableism in this “anarchist” space, as unfortunately TERFs and local fascist rarely are inflicted the brutal retaliation they deserve here. We believe this intense reaction against vocal disabled trans people reveal the fascist taint in these “anarchist” anti-maskers, who rarely enact that level of violence onto other right wingers. We urge people to deplatform their crypto-fascist newspaper and these ableist talking points everywhere.

We also call for people to create space to grieve the ongoing losses & deaths from the COVID genocide, as state power & its organizational control continue to push its colonial legacy from our collective memory. From AIDS activists worldwide, to the antifascists who had fought against Pinochet, disrupting public spaces to create living sites of greiving against the ongoing violence can be a powerful act to end the silence which both obscures these deaths & benefits from their erasure. We believe that it is legitimate for people to force events like anarchy fair to be locations of grieving, so the violence is not ignored and the proud perpetrators are revealed.

We are proud of resisting the COVID genocide, because to remain passive in the face of violence, or to spend our time & efforts convincing committed ableists to stop the violence, only perpetuates the

reproduction of ableism. We will fight until all disabled people are liberated from the domination of ableism, and until the grip of white supremacy is destroyed by the fury of anti-colonial rebellion! We know that only in direct conflict will hierarchy begin to crumble.

For the destruction of all oppression! Long live the struggle for the liberation of disabled people!
LONG LIVE ANARCHY!!!!!!

20. Think for Yourself, Question Authority

Deleted reason: to the bin for now, pending further review

Author: Arno Ruthofer

Topics: accelerationism, artificial intelligence, chaos, computers, counterculture, cybernetics, death, democracy, drugs, futurism, futurist, Genetic Engineering, Internet, nanotechnology, quantum physics, religion, space, spirituality, technology, transhumanism, Timothy Leary

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Introduction

psychedelic “Psychedelic” – coming from the Greek “psyche”(soul) and “delein,” to make manifest, or “deloun,” to show, reveal – was first proposed in 1956 by [Humphry] Osmond [...] to describe the effects of mind-altering drugs like mescaline and LSD. (Peter Stafford)¹

[...] a psychedelic drug is one which, without causing physical addiction, craving, major psychological disturbances, delirium, disorientation, or amnesia, more or less reliably produces thought, mood, and perceptual changes otherwise rarely experienced except in dreams, contemplative and religious exaltation, flashes of vivid involuntary memory, and acute psychoses. (Lester Grinspoon and James B. Bakalar)²

cybernetic(s) Norbert Wiener, in 1948, invented the term “cybernetics” to describe control [and communication] systems using computers. Since then the prefix cyber is used in connection with robots and computers: cybersex, cyberfeminsim, cyberpunk [...]. (Joanna Buick and Zoran Jevtic)³

cyberspace [William] Gibson invented the word cyberspace in *Neuromancer*, describing it with these phrases: “A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding.” [Gibson’s] dream of literally “plugging in” to a computer via a jack that goes into the back of your head is still science fiction. The trend in the 90s is to try to get a “plugged-in” feeling simply by using very advanced sound and graphics displays. Thus Gibson’s “cyberspace” has permutated into today’s “virtual reality” [...]. (Rudy Rucker, R. U. Sirius, and Queen Mu)⁴

Many people know that Timothy Leary was an advocate of psychedelic drugs, especially LSD, which made him a cultfigure of the hippies. With his famous slogan “Turn on – Tune in – Drop out” Leary encouraged the young generation of the 60s to take psychedelic drugs and question authority. Not so many people know, however, that Leary reemerged in the 1980s as a spokesman of a new global counterculture called the cyberpunks and became one of the most energetic promoters of computers, virtual reality, and the Internet. “No magazine cover story on the [cyberpunk] phenomenon is complete without the septuagenarian Timothy Leary, admonishing readers to “turn on, boot up, jack in” and proclaiming that the “PC is the LSD of the 1990s,” writes cultural critic Mark Dery in *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century* (Dery 1996: 22).

In contrast to the hippies of the 60s who were decidedly anti-science and anti-technology, the cyberpunks of the 80s and 90s ecstatically embrace technology. They believe that technology (especially computers and the Internet) can help us to transcend all limits, that it can liberate us from authority and even enables us to transcend space, time, and body. Originally, the term “cyberpunk” was used to describe a subgenre of science fiction. Cyberpunk science fiction is primarily concerned with computers

¹ Stafford 1992: 4ff.

² quoted in Stafford 1992: 1

³ Buick 1995: 5

⁴ Rucker 1992: 78

and their interaction with humans. The first and most influential cyberpunk novel is William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (Gibson 1984, 1995). In *Neuromancer*, Gibson describes a world of outlaw computer hackers who are able to link up their brains to computer networks and operate in cyberspace. In the late 80s, Cyberpunk escaped from being a literary genre into cultural reality. Media philosopher R. U. Sirius describes this process as follows:

People started to call themselves cyberpunks, or the media started calling people cyberpunks. [...] The first people to identify themselves as cyberpunks were adolescent computer hackers who related to the street-hardened characters and the worlds created in the books of William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, John Shirley, and others. [...In 1988] cyberpunk hit the front page of the *New York Times* when some young computer kids were arrested for cracking a government computer file. The *Times* called these kids "cyberpunks." From there, the performers involved in the high-tech-oriented radical art movement generally known as "Industrial" started to call themselves – or be called — cyberpunks [...]. Finally, cyberpunk has come to be seen as a generic name for a much larger trend more or less describing anyone who relates to the cyberpunk vision" (Rucker 1992: 64).

Leary, who called himself a cyberpunk as well, believed that this cyberpunk vision of a world where all limits are transcended has already become reality. The "new world" that Leary means is cyberspace (virtual reality and – in a broader sense – all digitally mediated space), which he sees as a boundless reality where time, space and body are perceived as meaningless.

The question arises: Why did Leary's focus shift from psychedelic drugs to computers? At first sight psychedelics and computers seem to have nothing in common. From a (counter-)cultural point of view, they seem to be complete opposites. The hippies, for example, saw psychedelics as an antidote to technology which stereotypes our consciousness and desensitizes our perception. In the 60s, Leary himself was very much against computers. He saw them as devices that would merely increase the dependence of individuals on experts. As Leary put it: "[A]t that time, computers were mainframes that cost millions of dollars and were owned by Bell Telephone company, IBM, CIA, Department of Motor Vehicles – no friends of mine! So I had this prejudice that computers were things that stapled you and punched you and there were these monks, the few experts, who controlled it"(quoted in Rucker 1992: 84).

In the early 80s, however, when thanks to smaller size and cheaper prize computers became accessible to millions of people, Leary changed his attitude towards computers and realized that psychedelic drugs and computers actually have very much in common. He discovered that psychedelic drugs and personal computers "are simply two ways in which individuals have learned to take the power back from the state"(ibid.). Leary argues that both psychedelics and computers can help us to liberate ourselves from authority and "create our own realities." In the course of his long career as psychologist and counterculture philosopher Leary wrote more than thirty books (several of them more than 400 pages long) in which he offers us very elaborate theories — using concepts from the fields of psychology, neurobiology, ethology, quantum physics, cybernetics, and chaos theory — that explain how we can use psychedelic drugs and computers to escape the "narrow reality tunnels" that authorities force us to live in and create our own individual realities whose limits are determined only by the limits of our imagination.

What are those "narrow reality tunnels" Leary is talking about? According to Leary, we have been programmed by our parents, politicians, priests, and teachers to think and see the world the way they want us to think and see the world. For example, they programmed us to think in terms of dominance and submission so that for us it seems normal that there are a few who have power and create the rules while all the others are submissive, law-abiding citizens. Leary makes us aware that the models of reality the authorities are imposing on us are not reflections of an objective reality; they are just arbitrary constructions. What we accept as objective reality is actually a social fabrication, a construction of our

minds, that is, our nervous systems. Only if we are able to control our own nervous systems – which means that we know how our brains operate – would we be able to change the realities we live in. Leary describes his books as “manuals on the use of the human nervous system.” (Leary’s *Info-Psychology*, for example, is subtitled “A manual on the use of the human nervous system according to the instructions of the manufacturers.”) In his theories, Leary explains how we can use psychedelics and computers to “metaprogram” our “brain-software” (the categories through which we perceive the world, our overall cultural worldview, etc).

According to Leary, the hippies were the first generation in human history that knew how to “control their own nervous systems, change their own realities,” using psychedelic drugs to metaprogram their “bio-computers” (brains). In *The Politics of Ecstasy*, Leary writes that the hippies started an individual-freedom movement which is new to human history because “it is not based on geography, politics, class, or religion. *It has to do not with changes in the political structure*, nor in who controls the police, *but in the individual mind* [italics mine]”(PE 3). According to Leary, the individual-freedom revolution started by the hippies in the 60s was continued in the 80s by young people using cybernetic technology (computers, the Internet, TV, etc) to undermine authoritarian dogmatic social structures and create their own (digital) realities.⁵ Leary points out that this freedom movement — which has country by country, continent by continent, liberated much of the world in the last three decades (fall of the Berlin Wall, resignation of the hard-line regime in Czechoslovakia, etc) — would not have been possible without mind-expanding drugs and mind-linking electronic appliances accessible to individuals (cf. *ibid.*). In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary predicts that psychedelic drugs and computers will help this movement to create a post-political “cyber-society” that is based on individual freedom and Ecstasy — defined by Leary as “the experience of attaining freedom of limitations, self imposed or external”(PE 2). Leary backs his idea of the cyber-society with an interesting interpretation of chaos theory.

In this paper I am going to describe the development of Leary’s theories (how his focus shifted from psychedelics to computers) and discuss the impact Leary had on the psychedelic counterculture of the 60s (the hippies) and the cybernetic counterculture of the 80s and 90s (the cyberpunks and cyber-hippies). I want to compare Leary’s earlier theories, in which he praises LSD as the key to cosmic consciousness and sweeping societal change, to his later theories, in which he praises the computer as a tool of liberation and transcendence. This comparison will help me to show that that the hippies and the cyberpunks – who, at first sight, seem to have nothing in common except the fact that they are both countercultures (i.e., counter to the leading culture) — have much more in common than one would think. I will argue that the cyberpunks and cyber-hippies were strongly influenced by the transcendentalist ideas that prevailed in the 60s counterculture. (Although it is indebted to ideas of recent vintage such as chaos theory, the cyber-hippies’ techno-transcendentalism owes much to the 60s counterculture – specifically, to the ideas of 60s-cult-authors like Leary or Marshall McLuhan.) Another thing we will see when we examine Leary’s theories is that the hippies were not nearly as rural and anti-technological as some cultural critics argue. According to Leary, the hippies and the cyberpunks/cyber-hippies share the same aim (individual freedom, ecstasy); only the technologies the cyberpunks use to reach this aim are different ones.

There are several reasons why I decided to write this rather extensive paper on Leary: First of all, many cultural critics and media philosophers writing about countercultures (e.g., Theodore Roszak, Mark Dery, and Douglas Rushkoff) argue that Leary “exerted a significant influence on the youth culture of the 60s”(Roszak 1995: 164) and portray him as a leading figure of the “cyberdelic” (cybernetic-psychedelic) counterculture of the 90s (cf. Dery 1996: 22, cf. Rushkoff 1995: 49f.). None of them, however, gives a comprehensive overview of Leary’s theories which have influenced thousands of young people who read Leary’s books. I decided to give such an overview because I want to show that Leary has

⁵ It should be mentioned here that the cybernetic counterculture that Leary describes in his later works encompasses a cluster of subcultures, among them computer hackers, ravers, technopagans, and cyber-hippies (I will describe these subcultures in my discussion of cyberculture). Leary uses the generic term “cyberpunk” to describe all these subcultures because they all share the same vision: the cyberpunk vision of a world where space, time, and body are transcended – no limits, total freedom.

more to offer than a few catchphrases (like “turn on, tune in, drop out”). Furthermore, I think that an overview of Leary’s different theories can be very helpful to discover interesting connections between his early theories, in which he expresses the most important beliefs that prevailed in the apolitical wing of the 60s counterculture, and his later theories, which are a synthesis of the most important beliefs and ideas that prevail in the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s.

Another reason why I decided to write this paper on Leary is that in his theories Leary expresses a worldview that is becoming more and more important in science and philosophy, as well as in everyday life in our postmodern Information Society: the constructivist worldview. An old Talmudic saying perfectly describes this worldview in one single sentence: We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are. Paul Watzlawick, a leading exponent of the metatheory known as constructivism, explains this sentence as follows: “[J]ede Wirklichkeit [ist] im unmittelbaren Sinne die *Konstruktion* derer [...], die diese Wirklichkeit zu entdecken und erforschen *glauben*. Anders ausgedrückt: Das vermeintlich Gefundene ist ein *Erfundenes*, dessen Erfinder sich des Aktes seiner Erfindung nicht bewußt ist, sondern sie als Grundlage seines ‘Wissens’ und daher seines Handelns macht” (Watzlawick 1998: 9f.). Constructivists argue that humans impose order on their sensory experience of the outside world, rather than discern order from the world, and they create knowledge rather than discover it (cf. Spivey 1997: 3).

Many constructivists focus their attention on the metaphysical issue of the nature of reality, trying to answer the question to what extent humans can learn about and experience reality, or, put another way, to what extent we create our realities. In general, they point to the role of the observer in any observations that are made of the “world.” The quantum physicists (Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, Max Planck, et al) were the ones who, in the 1920s, introduced constructivist concepts to the world of physics. In contrast to Descartes and Newton who argued that the world is made up of a multitude of separate objects existing independently of the observer, the quantum physicists suggested that the universe is “a network of dynamic relationships that *include the human observer and his or her consciousness in an essential way* [italics mine]”(Capra 1982: 47). (I will explain this quotation in the chapter “The observer created universe”). Leary was very much influenced by the ideas of Einstein and Heisenberg. In practically all of his books he discusses the philosophical implications of quantum theory. In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, for example, he offers us a very bold interpretation of quantum theory which he uses to back his idea that computers enable us to create our own realities which, according to Leary, are as real as the so called material reality. However, the method that helped Leary to discover that “reality” is a construction of our minds was not quantum physics but psychedelics. Leary explains: “Since psychedelic drugs expose us to different levels of perception, and experience, use of them is ultimately a philosophic enterprise, compelling us to confront the nature of reality and the nature of our fragile, subjective belief systems. The contrast is what triggers the laughter, the terror. We discover abruptly that we have been programmed all these years, that everything we accepted as reality is just a social fabrication” (FB 33).

Another reason why I decided to write this paper on Leary is that I want to show that Leary was one of the founding fathers of cyberpunk. As early as 1973, Leary predicted that some day the world would be linked through an “electronic nervous system” (the Internet) and that computers could be used to empower the individual (cf. NP 45f.). In this paper, I want to make people aware of the fact that several important figures of the cybermovement (e.g., R. U. Sirius) were strongly influenced by Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory which Leary describes in *Neuropolitics* (Leary 1977), *Exo-Psychology* (Leary 1977), and *The Intelligence Agents* (Leary 1979).

As far as the organization of this paper is concerned, I choose to describe Leary’s different theories in chronological order because this is the best way to show how Leary’s focus shifted from drugs to computers. The first chapter is a short biography of Leary. I decided to include it because in my opinion we can never fully understand Leary’s theories if we do not know anything about his background (how a sober, buttoned up psychologist became a drug guru of the 60s counterculture, etc). In this biography, I will also shortly describe Leary’s revolutionary approach to psychotherapy which earned him a post at Harvard. (Leary’s humanistic approach to behavior change – he emphasized inner potential and personal

growth through self-reliance, so patients avoid dependence on authoritarian doctors and dogmas – is relevant to this paper because it helps me to show that Leary has always encouraged people to “think for themselves and question authority.”)

Thematically as well as chronologically, Leary’s theories can be categorized into three phases:

1. *The Politics of Ecstasy*/The Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness (the 60s)
2. Exo-Psychology (the 70s)
3. *Chaos and Cyberculture*/Quantum-Psychology (the 80s and 90s)

In chapter two, I will describe Leary’s Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness (a theory on psychedelic drugs and their effects on human consciousness) and examine the political, ethical, and philosophical implications of this theory. After describing this theory I will discuss Leary’s impact on the 60s counterculture.

Chapter three deals with Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory in which Leary encourages the hippies to let go of the flower-power-60s and find a way to live with technology. (According to Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory, technology has the potential to liberate us from all limits. Leary argues that psychedelics and other technologies enable us to decipher the DNA code, which is the key to immortality) After explaining the most important concepts of Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory, I will show that in this theory Leary laid the ideological foundation for the cybermovement of the 80s and 90s. I will argue that R. U. Sirius and Bruce Eisner, two leading figures of the cybermovement, were strongly influenced by Leary’s Exo-Psychology.

In chapter four, I will discuss the most important book that Leary wrote in the 90s, *Chaos and Cyberculture*, in which he conveys his vision of the emergence of a new humanism with an emphasis on questioning authority, independent thinking, individual creativity, and the empowerment of computers and other new technologies. In *Chaos and Cyberculture*, Leary gives voice to nearly all of cyberculture’s received truths, foremost among them the idea that “the basic elements of the universe are bits of (0/1) information,” which Leary tries to back with a bold interpretation of quantum physics (Leary’s Quantum Psychology theory). I will explain Leary’s concept of the “cyberpunk,” describe the philosophy that lies behind this term, and trace the origin of the term “cybernetics.” Furthermore, I will give an overview of Leary’s theory of the evolution of countercultures (the Beats, the hippies, the cyberpunks), present his explanation for the comeback of LSD in the 90s, and give an outline of Leary’s last book *Design for Dying*, in which Leary encourages us to design our deaths and predicts that soon computers and other new technologies will enable us to become immortal. (Leary’s prediction in *Design for Dying* that we will soon be able to download our brains into computers and exist as electronic life forms is a logical consequence of the assumption that the basic elements of the universe are bits of information. *Design for Dying* makes Leary’s Quantum Psychology theory complete.)

Chapter 4.6. is a comparison of Leary’s different theories. This comparison shows that all of Leary’s theories are based on the belief that science and technology can help us to attain freedom, enlightenment, and immortality. Leary has never been a technophobe, he has always believed in technology. The controversial Harvard psychologist was very well aware that he was “turning on the world” with a high-tech product (LSD), that “no counterculture Earth Mother gave us lysergic acid – it came from a Sandoz lab,” as cyberpunk novelist Bruce Sterling put it (Sterling 1986: xiii)

In chapter 4.7., I argue that Leary was a central figure in the cyberdelic (psychedelic-cybernetic) counterculture of the 90s and that, in his Quantum Psychology theory, Leary expresses the most important beliefs that prevail in this counterculture. I will trace the roots of the cyberdelic (cybernetic-psychedelic) counterculture of the 90s and critically discuss the most important ideas and beliefs that prevail in this counterculture by comparing two interesting analyses of the cyberdelic phenomenon: Douglas Rushkoff’s *Cyberia*, and Mark Dery’s *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*. This discussion shows that, from a countercultural point of view, the 90s are in many ways a return of

the 60s. (Leary is a perfect example for this return of the 60s. He was a cultfigure of the 60s counter-culture and he reemerged as an important spokesman of the cyberdelic counterculture of the 80s and 90s, encouraging people to “turn on, boot up, jack in.”) Furthermore, this discussion will help me to uncover the weak points of Leary’s Quantum psychology theory (his concepts of the cyber society and the “posthuman”). Criticizing Leary’s Quantum psychology theory, I will focus on the philosophy that this theory is based on (the notion that reality is an arbitrary construction, that we have chosen our reality arbitrarily).

In the final chapter, I will argue that Leary’s whole trip from psychedelics to computers to designer dying was to make people aware that they are capable of more than the appointed authorities would prefer to grant them. Leary’s advocacy of psychedelics and computers was to show that people are capable of taking charge of their own brains, hearts, and spirits. For me, Leary is the Socrates of the Inforamtion Age because he was one of the few philosophers in our age who carried on the Socratic tradition of teaching people to “think for themselves and question authority.” Many of Leary’s predictions concerning the impact of psychedelics and computers on our culture turned out to be wrong. Leary, however, did never feel embarrassed when one of his predictions turned out to be wrong because he did not want people to blindly believe what he said anyway. His aim was to teach people to “think for themselves and question authority,” his own authority included.

When reading this paper, keep in mind that Leary’s theories are based on the assumption the limits of our reality/-ies are determined by the limits of our imagination. As psychoanalyst, cyberneticist and psychedelic explorer John Lilly put it in *The Center of the Cyclone*,

In the province of the mind, what is believed to be true is true or becomes true, within limits to be found experientially and experimentally. These limits are further beliefs to be transcended. In the province of the mind, there are no limits. This is one of the major messages I wish to give you about inner trips, whether by LSD, by mediation, by hypnosis, by Gestalt therapy, by group work, by studies whatever means one uses (Lilly 1972: xvi).

1. Biography

Timothy Leary was born on October 22, 1920 in Springfield, Massachusetts. His grandfather, Dr. Timothy Leary, after whom his father “Tote” and Timothy himself were named, was considered to be the richest Irish Catholic in western Massachusetts. He published works on blood circulation. The Learys were “urban, urbane, well-to-do [...] sexy, funloving and selforiented” (FB 24–26). Leary’s mother was also an Irish Catholic but she came from a different social scene. According to Leary, Abigail’s side of the family was “traditional, family oriented, suspicious of all things joyous, frivolous, or newfangled” (FB 26). Tote was “contemptuous of those who worked for the system”(FB 38). He practiced dentistry sporadically, as “a gentlemanly hobby” (cf. FB 38). Timothy turned out to be a smart boy. At the age of ten, when he was reading eight to ten books a week, his grandfather gave him the advice: “Never do anything like anyone else, boy [...] Find your own way” (FB 24). When Timothy was fourteen his alcoholic father left the family, because he was disappointed about the fact that the inheritance from his father was just a few thousand dollars.

After High School Timothy went to Holy Cross, a Jesuit college. He left Holy Cross after about one year, because he was accepted at the military academy West Point. After dropping out of West Point, because he committed a rules infraction, Leary became a psychology major at the University of Alabama. It didn’t take long, however, until he was expelled from university for sleeping over at the girl’s dormitory, which was in 1942 (cf. FB 137). Leary’s draft deferment was cancelled, so he was drafted. Since the army needed psychologists they let Leary finish his degree in the service. In 1944, Leary met Mariannne (?), an audio technician. They married the same year and had two children, Susan and Jack. Leary received his master’s degree in psychology at Washington State University. His thesis was a statistical study of the dimensions of intelligence (Leary 1946). Leary and Marianne moved to Berkeley. Leary earned a doctorate in psychology from the University of California Berkeley (Leary 1950), and over the next few years conducted research in psychotherapy. By the 50s he was teaching at Berkeley and had been appointed Director of Psychological Research at the Kaiser Foundation Hospital in Oakland (cf. FB 16). His book *The Interpersonal Diagnosis of Personality* (Leary 1957) enjoyed much success. His personal life, however, took a turn for the worse. His depressive wife committed suicide on Leary’s 35th birthday.

Leary quit his post at Berkeley because he felt that he was “practicing a profession that didn’t seem to work” (FB 16). Psychology still had not developed a way of significantly and predictably changing human behavior. Leary’s studies showed that one third of the patients who received psychotherapy got better, one third got worse and one third stayed the same. Together with Susan and Jack, Leary moved to Florence, Italy. In spring 1960, Leary got a teaching post at Harvard University, Massachusetts, because the Director of the Harvard Center of Personality Research, McClelland, considered Leary’s revolutionary approach to psychotherapy to be the future of American Psychology. Leary’s theory on existential transaction (Leary 1960) suggested that the whole relationship between patient and therapists should be changed to a more egalitarian information exchange.

On a vacation in Mexico in 1960, Leary was offered some of the so-called “sacred mushrooms” by an anthropologist from the University of Mexico, who got them from a shaman. (The reader interested in the history of these mushrooms is referred to Gordon R. Wasson’s *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality* and Terence McKenna’s *Food of the Gods*.) Leary ate the mushrooms which contained the psychedelic psilocybin. During the mushroom inebriation he entered into a state of mystic-religious ecstasy, which he later called “the deepest religious experience of his life”(Weil 1973:191). Like so many mystics before him he discovered that “the world – so manifestly real – was actually a tiny stage set

constructed by the mind,” that human beings are all programmed and “everything we accept as reality is just a social fabrication (FB 32 f.). In his autobiography, *Flashbacks*, he explains that,

In four hours by that swimming pool in Guernavaca I learned more about the mind, the brain and its structures than I did in the preceding 15 years as a diligent psychologist. I learned that the brain is an underutilized biocomputer containing billions of unaccessed neurons. I learned that normal consciousness is one drop in an ocean of intelligence. That consciousness and intelligence can be systematically expanded. The brain can be reprogrammed. That the knowledge of how the brain works is the most pressing scientific issue of our time. I was beside myself with enthusiasm, convinced we had found the key [for behavior change] we had been looking for (FB 33).

This was the turning point of his life. Leary, together with his colleague Frank Barron, persuaded Harvard to allow them to study the effects of psychedelic drugs. (It should be mentioned here that at that time most psychedelic drugs were still legal.)

Leary did not follow the medical model of Behaviorism, which is the model of giving drugs to others and then observing the external results. His idea was that the scientist first should teach him-/herself how to use the drug and then take it together with the “patient.” Furthermore, Leary was not out to discover new laws, which is to say, to discover the redundant implications of his own premises. This approach, which is the approach of Humanistic Psychology, was considered to be unscientific by many psychologists at that time. Leary also felt that the term “psychotomimetic” (which means “mimicking psychosis”), which was used in psychology of that time to describe the effects of hallucinogenic drugs, was inadequate, because it reflected a negative, pathological orientation and did not include concepts of enriching the mind and enlarging the vision. He used the term “psychedelic,” meaning “mind-manifesting,” instead (cf. Lee 1992: 55). Leary’s experiments had interesting results. For example, in one of his formal experiments Leary was able to show that psychedelic drugs can produce deep religious experiences similar to those reported by prophets and mystics throughout the ages (cf. PE 15f.).

Celebrities such as writers Aldous Huxley and Allen Ginsberg took part in Leary’s experiments. In addition to the formal studies Leary carried out at Harvard, Leary also held psychedelic sessions in his private apartment. In December 1960, Ginsberg came for a visit. Leary and Ginsberg took psilocybin together. While under the influence of the drug, Ginsberg had a vision: “I’m the messiah. I’ve come down to preach love to the world. We are going to teach people to stop hating”(FB 48f). During the experience Ginsberg became convinced, that psychedelic drugs held the promise of changing mankind, curing sick society. His plan was that everybody should take mind-expanding drugs. Ginsberg’s vision struck a chord in Leary. From then on, Leary saw himself as the messiah whose mission was to enlighten the whole world with psychedelic drugs. Leary believed that political problems were manifestations of psychological problems, which at the bottom were neurological-chemical (cf. FB 50). Together with Ginsberg, Leary started turning on the Beat poets Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassady, Charles Olson, and William Burroughs to psilocybin (cf. FB 49–52, cf. Lee 1992: 80).

It was Michael Hollingshead, a British philosophy student, who gave LSD to Leary (cf. FB 117). LSD is a synthetic psychedelic — first synthesized by Albert Hofmann, a Swiss scientist, in 1938, while seeking for a pain killer for migraine headaches (cf. Hofmann 1980) – which is even stronger than psilocybin. When Leary took LSD he experienced the most shattering experience of his life: “Psilocybin had sucked me down into nerve nets, into body organs,[...] had let me spiral down the DNA ladder of evolution to the beginning of life on this planet. But LSD was something different [...it] had flipped my consciousness into a dance of energy, where nothing existed except whirring vibrations and each illusory form was simply a different frequency”(FB 118). From then on, Leary used LSD in his research. With the help of LSD he wanted to get insight into the mechanisms of the brain. He also wanted to develop a language, verbal as well as non-verbal, that makes us able to talk about drug experiences in a scientific way.

When it became public that Leary administered drugs to students (who phoned home to announce they had found God) and got “high” with his test subjects, Harvard insisted that Leary stopped his experiments. Leary was accused by various scientists of leading his experiments in an unscientific way. Since Leary and his colleague Richard Alpert would not stop their experiments (“LSD is more important than Harvard,” Leary said) they were expelled from Harvard in spring 1963. After the “Harvard scandal” most major US magazines featured stories about Leary and LSD, so Leary was suddenly known all over the US as “Mr. LSD”(cf. Lee 1992: 88). During their time at Harvard Leary and Alpert had also started a private drug research project, the International Foundation of Internal Freedom (IFIF), which they continued after their expulsion (cf. Lee 1992: 96). The aim of the project was to study the religious use of psychedelics. It did not take long until the organization counted 3000 dues-paying members. Offices were set up all across America. In the summer of 1963, the headquarters of the organization were moved to a hotel in Zihuatanejo, Mexico. A group of Beatniks and bohemians followed Leary to Mexico, but were not allowed to participate in the research programs. It only took six weeks until the IFIF was expelled from Mexico (cf. Lee 1992, 97).

A rich stockbroker, Bill Hitchcock, was very interested in the IFIF’s work, so he offered Leary and Alpert that they could use his mansion in Millbrook, New York, as a place where they could do their research. Leary and Alpert accepted the offer. A core group of about 30 people gathered at Millbrook. IFIF was disbanded and replaced by another organization, the Castilian Foundation (named after an intellectual colony in Hesse’s *Glass Bead Game*). The members of the Castilian Foundation lead a communal life and did research on psychedelics and oriental meditation. As a guide for their psychedelic sessions the group was using a text written by Leary called *The Psychedelic Experience* (Leary 1964). This text is a translation of the old Buddhist text *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* from English into what Leary calls “psychedelic American”(cf. FB 199). Millbrook attracted visitors from all walks of life. To name a few, there was the Jazz trumpeter Maynard Ferguson, psychiatrists Humphry Osmond and R. D. Laing, the philosopher Alan Watts, and also a Swedish model named Nina Schlebrugge. In 1964, Leary married Nina Schlebrugge (cf. Lee 1992, 102). However, their relationship did not last long. They parted soon after their honeymoon in India.

In December 1965, Leary, his children, and his soon to be wife Rosemary Woodruff wanted to go on vacation to Mexico, but Leary was arrested after he and his daughter had been caught with a small amount of marijuana at the border between Mexico and Texas. Leary was sentenced to 30 (!) years in prison (cf. FB 242). While his lawyers appealed the verdict, Leary returned to Millbrook, continuing with drug experiments, and set up a religious group, the League for Spiritual Discovery (L.S.D.).

Inspired by the media philosopher Marshall McLuhan, Leary started using the media, trying to change the negative associations that people had when they heard the word “LSD” into positive ones. He promised LSD users beauty, philosophic wonder, religious revelation, increased intelligence, mystical romance, and better sex (cf. FB 251). It was at that time that Leary came up with the slogan “Turn On – Tune In – Drop Out”. “Turn On” meant to go within, with the help of psychedelics, meditation or other methods. It meant to become sensitive to the many levels of consciousness one can reach. “Tune In” meant to interact harmoniously with the world one is surrounded by, to express one’s new internal perspectives. “Drop Out” suggested an active process of detachment from involuntary and unconscious commitments (cf. FB 253). What he wanted to express with his slogan is that psychedelics (especially LSD) create a “new consciousness” and teach you to reject repressive politics, war, violence, military service, racism, erotic hypocrisy, sexism, and established religion (cf. Leary 1995: 8). In 1966, LSD became illegal. For Leary, the criminalization of LSD meant that psychedelics and what he called “new consciousness” became a political issue indissolubly intertwined with peace, sexual liberation, “end the draft”, ecology, etc(cf. Leary 1995: 9). In 1968, when the 60s revolution reached its peak, Tim became active socially as an anti- Vietnam protester, sang “Give peace a chance” with John Lennon and Yoko Ono, and announced his candidacy for governor of California in March 1970 (cf. FB 287). In *The Politics of Ecstasy*, Leary suggested a new Declaration of Independence based on the idea of personal freedom (freedom to alter one’s own consciousness). In spite of the fact that President Nixon called Leary “the

most dangerous man on the planet” (see *Timothy Leary is dead*, a documentary about Leary’s life and work by Paul Davis, 1996) things looked good for Leary, because the Texas drug case was overturned by the Supreme Court.

However, it did not take long until Leary received a 10 year sentence for another arrest for possession of marijuana. He was sent to jail immediately. In September 1970, Leary escaped from prison (cf. FB 291). He fled to Algiers where he was offered asylum with Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver’s government in exile. Since Cleaver put him under house arrest Leary fled to Switzerland and tried to find refuge there. While waiting for asylum, Leary visited Austria, where he acted in an anti-heroin documentary (cf. FB 328). Leary did not get asylum in Switzerland. He was caught by the police in Afghanistan and handed over to the American Drug Enforcement Agency.

Starting in 1972, Leary spent time in several different prisons and was finally released in 1976 (cf. FB 366). During this time he wrote several books about “neurotechnology” (methods to control our nervous systems), the most important one of them being *Exo-Psychology* (Leary 1974). He started giving lectures at colleges and appeared in talk shows. This time, however, his main subject was not LSD, but space migration and life extension. He married Barbara Chase who had a son, Zach. In the early 80s, Leary went on a lecture tour with G. Gordon Liddy (a former law enforcement officer who, in the 60s, raided Millbrook and later was sent to prison because he was involved in the Watergate scandal). In their very ironic debates Leary and Liddy caricatured each other’s former roles (cf. Lee 1992: 293).

During the 80s, Leary turned to computers as his “transformational tool of choice” and became one of the first promoters of virtual reality and the Internet. He proclaimed that “the personal computer is the LSD of the 90s,” empowering people on a mass level (cf. CC coverpage). Leary became a spokesman for a new high-tech subculture, the “cyberpunks.” Furthermore, he started his own software company, Futique Inc., which designs programs that “digitize thought-images,” produces “cyberwear” for virtual reality (TV goggles and quadrophonic sound systems that immerse the user in 3-D computer-graphic worlds) and develops educational software for students (cf. FB 384f). Leary went on college lecture tours again and also gave talks on “rave parties.” His lecture tours became multi-media extravaganzas with live video and music. His books became graphic novels that were products of desktop publishing. Some of his books were converted into psychedelic audio-books or computer programs. For example, *What does WoMan want?* (a novel written by Leary in 1976) was converted into an interactive computer program, a “performance book” as Leary calls it (Leary 1988a). Leary designed a web page (<http://www.leary.com>) where people are encouraged to discuss the effects of psychedelic drugs, etc. In 1995, Leary discovered that he had incurable prostate cancer. He refused to be treated in a hospital and “designed” his dying process to be a party instead. By challenging the solemnity of dying – shortly before he died he wrote a book called *Design for Dying* (Leary 1997b) in which he says that we should question the traditional notion of what dying is and design our dying process the way we like it — Leary broke the last and greatest taboo. Leary passed away on May 31, 1996. His ashes were sent into space.

2. *The Politics of Ecstasy*/The Seven Levels of Consciousness (the 60s)

Revolution is a personal matter. You create the world; you must change it. (Paul Williams)¹

In the 60s, Leary wrote several books on psychedelic drugs and higher levels of consciousness. The most important of them is *The Politics of Ecstasy*. It could be said that all of these books describe one more or less consistent theory about human consciousness. I want to call this theory “Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness”. (I did not choose the name “Politics of Ecstasy” for this theory because I think this title focuses on the political aspect too much. In Leary’s theory, politics, which Leary saw as a primitive struggle for power and territory, is only one stage in the development of human consciousness towards enlightenment. Leary thought that we should leave politics behind and move on to higher levels of consciousness. It should be mentioned here that the title “Politics of Ecstasy” was not Leary’s idea. It was Abbie Hoffman who suggested this title to Leary (cf. PE 1).) In this chapter, I want to describe the Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness and discuss Leary’s impact on the 60s counterculture.

2.1. Ancient models are good but not enough

Leary’s work, especially the theory about human consciousness he developed in the early 60s, was very much influenced by Eastern philosophies and religions. In his spiritual approach to psychedelic experiences Leary felt affirmed by the discovery of ancient Asian spiritual texts. Ancient Asian spiritual texts are concerned with transcendence, with learning to go beyond the ego-centered perspectives of ordinary human consciousness, beyond the dualities of right and wrong, beyond space and time, and with becoming liberated from the cravings and fears that characterize human existence. For Buddhists, Hinduists, and Taoists, the method of attaining such liberating transcendence was not psychedelics but meditation. However, Leary was convinced that their goal was essentially the same as that of spiritually oriented psychedelic explorers. Leary translated two of the ancient texts, the Buddhist text *Tibetan Book of the Dead*² and the Taoist text *Tao Te Ching*³ from English into what he calls “psychedelic American.” These two ancient texts describe different levels of consciousness, stages that we have to go through if we want to attain enlightenment. There are seven levels in the Buddhist text, five levels in the Taoist text. Both texts are concerned with giving up the supremacy of the “egohood” and entering a mystical state of illumination which goes beyond form, that is, beyond words and “hallucinatory struggles.” Leary used these translations as guide books for his psychedelic sessions.

The most important essays that describe Leary’s own theory about human consciousness can be found in *The Politics of Ecstasy*. This book was first published in 1968. It is a collection of essays and lectures on psychedelic drug experience and the personal, social, and political changes that psychedelics were supposed to bring about. In *The Politics of Ecstasy*, Leary praises LSD as the *key to altering our consciousness*, which can help us to increase our intelligence, creativity, sexual pleasures, philosophical insight, to abolish authoritarian dogmatic social structures, and to speed up the evolution of humankind in general. On the basis of his drug experiments at Harvard and personal experiences with the psychedelic

¹ Williams 1978: 94

² The translation was first published in 1964 under the title *The Psychedelic Experience*.

³ First published in 1966 under the title *Psychedelic Prayers and Other Meditations* (Leary 1997a).

drugs LSD and psilocybin, Leary built an all-encompassing theory about human consciousness, which is a synthesis of eastern philosophy and western science and gives answers to basic questions of philosophy, psychology, politics and religion. (Leary was not the first person who tried to create such a synthesis. For example, there were William James, C.G. Jung, and writer and early psychedelic explorer Aldous Huxley who tried to create a synthesis between eastern and western thinking.) In Leary's opinion ancient eastern texts on the nature of consciousness were helpful but they were only very vague descriptions of the unknown "phenomenological territories" Leary wanted to explore. Leary thought that he had found a language that was more adequate to describe psychedelic experiences and the nature of human consciousness. The language Leary uses in his *Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness* is a mixture of scientific vocabulary, mystical terms used in eastern philosophical and religious texts, and psychedelic slang.

2.2. "The Seven Tongues of God"

The lecture in which he presented his theory of human consciousness for the first time is a lecture he gave in 1963 at a meeting of Lutheran psychologists. By describing his model of the Seven Levels of Consciousness Leary tried to show that eastern philosophies and discoveries of western science do not contradict but rather complement each other⁴. The lecture, which in *The Politics of Ecstasy* appears under the title "The Seven Tongues of God"(PE 13–58), was originally titled "The Religious Experience: Its Production and Interpretation." Leary begins this lecture by describing two formal experiments with psilocybin that were carried out at Harvard. (The description of the first experiment helps to see that his approach to psychotherapy was really revolutionary.)

The first formal experiment conducted by Leary's group was a rehabilitation program carried out at the Massachusetts Correctional Institute in Concord, a maximum security prison. The inmates were given (synthetic) psilocybin to find out whether the drug would help prisoners change their ways, thereby lowering the recidivism rate. They formed groups and at least one member of Leary's group took psilocybin with the prisoners. Part of the project was designed to help ex-inmates (only those who received the drug) get integrated into society again after their release. The study proved successful in the short term, only 25% of those who took the drug ended up in prison again, as compared to the normal return-rate of about 80% (cf. Lee 1992: 75; cf. FB 102).

The other experiment, which was conducted by Walter Pahnke as part of his Ph.D. dissertation for Harvard Divinity School, dealt with the relationship between drug-induced and naturally occurring religious experiences. In this experiment Pahnke sought to determine, whether the transcendent experiences reported during psychedelic sessions were similar to the mystical experiences described in various holy scriptures and reported by prophets throughout the ages. Pills, half of them containing psilocybin and half of them being placebos, were given to theology students at a Good Friday service. Neither the test subjects nor Leary and Pahnke knew who had received the drug and who had not. The results showed that the participants who took the psilocybin pill had significantly deeper mystical religious experiences than the ones who received placebos in the same situation. Leary concluded that a mystical experience could be produced chemically by those who sought it, provided that "set" and "setting" are appropriate (cf. FB 108). ("Set" is the character structure and attitudinal predisposition. In this case it means being religiously motivated. By reading books on psychedelic experiences and protocols written by other subjects the divinity students prepared themselves for the drug experience. "Setting" is the immediate situation; in this case: a Good Friday service.)

After describing these experiments, Leary raises the question what a religious experience is and gives *his* definition: "The religious experience is the ecstatic, incontrovertibly certain, subjective discovery of

⁴ Philosophic models which define seven levels were used in Hinduism and various schools of Buddhism. According to the Hinduistic chakra system, for example, we can experience seven energy-spots in the body which correspond to different levels of consciousness.

answers to seven basic spiritual questions”(PE 19). What are these seven basic spiritual questions Leary suggests?

1. The ultimate Power question: What is the basic energy underlying the universe?
2. The Life Question: What is life? Where and how did it begin? How is it evolving?
3. The Human Being Question: Who is man? What is his structure and function?
4. The Awareness Question: How does man sense, experience, know?
5. The Ego Question: Who am I?
6. The Emotional Question: What should I feel about it (life)?
7. The Ultimate Escape Question: How do I get out of it (cf. PE 19)?

After formulating these questions, Leary explains that the purpose of life is religious discovery, which, for him, means to answer these questions and also experience the answers. However, Leary’s concept of religion, as we will see, is totally different from the rigid hierarchical dogmatic religious systems of Catholicism, Protestantism or any kind of fundamentalism. Leary makes the reader aware that one important fact about these questions is that not only the religions of the world give answers to these questions, the data of natural sciences do so as well. He compares answers given by science with the experiences described by his test subjects and finds striking similarities. Let me give one of Leary’s examples: What is the scientific answer to the first question? Leary explains that Nuclear physicists, for example, suggest that the basic energy underlying the universe is located within the nucleus. “The nucleus radiates a powerful electrical field which holds and controls the electrons around it.[...] Objects, which on the macroscopic level seem to be solid, are actually a transparent sphere of emptiness, thinly populated with whirling electrons” (PE 22). Leary points out that psychedelic reports often contain phrases which seem to describe similar phenomena, subjectively experienced: “I felt open to a total flow, over and around and through my body[...] All objects were dripping, streaming, with white hot light of electricity which flowed in the air [...]”(PE 23). He comes to the conclusion that “those aspects of the psychedelic experience which subjects report to be ineffable and ecstatically religious involve a direct awareness of the energy process which physicists and biochemists and physiologists and neurologists and psychologists and psychiatrists measure” (PE 21).

Based on this conclusion, Leary builds his theory about human consciousness. The basic assumption of this theory is that consciousness is based on physical structure. Leary sees *consciousness as a biochemical process*⁵ (cf. PE 339). He also equates consciousness with energy: “Consciousness is energy received and decoded by structure” (PE 342). According to Leary’s theory, there are as many levels of consciousness in the human body as there are anatomical structures to receive and decode energy. Leary suggests that there are seven levels of consciousness. These seven levels correspond to the seven questions. (I will explain the seven levels and their correlation to anatomical structures further below.) And now comes the crucial point in Leary’s theory. Since, according to Leary, consciousness is a biochemical process Leary concludes that the *key to changing consciousness is also chemical*. He suggests that there are specific drugs to “turn on” each of the seven levels. Most people would not be capable of reaching the higher levels of consciousness (levels 1–4) and having religious experiences, except with the help of psychedelic drugs. Leary admits that there are other ancient methods, like meditation, which can help us to reach higher levels of consciousness, but “at present time, man is so sick, that only a

⁵ Leary seems to have been influenced by Aldous Huxley very much. This can be seen in the following passage from Huxley’s *Heaven and Hell*: “[I]n one way or another, *all* our experiences are chemically conditioned, and if we imagine that some of them are purely “spiritual”, purely “intellectual”, purely “aesthetic”, it is merely because we have never troubled to investigate the internal chemical environment at the moment of their occurrence (Huxley 1972: 121). Huxley visited Leary in Harvard in the early 60s when Leary had just ‘discovered’ psychedelics.

few people can use ancient methods, so that it is safe to say that drugs are the specific, and almost the only, way that the American is ever going to have a religious experience” (PE 297). Leary predicts that “psychedelics are the future of mankind,” that psychedelics will be the religion of the twenty first century and that during the next few hundred years the major activity of man will be the scientific exploration of our consciousness (i.e., our nervous system) with psychedelic drugs (cf. PE 346). In his Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness, he gives his view of how the future of mankind is going to look like. Now, what are these seven levels of consciousness? Which drug “turns on” which level? And why exactly are most people not capable of reaching the higher levels?

Before I describe the seven levels, I want to make a short comment on Leary’s style: Leary’s language is very euphoric, agitating, poetic, and transcends standard “either/or” logic (Eastern Philosophy does so as well). Leary mixes Buddhist and Hinduist metaphors with accurate scientific descriptions of biological, neurological, psychological and physical processes. Another thing that should be mentioned here to avoid confusion is that, according to Leary’s Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness, “reality” is a construction of our nervous system. Leary argues that a certain model of reality is imprinted in our nervous systems in childhood, and this model (or “neural program”) determines what we will “see” and “not see.” In most people the programs (imprints) they use to process information from the outside world remain the same for their whole life. If we took psychedelics, however, we would be able to suspend imprints, experience other realities (different levels of consciousness) and create our own realities.

(In *The Politics of Ecstasy*, Leary does not give very elaborate definitions of the seven levels of consciousness he suggests. In his later works — in the 70s, 80s, and 90s — Leary elaborates on this theory.)

2.3. Leary’s model of the Seven Levels of Consciousness

This is how Leary describes this model in the texts “The Seven Tongues of God” and “The Molecular Revolution”(PE 332–361). (Since in these texts Leary describes the seventh level first I am going to do so as well.)

1. The Void (level 7):

This is the lowest level. It is a state of anesthesia which can be produced by narcotics, barbiturates (sleeping pills) and large doses of alcohol. Typical examples for people living on this level of (un-)consciousness are heroin addicts and alcoholics who want to escape the existential pressure of being. Leary notes that he can very well understand these people who want to escape the ego that narrows down our perception and escape all the social games of our society –he even calls them “deeply religious” -, but their attempts to escape the ego are futile because “you just can’t keep holding the ‘off’ switch”(PE 43). The question (in Leary’s list of seven questions) that corresponds to this level is the Ultimate Escape question: How do I get out of it (life)? Or you could also ask: When does it (life) end? Leary’s answer is that life never ends. Science tells us that life is an ongoing process of being born and dying. According to Leary, it is only during a psychedelic experience that we learn that actually there is no death, there is nothing to fear. Leary suggests that we should “go with the flow” of life, because stability is an illusion; everything is changing all the time (this concept can be found in Buddhism as well).

2. Emotional Stupor (level 6):

This is the level of consciousness that people are on when they get emotional. Leary’s concept of emotions is a negative one. He writes that, “all emotions are based on fear. The emotional person cannot think,[...] is turned off sensually [...] is an inflexible robot gone berserk” (PE 38). It should be mentioned here that love, for Leary, is not an emotion. He sees love as a state without emotional greed which is

not ego-centered. The answer to “How shall I feel about it ?” is that you should not get emotional at all. Only if you “turn off” your emotions can you reach higher levels of consciousness.

The drug that brings you in an emotional and stubborn state is alcohol.

3. The State of Ego Consciousness/ The Mental-social-symbolic Level (level 5):

This state of consciousness is dominated by the ego and the mind, the seat of thinking and reasoning. According to Leary, the most important reason why most of us cannot reach higher levels of consciousness is that we cannot escape the narrow “reality tunnel” of the ego, which is formed by what we have been told by our parents, educational institutions and governmental agencies. The ego is always socially defined. “Social reality” is a neural program (cf. PE 35). (As I have already mentioned, Leary argues that a certain model of reality is imprinted in our nervous system during childhood which determines how we see the world.) We are told what we are and we accept what we are told. We are conditioned to see, hear, smell, and to behave in a certain way. Psychological censoring-mechanisms (imprinting and conditioning) have made us “blind Pavlovian dogs” who do whatever our rulers want us to do. We can not use our senses in a free, direct way. We see the world through the categories we have been taught to use. Sensory conditioning has forced us to accept a “reality” which is “a comic-tragic farce illusion”(cf. PE 33).

Who am I? Leary argues that for the average American this question is answered totally in terms of artificial roles (cf. PE 35). Only if we drop out of social roles can we find divinity and discover that the ego is only a fraction of our identity. Leary says that the perspective on this question above comes only when we “step off the TV stage set defined by mass-media-social-psychology-adjustment-normality”(PE 35). Then we will discover that we exist at every level of energy and every level of consciousness. Who am I? Leary’s answer is that *you can be whoever you want to be*. With the help of psychedelics you can control your nervous system and *create your own reality*. Who you are depends on which level of consciousness you are at the moment. For example, if you are at the atomic level (level 1) you can be “a galaxy of nuclear-powered atoms[...]the universe[...]God of Light”(PE 35). At the cellular level you can be “the entire chain of life [...] the key rung of the DNA ladder [...] the now-eye of the 2-billion-year-old uncoiling serpent”(ibid.)⁶.

Without psychedelics we cannot go beyond the ego-centred perspectives of human consciousness. The “ego drugs” coffee, nicotine, and meta-amphetamines (pep pills), which dominate our Western culture, only “blow up” our egos.

The person who cannot transcend the three levels discussed so far lives in a pretty bleak world. He/ she is a victim of his/her parents, educational systems, the government, and of psychological processes in the brain (e.g., conditioning) which he/she cannot control. But as soon as we reach the higher levels of consciousness that Leary defines in his Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness, there is freedom, beauty, ecstasy.

4. The Sensory Level (level 4):

When we transcend the level of the conditioned mind with its symbolic representations of the world, then our senses are opened and we “experience afresh the hardly bearable ecstasy of direct energy exploding on our nerve endings” (PE 34). On this level of consciousness our perception of the environment transcends the usual limitations of sensory perception. Leary notes that this awakening and controlling of our is the most basic part of every religious method (cf. PE 34). “Control means the ability to turn off the mind, ignore the enticing clamor of symbolic seduction and open the senses like

⁶ Leary recorded an LP with Jimmy Hendrix and drummer Buddy Miles, which is called “*You can be anyone this time around.*” On this LP Leary raps that the hippies were “the first generation in human history who are able to control their own nervous systems” which made them able to be literally anyone or anything we want to be.

flowers, accepting like sunshine the gift of those energies which man's senses are designed to receive," he explains (PE 34). Leary puts much emphasis on this level of consciousness. (We have to be aware of the fact, that the direct and intense sensual experience – the Acid Rock and Jazz music, nature's beauty, psychedelic artwork, free love — was one of the most important aspects of life for the hippies.)

The drug that opens our senses to this direct experience is marijuana.

5. The Somatic (Body) Level (level 3):

The question that corresponds to the Somatic Level is "What is the human being?". Science defines man as an evolutionary form emerging from animal-mammalian-primate stock characterized by a particular anatomy and physiology. Man's body contains a complex system of life functions of which he/she normally has no direct experience. (According to Leary, a small dose of marijuana is not sufficient to experience your inner body functions.) A deep psychedelic experience, however, is "the sudden confrontation with your body, the shattering resurrection of your body. You are capitulated into the matrix of quadrillions of cells and somatic communication systems. Cellular flow. You are swept down the tunnels and canals of your own waterworks. Visions of microscopic processes [...]"(PE 30). You discover that your body is the universe, that you are the universe, because — as Gnostics, Hermetics, and Tantric gurus said – what is without is within (cf. *ibid.*). If you look within yourself you will discover that "the kingdom of heaven is within you" (*ibid.*).

The drugs that trigger off this awareness of your body functions are large doses of hashish, moderate doses of psilocybin, MDA ("Ecstasy"), and small doses of LSD.

6. The Cellular Level (level 2):

This level leads us one step further into the microscopic world of our body to the biological cell and the DNA — the genetic code. The questions that are answered on this level of consciousness are "What is life?" and "How does life evolve?". Science tells us that the DNA is the blueprint of life which (along with environmental factors) determines evolution. According to Leary, the secrets of your DNA can be revealed to you if you reach this level of consciousness. Leary was convinced that the DNA "remembers" all the important facts of the evolution of life (cf. PE 28) — of life in the evolutionary sense of the word (phylogenesis: single cell, fish, vertebrates, mammals, etc) as well as of a person's individual life (ontogenesis: intrauterine events, birth, etc). Everybody can re-experience all these facts; everybody can see what part he/she plays in the evolution of life. Practically all of the test subjects in Leary's LSD experiments reported evolutionary journeys and experiences of rebirth. "It is all there in our nervous systems," Leary says; we just have to become aware of it. Leary points out that he is not the first person who talks about this level of consciousness. He refers us to Buddhist and Hinduist reincarnation theories which describe a similar level of consciousness⁷.

In order to reach this level of consciousness you have to take a moderate dose of LSD or a large dose of psilocybin or mescaline (cf. PE 344).

7. The Atomic — Solar Level (level 1):

This is the highest level which can only be triggered off by high doses of LSD (cf. PE 344). If you are on this level, you are aware of energy transactions among molecular structures inside the cell. You are experiencing the basic energy of the universe (see question 1). More than that (this is where Buddhism comes in), "Subjects speak of participating in a merging with pure (i.e., content-free) energy, visual

⁷ Interesting similarities can be seen if we compare this level of consciousness with Carl Jung's concept of the Collective Unconscious (Jung 1936). Also LSD-therapist Stanislov Grof's *Realms of the Human Unconscious* (1976) should be mentioned here. Based on LSD experiences, Grof developed a theory of consciousness which deals with transpersonal (e.g. prenatal or perinatal) experiences. Grof still uses this theory for his LSD psychotherapy and a therapeutic method called "holotropic breathing."

nets, the collapse of external structure into wave patterns, the awareness that everything is a dance of particles, sensing the smallness and fragility of our system, visions of the void [a Buddhist concept], the world ending explosions[...]" (PE 24). Leary notes that the metaphors he uses are inadequate to describe the actual experience, but "at present we just don't have a better experiential vocabulary"(ibid.). Leary admits that his metaphors may sound farfetched but "if God were to permit you a brief voyage into the divine process, let you whirl for a second into the atomic nucleus or spin you out on a light-year trip through the galaxies, how on earth would you describe what you saw when you got back, breathless, to your office"(ibid.)? Leary repeatedly uses the terms "void" or "the clear white light" to describe this level of consciousness. These terms are adopted from Buddhist philosophy⁸.

Leary admits that the levels of consciousness and the relationships between certain drugs and each level of consciousness he proposed are still hypothetical. However, he seriously encourages scientists to study these relationships. A scientific study would be possible because his hypotheses are cast in operational language (cf. PE 345).

2.4. The importance of "set" and "setting"

As far as the nature of any psychedelic experience triggered by drugs like LSD or psilocybin is concerned, Leary argues that LSD and all the other psychedelics have no standard effects which are purely pharmacological in nature; it is not the drug that produces the transcendent experience. The drug only inhibits conditioned reflexes. The enormous range of experience produced by various chemicals stems from differences in "set" and "setting" (cf. Timothy Leary. *The Psychedelic Experience*. Translated into HTML by Den Walter. 20 Mar. 1998: n. pag. Online. Internet. <http://hyperreal.com/drugs/psychedelics/leary/psychedelic.html> , general introduction). (I know that I have already shortly explained these terms, but I want to give a more detailed explanation of them and the concept that lies behind them, because, for me, this concept seems to be the key to Leary's theory.)

In the general introduction to *The Psychedelic Experience* Leary explains set and setting as follows:

Set denotes the preparation of the individual, including his personality structure and his mood at the time (attitudinal predisposition). Setting is physical (the situation) – the weather, the room's atmosphere; social – feelings of persons present towards on another; and cultural – prevailing views as to what is real. It is for that reason that manuals or guide-books are necessary. Their purpose is to enable a person to understand the new realities of the expanded consciousness, to serve as road maps for new interior territories which modern science has made accessible (ibid.).

During one of his many psychedelic sessions Leary discovered that the drug only acts as a chemical key which "opens the mind [and] frees the nervous system of its ordinary patterns and structures"(ibid.). The person who takes the drug, not the drug, would be responsible for how the trip is going to turn out. In *High Priest*, Leary describes this discovery which was disturbing for him:

There seemed to be equal amounts of God and Devil (or whatever you want to call them) within the nervous system. Psychedelic drugs just open the door to the Magic Theatre, and the stages and dramas you encounter depend on what you are looking for, your state of mind when you begin [...] I began to get a sinking feeling. Psychedelic drugs didn't seem to solve any problems. They just magnified, mythified, clarified to jewel-like sharpness the basic problem of life and evolution (Leary 1995: 80)⁹.

⁸ Neither scientists nor philosophers have found the final answer to the consciousness question. Buddhists believe that if we continue to cling to "either/or" causal logic we will never be able to answer the question in a satisfying way.

⁹ Aldous Huxley repeatedly uses this metaphor of the drug as a magnifying glass which makes all things appear under a crystal-clear light in *The Doors of Perception* as well.

From this discovery Leary concludes that we can “design” our psychedelic trips, which means that we can actually design our own realities. We only have to create the right set and setting.

2.5. The political and ethical aspects of Leary’s “*Politics of Ecstasy*”

In the 60s, Leary was convinced that psychedelics were necessary for the future evolution of mankind (in the 80s Leary changed his mind). For him, it was no coincidence that LSD was discovered around the time when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and the Holocaust happened. The Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness is supposed to show us the way to peace, individual freedom and enlightenment. In the 60s, Leary felt that the limited vision of reality prevailing in modern society and socio-political conflicts were largely due to the dominant ego-drugs, alcohol and coffee. His idea was to change the drugs, and a change of heart would naturally follow. He claimed that “politics, religion, economics, social structure are all based on shared states of consciousness. The cause of social conflict is usually neurological. The cure is biochemical”(Lee 1992: 79).

As far as the political and ethical aspects of Leary’s theory on human consciousness are concerned, Leary argues that the changes in peoples’ consciousness that psychedelics brought about have made necessary new ethical commandments, and a revision of the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution. In *The Politics of Ecstasy*, he suggests new ethical commandments, a new Declaration of Independence (the “Declaration of Evolution”), and a new American Constitution (the “The Constitution of Life”). Leary’s “Declaration of Evolution” and his “Constitution of Life” focus on his vision of the future of human evolution, that is, the future of human consciousness he describes in the “scientific-religious” Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness.

The two new commandments Leary suggests instead of the ten old ones are:

1. Thou shalt not alter the consciousness of thy fellow man.
2. Thou shalt not prevent thy fellow man from altering his own consciousness (PE 94).

These commandments were, so he claims, revealed to him by his nervous system. (I think it is obvious that the message that Leary tries to communicate with these two commandments is: Question authority! Legalize psychedelic drugs!)

Leary’s “Declaration of Evolution”(PE 362ff.), which is in many aspects similar to the original Declaration of Independence, is based on three “God-given rights” (God being Nature and our genetic wisdom): the “Freedom to Live, Freedom to Grow, and Freedom to pursue Happiness in their own style”(PE 362). In his “Declaration of Evolution,” Leary encourages the reader to question authority, including his own authority. Leary does not want people to blindly believe in the things he says. “Write your own declaration [...] write your own Bible [...] Start your own religion,” Leary writes (PE 95f.). In order to be able to start your own religion you would have to “Turn On – Tune In – Drop Out”. “Turn On” means to go within, with the help of psychedelics, meditation or other methods. It means to find a sacrament which “returns you to the temple of God,” which is your own body, and become sensitive to the many levels of consciousness one can reach. “Tune In” stands for starting a new sequence of behavior that reflects your vision and for interacting harmoniously with the world you are surrounded by to express your new internal perspectives. “Drop Out” suggests an active, selective, graceful process of detachment from involuntary and unconscious commitments. “Drop Out” means self-reliance, a discovery of one’s singularity, a commitment to mobility, choice, and change (cf. FB 253, cf. Leary 1995: 320). In *The Politics of Ecstasy*, Leary encourages people to quit their jobs, quit school, and not to vote. What he wants to express with his slogan is that psychedelics (especially LSD) create a “new consciousness” and teach people to reject repressive politics, war, violence, military service, racism, erotic hypocrisy, sexism,

established religion (cf. Leary 1995: 8). In “Timothy Leary is dead,” a documentary about Leary’s life and work, painter Claire Burch recalls what Leary said in an interview in the 60s: “He said that it was his mission to introduce LSD to the world – and he said it like a general. Even if there are a few [LSD-] victims we still would have to look at the larger picture” (Davis 1996).

Leary has always seen politics as something primitive which has to be transcended. According to Leary, real change is not possible within the system of politics. It is not enough to “change the name of the tax-controller and the possessor of the key to the prison cell” (Leary 1988: 22) This is why we have to “abolish this mammalian push-pull to get on top”(ibid.). Leary’s aim has always been to de-politicize young people. “People should not be allowed to talk politics,” he states, “except on all fours”(Lee 1992: 166). Revolution would be important but “Revolution without Revelation is Tyranny” and “Revelation without Revolution is Slavery”(Leary 1988: 16), as Leary had learned from the teachings of the mystic George Gurdjeff. For Leary, the only revolution that can be successful is a revolution of the mind because the “world” is a creation of our minds.

2.6. Leary’s impact on the young generation of the 60s

In order to understand Leary’s impact on the youth culture and politics in the 60s we have to be aware that in the 60s the use of psychedelics and politics were strongly linked. Many historians writing about the 60s avoid any discussion of psychedelics without which the 60s, as we know them, would never have occurred. It should be remembered that in the 60s most of the political activism was connected, directly or indirectly, to the ingestion of psychedelics and therefore was shaped by ecstatic states of being. Michael Rossmann, a veteran of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement (this radical left wing student organization arose on the Berkeley campus in the fall of 1964 and protested for civil rights, disarmament, university reform, and so forth) perfectly described this connection between psychedelics and politics when he said: “When a young person took his first puff of psychoactive smoke, he also drew in the psychoactive culture as a whole, the entire matrix of law and association surrounding the drug, its induction and transaction. One inhaled a certain way of dressing, talking, acting, certain attitudes. One became a youth criminal [sic] against the state” (Lee 1992: 129). Also Peter Stafford, in his *Psychedelics Encyclopedia*, points out that much of the “social experimentation” in the 60s — which resulted in a change of American attitudes toward work, toward the police and the military and toward such groups as women and gays — was touched off by the mass use of LSD (cf. Stafford 1992: 54).

Leary was known to say that his aims were not political. For him, politics were “game playing, a bad trip, a bringdown, a bummer.” His own definition of the word *ecstasy*, however, shows that drug induced ecstasy and politics *are* connected in a certain way and that the ecstatic experience itself is a political subversive act. Leary defines *ecstasy* as “the experience of attaining freedom from limitations, either self-imposed or external”(PE 1). He notes that the word *ex-stasis* (the Greek root of *ecstasy*), by definition, is “an ongoing on/off process that requires a continual sequence of ‘dropping out’”(ibid.). When many individuals share the ecstatic experience at the same time, they would create a brief-lived counterculture (cf. ibid.). By telling the young generation not to care about politics but to “Turn on — Tune in — Drop out” instead, Leary contradicts himself. Turning on and dropping out *are* political acts. If you “turn on” (which means to take illegal drugs) and “drop out” (which means to quit your job, quit school, and not to vote), you automatically destroy the existing political and social systems. Leary says that he does not want blind followers and at the same time encourages people to trust him and take LSD because it would solve practically every problem. Leary’s own actions are in contradiction to his first commandment “Thou shalt not alter the consciousness of thy fellow man.”

In the 60s, there were many people (Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters, Allen Ginsberg, Abbie Hoffman, just to name a few of them) who promoted the use of pschedelic drugs. Still, Leary stands out as the promoter, apologist, and “High Priest of psychedelia” nonpareil. Theodore Roszak in his book about the 60s counterculture, *The Making of a Counterculture*, writes that, “Surely if we look for the

figures who have done the most to push psychedelic experience along the way toward becoming a total and autonomous culture, it is Leary who emerges as the Ultra of the campaign”(Roszak 1995: 164).

What is the difference between Leary and the other promoters of psychedelics? If we compare Leary to novelist Ken Kesey who also “turned on” a lot of people (see Wolfe 1969), there is one big difference. In contrast to Ken Kesey, whose notorious “acid tests” were supposed to be only fun and games — Kesey would put LSD in people’s drinks and without knowing that their drinks were laced with LSD people would drink it —, Leary told the young generation that getting turned on was not just a childish game but “the sacred rite of a new age”(ibid. 166). For Leary, the psychedelic movement was a religious movement. Leary managed to embed the younger generation’s psychedelic fascination in a religious context. For many young people Leary’s ideas were attractive because they were looking for something to believe in anyway and it was considered to be “hip” to take drugs too.

Since the moment Leary came out of the academic closet more and more people saw him as a prophet for a better future. Leary was just in time with his LSD campaign because the younger generation was ready to break out of the conservative, materialistic, and complacent world of their parents anyway. When, in 1964, the US got involved in the Vietnam war this was just one more reason for people to join Leary’s side. Who exactly were those people who saw Leary as a prophet for a better future?

First of all, there were the Beat poets and other artists who lived in communities on both coasts of the US who considered Leary to be a “hero of American consciousness.” Allen Ginsberg, for example, saw Leary as an antidote to a society dominated by technology which degraded people to robots. For Ginsberg, Leary was one of the few people in our century who kept up the tradition of the “new consciousness” which, according to Ginsberg, can be traced back through old gnostic texts, visions, artists, and shamans (cf. Leary 1995 Foreword by Ginsberg). Even William Burroughs who initially was skeptical about Leary’s “save-the-world antics” later came to regard Leary as a “true pioneer of human evolution”(cf. FB 8).

After Leary had been dismissed from Harvard, students from various universities throughout the US paid him to give lectures at their universities. Leary’s organizations for spiritual discovery (IFIF, Castilia Foundation, L.S.D.) and also his “psychedelic celebrations” — featuring re-enactments of the lives of Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and light shows which were designed to produce an “acid trip” without drugs — were enjoying much success. Various Rock groups, for example the Beatles, were using passages from Leary’s books as lyrics for their songs (cf. Lee 1992: 181). At the first Human Be-In in San Francisco in January 1967 Leary’s speech was the highlight of the afternoon (cf. Lee 1992: 161). Many people of the radical and hip scene that developed in the Haight Ashbury district in San Francisco in the early 60s, the hippies, and even members of the New Left accepted as gospel every word Leary uttered (cf. ibid.).

Of course, not everybody — especially not the government — was impressed by Leary’s message. Many people accused Leary of spoiling innocent young people and seducing them into taking drugs which would ruin their lives. They felt that it was irresponsible to encourage the youth to use psychedelics and to advocate the legalization of those drugs.

The US government was against the use of psychedelic drugs in general. The consumption of these drugs was considered to be morally wrong and dangerous to the user as well as society. With the LSD wave came a wave of establishment panic. Suddenly LSD was considered to be more dangerous than heroin (cf. Stafford 1992: 59). Interviews with college presidents, narcotics agents, doctors and other “authorities” appeared creating an atmosphere of national emergency. Headlines like “Warning to LSD users: You may go blind”, “Mad LSD Slayer”, or “LSD causes chromosome damage” could be found in nearly every newspaper. Bills that made possession of LSD and other psychedelics a felony were introduced into state legislature throughout the nation (cf. Stafford 1992: 58–62). Under President Nixon, a fierce, rhetorical campaign was launched to define drugs as major source of crime in America and to make the war on drugs and crime a national priority. Nixon declared the (ab-)use of drugs a “national threat”, a threat to personal health and the safety of millions of Americans (cf. Bertram 1996: 4f.). Given these facts, it is not surprising that Nixon called Leary “the most dangerous man

on the planet” – nor is it surprising that Leary found himself in prison on drug charges, facing thirty years incarceration for a small amount of marijuana, six months before he wanted to challenge Ronald Reagan in the election to be governor of California, 1970 (cf. PE Editor’s note). This thirty year sentence transformed Leary into the LSD movement’s first martyr. (Of course, Leary appealed the verdict.)

In *Psychedelics Encyclopedia*, Peter Stafford notes that in the 60s the confusion among people about the physical and mental effects of psychedelics was great but their knowledge was not so great (cf. Stafford 1992: 20). Both Leary as well as the US government gave a distorted picture of what the effects of psychedelic drugs really are. Leary wanted everybody to take LSD because his own drug experiments were so successful. The government wanted to ban the use of all psychedelics because they only wanted to see only the dangerous aspect of psychedelic drug use (and politicians felt that they lost their power to rule the country). Neither of the two would admit that psychedelic drugs can have positive as well as negative effects. You might have a revealing experience but psychedelics can also be dangerous to your mental health. Encouraging people to question authority is one thing, encouraging people to take drugs that may ruin their lives is another.

Since Leary had a large influence over a good many people who took LSD because he promised them that by doing so their dreams would come true, I want to talk at least a little bit about the potential risks of the use of psychedelics, especially LSD. What are those risks?

2.6.1. “ACID IS NOT FOR EVERYBODY”

We all know LSD-horror-stories, like the one in which an unknowing innocent person takes LSD, becomes depressed, and then commits suicide. Now, is it true that LSD might trigger a serious depression or even suicide attempts? In 1960, Dr. Sidney Cohen (a psychologist attached professionally to UCLA and the Veterans Hospital in Los Angeles) compared forty-four studies on the use of LSD and mescaline/peyote, trying to find out the dangers of psychedelic drug use and psychedelic treatment. He divided the 5000 patients and volunteers who took part in various psychedelic experiments and treatments into two groups: mentally sound volunteers and people who were mentally unstable. Peter Stafford summarizes what Cohen found out:

Not one case of addiction was reported, nor any deaths from toxic effects. Among those who volunteered for LSD or mescaline experiments, a major or prolonged psychological complication almost never occurred. In this group, only one instance of a psychotic reaction lasting longer than two days was reported, and there were no suicides. Among the mentally ill, however, prolonged psychotic states were induced in “one out of every 550 patients”. In this group, “one in 830 attempted suicide”, and one carried the attempt through (Stafford 1992: 21).

This survey gives the impression that for any person without mental problems there is a very low risk of triggering a psychosis and no risk of suicide involved in taking LSD. However, it has to be mentioned that the test subjects had all been informed that they received a drug, they were all — in some way or the other — prepared for the drug experience, and they all had a guide who helped them in case they had a bad trip.

An example that shows how traumatic uninformed administration of LSD can be, is an incident that happened during an investigation to find out whether and how it was possible to modify an individual’s behavior with LSD carried out by the CIA in 1953. During a private meeting with members of the Army Chemical Corps, Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, who was the head of the investigation, passed around a glass of Cointreau which – unknown to the others – he had spiked with LSD. Among those who partook from Gottlieb’s glass was Dr. Frank Olson, who after the drug experience became deeply depressed. Reluctantly Olson agreed to enter a mental hospital. The night before the psychological treatment started he died after crashing through a window on the tenth floor of a hotel (cf. Stafford 1992: 47f.).

If we look at Cohen's study and Olson's suicide we can deduce three things: The use of LSD might be dangerous for you: 1. if you have mental problems, 2. if you are not mentally prepared for it or not informed that you took it at all, 3. if there is no guide that can help you to avoid a horror trip which may trigger a psychosis. (Dangerous "suicide programs" from your subconscious which are normally suppressed might be released during an LSD experience; programs which you cannot control.)

In the 60s Leary, Ginsberg, Kesey and all the others who wanted to "turn on the whole world" did not seem to notice that there is a big difference between experienced intellectuals like Aldous Huxley, philosopher Gerald Heard, or psychologist Frank Barron, who took LSD trying to systematically cultivate states of "abnormal" consciousness, and an inexperienced teenager who takes LSD just because it is considered to be "hip," not knowing what to expect at all. Leary thought that LSD was good for everybody just because he and his friends (supposedly) had only positive experiences with it. It was only in the 80s, when Leary realized that psychedelics were "not appropriate for democratization, or even socialization." He realized that "the Huxley-Heard-Barron elitist position was ethically correct and [...] the Ginsberg-Leary activism was naively democratic"(Stafford 1992: 25). He had to face the fact that not everybody had the genetic and mental prerequisites to profit from an LSD experience. Leary then admitted that his error in 1963 — this was the year when he started his LSD campaign — was "to overestimate the effect of psychological set and environmental setting"(ibid.). That is why he "failed to understand the enormous genetic variation in human neurology"(ibid.). In the 80s, he admitted that he had been blind to the potential dangers of LSD because in the course of his experiments there was not one enduring "bad trip" or "scandalous freak out." In his flamboyant style Leary warned people that

"ACID IS NOT FOR EVERYBODY [...] ONLY THE HEALTHY, HAPPY, WHOLESOME, HANDSOME, HOPEFUL, HUMOROUS [...] SHOULD SEEK THESE EXPERIENCES. THIS ELITISM IS TOTALLY SELF-DETERMINED. UNLESS YOU ARE SELF-CONFIDENT, SELF-DIRECTED, SELF-SELECTED, PLEASE ABSTAIN" (Stafford 1992: 28).

Leary never really stopped to encourage people to take psychedelics until the day he died. Although in the 70s his focus shifted from drugs to computers and space migration, he nevertheless continued to give lectures on psychedelic drugs. However, in the 70s, Leary gave up his plan to "turn on the whole world," but directed his teachings only to those people who were "ready to take the next step in human evolution"(cf. NP 90). Leary realized that LSD was not the magic cure-all (for social, political and neurological problems) he had thought it was. He realized that it was time to change and start looking for new methods to help us escape the narrow reality tunnels imposed on us by authorities. It was time to start looking for new methods that could help us to produce the ecstatic experience, that is, the experience of attaining freedom from all limitations.

As a final comment on this chapter I want to mention that now, in the 90s, LSD is making a comeback and young people, especially people from the "techno-rave" scene, are re-discovering Leary's "psychedelic guide books" from the 60s. The shelves in alternative bookstores in San Francisco and London, for example, are packed with new editions of Leary's books from the 60s.

3. *Exo-Psychology* (the 70s)

Technology governs change in human affairs while culture guards continuity. Hence technology is always disruptive and creates a crisis for culture. (Daniel Bell)¹

The Exo-Psychology phase is a transitional stage between Leary's LSD-phase (the 60s) in which Leary focuses on "inner space," and his computer-phase (the 80s and 90s) in which he focuses on cyberspace. The prefix "exo" in Exo-Psychology indicates that this "new branch of science" created by Leary has to do with things that are outside of ourselves: outer space. Exo-Psychology, which is also the title of one of Leary's books, is concerned with space migration. It is the "psychology of post-terrestrial existence"(Info 1). In the 70s, Leary was convinced that there was a trend in biological evolution on this planet from water, to shoreline, to land, to atmospheric flight. In his Exo-Psychology phase, Leary takes one step away from Eastern Philosophy and a step towards technology (especially computer technology, genetics, and biochemistry).

Leary describes his Exo-Psychology theory as "Science-Fiction, Philosophy of Science, PSY PHY." In order to understand what Leary means with this description let us look how he defines the term *science fiction*. In the introduction to *Neurologic* (Leary 1996, first published in 1973), Leary explains that, on the one hand, his theories are *scientific* because they are based on empirical data from physics, physiology, pharmacology, genetics, behaviorist psychology, and neurology. On the other hand, they are *fictional* in a Wittgensteinian sense that all theories and speculations beyond the mathematical propositions of natural science are subjective (cf. Leary 1996: 7). Leary points out that his Exo-Psychology theory does not give "final answers" but it can give us a lot of pleasure and make us feel free (cf. *ibid.*).

In the 70s, Leary had to spend a lot of time in prison. This period of time — when Leary was cut off from society and unable to change the system that kept him in prison — gave him a different, more pessimistic perspective on life. Life on planet earth did not seem to evolve to higher levels of being like Leary had expected. The 60s revolution was over. Leary realized that it was just not enough to "look within," "return to nature," and assume that "all is one"(cf. Info 68f.). In Leary's opinion the hippies had made an important step in human evolution: They knew how to "accept the rapture of direct sensation" and lead a hedonic life style; they had learned how to control their nervous systems and how to change social imprints and conditioning. But, according to Leary, the ability to change your imprints is useless if you do not know what to re-imprint.

In *Exo-Psychology*, Leary describes the drug culture of the 60s as "wingless butterflies" who were "spaced out", "high", but "with no place to go" (cf. Info 61). What Leary means is that you just cannot go on living in the moment forever. He points out that the hippies had evolved "beyond terrestrial attachments" and "detached themselves from larval symbols" but their problem was that they had no direction in life (cf. Info 67). Where should they go? What should they re-imprint into their nervous systems? In his rather disgruntled state of mind Leary wrote that many of the ex-hippies tried to escape this existential vacuum by "grasping at any transcendental straw – magic, occultism, chanting, witchcraft, telepathy, guru-ism, mystical Christianity [...] the endless variety of oriental charlatanism"(Info 68), but it was all in vain because "inner space is a dead end"(cf. *ibid.*). According to Leary, the hippies' tragic flaw was that they rejected science and technology. Leary argues that things like psychedelic drugs, the DNA structure, and also new types of technology for space-travel were not discovered by sheer chance.

¹ quoted in Bukatman 1993: 3

They would show us the way to the next phase in human evolution bringing us one step closer to our final destination, that is, the final destination of life.²

In his Exo-Psychology works, Leary suggests that the course of evolution of life on this planet is predetermined and that practically all scientific discoveries would indicate that the next step in human evolution is space migration. In *The Intelligence Agents* (1979, 1996), Leary writes that in the course of history the “genetic frontier” (the best developed culture in terms of technology and intelligence) has moved from the East to the West. East to West means past to future. According to Leary, the East (India, China) was the genetic frontier 3000 years ago. In the sixteenth century, the Enlightenment, Europe was the genetic frontier. In 1976, the West Coast of North America was the genetic frontier (cf. Leary 1996: 177ff.). (Leary calls this area the Sun Belt. The Sun Belt encompasses a crescent of “Migrating Higher Intelligence that stretches from Mountain View, California at the Northwest; through Southern California, Arizona and New Mexico; to Cape Canaveral, Florida at the Southwest.”) The West Coast of America would be the last terrestrial frontier; from there we would move to outer space (cf. *ibid.*). To put it in a nutshell: For Leary, technological innovation means intelligence and independence. West means evolution and change. The “genetic runway” along which gene-pools “accelerate to Escape Velocity” runs from East to West.

Now how is the next phase of human evolution going to look like? What is the aim of life? What is our final destination? How do we get there? In his Exo-Psychology theory, Leary gives answers to these questions. He offers us a model of the evolution of humanity and life in general which is supposed show us the way to a better future and (of course) higher levels of consciousness.

3.1. S.M.I.²L.E. to fuse with the Higher Intelligence

According to Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory, we have come to a point in human evolution where all the “terrestrial goals” — the most important of which are bio-survival, territorial expansion, national security, technological efficiency, and “consumer-cultural television homogeneity” — have more or less been achieved (cf. NP 142). At the same time, centralized civilization has produced various technologies which seem to “point us upwards away from the heavy pull of gravity.” Leary suggests that new developments for space-flight as well as the discovery of psychedelic drugs (which would enable us to experience a world where gravity does not exist, thus preparing us for life in outer space) are an indication that there is a trend in biological evolution on this planet from water, to shoreline, to land, to atmospheric flight (outer space, the “new frontier”). In Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory, political and cultural phenomena like war, enslavement, or centralization are seen as “necessary preludes” to the next phase in human evolution which is space migration.

According to Leary, the nature of human evolution is paradoxical. For example, there is the Centralization Paradox. Although centralization limits our freedom, it would be necessary to link up in centralized collectives if we want to attain “the ultimate freedom of space existence” and “the velocity to escape the planet.” Without centralized governments and a “diligent, competent, mechanically efficient middle-class” we would not be able to mobilize the technologies we need for space migration. The same paradox could be found if we look at the phenomenon of war. Leary explains that wars – especially the two World Wars and the Cold War – seem absurd “until we understand that the genetic purpose of the conflict[s] was to stimulate the development of radar, rocketry, synthetic chemistry, atomic fission, [...] and, most important, computers[.]” (NP 141). Leary argues that centralization, wars, and the

² In the early 70s, the Apollo-Saturn space missions and the first skylab — this was in 1973 — seemed to open a promising new frontier. Obviously, Leary was deeply impressed by these new developments because he became obsessed with space migration. The idea that salvation might be found in outer space occurred to Leary during the time when he was in prison. Several chapters of his Exo-psychology works were written during periods of solitary confinement. In the introduction to *Neuropolitique* — which was written in the 80s and is a revision of *Neuropolitics* — Leary admits that in prison he felt alienated from the whole world. This alienation and the fact that he was unable to change the system which deprived him of his freedom was the reason for his longing for the freedom, happiness, and the endless possibilities that outer space seemed to offer.

consumer-cultural TV homogeneity of our post-industrial society are all dead ends. However, they are inevitable steps to get to the next phase in human evolution which is space migration.

Anyway, why should we migrate to space at all? According to Leary, the main reason for space migration is not overpopulation, or a shortage of energy. In his Exo-Psychology theory, Leary suggests that somewhere in outer space there is a “Higher Intelligence” which, a long time ago, sent a message to our planet in form of the DNA, the genetic code. He writes, “[L]ife was seeded on this womb-planet in form of amino-acid templates designed to be activated by solar radiation and to unfold in a series of genetic molts and metamorphoses”(Info 16). Now what does that mean? It means that actually all life forms on our planet are “alien immigrants from outer space” and that evolution of the various species unfolds according to the same pre-determined plan. According to Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory, life is designed to migrate from the “womb-planet” (Leary speculates that there might be other unknown womb-planets with life on it), seek this Higher Intelligence, and try to fuse with “Hir”³ again. The tactics in order to achieve this final goal would be S.M.I.²L.E., which means “space migration” (@@@S.M.), “intelligence increase” (@@@I.²), and “life extension” (@@@L.E.) (cf. NP 143–45). (This acronym can be found printed several times on every page of every single book that Leary wrote in the 70s to remind the reader of the purpose of life.) Intelligence increase would be a necessary prerequisite for space migration and life extension. Psychedelic drugs would help us to enhance our intelligence, and it would not take long until scientists are able to decipher the genetic (DNA) code and extend our life spans.

In “H.O.M.E.S. A Real Estate Proposal,” an essay co-written with cyberneticist George A. Koopman (NP 157–70), Leary suggests the construction of “space H.O.M.E.s” (High Orbital Mini Earths) as “a practical step to explore and activate new resources – internal and external to the nervous system” (NP 159). These space H.O.M.E.s would “open up unexploited territories, new energy sources, and new stimulation for the brain” (ibid.). As far as the “unexploited” territories are concerned, Leary explains that

We must not cringe from the word “exploitation.” At every stage of information/energy the laws of nature seem to require new and more complex engagements of elements to accelerate the evolutionary process. We **must** exploit every new level of energy in order to build the structures to reach the next cycle. The embryo ruthlessly exploits the supplies of the maternal body. The derogatory flavor of the word “exploit” has been added by reactionary political groups who wish to slow down the expansion of energy. Rhetoric aside, there has never been an example of a surviving-evolving species which did not **use all energies** available to it. Nothing can stop the surge towards Space Migration (NP 159).

It should be mentioned here that Leary’s idea of the construction of a space colony that opens up unexploited territories was inspired by Princeton physicist Gerard O’Neill’s book *The High Frontier* and the L-5 Society (cf. NP 157). In *The High Frontier*, O’Neill calls for the establishment of an orbital colony equidistant between the earth and the moon at a gravitationally stable point known as Lorange Point 5. In response to O’Neill’s call the L-5 Society was founded (cf. Dery 1996: 36). The members of this society believed that the L-5 colony would help humanity to escape from ecological pollution, resource depletion, poverty, and collectivism (cf. ibid.). The difference between the vision of the L-5 Society and Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory is that the L-5 Society was interested only in the social, ecological, and material implications of space migration, whereas Leary saw space migration as a necessary step towards self-realization, enlightenment, immortality, and “fusion with the Higher Intelligence.”

In Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory, the evolution of life and humanity (past, as well as future) is described in terms of the evolution of the nervous system. Now, how did the human nervous system evolve and how is it structured? Leary assumes that our nervous systems consist of eight “potential circuits”, or “gears”, or “mini-brains” which have evolved in the course of evolution. Leary describes the

³ Leary introduces the generic term „Hir“ (i.e., a combination of „his“ and „her“) because in the Higher Intelligence he is talking about male and female are united.

evolution of the nervous system in his model of the Eight Circuits of Consciousness. Before an outline of Leary's model of the Eight Circuits of Consciousness is given, it is necessary to make a short excursion into the field of conditioning psychology. Leary says that if we want to understand his Exo-psychology theory and the model of the Eight Circuits of Consciousness we first have to understand the concept of imprinting and that there is a crucial difference between the phenomenon of imprinting and other forms of learning, especially conditioning. (The reader already knows that Leary is interested in the biological phenomenon of "neural imprinting" very much, and that he thinks that imprints can be suspended and changed by using certain psychoactive chemicals.)

3.2. Imprinting and conditioning

The understanding of the concepts of "imprinting" and "conditioning" and the difference between these two phenomena is the crucial point in Leary's Exo-psychology theory. Leary uses these concepts to explain the miserable socio-political situation on our planet, and to back his hypothesis that the only way for a "domesticated middle-class person" to arbitrarily change his or her "reality" is to apply psychedelic drugs.

In *Exo-Psychology*, Leary explains that it is a well known fact in psychology and ethology (the comparative study of animal behavior) that there are certain brief "critical periods" in a human being's life during which imprints are made. One of these critical periods is the time soon after a baby or animal is born. If the baby does not develop a basic feeling of trust towards his or her mother during this short "critical period" — which in Leary's jargon means that the infant's first circuit is negatively imprinted to his/her mother — he/she will never be able to develop this basic feeling of trust (see Bio-survival circuit). The same applies to animals. If birds are handled by an experimenter during their first few hours of life, they thereafter react to him/her and to other human beings as they normally would to their parents, and they reflect their real parents. During this critical period, which is the first of several critical periods in a person's life, a basic attitude of trust or distrust is set up which will ever after trigger approach or avoidance (cf. Info 40).

What is the difference between imprinting and conditioning? The three major forms of conditioning are: Classical conditioning (main exponent: Ivan Pavlov), Instrumental conditioning, and Operant conditioning (main exponent: B. F. Skinner). Leary explains that they are forms of learning which are based on repeated reward and punishment. Imprinting, however, is a form of learning which does not require repetition. "The most fascinating aspect of imprinting is this; the original selection of the external stimulus [e.g. mother] which triggers off the pre-designed response [e.g. trust] does not derive from a normal learning process but a short exposure during a brief, specific 'critical period' [...]" (Info 40). In contrast to all other learning processes, imprinting is immediate and — which is even more important — irreversible. As Leary put it: "*The imprint requires no repeated reward or punishment. The neural fix is permanent. Only bio-chemical shock [drugs or trauma] can loosen the neuro-umbilical lines. The conditioned association, on the contrary, wanes and disappears with lack of repetition [my italics]*" (Info 51). To help his readers to get a better understanding of the primary role of the imprint and the secondary role of the conditioned association Leary mentions Ivan Pavlov's classic study with a dog as an example (everybody knows this experiment): In Pavlov's study the flow of saliva in the dog's mouth is an unconditioned, unlearned response. The imprint hooks an unconditioned response (flow of saliva) to an external stimulus, or releaser mechanism (food placed in the dog's mouth), so that the dog always automatically produces saliva when food is in his mouth. However, the association between the sight of food and the food in the mouth, or between a ringing bell and food, has to be learned by the dog. This is where conditioning comes in. Conditioned stimuli like the ringing bell are associated with the imprinted stimulus which is the food in the dog's mouth.

It is important to mention that, according to Leary, *conditioning cannot change an imprint*. "Trying to recondition an imprint with reward-punishment is like dropping a single grain of sand on a forged

steel pattern,” as Leary expresses it. By applying psychological conditioning techniques we would be able to temporarily change a person’s behavior. However, as soon as the conditioned person is left to his/her own devices he/she would drift back to the “magnetism of the imprint” and to his/her “genetic-robot style” which is determined by the DNA (cf. Info 54). Leary argues that psychedelics can help us to “recast” the different circuits. With psychedelics we can re-imprint new realities and activate new, higher circuits of consciousness. How exactly do these higher circuits Leary talks about look like?⁴

3.3. The Eight Circuits of Consciousness

I have already mentioned that Leary assumes that our nervous systems consist of eight “potential circuits”, or “gears”, or “mini-brains.” Where are these “mini-brains” located and what is their function? According to Leary, four of these “brains” are in the left lobe, which is usually active, and are concerned with our terrestrial survival; four are “extraterrestrial,” reside in the ‘silent’ or inactive right lobe, and are for use in our future evolution (cf. Leary 1988: 88). In his model of the Eight Circuits of Consciousness, which is described in his books *Neuropolitics* (1977a) and *Exo-Psychology* (1977b), Leary explains how these circuits, or mini-brains, evolved in the course of evolution. Each of these eight circuits corresponds to one of the eight neurological phases in evolution. In Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory the definition of consciousness is the same as in the theory of the Seven Levels of consciousness. Consciousness is defined as “energy received by structure” (in the human being the structures are the neural circuits and their anatomical connections).

(The reader will notice that this model of The Eight Circuits of Consciousness is an elaboration of the model of the Seven Levels of Consciousness.⁵ Leary reversed the numerical order of the different levels and split up the Mental-social-symbolic Level.)

1. The Bio-Survival Circuit (*trust/distrust*):

In the essay “From Outer World to Inner World to Inner Space to Outer Space” (NP 87–99), written together with philosopher and science fiction writer Robert Anton Wilson, Leary explains this circuit, or brain, which can be found in the most primitive life forms and is the first circuit activated in the newborn baby as follows:

This marine or vegetative brain was the first to evolve (billion years ago) and is the first activated at birth. It programs perception onto an either-or grid divided into nurturing-helpful Things (which it approaches) and noxious-dangerous Things (which it flees, or attacks). The imprinting of this circuit sets up the basic attitude of trust or suspicion which will last for life (NP 88).

When Leary talks about the new born child, in which the first brain is activated, he puts very much emphasis on the process of imprinting (that is why I have explained this process in a rather detailed way). He points out that the first imprinting process, during which a basic attitude of trust or distrust is set up, will ever after trigger approach or avoidance. If the baby does not develop a basic feeling of

⁴ To avoid confusion, I want to tell the reader that I was not able to get the books *Exo-Psychology* and *Neuropolitics*. They are out of print. The books I use as sources for describing the model of the Eight Circuits of Consciousness are *Info-Psychology*(1990), a revision of *Exo-Psychology*(1977b), and *Neuropolitique*(1995), which is a revision of *Neuropolitics*(1977a). These revised versions contain the most important essays of Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory in an unchanged form, which means that they do not differ from the original versions published in the 70s.

⁵ In *Exo-Psychology*, Leary subdivides the 8 neurological phases of evolution in 24 stages (8x3) of biological-neurological evolution. Furthermore, in another book titled *The Game of Life* (1977c) Leary tries to correlate the 8 phases, or 24 stages, with the chemical Periodic Table of Elements, the Tarot, the Zodiac, the I Ching, the Greco-Roman Pantheon, the Hebrew alphabet, and other symbol systems. I do not want to discuss these 24 stages and the correspondences between Leary’s 8-fold model and the other systems (all based on the number 8) in detail because these things are not of crucial importance for my paper.

trust towards his/her mother during the short critical period during which the first imprint is made, he/she will never be able to develop this basic feeling of trust towards her mother and he/she will never be able to fully trust his/her partner(s) and friends in life either.

2. The Emotional-Territorial Circuit (*assertiveness/submissiveness*):

According to Leary, this second, more advanced “bio-computer” formed when vertebrates appeared and began to compete for territory (perhaps 500,000,000 B.C.). In the individual, this circuit, which corresponds to a bigger “tunnel reality” than the reality of Circuit One, is activated when “the DNA master-tape triggers the metamorphosis from crawling to walking” (cf. NP 88). Leary explains:

As every parent knows, the toddler is no longer a passive (bio-vegetative) infant but a mammalian politician, full of physical (and emotional) territorial demands, quick to meddle in family business and decision-making. Again the first imprint on this circuit remains constant for life (unless brainwashed) and identifies the stimuli which automatically trigger dominant, aggressive behavior or submissive, cooperative behavior. When we say a person is behaving emotionally, egoistically or ‘like a two-year-old’, we mean that SHe [sic] is blindly following one of the robot imprints on this circuit (NP 88f.).

In popular speech the second circuit is called “ego.” The “ego” is “the second circuit mammalian sense of status (importance-unimportance) in the pack or tribe” (NP 89). Leary points out that politicians live in a second circuit “reality tunnel” because their only goals are territorial expansion and control over others.

3. The Dexterity-Symbolism Circuit (*cleverness/clumsiness*):

Leary writes that this brain was formed when “hominoid types began to differentiate from other primate stock” (circa 4–5 million years ago). It is activated in the individual when the older child begins “handling artifacts and sending/receiving laryngeal signals (human speech units)” (NP 89). This circuit discloses the symbolic, conceptual and linguistic world. Leary writes, “If the environment is stimulating to the third circuit, the child takes a ‘bright’ imprint and becomes dextrous and articulate; if the environment is made of deliberately stupid people, the child takes a ‘dump’ imprint, i.e. remains more or less at a stage of symbol-blindness” (ibid.). This circuit determines our “normal modes of artifact-manufacture” and conceptual thought. It is made for understanding and using language and thinking logically-scientifically. As Leary puts it, “The third brain or ‘mind’ is hooked into human culture and deals with life through a matrix of human made gadgets and human-created symbolism” (ibid.).

According to Leary, it is the Third Brain that created the mechanical civilization which began in the Neolithic and climaxed in Henry Ford’s assembly line. The Third Brain also produced Behaviorist psychology (not Humanistic psychology!), and Newtonian mechanistic ‘visible’ physics (not Einsteinian concepts!). By pointing out the limitations of the Third Brain’s mechanistic-Behavioristic way of thinking, Leary wants to show that a person who lives in a Third Circuit “tunnel reality” will never be able to understand how to change basic imprints, that is, to change a his/her “reality.”

According to Leary, the “crowning philosophy of the Third Circuit society” is Operant conditioning, or “Skinnerism,” as Leary calls it (B. F. Skinner is the founder of the school of Operant conditioning)⁶.

⁶ Why Operant conditioning and not Classical conditioning? There is a crucial difference between Classical and Operant conditioning. In Classical conditioning the animal, or person is passive; it merely waits until the unconditioned stimulus is presented and is followed by the unconditioned stimulus. Pavlov’s dog, for example, is not encouraged to show new behavior. In Operant conditioning, the animal, or person, has to be active; its/his/her behavior cannot be reinforced unless it does something. A large part of human behavior may be classified as operant – turning a key in a lock, driving a car, writing a letter. Such activities are not elicited by an unconditioned stimulus of the Pavlovian type. But once the behavior occurs it can be reinforced according to the principles of Operant conditioning. Operant conditioning is often applied in politics and education .

Leary defines Operant conditioning as “the final philosophic statement of the puritanical protestant-ethic manipulators who dominated the world for 400 years up to Hiroshima”(Info 49).

Leary defines two main groups of technocrats who are trying to use “Third Circuit conditioning techniques” to change the behavior of their fellow citizens: “Right-wing punitive coercers” and “liberal rewarders”. According to Leary, the attempts of both of these groups of bureaucrats are futile because they attempt to re-condition rather than re-imprint:

Punitive coercion [the method applied by right-wing punitive coercers] works only as long as the threat remains and thus requires a police state.

The liberal social psychologists [liberal rewarders] believe that they can change behavior by democratic, supportive, egalitarian education methods. Head-start programs. Peace Corps. [...] Tutoring. Scholarship payments. Insight therapies. Mental health methods.

These liberal approaches fail to effect change and serve only to support the “humanist” welfare bureaucracy (Info 51f.).

Leary argues that a regime based on social conditioning can only work if the government psychologists have total control over the citizenry and if the method of conditioning is a government secret. Such a “social conditioning regime” would not be possible in a democracy where minority groups can campaign against and publicly discuss the techniques being used (cf. Info 53f.).

4. The Socio-Sexual Circuit:

This circuit determines what in a specific culture is considered to be sexually normal and morally right. Leary describes how it evolved:

The fourth brain was formed when hominid packs evolved into societies and programmed specific sex-roles for their members (circa 30,000 B. C.). In the individual it is activated at puberty when the DNA signals trigger the glandular release of sexual neurochemicals and the metamorphosis to adulthood begins.[...] The fourth brain, dealing with the transmission of tribal or ethnic culture across generations, introduces the fourth dimension, time – binding cultures (NP 89–91).

As far as sex-roles are concerned, Leary holds that our first sexual experiences imprint a characteristic sex-role which, again, is bio-chemically bonded and remains constant for life (unless brain-washing or chemical re-imprinting is accomplished). The sex role imprinted in a person’s brain does not always coincide with that which is accepted by society. Leary points out that perversions, fetishes, and other eccentric sexual imprints are usually defined as “sinful” by the local tribe (cf. NP 90).

In most people these four circuits are the only networks of the brain that are activated. Leary notes that this is the reason why their way of thinking is rather inflexible. Their logic follows the primitive either/or binary structures of the four circuits: forward/backward @@@ trust/distrust, up/down @@@ assertiveness/submissiveness, clever/clumsy, good/evil. Leary calls these circuits “terrestrial” because “they have evolved on, and have been shaped by, the gravitational, climatic and energy conditions determining survival and reproduction of gene-pools on a planet like ours.” (Leary hypothesizes that there might be more intelligent individuals evolving in space who would definitely develop circuits different from our “inflexibly Euclidean” ones.)

According to Leary, each of the first four circuits can be arbitrarily activated by a certain type of drug (first circuit drug: opiates; second circuit drug: alcohol; third circuit drug: coffee, fourth circuit drug: sexual hormones produced by adolescents in puberty). Leary calls these drugs “terrestrial drugs.” Leary explains that *none of these “terrestrial drugs” can change basic biochemical imprints.* They can only trigger behavioral patterns and thought patterns that were wired into the nervous system during the first stages of imprint vulnerability.

Let us now look at the four “extraterrestrial circuits” and the “extraterrestrial drugs” that can activate them. The extraterrestrial circuits are levels of reality beyond the socially conditioned. Leary notes that the experience of these extraterrestrial circuits/realities normally causes confusion and fear among people who have never before transcended the four basic larval reality-tunnels, because they are not designed to be understood by “larval psychology” (cf. Info 60).

What are the four extraterrestrial circuits?

5. The Neurosomatic Circuit:

Leary explains this circuit as follows:

When this fifth “body-brain” is activated, flat Euclidean figure-ground configurations explode multi-dimensionally. Gestalt shift, in McLuhan’s terms, from linear *visual space* to all-encompassing *sensory space*. A hedonic turn-on occurs. [...]

This fifth brain began to appear about 4,000 years ago in the first leisure-class civilization and has been increasing statistically in recent centuries (even before the Drug Revolution), a fact demonstrated by the hedonic art of India, China, Rome and other affluent societies. [...]

The opening and imprinting of this circuit has been the preoccupation of “technicians of the occult” – Tantric shamans and hatha yogis. While the fifth tunnel-reality can be achieved by sensory deprivation, social isolation, physiological stress or severe shock (ceremonial terror tactics, as practiced by such rascal-gurus as Don Juan Matus [described in Carlos Castaneda’s books] or Aleister Crowley), it has traditionally been reserved to the educated aristocracy of leisure societies who have solved the four terrestrial survival problems.

About 20,000 years ago, the specific fifth brain neurotransmitter was discovered by shamans [...]. It is, of course, cannabis (NP 90).

As far as the evolutionary aspect of this circuit is concerned, Leary points out that it is no accident that people who use cannabis (the drug that opens up the Fifth Circuit) refer to their neural states as “high” or “spaced out.” For Leary, the transcendence of gravitational, linear, either-or, Euclidean, planetary orientations (circuits 1–4), experienced with the help of cannabis, is part of our neurological preparation for the inevitable migration off our home planet. According to Leary, the West Coast of the US (California, the last terrestrial frontier) is the area with the highest percentage of people living in a Fifth Circuit post-political, hedonistic reality (cf. Leary 1996: 176–79).

However, this hedonistic level of consciousness is just a transitional stage which prepares us for the next circuit which is exclusively designed for post terrestrial existence.

6. The Neuroelectric-Metaprogramming Circuit:

This is the level of consciousness on which the nervous system becomes aware of itself, apart from the “gravitational reality-maps” (circuits 1–4) and from circuit-five-body-rapture. Leary calls this state of consciousness “consciousness of abstracting” (a term borrowed from the semanticist Alfred Korzybski), or “meta-programming,” that is, awareness of programming one’s programming (this term was coined by John Lilly in *Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Bio-Computer*). When we activate this circuit we become aware that what we accepted as reality is actually just a program ‘fed’ into our bio-computers (brains). The person who activates this “Einsteinian, relativistic” circuit realizes that the Euclidean, Newtonian, Aristotelian reality-maps are just three among billions of possible programs or models of experience (cf. NP 93). On this level of consciousness “mammalian politics”, which have to do power struggles among “terrestrial humanity” are seen as static and artificial.

Leary explains that the nervous system is constructed in a way that it is capable of self-reflection. That is why it is capable of understanding and controlling its own functioning. What this means is that

everybody can create his/her own realities if he/she knows how the nervous system works. As far as Leary is concerned, it is no longer necessary to describe the opening of this circuit with the paradoxical terms used in Eastern philosophy — “Non-Self,” “No-Mind,” or “White Light of the Void.” The Einstein revolution in physics, discoveries in neurology and pharmacology, and computer linguistics would allow us to describe the Sixth Circuit functioning in operational and functional terms as *the nervous system metaprogramming the nervous system or serially re-imprinting itself* (cf. NP 94).

What exactly happens when we access the Neuroelectric Circuit? When the Sixth Circuit is activated, the nervous system “real-izes” that it is a “transceiver” (transmitter and receiver) for bio-electric frequencies (electromagnetic signals). Leary says that the use of the Neuroelectric Circuit had to await the development of electronic and atomic technology to provide the language and models that allow us to understand and activate it (cf. Info 112). Only now that we begin to understand and use invisible electromagnetic processes could we learn how to operate our own circuitry.

The evolutionary function of the Sixth Circuit would be communication – not normal (Third Circuit) speech or symbols on paper, but communication on the electromagnetic level, at the speed of light, between two or more “contelligences” operating at the Sixth Circuit. (Leary uses the term “contelligence,” a combination of consciousness-intelligence, to describe people who are on a higher level of consciousness.) Since Circuit-Six-communication is electronic, it demands that we are able to use computers. Leary explains that this mode of communication, which will enable us to connect our nervous systems with computers, will be necessary for our interstellar existence: “Electro-magnetic-gravitational processes are the meat and potatoes of galactic life. The vibratory-transceiver nature of the brain, useless to the larval [a person who uses only circuits 1–4], is very necessary in space. Telepathy, Brain-computer links. Brain-radio connections” (Info 113).

Leary points out that one of the most important characteristics of Circuit-Six-communication is that it (necessarily) is erotic. Leary explains: “[Six-Circuit-communication] is Brain-Intercourse. Electronic sexuality. Reception and transmission of thought waves. The erotics of resonance. The entire universe is gently, rhythmically, joyously vibrating. Cosmic intercourse”(NP 121). Only if we take the crucial step from “larval earth-life” to the next stage (Circuit Six) would we be able to experience what “Higher Love” means, namely the “electronic connection of nervous systems, making love to each other over galactic distances of neurological time [sich einander liebend über galaktische Distanzen neurologischer Zeit]”(translated back into English from the German version of Leary’s *Neurologic*, which was first published in 1973; Leary 1996: 42).

Is there a specific drug that can open the Neuroelectric Circuit? Yes, the drug that makes us aware that the things that normally seem to be solid are actually electromagnetic vibrations is LSD. However, Leary warns us that

Neuro-electric drugs like LSD are not designed for terrestrial life and are rightly considered dangerous by larval moralists. The Sixth Circuit is designed for extra-terrestrial life – and its activation by drugs at the present time is in preparation for migration. Neurophysical drugs *can* be used by neurologicians to “cure” ineffective childhood imprints. LSD-type drugs used for treatment or for pre-flight training should be administered by knowledgeable experts who understand the principles of re-imprinting and who have experiential control of their own nervous system. *The hedonic “party” use of LSD is a risky business* [my italics](Info 114).

(This quotation shows that in the 70s Leary apparently realized that LSD is a dangerous drug.)

7. The Neurogenetic Circuit:

By activating the sixth circuit we escape the narrow reality-tunnels of the four terrestrial circuits. However, the sixth circuit does not enable us to receive signals from within the individual neuron where

the DNA is located. In order to be able to read the DNA code we would have to activate the Neurogenetic Circuit. Leary believes that the first people who were able to receive signals from the DNA were yogis (Hindus, Sufis, etc) who spoke of re-experiencing past lives, reincarnation, and immortality. According to Leary's Exo-Psychology theory, the DNA memory contains information about the whole evolution (our past lives as well as the future of evolution).

What is the function of the DNA? According to Leary, the growth and function of the nervous system as well as the rest of the body is predetermined by the DNA code: "DNA designs and constructs the nervous system and maintains supervisory and re-constructive communication with somatic cells and neurons mediated by RNA"(Info 120). Leary considers the DNA code to be something which is immortal because it is the only thing that has survived in the long chain of evolution. The goal of life, in Leary's Exo-psychology theory, is immortality or fusion with the Higher Intelligence. Leary argues that *immortality is attained through control of the DNA*. Psychedelic drugs like LSD would enable the nervous system to decipher the genetic code. By identifying with this "genetic intelligence", which means that we imprint the DNA reality in our nervous system, we would be able to become immortal (cf. Info 122).

8. The Neuroatomic Circuit:

The "genetic intelligence"(seventh circuit) is "the immortal, invisible soul that outlives the body," writes Leary. But where does the DNA come from? Who created the DNA? Leary admits that he does not have a final answer to this question. He speculates that the answer to this question could be found if we go further on into the microscopic physical world. In *Exo-Psychology*, he suggests that sub-nuclear events inside each atom determine the elemental processes of life:

On the basis of the scientific evidence now at hand, the best answer to the Higher Intelligence Creator question comes from the frontiers of nuclear physics and quantum mechanics. The basic energies, the meta-physiological contelligence is probably located within the nucleus of the atom. [...] Physicists are currently studying the sub-nuclear realm to identify the high-velocity particles which make up the language of energy. [...] Exo-psychology seeks to provide the concepts which allow nuclear physicists to *personalize* sub-nuclear events [by activating the Eighth Circuit] so that they can be experienced" (Info 126).

In order to back his speculations Leary quotes physicist and philosopher Nick Herbert who argues that the sub-atomic world must be "non-local", which means that it does not obey the laws of space and time and that in this world the speed of light barrier is transcended (cf. Info 130f.). (The interested reader is referred to "Bell's theorem," a principle of quantum physics, which is used by to back the idea of "non-locality"(see Capra 1982)).

In *Exo-Psychology*, Leary explains that at the Neuroatomic level the basic energies which comprise all structure in the universe are available for management: "The metaphysiological contelligence constructs atoms, DNA chains, molecules, neurons; sculpts, designs, architects all forms of matter by manipulating nuclear particles and gravitational force fields"(Info 129). The "Neuroatomic Contelligence" no longer needs bodies, neurons, and DNA designs. It is a "metaphysiological brain." According to Leary, this metaphysiological contelligence is the Higher Intelligence (God?) which created life and the DNA. It is the entire "cosmic brain" (just as the DNA helix is the local brain guiding planetary evolution). It is "ourselves-in-the-future" (cf. NP 98).

According to Leary, science (nuclear physics, genetics) and technology (computers, psychedelics, technology for space travel) will help us to reach this final stage of evolution, but we have still a long way to go.

3.4. Neuropolitics: *Representative government replaced by an “electronic nervous system”*

In Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory, in which the evolution of the nervous system from its terrestrial-mechanical stages to its post-terrestrial-individualistic stages is described, technology plays an important role. The function of technology is that it aids our evolution. It helps us to activate the higher circuits of the nervous system. Leary puts much emphasis on the sixth stage of evolution, in which the Neuroelectric Circuit is activated.

I have already mentioned that the function of the sixth circuit is communication – not normal speech or symbols on paper, but communication on the electromagnetic level between two or more people operating at the sixth circuit. According to Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory, electronic-communication technology (telephone, TV, computer networks, etc) can help us to activate the Neuroelectric Circuit.

In *Neuropolitics*, we find two interesting essays which deal with the political implications of electronic-communication-technology. The essays are titled “The Fall of Representative Government”(NP 45f.) and “The Return of Individual Sovereignty”(NP 47–49) (both written in 1973 when Leary was in prison). In “The Fall of Representative Government,” Leary, who has always been against governments, argues that with the emergence of electronic-communication-technology any form of representative government (one person is selected to represent others) becomes outmoded. As Leary put it: “Representative government as practiced today is a brief and now outmoded historical phase designed to bridge the period between the rise of industrial states and the emergence of globe-linking electrical-electronic communication”(NP 45). According to Leary, the process of selecting representatives to govern is a relic of the horse-drawn slave-holding culture which produced the American Constitution. Leary argues that the articles in the American Constitution which set up the mechanics of government are dangerously archaic:

Senators elected every six years to represent two million people? A president elected every four years to represent 140 million people? This slow, cumbersome system was necessary when it took two weeks for the news to travel from New Orleans to Boston. Representative government by strangers and political party partisanship is outdated. Most Americans have never met their representative – indeed do not know his name. Government by law is an unworkable bureaucratic cliché(NP 46).

Leary tries to make us aware that we have all been “robot-trained” – with the help of history books which are self-serving and the print media which are used by political leaders to manipulate us – to believe that elective democracy is something sacred. He wants us to realize that the times of centralized governments, when politicians were able to control people with the help of technology, are over. Politicians are no longer able to keep the methods they apply secret from the people. Technology can be used to reduce individual freedom and to enhance the power of politicians controlling centralized governments, but only if the people do not know the methods applied by authoritarian technocrats. One dissident electronic-media expert, however, would be able to “jam the system”(cf. NP 47). Leary argues that more and more people are learning to use the electronic media for their personal empowerment. As more and more people are learning to use electronic technology to govern themselves according to the laws of information, competitive politics are dying (cf. NP 49).

Instead of the “outdated and cumbersome” American political system in which one president elected every four years represented 140 million people, Leary suggests a new political model:

The political model should be based on the nervous system: 140 billion neurons each hooked to an electric network. Electronic communication makes possible direct participatory democracy. Every citizen has a voting card which he or she inserts in voting machine and central computer registers and harmonize the messages from every component part. Neurological politics eliminates parties, politicians, campaigns, campaign expenditures. The citizen votes

like a neuron fires when it has a signal to communicate. The voices of the citizenry continually inform civil service technicians who carry out the will, not of the majority (a vicious and suicidal elevation of the mediocrity) but of each citizen (NP 46).

Leary's model of an "electronic nervous system" is based on the assumption that every citizen has a personal computer which is connected to a worldwide electronic network (cf. *ibid.*). This worldwide electronic network in which every individual can express his or her opinion would help us to create a new governmental structure which "gets the country alive and laughing again"(cf. NP 49). However, Leary does not explain in detail how this governmental system without parties and politicians is supposed to function.

As far as the idea of a global "electronic nervous system" is concerned, it has to be mentioned that Leary seems to have been influenced by Global Village prophet Marshall McLuhan very much. It was already in the early 60s when McLuhan came up with the idea that electric circuitry is an extension of the human nervous system (McLuhan 1964: 1). This idea is based on the concept that "all media [i.e. technologies] are extensions of some human faculty – psychic or physical"(McLuhan 1967)⁷. For example, the photo is an extension of the eye, the wheel an extension of the foot, etc. "With electricity [radio, television, computers, etc] we extend our nervous systems globally, instantly interrelating every human experience"(*ibid.*). McLuhan predicted that electronic technology would reshape and restructure patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal lives. By involving us in other people's actions and thoughts, electronic technology would end psychic, social, economic, and political self-centeredness (cf. *ibid.*). A new form of "politics" would be emerging because "the living room has become a voting booth"(*ibid.*) "In the electric age, when our nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of our every action," writes McLuhan in *Understanding Media*(McLuhan 1964: 4). According to McLuhan, every new medium introduces a change of human perception (focus-shift from one sense to other), association and action. This means that our ways of thinking and perceiving the world are always determined by the medium we use. McLuhan coined the phrase "the medium is the message" which expresses his idea that it is the medium, not the content, that changes people's world views.

Leary does not mention McLuhan in his two essays that deal with the effects that electronic technology has on society and the individual. However, he uses McLuhan's famous phrase in a slightly different form: "The medium is the evolutionary message"(NP 49).

How did people in the 1970s react to Leary's early projections about computers and networking? His ideas about a global electronic network that connects people throughout the world elicited only ridicule. "He was literally laughed off the sets of TV news shows in the 1970s for predicting that most human beings would some day be sending one another 'messages through their word processors' and that the world would be linked together through a new 'electronic nervous system'," writes Douglas Rushkoff, writer and friend of Leary's (Rushkoff, Douglas. E-mail to the author. 11 Sep 1997)⁸. As far as Leary's advocacy for personal computers and the Internet in the 80s and 90s is concerned, many people in the cyber-movement (discussed in the next main chapter) and kids at rave-parties (Leary gave lectures on rave-parties) considered Leary to be only "jumping on their bandwagon" even though he was one of the first advocates of computers (cf. Rushkoff "Loved by Leary." *Psychedelic Island Views*. Vol. 2, Issue 2, (1996) p. 47.). They did not know that Leary began talking about computers as a means of culture-crossing communication already in the early 70s. (I want to make the reader aware that this was even before Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak marketed the first personal computer in 1976.)

⁷ In McLuhan's *The medium is the Message* (1967) the pages are not numbered. However, there are headings. The passages from *The Medium is the Message* I quote in this paragraph can be found under the headings "The medium is the message?" , „Your neighborhood", "Your government," and "the others."

⁸ I asked Rushkoff what Leary's impact was. He said that Leary's greatest influence was in seeing computers and the Internet as an extension of human beings. Attached to his email Rushkoff sent me an essay he wrote for the Guardian of London, "Timothy, Allen, and Bill: The Godfathers of Cyberspace" (date of publishing ???). The quotation above is from this article.

3.5. Better living through technology/*The impact of Leary's Exo-Psychology theory*

In the late 70s and early 80s, Leary's model of the Eight Levels of Consciousness and his vision of a post-terrestrial existence free from all limits (free from social and political limitations, as well as the limits of space, time, and the body) influenced quite a few "psychedelic philosophers" (discussed below) and a considerable number of young people interested in altered states of consciousness. Many young people in the early 80s, however, were not only interested in the drug-aspect of Leary's theory. They felt that Leary, by including technology into his vision of the future, helped them to define the new generation they were part of. Leary's Exo-Psychology theory offered these people who had decided to "leave the flower-power 60s behind" a new way to live with technology, to make it theirs. In the eyes of these people, Leary resolved the dichotomy between spirituality (the "inner quest") and science/technology (the "outer quest"). In *Exo-Psychology* and *Neuropolitics*, he shows that technology is not intrinsically evil; it can have a liberating effect as well. In *The Intelligence Agents*, Leary suggests that we should look westward for change because the East is stagnating. Leary was the one who made young psychedelic trippers and anti-technology-oriented (ex-) hippies aware of the fact that drugs were only a part of the continuing evolution of the human species towards enlightenment, and that the evolutionary purpose of technology was to help us on our "spiritual path" towards freedom, enlightenment, and immortality.

As far as psychedelic philosophers who were inspired by Leary's Eight Circuit model are concerned, there are at least two writers that have to be mentioned here: Robert Anton Wilson and Antero Alli. Both of these writers are not mainstream writers. Like Leary's books, their books could be placed somewhere between science fiction, psychology, sociology, philosophy, New Age and "underground." Robert Anton Wilson – who was a longtime collaborator with Leary and, like Leary, is a spokesman for the psychedelic culture — talks about Leary's model of the Eight Circuits of Consciousness in several of his books, for example in *Cosmic Trigger: The Final Secret of the Illuminati* (Wilson 1997, first published in 1977) and *Quantum Psychology* (Wilson 1996). He even wrote one book, *Prometheus Rising* (Wilson 1983), that deals exclusively with Leary's Eight Circuit model. By relating it to a great number of theories from the fields of psychology, philosophy, and atomic physics and adding new ideas about how to increase one's intelligence, Wilson develops Leary's model further. Leary claims that Robert Anton Wilson has interpreted his theories better than anybody else (cf. Stafford 1992: III-30). Wilson was influenced by Leary's Eight Circuit model very much. Now that Leary is dead Wilson continues to spread Leary's ideas. At the TRANSCENDANCE-conference in Brixton/England, in 1997, for example, Wilson spent half of his 90-minute talk on explaining Leary's Eight Circuit model.⁹

Angel Tech – A modern Shaman's Guide to Reality Selection (Alli 1990), written by Antero Alli, is also based on Leary's Eight Circuit model and offers the reader a great variety of ways to expand one's consciousness (not only the chemical solution that Leary suggests). The aim of the books I have mentioned in the last two paragraphs is basically the same as Leary's, namely to enable the individual to create his or her own realities.

It is hard to say how many young people were influenced by Leary's Eight Circuit model in the 1970s. Of course, there were some of the (ex-)hippies who still read Leary's books from the 60s. However, from the fact that Leary was not released from prison before 1976 and that his Exo-psychology works did not appear before 1977 it could be concluded that not many people knew what Leary was doing in the early 70s at all. Furthermore, the "LSD-boom" was over, so there was no need for an LSD-guru any more. But what about the late 70s when Leary went on lecture tours again? In *Fried Shoes, Cooked Diamonds* (Mystic Fire Video 1978), a documentary on the Beat poets, we can see that there was a considerable number of artists, students and people who were in some way associated with the Beat poets, who read

⁹ I attended this conference. In his lecture Wilson also said that, in his opinion, Leary's model is still the best model of human consciousness.

Leary's Exo-Psychology books. After his release from prison Leary spent a lot of time with the Beat poets. Whenever they gave seminars, the "Evolutionary Agent" Leary was also there lecturing on space migration, intelligence increase, and life extension. *Fried Shoes, Cooked Diamonds* (Mystic Fire Video 1978) shows one of these seminars with Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Timothy Leary, and other Beat poets.

In the 80s and 90s, Leary did not talk about his Exo-Psychology theory much any more¹⁰. However, in the 80s and 90s many young people became interested in this theory because they felt that Leary, by reconciling spirituality with science and technology, helped them to define the new techno-generation they were part of. In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary calls these people who grew up using computers to communicate and create their own digital realities "cyberpunks," or the "New Breed." (I will discuss the general characteristics of this new generation in the last main chapter of this paper.) I now want to talk about two prominent spokespeople of the cyberpunk counterculture who have been influenced by Leary's Exo-Psychology.

One important spokesman of cyberculture who was inspired by Leary's Exo-Psychology theory is R. U. Sirius (a.k.a. Ken Gofmann), the cofounder and original editor-in-chief of the first cyberculture magazine *Mondo 2000*, who has been called "a head on the Mt. Rushmore of cyberculture"(DD 241). (Since R. U. Sirius will also play an important role in the last main chapter of my paper I want to talk a little bit about his background here.)

In contrast to most of the people in the psychedelic movement of the 60s and 70s, Sirius has never been a technophobe. According to Sirius, there have always been two strands in the psychedelic counterculture. Sirius explains: "A majority strand of people felt overwhelmed by the ugliness of Western civilization and wanted to get as much distance from it as possible. But about ten percent always consisted of 'sci-fi' types. For instance, Digger manifestoes of '67 and '68 anticipated 'machines of loving grace' that would usher in a post-scarcity culture"(quoted in Stafford 1992: III – 46).¹¹ In the 70s, Sirius felt that he rather belonged to the sci-fi types than to the technophobes. In a *Washington Post* interview in 1992, Sirius recalled, "We wanted to believe in this cybernetic vision, that the machines would do it for us. And I maintained that vision, somewhere in the back of my head" (quoted in Dery 1996: 35). In 1980, Sirius had a revealing LSD-experience which assured him that his intuition was right. This experience caused him to change his life. Cultural critic Mark Dery describes Sirius' "metamorphosis":

A fateful acid trip in 1980, days after John Lennon's death, somehow assured him of "the all-rightness of everything" – a revelation that spurred him to leave the sixties behind and catch up with the emerging computer culture around him. Delving into *Scientific American*, he soon concluded that the Diggers' anarchist utopia of universal leisure and infinite abundance lay within reach; the revolution, if it happened, would be brought about not by political radicals but by the high-tech breakthroughs of capitalist visionaries. But why settle for a cybernetic Eden when the promise of prosthetic godhood lay somewhere over the rainbow? *Inspired by Timothy Leary's premonitions in the seventies of "space migration" to off-world colonies, Sirius incorporated a high-tech take on the human potential movement into his vision of robotopia [my italics]*" (ibid.).

¹⁰ In the 80s and 90s, Leary did not talk about his Eight-Circuit model much any more but rather tried to show that the universe is just too complex and chaotic to be pressed in a simple, rigid model like his Eight Circuit model. However, in 1987 Leary published an updated version of *Exo-Psychology* which is titled *Info-Psychology*. In *Info-Psychology*, the focus is on cyberspace, not outer space. The model of the Eight Circuits of consciousness basically remains the same. The Neuroelectric Circuit is renamed Cybernetic Circuit (the Internet being the electronic nervous system Leary predicted in the 70s).

¹¹ In *Escape Velocity* cultural critic Mark Dery describes the Diggers as "a Haight-Ashbury-based anarchist collective that harmonized the counterculture's Arcadian longings with the technetronic age"[sic](Dery 1996: 34). Dery quotes Sirius who explains that the Diggers preached the Arthur C. Clarkeian gospel of "a post scarcity culture where work was obsolete, 'all of [us] watched over by machines of loving grace'"(Dery 1996: 35). In the 60s, the science fiction author Arthur C. Clarke prophesied that in the near future "ultra-intelligent" machines would make possible an "uninhibited, hedonistic society" of cradle-to-grave leisure (cf. Dery 1996: 29).

It was Leary's Exo-Psychology theory that convinced Sirius that technology would not only help us to create a society where work is obsolete and all of us are watched over by "machines of loving grace," but also enable us to attain enlightenment, to free ourselves from the limits of space, time, and the body.

In 1984, Sirius founded a psychedelic magazine that later became *Mondo 2000*. Subtitled *A Space Age Newspaper of Psychedelics, Science, Human Potential, Irreverence and Modern Art*, it was called *High Frontiers*. *High Frontiers* is a name borrowed from O'Neill's book *The High Frontier*, which deals with the construction of a space colony. *High Frontiers* evolved into *Reality Hackers*, which evolved into *Mondo 2000*. In the course of time the magazine became more and more high-tech. The focus of the magazine shifted from the coverage of psychedelics, in *High Frontiers*, to the coverage of cyberculture, in *Mondo 2000*. (Leary was one of the contributing editors of this magazine.) In *Mondo 2000* we find articles about smart drugs (legal drugs that are supposed to enhance your intelligence), virtual reality, cyberpunk, interactive media, aphrodisiacs, artificial life, nanotechnology¹², brain implants, life extension, etc.

According to Sirius, now, in the 90s, scientists are developing technologies (e.g., nanotechnology) that help us to understand and "real-ize" Leary's Eight Circuit model. In *Design for Dying* (Leary's last book which he wrote together with Sirius), Sirius argues that most of Leary's predictions in his Eight Circuit model about future scientific/technological and cultural developments have actually become true:

During his later days, he [Leary] didn't talk about it [the Eight Circuit model] much. I think as he embraced "chaos", he wanted to distance himself from the tidiness of the model. After all, did any of us live perfect, smooth, Circuit-Six, psychedelic, yogic lives? Or did we not, occasionally, get drunk[...] But when I think about it, I'm impressed, particularly with how the evolution of the technoculture since the 1970s matches his predictions of future evolution.

In a clear gelatin capsule: Circuit Six, the neuroelectric circuit, is already a pop culture phenomenon, otherwise known as cyberculture, wired, the Web, the Net, cyberspace, etc. The notion of living in electricity is with us. More important, it surprised our culture by preceding Circuit Seven, the neurogenetic circuit – biotechnology as a popular phenomenon, which is just slowly coming into its own. When you hear about garage gene hacking, you'll know we've arrived. And who would have guessed that nanotechnology mainman Eric Drexler would come along and begin mapping Circuit Eight, the neuroatomic level, human empowerment on the molecular/atomic level (Leary 1997: 91)?

I think now it becomes clear why in *Mondo 2000* Leary (along with Global village prophet McLuhan and science fiction writer William Gibson) is portrayed as one of the most important pioneers of cyberspace (see *Mondo 2000*, issues 1 and 4). In his Exo-Psychology theory Leary laid the ideological foundation for the cyber-movement of the 80s and 90s.

There is another prominent spokesperson of cyberculture who has been influenced by Leary's Exo-Psychology. His name is Bruce Eisner. Eisner is the founder of a "psychedelic-cybernetic organization" called Island Foundation and the author of *Ecstasy: The MDMA Story*. The Island Foundation (see <http://www.island.org>) is an organization of individuals dedicated to the creation of a psychedelic culture.

¹² "Nanotechnology is the manufacture of materials and structures with dimensions that measure up to 100 nanometers (billionths of a meter). Its definition applies to a range of disciplines, from conventional synthetic chemistry to techniques that manipulate individual elements with tiny probe elements. In the vision promulgated by Eric Drexler [the avatar of nanotechnology] current nanoscale fabrication methods could eventually into techniques for making molecular robots or shrunken versions of 19th-century mills. In the course of a few hours, manufacturing systems based on Drexler's nanotechnology could produce anything from a rocket ship to minute disease-fighting submarines that roam in the blood stream. [...] Molecular robots could repair cells in our bodies and make us immortal.[...] (This passage is taken from an article by Gary Stix "Waiting for Breakthroughs" which can be found on the homepage of *Scientific American* <http://www.sciam.com/exhibit/040000trends.html>).

The group is named after English novelist Aldous Huxley's last novel, *Island*, about a utopian island, "an imaginary place that nurtured and supported the psychedelic vision"(ibid.). Island Foundation's mission is to "foster the creation of a new culture based on the visions and ideals catalyzed by the psychedelic experience"(ibid.). Island Foundation seeks as its members those who have gained a vision of a more sensible and peaceful way of living together through the use of psychedelic and other mind-altering substances, as well as other methods of altering consciousness, like computers and the Internet.

It was Leary's *The Intelligence Agents* (and Huxley's novel *Island*) that inspired Eisner to form the Island Foundation (cf. <http://www.island.org/BRUCE/story.html>). Leary also made Eisner aware of the promising possibilities of computers and the striking similarity between the psychedelic experience, during which one feels that he/she leaves his/her narrow reality tunnel and enters a multi-choice reality labyrinth, and the hypertext universe of the Internet, which gives one the same feeling (Eisner, Bruce. *Psychedelic Island Views* Vol. 2, Issue 2, 1996: p.4). I think it is worth mentioning here that a psilocybin-trip in October 1977 was the trigger that allowed Eisner to "perceive new connections." On this psychedelic trip Eisner realized that Leary was right: "East means stagnation. West means evolution and change." Psychedelics and technology can help us to make the world a better place to live in. This discovery led him to found the Island Foundation (cf. ibid.). (Notice the striking similarity between Eisner's and Sirius' life-changing experiences. It was the psychedelic experience that changed their lives.)

The Island Group expresses its opinions and policies in a magazine called *Psychedelic Island Views*, edited by Bruce Eisner. We only have to take a look at the second issue of *Psychedelic Island Views*, which is dedicated to Timothy Leary (this issue was published soon after Leary died), and we see that Leary plays an important role in this organization. This issue features several articles about Leary. Just like R.U. Sirius, Bruce Eisner, who wrote two of these articles, praises Leary as the psychedelic and cybernetic pioneer nonpareil (cf. Eisner, Bruce. *Psychedelic Island Views*. Vol.2, Issue 2, 1996: 5-9).

As a final comment on this chapter I would like to point out that both *Mondo 2000* and the Island Group have their origins in California. (The Island Foundation has its headquarters in Santa Cruz; *Mondo 2000* is based in Berkeley) Why is that so? Is California really the "genetic frontier"?

4. *Chaos & Cyberculture* (the 80s and 90s)

Filtered through the computer matrix, all reality becomes patterns of information: [...] Just as the later Taoists of ancient China made a yin/yang cosmology that encompassed sex, cooking, weather, painting, architecture, martial arts, etc, so too the computer culture interprets all knowable reality as transmissible information. (Michael Heim)¹

Since the early 70s Leary has been fascinated by the idea that the brain functions like a computer and that we can change the programs in our “bio-computers” (brains) if we know the language in which these programs are written (the code). There is one book, written by psychoanalyst and LSD researcher John Lilly, in 1967, which Leary repeatedly mentions in several of his works and which seems to have sparked this fascination with the computer-brain metaphor. This book is titled *Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Bio-Computer* (Lilly 1967).

It was not until 1983 that Leary bought his first personal computer and discovered how computers really worked – that the language of computers is based on the principle of 0 and 1 (the transistors in a computer can be switched ON or OFF, representing 1 and 0 in the logical sequence). When Leary learned that in a computer every program and every piece of information is stored in zeros and ones and that theoretically any kind of information – be it a sound, picture, word, etc – can be translated into the digital language of 0 and 1, he felt that a “new world” with seemingly endless possibilities was revealed to him. Leary called this world the “Info world” or “Quantum world” (I will explain the term “Quantum world” when I talk about Leary’s Quantum-Psychology). He began spending around five hours a day in this new world on the other side of the screen translating his thoughts to digital codes and screen images (cf. CC 3). It did not take long until Leary felt he was able to “pilot his brain” through the newly discovered “digital spaces” and that the exercises in translating his thoughts to digital codes actually helped him to understand how his brain works. In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary writes that computers taught him that the human mind (i.e., processes in the brain) could be perfectly explained with this principle of 0 and 1, and that computers helped him to control the processes in his brain and create his own digital realities (cf. *ibid.*).

Leary discovered that computers were actually very similar to LSD. More than that, in an interview with P. Johnston in 1986, Leary said that the computer is a technology for brain change that is even more effective than LSD: “Computers are the most subversive thing I’ve ever done. [...] Computers are more addictive than heroin. [...] People need some way to activate, boot up, and change disks in their minds. In the 60s we needed LSD to expand reality and examine our stereotypes. With computers as our mirrors LSD might not be necessary now” (quoted in Bukatman 1993: 139). This discovery led Leary to proclaim that “The PC is the LSD of the 90s” (CC cover-page). Leary found out that his experiences with this new medium were far from being unique and original but seemed to be part of an enormous cultural metamorphoses. As a result of personal computers, millions of people, especially the young generation, would no longer be satisfied “to peer like passive infants through the Terrarium wall [TV screen] into ScreenLand [sic] filled with cyberstars like Bill and Hillary and Boris and Sadam and Madonna and Beavis and Butt-Head”(CC 4). People would begin to learn how to “enter and navigate in this world behind the screen” and avoid television dictatorship. Computers would change the young generation’s appreciation for their own intrinsic worth and ability to alter reality. Leary had a vision of the emergence of a “new humanism” based on questioning authority, independent thinking, and the

¹ Michael Heim, “The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace,” in Benedikt 1991: 65

empowerment of computers and other technologies. A new global “cybernetic culture” would be emerging, creating a post-political society based on individual freedom.

These discoveries had a profound impact on Leary’s theories of the 80s and 90s in which Leary takes his idea of the brain as computer even one step further. In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, which is a collection of Leary’s most important essays about the effects of computers and drugs on the individual and society, he suggests that the whole universe consists of “zeros and ones, bits of off/on information.” Matter is “frozen information”(cf. CC 7). The computer would help the individual to dissolve, or deconstruct, all rigid thought systems/structures (political, social, and philosophical) into zeros and ones, and create new structures/systems with the freed elements — structures that are more fun than the old ones. Furthermore, we would be beginning to “understand ourselves as information processes,” and in the near future there would be technologies available that allow us to manipulate matter as information, which means that we can exist without our blood-and-flesh bodies and become immortal. Leary tries to back these ideas with a bold interpretation of quantum physics and defines a new branch of science called Quantum Psychology (human thought and behavior described in terms of the language of computers). Quantum Psychology would help us to understand the basic nature of the universe and how our brains operate. However, we would not be able to apply the principles of quantum physics without computers, which Leary sees as extensions of our brains which help us to navigate through the meaningless, disordered, chaotic universe and to design ourselves individual realities. As far as the correlation of personal computers and personal freedom is concerned, Leary says that freedom in any country could be measured perfectly by the percentage of personal computers in the hands of individuals (cf. CC 84).

In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary also presents a theory on the evolution of countercultures from the 50s to the 90s (the Beat Generation, the hippies, etc) and defines a new counterculture — Leary is even talking about a new species which constitutes a new gene pool — called the “cyberpunks,” or “new breed.” As far as the political implications of the use of personal computers and electronic media (especially TV and the Internet) is concerned, Leary gives various examples that demonstrate that these new technologies have introduced profound changes in our society. Leary argues that personal computers, TV, and the Internet encouraged young people from all over the world to think for themselves, question authority, and start a freedom revolution which led to the fall of various political regimes in the late 80s (fall of the Berlin Wall, Czech hard-line regime toppled, etc). According to Leary, this “digital freedom revolution” is still going on. Leary was very optimistic as far as the liberating effect of electronic technology and the future of this freedom movement is concerned. In the near future we would all find ourselves living in a post-political society that functions according to the cybernetic principles of self-organization – a society where the person who automatically obeys and never questions authority will be the “problem person” and the intelligent person who knows how to live in symbiosis with technology and who thinks for him-/herself (the cyberpunk) will be the norm. Furthermore, we would soon be able to “download” our mind/brain into a computer, which means that we do not need our bodies to survive any more and that we can become immortal.

Before I describe the basic principles of Quantum Psychology, I want to shortly comment on the language Leary uses (so the reader will not be confused when I start talking about things like the “info-starved tri-brain amphibian”). The language Leary uses in *Chaos & Cyberculture* is a mixture of computer-language (e.g. to boot up a computer), psychedelic metaphors (which he uses to describe the experience of cyberspace), and neologisms like “tri-brain” (which I will explain later), or “electronic haiku” (movie trailer).

(Keep in mind that we are dealing here not with a scientific theory based on objective facts, but with a theory that is based on the assumption that “the limits of our reality are determined by the limits of our imagination.”)

4.1. Quantum Psychology

Chaos & Cyberculture, the book that serves as the main source for my description of Leary's Quantum Psychology, consists of texts that were first published in a wide array of publications, ranging from obscure underground 'zines to university journals; from New Age/New Edge periodicals (e.g. *Mondo 2000*) to mainstream Sunday supplements. Roughly speaking, one third of these texts deals with computers, one third with countercultures, and one third with "chaos-drugs" (psychedelic drugs). Although these texts deal with a variety of topics there is one core theory underlying all of them. Leary calls this theory Quantum Psychology. Basically, it could be said that there are three concepts that constitute the principles of Leary's Quantum Psychology theory:

1. The philosophy of Chaos: The basic nature of the universe is extreme complexity popularly known as chaos.(4.1.1)
2. Quantum physics and the "user-friendly Quantum universe:" The basic elements of the universe are bits or quanta of off/on information. In the Quantum universe everything is continually changing , relative to viewpoint, and dependent on our psychological attitude and info-technology (e.g. computers). Computers help us to make the chaotic universe "user-friendly," which means we can digitize, store and create our own realities.(4.1.2)
3. The info-starved "tri-brain amphibian": The brain can be understood as a digital computer that converts every sensory stimulation into "quantum realities," into directories and files of 0/1 signals. The info-starved brain requires more and more input of digital data in order to keep growing towards maturity. When the human brain enters a symbiotic relationship with a computer we get the "tri-brain": digital brain – body matter – digital screen.(4.1.3)

4.1.1. *The Philosophy of Chaos*

In the preface to *Chaos & Cyberculture*, which is an essay called "The Eternal Philosophy of Chaos," Leary gives examples from both eastern philosophies and western science that are supposed to show that the basic nature of the universe is chaos, inexplicable disorder "maybe a trillion times too complex to be grasped by the human mind" (cf. CC xiii). Leary says that there are basically two ways of dealing with the chaotic universe that surrounds us: to accept chaos and "go with the flow," or to be afraid of chaos and cling to the idea/illusion of stability. Hindus, Buddhists, and Taoists, for example, accept the fact that they live in a world of inexplicable complexity and try to learn how to "go with the flow." They belong to the group of people that have realized that you cannot control chaos but you can learn how to "surf the waves of chaos" and get a lot of fun out of experiencing parts of the chaotic universe (cf. CC xiv).

The majority of people on our planet, however, are afraid to face chaos. They are afraid to face the fact that safety and order is only an illusion. According to Leary, this fear of chaos explains why for centuries there existed a fanatic taboo against scientific thinking. He points out that "Galileo got busted" and "Bruno got the Vatican microwave" for showing that the sun did not circle the earth, just "because religious and political chaos-phobes wanted the nice, tidy, comfy universe to cuddle around them" (CC xiv).² The standard method with which religious and political "control freaks" would try to tame and domesticate the impossible complexity that surrounds us is to "invent a few 'tooth-fairy' Gods" (the more infantile the better) and to "lay down a few childish, simple rules like 'Honor you father and your mother'" or "You passively obey. You pray. You work."(ibid.). According to Leary, scientific thinking and thinking for oneself has always been considered "heretical, treasonous, blasphemous, a capital crime, the ultimate nightmare" by religious and political fanatics. However, you cannot hide the

² This idea involves a contradiction. It seems that Leary was not aware of the fact that science tries to order chaos.

truth forever. Leary points out that, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, scientists – with the help of technical extensions of the human sensorium like telescopes and microscopes — began to specify the “truly spooky” nature of the complexities around us and within us (e.g., they found out that the brain is a network of hundred billion neurons, each neuron being connected to ten thousand other neurons). According to Leary, among the various scientific theories which have been advanced in the last hundred years there is one theory that changed human life more than any other – quantum physics. Leary argues that equations of quantum physics perfectly describe the chaotic universe we live in:

The universe described by Einstein and the nuclear physicists is alien and terrifying. Chaotic. Quantum physics is quite literally a wild acid trip! It postulates an hallucinatory Alice-in-Wonderland universe in which everything is changing. As Heisenberg and Jimmy Hendrix said, “Nothing is certain except uncertainty.” Matter is energy. Energy is matter at various forms of acceleration. Particles dissolve into waves. There is no up or down in a four-dimensional movie. It all depends on your attitude, i.e. your angle of approach to the real worlds of chaotics (CC 45).

(Leary does not describe the theories he boldly interprets at all. It is obvious that he does not expect his readers to seriously study nuclear physics.) Leary suggests that, in addition to describing the chaos that surrounds us, quantum physics also presents a couple of startling concepts that help us to understand how our brains operate and what the basic elements of the universe are — which leads us to the next basic concept of Leary’s Quantum Psychology theory.

4.1.2. *Quantum physics and the “user-friendly” Quantum universe*

Before I present Leary’s bold interpretation of quantum physics, let us look at how Leary defines the term “quantum” which is the singular of “quanta”: “The word ‘quantum’ refers to a bit, an elemental unit. The word QUANTUM used as an adjective indicates that the subject is defined in terms of numbers, clusters of digitized elements, units of information”³(Info v).

Now how does Leary interpret quantum physics? According to Leary, the quantum physicists (Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, Max Planck etc) discovered that we live in a universe made up of bits of information, “a universe of elemental off/on digital bits (particles) that swirl in chaotic clouds, occasionally clustering together in geometrically logical temporary configurations” (cf. CC 44). In the universe described by the quantum physicists solid Newtonian matter becomes waves or clouds of 0/1, yin/yang, on/off probabilities⁴(cf. CC 45). According to Leary, the equations of quantum physics suggest that solid matter is nothing but “frozen information” (cf. CC 6). (This means we do not have the body-mind dualism any more; everything is information.) Realities could be explained metaphorically as screens of digitized patterns (cf. Info 2). The universe, according to the equations of quantum physics, would be best described as a “digital information processor with subprograms and temporary ROM states, megas called galaxies, maxis called stars, minis called planets, micros called organisms or Macintosh, and nanos called molecules and atoms” (CC 44). All of these programs are perpetually in states of evolution, that is, continually “running.” Furthermore, quantum theory suggests that the behavior of atomic particles, and thus of the universe, is governed by a single programming rule: it is

³ Einstein used the term “quanta” to describe particles of light (now known as photons). This is the origin of the term “Quantum Theory”(cf. Capra 1982: 79).

⁴ Capra’s explanation of these probabilities may help us to understand what Leary means: „At the subatomic level, matter does not exist with certainty at definite places, but rather shows ‘tendencies to exist’, and atomic events do not occur with certainty at definite places, but rather show ‘tendencies to occur.’ In the formalism of quantum mechanics, these tendencies are expressed as probabilities and are associated with quantities that take the form of waves [...]. This is how particles can be waves at the same time. They are not ‘real’ three- dimensional waves [but] ‘probability waves’ – abstract mathematical quantities with the characteristic property of waves – that are related to the probabilities of finding the particles at particular points in space and at particular times. All the laws of atomic physics are expressed in terms of these probabilities”(Capra 1983: 80). So this means that the probabilities tell us if a particle can be found at a particular point in space at a particular time (1) or not (0).

nothing but “if-then algorithms”(cf. CC 14). Leary explains that the application of quantum physics produced vacuum tubes, transistors, integrated circuits, lasers, radio, television, computers, etc — all the important gadgets that can move around information (cf. CC 6f.).

Quantum psychology, the “new branch of science based on the principles of quantum physics,” would allow us to redefine the most important terms of classical metaphysics. For example, Leary suggests that *a new definition of “spiritual” could be “digital.”* If we look at some of the traditional attributes of the word “spiritual” (mythic, magical, ethereal, incorporeal, intangible, nonmaterial, ideal) we see that this is the exact definition of electronic-digital (cf. CC 5).

Leary argues that the quantum physicists were explaining ideas that can only be fully understood now, in the electronic-information age. The knowledge that we live in a chaotic universe consisting of digital bits of information – Leary calls this universe Quantum universe — is useless for the individual human as long as he/she does not have tools that enable him/her to make that chaotic universe “user-friendly.” In order to make the Quantum universe user-friendly the individual would need electrical appliances that allow him/her to cruise around in the “chaotic post-Newtonian information ocean,” to think and communicate in the digital language of light. Leary also calls the digital language of light “lingua franca of the universe” or “binary dialect of the galaxies and atoms”(cf. CC 45). Leary points out that, although Einstein and his colleagues developed theories that were to change the world, they were not able to apply their theories to their own lives. They did not have computers that allowed them to digitize, store, create, and communicate their individual realities. In “Quantum Jumps, Your Macintosh, and you,” Leary explains this paradoxical situation the quantum physicists were in:

They [the quantum physicists] expressed their unsettling theories in complex equations written on chalkboards with chalk. [...]They] thought and communicated with a neolithic tool: chalk marks on the blackboard of the cave. The paradox was this: Einstein and his brilliant colleagues could not experience or operate or communicate at a quantum-electronic level. In a sense they were idiot savants, able to produce equations about chaos and relativity without being able to maintain interpersonal cyberrelationships with others (CC 45).

For Leary, the application of the laws of quantum physics has to do with freedom. The universe that quantum physicists describe would open up endless possibilities for the individual. Electrical “quantum-appliances,” like computers, interactive TV, or virtual reality gear (TV goggles and quadrophonic sound systems to create 3-D computer graphic worlds), would enable us to apply the principles of quantum physics so we can pilot ourselves through the chaotic universe — Leary calls this “chaos engineering” — and create 3-D digital realities where we can meet with people from the other side of the planet. More than that, the application of quantum physics would allow us to “real-ize” the realities of our dreams, the limits of which are determined only by the limits of our imagination. This means that we would actually be able to free ourselves from any kind of structure (political, social, personal) that is imposed on us. Information technology would enable us to dissolve existing structures and create new forms, new (virtual) realities with the freed elements. We would be beginning to understand ourselves as information processes, and soon there would be new technologies available that allow us to manipulate matter as information. This would mean that we can finally free ourselves from our heavy, clumsy, mortal bodies and become immortal.

Now that we are learning to experience what Nils Bohr and Werner Heisenberg could only dream of, it is clear that “the great intellectual challenge of the 20th century was to produce an inexpensive appliance that would make the chaotic universe ‘user friendly,’ which would allow the individual human to decode, digitize, store, process and reflect the sup-programs which make up his/her personal realities” (ibid.). (What is the great challenge of the next century? According to Leary, the great challenge of the 21st century is to develop technologies that make the human body immortal and allow us to exist as electronic life-forms on computer networks.)

4.1.3. *The info-starved “tri-brain amphibian”*

We already know that since the early 1960s Leary has always been interested in finding out how the human brain operates and how we can use our brains in the most sufficient way. In all of his theories Leary argues that the best way to understand and describe the evolution of the human race is in terms of how well we have learned to operate our brains. In “Our Brain” (CC 35–39), for example, he suggests that since the 1950s, when people began to use electrical appliances (television, radio), there has been an enormous acceleration of brain power. In just the last ten years new developments in technology, especially computer technology, would have multiplied the ability to use our brains by a thousandfold (!). The best way to understand how efficiently we are using our brains would be to clock it in rpm – realities per minute. Now that we have television (hundreds of programs to choose), the internet and other new information technologies, our brains would be operating at a hundred times more rpm than the brains of people living thirty or forty years ago – and still we would be hungry for more.

It should be mentioned here that, according to Leary, historical technological development is following an exponential law. This means that there is a general tendency that there will be more basic breakthroughs (both in scientific and technological applications) in each generation than in the previous generation. Leary argues that this acceleration of technological development is in direct relation to an acceleration in human brain power/intelligence. In other words, although people in the Stone Age had basically the same brain as we have they were by far not as intelligent as we are because they did not have the technologies that helped them to effectively use their brains. On the inside cover of *Chaos & Cyberculture*, this relationship between technological innovation and human brain power is presented in form of a graph that shows an enormous acceleration of brain power since the 1950s.

Leary’s explanation for this enormous acceleration of brain power and the brain’s insatiable hunger for more data is an evolutionary one: As our brain evolves, it develops new and more effective vehicles and information-processing devices in order to feed its insatiable hunger for stimulation (television in the 50s, audio tapes in the 60s, personal computers in the 70s, etc). A person with a cybernetic post-industrial brain would no longer be content “to watch a tiring two-hour movie, or sit drinking tea and reading the London Times for two hours,” like people did in the mechanical age (cf. CC 14). “The cybernetic brain expects more data in much less time”, Leary explains (ibid.). The cybernetic brain “loves overload”(ibid.). For the information-age cyberperson the best stuff he/she sees in the movies would be the three-minute trailers with two cuts per second, which Leary calls “electronic haikus.” Leary argues that the use of electronic technology has elevated us to a new genetic status; a new species, the “homo sapiens electronicus,” has emerged (cf. CC 45). According to Leary, the growing appetite for digital data can now be recognized as a species need. Leary points out that the brain of the homo sapiens electronicus “needs electrons (and psychoactive chemicals) like the body needs oxygen” (ibid.). Like any adolescent organ, the human brain would require an enormous, continual supply of chemical and electronic data to keep growing towards maturity. To illustrate this evolutionary phenomenon Leary describes how his own brain has evolved since he started using computers:

In the last eight years the dendritic metabolism of my information organ (brain) seems to have undergone a dramatic change. My eyes have become two hungry mouths pressed against the Terrarium window [the screen between the material world, the Terrarium, and cyberspace] through which electronic pulses reach the receptive areas of my brain. My brain seems to require a daily input of several billion bytes of digital (light-speed) information.[...My] Personal Computer has changed my brain into an output organ emitting, discharging digital information through the Terrarium window into ScreenLand.

Just as my heart is programmed to pump blood, my sinewy brain is now to fire ,launch, transmit, beam thoughts through the electronic window into Cyberia [cyberspace](CC 4).

In this quotation Leary describes his brain as a computer, an organ that processes digital information. Leary’s “Info-organ” has entered a symbiosis with the digital screen of a computer monitor.

According to Leary, we were not able to understand how our brains operate before electronic engineers had built computers. The understanding of how the brain works would enable us to construct and inhabit “digital auto-realities,” which means that we can now choose if we want to spend our days in the material-organic world or in the “cyberworld” (cyberspace). For Leary, cyberspace is the more interesting one of the two worlds because it offers more freedom than the material world; in cyberspace the limits of time, space, and the body are perceived as meaningless. According to Leary, more and more people are discovering that cyberspace offers more freedom than the material reality. More and more people are learning to use “cyberwear” (goggles with graphic displays and gloves with sensors that register every movement so you can see your “hands” on the graphic display) to navigate around cyberspace like they use the “hardware” of their bodies to navigate around the mechanical-material world, and the way they use spaceships and space suits to navigate around the outer space (cf. CC 4). Leary calls people who are able to live in both the material world and in cyberspace “tri-brain amphibians.” (The word “amphibian” comes from the Greek *amphi* (double) and *bios* (life). It is used to describe a life form that is able to live in two different worlds.) The tri-brain consists of digital brain, body matter, and digital screen (cf. *ibid.*).

As far as the (digital) brain is concerned, Leary argues that for the brain (which he sees as a complex “bio-computer”) screen-realities are not less real than the “material” reality. Leary explains why digital realities are perceived by the brain as real:

All the screen scenes are as real as a kick-in-the-pants as far as our brains are concerned. Our brains have no sense organs and no muscles. [...] To be registered in consciousness, to be ‘realized,’ every sensory stimulation must be deconstructed, minimalized, digitalized. The brain converts every pressure signal from our skins, tickles from our genitals, delectables from our tongues, photons from our eyes, sound waves from our ears, and best of all, electronic buzziness from our screens into quantum realities, into directories and files of 0/1 signals (CC 4).

Body matter, which is the second constituent of the tri-brain, is necessary because the body is equipped with all the sensory input and output ports to bring information into the “neurocomputer” (cf. CC 35). The third constituent of the tri-brain, the digital screen (i.e. the computer), functions as a door to cyberspace and allow us to construct the digital realities we like. Leary describes how this partnership between human brains and computers evolved by comparing it to the biological phenomenon of symbiosis:

In evolving to more physiological complexity, our bodies formed symbioses with armies of digestive bacteria necessary for survival. In similar fashion, our brains are forming neural electronic symbiotic linkups with solid-state computers. [...] At this point in human evolution, more and more people are developing mutually dependent, interactive relationships with their microsystems. When this happens, there comes a moment when the individual is “hooked” and cannot imagine living without the continual interchange of electronic signals between the personal [digital] brain and the personal computer (CC 42f.).

However, the tri-brain amphibian will not neglect his/her body which can offer him/her a lot of pleasure. Leary says that the tri-brain amphibian will not use his/her precious, irreplaceable “fleshware” (body) to do work that can be done better by assembly-line machines. (For example, “[t]he languorous midwestern farmer will don her cybersuit and recline in her hammock in Acapulco operating the automated plough on her Nebraska farm, [and] the Mexican immigrant will recline in his hammock in Acapulco using his cybergear to direct the grape-harvest machines” (CC 5).) But when the brain work is done, the amphibian will take off his “brain clothing” (cybersuits), don body clothes, and enjoy all the pleasures that the body can offer. Leary explains how delightful the experience of the body will be:

When we platonic migrants sweat, it will be in athletic or sensual pleasure. When we exert elbow grease, it will be in some form of painterly flourish or musical riff. When we operate oil-gulping machines, we will joyride for pleasure. [...] Trains, planes, boats will be used only for pleasure cruising [...] Our bodily postures will thus be graceful and proud, our body movements delightful, slow, sensual, lush, erotic, fleshy, carnal vacations from the accelerated, jazzy cyberrealities of cyberspace, where the brain work is done (ibid.).

As far as the quality of face-to-face interactions are concerned, Leary says that for tri-brain amphibian flesh encounters will be rare and thrilling. For the near-future tri-brain person, the quality of a personal appearance in flesh will be “raised to a level of mythic drama” (cf. ibid.).

To sum up, for the tri-brain person experiencing the body is fun, but he/she just cannot imagine living without computers. Why does he/she need this continual interchange of electronic signals between the brain and the personal computer? Why does he/she form this symbiosis with the computer? The answer is simple: Because he/she wants to be free, free to “real-ize” the realities of his/her dreams. The tri-brain person feels that in the material world — which stands for bodily robotic work, political tyranny, and spending half of your life in trains, cars, airplanes or waiting in line if you want get information or meet people — he/she can never reach his/her goals. In cyberspace, however, he/she feels free from practically all the structures that limit him/her — free from dogmatic social structures, free from narrow reality-tunnels that are imposed on him/her, free from the limits of time, space, and body.

What, according to Leary, are the social, political and cultural implications of this new way of living in symbiosis with technology?

4.2. Countercultures (*the Beat Generation, the hippies, the cyberpunks/the New Breed*)

Leary’s Quantum Psychology theory encourages people to use electronic technology (computers, the Internet, etc) for their personal empowerment. In the 90s Leary updated his old catchphrase “Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out” to “Turn On, Boot Up, Jack In.” Electronic technology would enable us to free ourselves from dogmatic social structures and create our own cyber-realities (cyberspace). More than that, Leary argues that the use of electronic technology has elevated us to a new genetic status. People who grew up using electronic appliances for thinking and communicating would constitute a new species, which Leary calls the New Breed, or the cyberpunks. Leary writes that the New Breed of the 80s and 90s are people who have learned how to use technology to reach their own private goals and change the world to the better. According to Leary, this New Breed is creating a new post-political cybernetic society which is based on personal freedom and functions according to the cybernetic principles of self-organization and feedback (I will explain these principles later). It would be a society that does not operate on the basis of obedience and conformity to dogma — a society based on individual thinking, scientific know-how, quick exchange of facts around feedback networks, high-tech ingenuity, and front-line creativity (cf. PE 4). Leary notes that the youth revolutions of 1989, which, according to Leary, led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the resignation of the hard-line regimes in Czechoslovakia and Rumania, are signs how powerful this revolution really is. If we analyse these revolutions we see that the ones who rule the media are the ones who control the country. In an essay called “The Youth Revolutions of the 20th Century” Leary gives an impressive example of a young Chinese schoolboy using media technology to confront a powerful tyranny:

On June 5, 1989, a 19-year old Wang Weilin stood defiantly looking into the barrel of an enormous gun mounted on a tank in Tien An Men Square. He was unarmed. Look at the picture and you see that in his left hand he holds, not a gun or a bomb but his school

bookbag and in his right hand his lunch bag. His act was a cybernetic gesture. He and his friends knew that this picture, flashed around the world on TV screens and magazine covers, would be permanently imprinted on the minds of millions (PE 4).

Leary argues that the individual-freedom movement of the late 80s would not have been possible without electronic technology. Thanks to the electronic media, people are able to spread the idea of personal freedom and self-direction across the whole world. According to Leary, the liberation movements in Eastern Europe (in 1989) have their roots in the 50s and 60s in America. Leary points out that the 50s counterculture, the Beat generation, was the first counterculture which broadcast the idea of individual freedom around the world via electronic media, and sparked off a freedom-revolution that is still going on. As Leary put it,

In the 1950s in America, at the height of the television Cold War, there appeared a group of free people who created highly communicable counterculture memes that were to change history.⁵ The beats stood for the ecstatic vision and for individual freedom in revolt against all bureaucratic, closed-minded systems. They saw themselves as citizens of the world [...and] as heirs to the long tradition of intellectual and artistic individualism that goes beyond national boundaries.

What made the beats more effective than any dissident-artist group in human history was the timing. Electronic technology made it possible for their bohemian memes, their images, and their sounds to be broadcast at almost the speed of light around the world. [...] The hippie culture of the 1960s and the current liberation movements in Eastern Europe are indebted to the libertarian dissenting of the 'fifties counterculture(CC 75).

In the essay "Politics of Ecstasy: The youth revolutions of the 20th century," Leary notes that "thanks to the spread of the electronic media, the memes of freedom and self-direction have swept the whole world in less than three decades" (PE 4). Like Marshall McLuhan, Leary makes us aware that cultural change involves communication and that the mode of communication determines not just the speed of change but also the nature of change. "The medium is the message of cultural evolution," Leary writes and gives his explanation of McLuhan's famous phrase:

The Ten Commandments, chiseled on stone tablets, created a fundamentalist culture that discouraged change and democratic participation. There is one God, the author-creator, and his words are eternally true. This stone-tablet meme carrier spawns a culture ruled by the inerrant "good book" and a priesthood of those who preserve, interpret, and enforce the commandments.

The printing press mass-disseminates memes that create a factory culture run by managers.

The electronic, McLuhanesque meme-signals that produced Woodstock nation and the Berlin Wall deconstruction are more a matter of attitude and style.

The television news has trained us to recognize "the robe-memes" – the feudal pope (or the Iranian mullah) and his solemn piety-reeking priests. We recognize "the suits," the adult politicians of the industrial age, with their no-nonsense sobriety. We observe "the uniforms," armed, booted, helmeted (CC 72).

What Leary is saying in the last passage I have just quoted is that television, like a magnifying glass, makes us aware of the ideas and ideologies that are behind the robes, suits, and uniforms of politicians and priests; it would make us recognize how meaningless, foolish, and outdated the ideas that politicians

⁵ Leary uses the word "memes" (this term was coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976 in his book *The Selfish Gene*) to describe ideas that, like a self-replicating virus, sweep across human populations, bringing about cultural mutations.

and priests represent really are. Television encourages us not to blindly believe in the things politicians and priests tell us but to think for ourselves.

Leary points out that the post-war Baby Boom generation was the first generation that grew up with television: “From the time they could peer out of the crib the young Baby Boomers of the 50s were exposed to a constant shower of information beaming from screens.” According to Leary, television taught the Baby Boomers to be “reality consumers.” “Before they were ten, their brains were processing more realities per day than their grandparents had confronted in a year,” Leary explains (CC 78). Leary argues that the media that a child grows up with are of crucial importance because between the ages of three and eight “the language circuits of the brain are formatted” (this is the period of imprint vulnerability for everything that has to do with language). This means that the media used in the home of the child has an everlasting influence on the way this person thinks and perceives the world (cf. *ibid.*).

What happened when the Baby Boomers became teenagers? We all know that they evolved into the hippies of the 60s and started a freedom revolution. Leary describes these teenagers as affluent, self-confident, spoiled consumers, “ready to use their television-radio skills to be imprinted by turning on Bob Dylan, tuning in the Beatles, turning off parents songs, and fine-tuning color screens” (CC 82). Although their attitude was anti-high-tech, the hippies have used the media and electrically powered music to spread their ideas. When the 60s revolution, the LSD-boom, and the Vietnam war were over the hippies became the Yuppies of the late 70s and 80s.

However, the revolution was not over yet because the personal computer entered the ‘game.’ Leary argues that the millions of Americans who experienced the awesome potentialities of the brain via LSD certainly paved the way for the computer society we now live in. According to Leary, many of the people who were involved in the development of the personal computer got their inspiration from psychedelic drug experiences. He suggests that without the psychedelic revolution in the 60s, the personal computer would have been unthinkable. “It’s well known that most of the creative impulse in the software industry, and indeed much of the hardware [...] derived directly from the sixties consciousness movement,” he asserts. “[The Apple cofounder] Steve Jobs went to India, took a lot of acid, studied Buddhism, and came back and said that Edison did more to influence the human race than Buddha. And [Microsoft founder Bill] Gates was a big psychedelic person at Harvard. It makes perfect sense to me that if you activate your brain with psychedelic drugs, the only way you can describe it is electronically”(quoted in Dery 1996: 28). According to Leary, it is no accident that “the term ‘LSD’ was used twice in *Time* magazine’s cover story about Steve Jobs”(CC 42).

According to Leary, in the early 80s a new generation of young people emerged and continued the freedom revolution of the 60s, using personal computers and the electronic media in a subversive way. Leary points out that this new generation, which grew up creating their own realities with arcade games and personal computers, was the first generation in human history that was able to change electronic patterns on the other side of the screen. Leary believes that this New Breed which, in his opinion, was very much influenced by the ideals of the hippies (individuality, freedom of expression, etc) is responsible for the fall of several repressive political regimes in Europe and Russia in the late 80s and early 90s. By looking at the methods that students in the 60s applied to change the world, the youth in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, South Korea, and China have learned how to lead their freedom revolutions. Leary makes us aware that, again, it was the media that played the crucial role in the transmission of the idea of freedom:

Where did those Chinese students learn these clever methods of grabbing the news screens to express their ideals? Where did they learn the techniques of media savvy to counter the armed forces of the state? From the newsreel films of the American campus protests of the late 1960s, whose ideals are not dead. They were more powerful than ever in China’s Tien An Men Square, as well as in the USSR, where glasnost and perestroika define freedom for the individual (CC 56).

This quotation shows that, for Leary, the whole youth-revolution boils down to one idea: Freedom for the individual. Drop out of all hierarchical structures and create your own realities. Technology can help the individual to liberate him-/herself from authority. In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary calls people who think for themselves, question authority, and create their own realities with the help of computers “cyberpunks.” Since there is a long history behind the term “cyberpunk” I want to take a closer look at it. Who exactly is the cyberpunk? Where does the term come from?

4.2.1. *The cyberpunk*

In 1984, when William Gibson’s novel *Neuromancer* came out, a new genre in Science Fiction was born – cyberpunk. In the introduction to this paper I have already explained that cyberpunk escaped from being a literary genre into cultural reality, and that the media, inspired by the street-hardened characters and the new world (cyberspace) created in Gibson’s books, started to call adolescent computer hackers “cyberpunks.”

Now how does Leary define the term “cyberpunk”? According to Leary, there is a whole philosophy and a long history behind this term. Leary says that, in order to understand what the word “cyberpunk,” or “cyber-person” really means, we have to go back to the Greek roots of the term “cybernetics”⁶. Leary explains that the term “cybernetics” comes from the Greek word “kubernetes” which means “pilot” or “steersman”(cf. CC 64). The Hellenic origin of this word is important in that it reflects the Socratic-Platonic traditions of independence and individual self-reliance which, according to Leary, derived from the geographical situation in Greece. In the following quotation Leary explains how the geographical situation in Greece encouraged people to be self-reliant:

The proud little Greek city-states were perched on peninsular fingers wiggling down in the fertile Mediterranean Sea [...]

Mariners of these ancient days had to be bold and resourceful. Sailing the seven seas without maps or navigational equipment, they were forced to develop independence of thought. The self-reliance that these Hellenic pilots developed in their voyages probably carried over to the democratic, inquiring, questioning nature of their land life.

The Athenian cyberpunks, the pilots made their own navigational decisions.

These psychogeographical factors may have contributed to the humanism of the Hellenic religions that emphasized freedom, pagan joy, celebration of life, and speculative thought (CC 64).

But then the Romans took over and translated the word “kubernetes” to “gubernetes” (with the verb form “gubernare”). The Greek word for pilot became the Latin word for governor, “to steer” became “to control.” In Leary’s opinion the word “governor” expresses an attitude of “obedience-control in relationship to self and others” (CC 66). What Leary wants to show with this etymological analysis is that by translating the word “kubernetes” to “gubernetes” the aspect of self-reliance got lost, and that this translation was a semantic manipulation which had a profound impact on how people who used this word thought and behaved. The term “governor” encourages people to think in terms of obedience and control rather than independence and self-reliance. According to Leary, semantic manipulations are quite relevant to the pragmatics of the culture surrounding their usage. Leary quotes French philosopher Michel Foucault who said that

human consciousness – as expressed in speech and images, in self-definition and mutual designation...is the authentic locale of the determinant politics of being... What men and women are born into is only superficially this or that social, legislative, and executive system. Their ambiguous, oppressive birthright is the language, the conceptual categories, the

⁶ The term “cybernetics” was coined by Norbert Wiener in 1948 to describe a branch of science which is concerned with studying control processes in living and artificial systems/computers (see chapter 4.2.2.).

conventions of identification and perception which have evolved and, very largely, atrophied up to the time of their personal and social existence. It is the established but customarily subconscious, unargued constraints of awareness that enslave (CC 65).

With this quotation Leary wants to make us aware that “to remove the means of expressing dissent is to remove the possibility of dissent.” Leary notes that Marshall McLuhan would agree: “If you change the language, you change society.”

As far as the term “cybernetics” is concerned, Leary says that now (in the computer age) that all hierarchical structures in society are dissolving we are returning to the original meaning of “cyber.” People would create new words that express the self-reliance that got lost. As Leary puts it, “The terms ‘cybernetic person’ or ‘cybernaut’ [terms used to describe the person acting in cyberspace] return us to the original meaning of ‘pilot’ and puts [sic] the self-reliant person back in the loop. These words (and the more pop term ‘cyberpunk’) refer to the personalization (and thus the popularization) of knowledge-information technology, to innovative thinking on the part of the individual”(CC 67). Leary describes the cyberpunk as follows:

[A cyberpunk is a] resourceful, skillful individual who accesses and steers knowledge-communication technology toward his/her own private goals, for personal pleasure, profit, principle, or growth”(ibid.).

Cyberpunks are the inventors, innovative writers, technofrontier artists, risk-taking film directors, icon-shifting composers,[...] free-agent scientists, technocreatives, computer visionaries, elegant hackers, [...] neurological test pilots, media explorers – all of those who boldly package and steer ideas out there where no thoughts have gone before (ibid.).

According to Leary, *the cyberpunk is a person who uses all available data-input to think for him-/herself and questions authority*. He/she is a person who is able to apply the principles of quantum physics, a person who creates his/her own realities. Leary created the cyberpunk code “Think for yourself; question authority”(CC 69).

As far as the ethical aspect of the cyberpunk-way-of-living is concerned, Leary emphasizes that the cyberpunk performs no act of physical violence (cf. ibid.). However, the cyberpunk believes in freedom of information and is willing to go any length to free information, including breaking the law. (“Sticks and stones may break your bones, but information can never hurt you,” Leary says.) The cyberpunk seeks independence, not control over others (cf. ibid.). Now it becomes clear what puts the “punk” in “cyberpunk.” It is the idea of anarchy, rebelliousness, and liberation through technology.

Leary also describes the cyberpunk as modern alchemist and shows that the parallels between the alchemists of the Middle Ages and the cyberpunk computer adepts are be numerous:

Alchemists of the Middle Ages described the construction of magical appliances for viewing future events, or speaking to friends distant or dead. Paracelsus described the construction of a mirror of *electrum magicum* with such properties [...]

Today, modern alchemists have at their command tools of clarity and power unimagined by their predecessors. Computer screens are magical mirrors, presenting alternate realities at varying degrees of abstraction on command (invocation). Nineteenth-century occult legend Aleister Crowley defines magick – with a *k* [Crowley’s spelling] — as “the art and science of causing change to occur in conformity to our will.” To this end, the computer is the latter-day lever of Archimedes with which we can move the world (DD 45).

Furthermore, both alchemists of the middle ages and cyberpunks employ knowledge of an arcanum unknown to the population at large, with secret symbols and words of power. Leary explains: “The ‘secret symbols’ comprise the language of computers and mathematics, and the ‘words of power’ instruct the computer operating system to compete awesome tasks”(DD 46). Leary compares the four elements the

alchemists believed in (earth, air, fire, and water) with the Tarot's four suits (wands, cups, swords, and pentacles or disks) with four essential parts of the computer: mouse, RAM chips, electricity, and the disk drives(cf. DD 46f.).

In the essay "The cyberpunk: The individual as reality pilot"(CC 62–70) Leary gives examples of cyberpunks from different periods of history. Some of the most important cyberpunks that Leary mentions are Prometheus, "a technological genius who 'stole' fire from the Gods and gave it to humanity"(CC 63), Christoph Columbus who was unsurpassed in charting and finding his way about the unknown seas (cf. CC 68), Andy Warhol, William Gibson, Stanley Kubrik, Steve Jobs, and Steve Wozniak. By giving these examples Leary tries to show that the tradition of the individual who thinks for him-/herself extends to the beginning of recorded history. He reminds us that the very label of our species, *Homo sapiens*, defines us as "the animals who think" (cf. CC 69). "If our genetic function is *computare* ("to think")," Leary hypothesizes, "then it follows that the ages and stages of human history, so far, have been larval or preparatory. After the insectoid phases of submission to gene pools, the mature stage of the human life is the individual who thinks for him/herself" (CC 69).

In Leary's view we are coming closer and closer to this mature stage of human life. Leary predicts the emergence of a New (Digital) Humanism with an emphasis on independent thinking, individual creativity, and the empowerment of computers and other technologies. The various new electronic technologies that more and more people have access to — modern synthesizers, computers, Internet, etc — would help us to get closer to people and understand ourselves better. They would encourage us to "do our own thing" and help us to access the information we need to realize ourselves, which means that we do not need authorities that tell us what to do any more. Due to the de-centralizing effect of computers and the Internet the mature stage of the human life cycle would soon be reached. Leary predicts that in the cyber society of the 21st century the cyberpunk will be the norm:

In the information-communication civilization of the 21st Century, creativity and mental excellence will be the ethical norm. The world will be too dynamic, complex, diversified, too cross-linked by global immediacies of modern (quantum) communication, for stability of thought or dependability of behavior to be successful. The "good person" in the cybernetic society are the intelligent ones who think for themselves. The "problem person" in the cybernetic society of the 21st Century is the one who automatically obeys, who never questions authority, who acts to protect his/her official status, who placates and politics [sic] rather than thinks independently (CC 63).

As more and more individuals are liberating themselves from the bondage of authoritarian hierarchical management structures, freeing themselves to interact with the world supported by their wits rather than traditional social rules, *cybernetic principles of organization* would emerge within the social system and transform the conventional social structure into "a fabric whose weave is defined by the sum of interactions of autonomous entities"(cf. CC 51). This means that there will soon be no central government that imposes rigid rules on individuals any more. Democracy – no matter if it is a "capitalist democracy" or a "socialist democracy" — would be a system of government that is obsolete in the cybernetic age. "In the cybernetic age, 'democracy' becomes majority mob-rule and the enemy of individual freedom," Leary explains (CC 72). But would there not be total chaos if there is no central authority that has the power to create law and order, and everybody does whatever he/she wants to do? No. Contrary to the belief that a society that is not based on an authoritarian hierarchical system is nothing but total chaos (disorder), Leary is of the opinion that organizational principles that produce order will arise and create a "self-organizing system" without central government: the "cyber-society." What exactly are these cybernetic principles of organization Leary is talking about? How can order arise from chaos? How exactly does Leary picture this social fabric whose weave is defined by the sum of interactions of autonomous individuals?

4.2.2. *The organizational principles of the “cyber-society”*

In order to be able to understand the arguments Leary uses to back his idea of a cyber-society the reader has to have some background knowledge about cybernetics. Since Leary’s explanations of cybernetics are rather short I will first explain the basic concepts of cybernetics and then present Leary’s arguments.

Cybernetics is the study of control and communication processes in living and artificial systems. The cyberneticists — who were mathematicians, neuroscientists, social scientists and engineers — were concerned with describing patterns of communication and control that underlie electronic, mechanical, and biological systems. They clearly distinguished the patterns of organization of a system from its physical structure. This is an important distinction because it allowed them to define patterns of organization (organizational principles) that do not only apply to one particular system, but to all systems, irrespective of their nature (cf. Capra 1997: 51f.).

All the major achievements of cybernetics originated in comparisons between organisms (living systems) and machines (artificial systems). While studying the mechanisms of self-regulating machines like the thermostat, or the steam engine, the cyberneticists made an important discovery. Although self-regulating machines had existed long before cybernetics, the cyberneticists were the first ones who recognized that these machines involved a mechanism which Norbert Wiener called “feedback loop.” Fritiof Capra explains the concept of feedback as follows:

A feedback loop is a circular arrangement of causally connected elements, in which an initial cause propagates around the links of the loop, so that each element has an effect on the next, until the last “feeds back” the effect into the first element of the cycle [...]. The consequence of this arrangement is that the first link (“input”) is affected by the last (“output”), which results in self-regulation of the entire system, as the initial effect is modified each time it travels around the cycle (Capra 1997: 56f.).

Wiener called the logical pattern, or organizational principle, that underlies the concept of feedback “circular causality” (cf. Capra 1997: 58). The cyberneticists found out that circular causality cannot only be found in self-regulating machines but that this organizational principle is actually an essential property of all living systems (organisms and social systems) as well. The conditions necessary for a living system to exist are created and maintained by the system itself in a self-sustaining process of dynamical feedback (cf. Capra 1997: 62).

Leary was fascinated by the fact that feedback can create a system that regulates itself and does not need an outside force to control it. Being a person who is against centralism, he was very much interested in the decentralizing effect that feedback might have on the information society we live in. He was convinced that the feedback created by people communicating via the Internet, interactive media, etc, was going to change the world to the better. As more and more people become connected, more feedback could occur and create a living system that does not depend on rigid structures of control and domination in order to exist.

Now how does Leary explain the basic concepts of cybernetics? After making the reader aware of the difference between a pattern of organization/organizational principle and the structure of a system, Leary points out that the most important organizational principle defined by cybernetics is the circular causality of feedback, “a notion crucial to the understanding of the complexities of the modern world”(DD 50). He explains the concept of feedback by describing how perception in human beings works:

Feedback is information about a process used to change that process. One remarkable fact about neurophysiology is that nerve signals don’t carry explicitly encoded information. A nerve fiber carries signals to the brain. It is the brain that somehow manufactures the richness of our perceptual experience from these signals. Only by correlating the input signals with the internal state of the perceptual apparatus can sense be made of the signals. Changes

of sensation are correlated with motor activity. Here is our circularity again: movements are required for perception, and perception required for movements. Even seemingly simple muscular acts couldn't be accomplished without feedback (DD 50).

The system that Leary describes here regulates itself, like a thermostat which regulates itself by continuous feedback. Leary explains that in any self-regulating system all the components are active. As Leary puts it, "cybernetic systems are self-organizing. This implies an active cooperation of the individual components of any population that composes a system"(DD 51). Leary explains that cybernetics terms this principle of self-organization "autopoiesis," from the Greek *auto*, meaning "self," and *poiesis*, meaning "a making" (cf. *ibid.*). "Autopoiesis refers to the central circular quality of all living and lifelike systems," Leary writes. "The principal characteristic of such [autopoietic] systems is that their interaction yields systems with the same kind of organization, hence they are "self-making"(*ibid.*). The cyber-society that we supposedly are creating right now would be such an autopoietic system.

Leary argues that feedback (i.e., self-reference) in cybernetic organization leads to "fractal forms." What is a fractal form? The term "fractal" (coined by chaos mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot) is used to describe "a shape whose details resemble the whole thing. A mountain range is a kind of fractal, since if you look at an outcropping of rock on a mountain, it looks like a small mountain itself, and if you lean closer to the rock outcropping, you find bumps on the boulders which themselves look like mountains, and so on"(Rucker 1992: 45). Fractal forms can be described with the help of circular equations. These equations are called circular equations because after you get an answer, you plug it back into the original equation again and again, countless times (cf. Rushkoff 1995: 22). This image of the fractal — similar components repeated at each level of scale — gives us a better picture of what Leary means. Leary imagines the interpersonal organization of communicating individuals in an information society (a society which is based on unlimited information exchange) as a huge fractal: "I, as a person, am similar to you. Yet the juxtaposition of us and millions of others in a fractally organized system results in the apparent complexity of the system as a whole"(DD 33). The mind of a single person is seen by Leary as interacting fractal subsystems. "As inside, so outside," Leary says, reminding us of medieval mystics who expressed their insights into the real nature of the world in the sentence "As above, so below"(DD 36). Leary holds that we are all made up of many "selves" and that circuitous routes of communication exist between these selves. He refers to computer pioneer Marvin Minsky who argues that the mind is made up of independent interacting pieces of soft machinery (cf. DD 32). Leary concludes that the principles of organization that apply to the interpersonal organization of communicating individuals in an information society also apply to the intrapersonal organization of selves in a functioning individual.

As far as the fractal nature of the world is concerned, Leary argues that the ingestion of LSD would enable us to directly experience this fractal nature: "The interconnectedness of the world as it appears to humans in certain mystical and pharmacological states comes from a direct appreciation of its fractal nature. It's particularly amusing that nearly every LSD user who is shown visual representations of moving fractals exclaims over his or her astonished recognition: '*That's* what I see'"(DD 33).

After this short excursion into the world of fractals, let us return to the concept of self-organization. Leary's cyber-society is a self-organizing system. In order to understand the concept of self-organization, we have to understand how order can arise from chaos (disorder). Leary's answer to the question of how order can arise from disorder is crucial for the understanding of his concept of the cyber-society.

How can order arise from chaos? To answer this question Leary refers to a theory by Russian-born chemist and physicist Ilya Prigogine. The theory is called "theory of dissipative structures." This theory is the first, and perhaps most influential, detailed description of self-organizing systems (cf. Capra 1997: 88). During the 60s Prigogine developed a new nonlinear thermodynamics to describe the self-organization phenomena in open systems far from equilibrium. While studying the processes of heat convection, Prigogine discovered that there are phenomena which cannot be described with the laws of classical thermodynamics. According to the second law of thermodynamics, there is a trend in physical phenomena from order to disorder. Any isolated, or "closed," physical system will proceed spontaneously

in the direction of ever-increasing disorder. The phenomena that Prigogine discovered, however, showed that in an open system far from equilibrium coherence and order can arise from thermal chaos. Unlike closed systems, which settle into a state of thermal equilibrium, open systems maintain themselves far from equilibrium in a quasi-steady state characterized by continual flow and change (cf. Capra 1997: 88f.).

Leary describes Prigogine's theory of "dissipative structures" as follows:

In 1977, Ilya Prigogine won the Nobel Prize for his work on the thermodynamics of nonequilibrium systems, "dissipative" structures arising out of nonlinear processes. Classical thermodynamics maintained that random (autonomous) local processes such as molecular motion always tend toward a maximum of entropy (disorder). Prigogine showed that in spatially confined neighbourhoods, orderly physical assemblages can spontaneously arise. Individual occurrences that engender these spontaneous coherences are called "free agents"(DD 52).

As far as the "free agents" are concerned, Prigogine provides Leary with an explanation that helps Leary to show that in the cyber-society the individuals that make up this society are free to choose whatever they want to do (freedom of the will) and still their interactions produce ordered structures:

Prigogine's explanation of the phenomenon of convection are considered heretical by traditional science. For instance, we know that hot air rises, but there's no reason why it should; molecules are simply more energetic and faster moving than their cooler cohorts. Prigogine asserts that the coherent emergent behavior of masses of hot air is intelligent and volitional. Hot air rises because it *wants to*....]

Although the motion of a single molecule might appear "selfish," aimless with respect to the global organization of its environment, the local interactions of many such individuals produce macroscopic order, in certain circumstances (DD 53).

Another interesting thing about self-organizing chaotic systems like the ones described by Prigogine is that they are systems that are governed by orderly rules, yet their behavior is unpredictable because of their complexity. Leary explains: "[C]hanges in the initial state of a complex system, *however small*, lead to arbitrarily large changes after time elapses. Because the initial state is neither precisely measurable nor precisely reproducible, the system is not predictable" (DD 54). In Chaos theory this is known as the "butterfly effect" because of the assertion that a butterfly stirring the air in Beijing can cause a storm in New York next month (cf. Capra 1997: 134).

According to Leary, more and more people are discovering that change and disequilibrium are the driving forces of the universe and that stability (the static, predictable Newtonian universe) is an illusion (cf. DD 54). More and more people would accept the fact that we live in an unpredictable, chaotic world which cannot be controlled. This change in consciousness would make people realize that static hierarchical dogmatic social structures are outdated and, consequently, lead to change in society.

4.3. The observer-created universe

In this chapter I am going to show that the epistemology of Leary's Quantum Psychology theory is constructivist. Like the constructivists, Leary argues that "reality" (what we accept as reality) is a construction of our minds. In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary presents an interesting argument from the field of quantum physics to back this idea – Werner Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle." In this chapter I want to discuss this argument and explain Leary's concept of "formatting the brain," which corresponds to the concept of imprinting Leary used in the 70s to show how we can create our own realities. Before I discuss Leary's interpretation of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle I will shortly explain what constructivism is.

Constructivists argue that we do not see the world as *it* is, we see it as *we* are. They see the human mind as “creator, imposing its categories on what it encounters” (Spivey 1997: 2). This means what we accept as objective reality is actually a construction of our minds. Although constructivism was not identifiable as a theoretical orientation until the 1920s or 1930s, constructivist positions have been postulated through the years from classical times (e.g., the scepticist Epimenides from Crete) to the Enlightenment (e.g., philosopher Immanuel Kant) to our modern age (e.g., psychologist Jean Piaget). Kant, for example, argued that humans cannot directly experience external reality because they cannot escape the “categories” and “forms of perception”(time, space) through which they perceive the world. Ergo, the “Ding an sich” (objective reality) remains an enigma (cf. *ibid.* 6). Constructivists argue that humans impose order on their sensory experience of the outside world, rather than discern it, and that they create knowledge, rather than discover it. As Nancy Neslon Spivey put it in *The Constructivist Metaphor*: “Constructivists view people as constructive agents and view the phenomenon of interest (meaning and knowledge) as built instead of passively ‘received’ by people whose *ways* of knowing, seeing, understanding, and valuing influence what is known, seen, understood, and valued”(Spivey 1997: 3). The “radical constructivist” Ernst von Glasersfeld, for example, maintains that knowledge is “exclusively an order and organization of a world constituted by our experience” (Watzlawick 1984: 24) and is not a reflection of an objective ontological reality. This means that the models of reality we create can help us to organize our experiential world, but they cannot help us to discover an objective reality.

Like the constructivists, Leary argues that objectivity is an illusion. According to Leary, Werner Heisenberg’s “uncertainty principle,” a percept of quantum physics, is a scientific proof for the fact that knowledge can never be objective, that is, cleansed of all subjective distortion (cf. FB 378). Leary argues that Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, which states that a subatomic particle’s position and momentum cannot both be accurately known, has serious implications for philosophy and science, as well as for our everyday lives (cf. *ibid.*). In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary explains:

Werner Heisenberg’s principle states that there is a limit to objective determinacy. If everyone has a singular viewpoint, constantly changing, then everyone creates his or her own version of reality. This gives the responsibility for reality construction not to a bad-natured biblical God or to an impersonal, mechanical process of entropic devolution, or to an omniscient Marxist state, but to individual brains. Subjective determinacy [...]. Our brains create our own spiritual worlds, as they say along the Ganges (CC 5f.).

Furthermore, Leary explains that Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle “suggests that our observations fabricate the subject matter, i.e. realities. We can only know what our sense-organs, our measuring instruments and our paradigms or maps describe”(Info 2). According to Leary, the “Quantum universe” that Heisenberg and the other quantum physicists define is an observer-created universe. It is a universe that changes when the viewpoint of the observer changes.

In order to be able to understand Leary’s argument we have to have some background knowledge about quantum physics and we have to know the crucial difference between classical (Newtonian-Cartesian) physics and quantum physics. Since Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle is often used by various cyber-philosophers as an argument to challenge scientific authority (cf. Dery 1996: 63) I want to explain it here in a detailed way.

Classical physics suggests that atoms are hard, solid particles that exist independent of an observer (cf. Capra 1982: 78). The quantum physicists, however, discovered that atoms and subatomic particles are far from being hard, solid objects. The quantum theory of Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, Max Planck, et al. suggests that subatomic particles are very abstract entities that have a dual nature. Depending on how we look at them, they appear sometimes as particles, sometimes as waves. But how can something be, at the same time, a particle, an entity confined to a very small space, and a wave which is spread out over a large region of space? Fritjof Capra explains:

The situation seemed hopelessly paradoxical until it was realized that the terms “particle” and “wave” refer to classical concepts which are not fully adequate to describe atomic phenomena. An electron is neither a particle nor a wave, but it may show particle-like aspects in some situations and wave-like in others. While it acts like a particle, it is capable of developing its wave nature at the expense of its particle nature, and vice versa, thus undergoing continual transformations from particle to wave and wave to particle. *This means that neither electron nor any other atomic “object” has any intrinsic properties independent of its environment. The properties it shows – particle-like or wave-like – will depend on the experimental situation, that is, on the apparatus it is forced to interact with* [italics mine] (ibid. 79).

According to quantum physics, no atomic “object” has any intrinsic properties independent of an observer (i.e., the measuring instruments and the concepts an observer uses to describe atomic objects). In other words, scientists create models of reality, using concepts which are constructions of their minds, and they create knowledge rather than discover it.

The quantum physicists had to realize that the classical concepts they used could not provide a complete description of reality. Heisenberg managed to express the limitations of classical concepts in a precise mathematical form, which is known as the uncertainty principle. Capra describes the uncertainty principle as follows:

The uncertainty principle [...] consists of a set of mathematical relations that determine the extent to which classical concepts can be applied to atomic phenomena; these relations stake out the limits of human imagination in the atomic world. Whenever we use classical terms – particle, wave, position, velocity – to describe atomic phenomena, we find that there are pairs of concepts, or aspects, which are interrelated and cannot be defined simultaneously in a precise way. The more we emphasize one aspect in our description the more the other aspect becomes uncertain, and the precise relation between the two is given by the uncertainty principle (ibid.).

By showing that all the concepts scientists use to describe atomic phenomena are limited, Heisenberg made it clear that scientists do not deal with objective truth but with limited and approximate subjective descriptions (models) of reality.

For Leary, this means that anybody who claims that his/her model of reality is the absolute truth is simply wrong. Since we cannot say anything definite about objective reality there is simply no way to justify the claim that a model of reality is true or false. Leary suggests that we should learn to think of models not as “false” or “true” in some abstract and absolute sense, but as the products of humans in concrete situations, all possessing some kind of relative truth, and none of them big enough and inclusive enough to contain all the truth. We filter reality. We only perceive what confirms our model of the world (cf. CC 39f.)

Leary argues that out of the million signals received from the outside world per second, the human brain ignores most and organizes the rest in conformity with whatever model, or belief system, it currently holds. According to Leary, our usual habit of screening out all signals not compatible with our own favorite reality-map is the mechanism which keeps us all far stupider than we should. If we want to become more intelligent we have to be able to change the models of reality imprinted in our brains and learn to see the world through different models simultaneously. According to Leary, intelligence means awareness of detail. The more signals you receive/process per second the more intelligent you are (cf. CC 35ff.).

Like many constructivists, cognitive psychologists, and cyberneticists, Leary sees the brain as an information processing system (computer). Our minds, according to this metaphor, serve as the software that programs the neural hardware (cf. CC 39). According to Leary, most of the classic psychological terms can now be redefined in terms of computer concepts. The psychological process of imprinting,

for example, could now be called “formatting the brain.” Imprinting means sudden programming of the brain. Leary explains: “Imprinting is a multimedia input of data. For a baby, it’s the warmth of the mother, the softness, the sound, the taste of the breast. That’s called booting up or formatting. Now baby’s brain is hooked to Mama and then of course from Mama to Daddy, food, etc., but it ‘s the Mama file that’s the first imprint”(CC 35). (The reader who has read chapter three, where the concept of imprinting as interpreted by Leary is explained, should be able to understand this quotation.) According to Leary, psychedelic drugs enable us to “re-format the brain,” that is, to change imprints. This means that if one takes LSD one’s experience of life is reevaluated in a neutral context and put it into a new order (cf. *ibid.*). This process of “re-formatting the brain” corresponds to John Lilly’s concept of “metaprogramming,” which is explained in chapter 3.3., “The Neuroelectric-Metaprogramming Circuit.” (It should be mentioned here that Leary’s computer-brain model was inspired by John Lilly’s model of the “human biocomputer” which Lilly developed in the mid 60s. Lilly used this model, which is described in *Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Biocomputer*, for psychotherapy, meditation, and for his own experiments with LSD.)

According to Leary, at present the computer-brain-formatting metaphor is the best metaphor for explaining what happens during a psychedelic experience⁷; it is the best metaphor for understanding and operating the mind, the best metaphor for learning how we can consciously create our own realities (cf. CC 39).

4.4. The Sociology of LSD

In Leary’s Quantum Psychology psychedelic drugs do not play a central role. In various interviews Leary proclaimed that the personal computer is the LSD of the 1990s. However, psychedelics — LSD, psilocybin, and MDMA (Ecstasy) – seem to be making a big comeback in the 90s. That is why I want to discuss two interesting essays by Leary which explain why psychedelic drugs are in vogue again.

Are psychedelics really making a comeback in the 90s? Yes, they do. In an essay by Dan Joy called “Psychedelic Renaissance” (this essay serves as introduction to the 1992 edition of *Psychedelics Encyclopedia*) we can find quotations from newspaper/magazine articles from all over the world that indicate that there is a worldwide resurgence of interest in psychedelic drugs — especially LSD. *Newsweek* magazine, for example, reported in its February 3, 1992 issue that “acid is staging a serious comeback in the 90s, especially among affluent suburban teenagers.” According to this report, the rise in popularity is partially attributed to weaker doses, which result in fewer “bad trips” and are more likely to be taken at parties. Surveys conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the University of Michigan has shown that in 1991 LSD had overtaken cocaine in popularity among high school seniors for the first time since 1976 (cf. Stafford 1992: III-23).

In his essays “The Sociology of LSD” and “Just Say Know: The Eternal Antidote to Fascism,”⁸ Leary gives a sociological explanation for this phenomenon. He explains why the first LSD boom declined and why more LSD is being used today (so he claims) than in the 60s.

According to Leary, LSD – like the computer, the railroad, or the automobile – is a technology (a tool which is the result of scientific knowledge being used for practical purposes) that introduced profound changes in society. However, “change causes fear,” Leary says. Whenever a human being is confronted with something new, he/she would automatically react with fear. Leary explains: “[T]here are powerful genetic mechanisms, reinforced by society, geared to react with fear at the approach of the new. This neophobia obviously has a survival value. At each stage of evolution each gene pool has been protected

⁷ Leary’s computer-brain model also has an explanation for visions and hallucinations that occur during psychedelic experiences. According to Leary, there are programs in the ROM of our biocomputers which are responsible for psychedelic visions. During a psychedelic experience these programs are activated (cf. CC 39).

⁸ The slogan “Just Say Know” was Leary’s reaction to the “Just Say No” anti-drug campaign in the US. In “head shops” in San Francisco, for example, you can buy bumper stickers and patches with Leary’s slogan printed on them.

by those with the nervous system wired to cry *Danger! Caution*”(CC 101)! According to Leary, fear is the “glue” that holds “human hives” together. Fear guards continuity.

However, whenever cultures reach states of national security, economic prosperity, and imperial confidence people start to reflect about their fears. A counterculture emerges and encourage novel art forms and lifestyles. Philosophers, scientists and artists reject the old values and search for new meaning.

Exactly at these times, when philosophy, science, and religion “vibrate with transcendent energies” two things happen: external exploration into undiscovered geographical realms, and inner exploration using brain-change drugs (cf. CC 97). Of course, Leary is thinking about the 60s here. However, this cultural phenomenon could also be found in ancient India (the time of the Aryan conquest), ancient Greece, or in Europe in the 16th century (the Enlightenment). Let us, for example, look at the situation in ancient Greece: Leary explains that the Athenians were self-reliant pioneer navigators that discovered new territories (external exploration), that the Greek philosophers developed new philosophic models that help us to understand how our brain works, and that the Greek mystery cult of Eleusis used an LSD-type substance in its annual rebirth ceremonies (inner exploration).

At such times in the emergence of a civilization, optimistic change-agents would manage to push our species into new adventures and introduce new technologies in society. However, the history of science has shown that every new technology that compels change in lifestyle or in understanding of the human nature has always taken one or two generations to be socialized and domesticated (cf. CC 102). Right after their discovery the newly discovered technologies are considered to be dangerous, heretical, and morally wrong by the government. Leary reminds us that Vatican astronomers in the 16th century, for example, consistently refused to look through Galileo Galilee’s telescopes and tried to force Galileo to give up the heliocentric worldview.

Leary concludes that, given these facts, it is not surprising that LSD was considered to be dangerous and morally wrong when it first appeared in the 60s. According to Leary, the LSD-hysteria is over now because psychedelic drug usage is no longer a trendy topic for the media and politicians; we have new problems (oil, “crack”, the New Cold War, etc). Now that the LSD-hysteria has died down, more and more smart young people are learning how to intelligently use brain-change drugs like LSD for recreational purposes and to reach enlightenment. More and more people realize that the ultimate (and only) pleasure organ is the brain, “an enormous hundred-billion-cell hedonic system waiting to be activated”(CC 100). There are almost no bad trips being reported, because “the acid is clean and the users are sophisticated” (ibid.). According to Leary, the average suburban teenager today knows more about the varied effects of brain-change drugs than the most learned researcher twenty years ago”(ibid.).

Leary points out that, in addition to the pure LSD that is now available, new brain change drugs (“designer drugs”) are now appearing in plentiful quantities. In comparison to the “crude” psychedelics of long duration and unpredictable effect that were used in the 60s (e.g., STP), the new shortacting drugs (e.g., MDMA, the favorite drug of people in the techno-rave scene) would be safer and easier to handle.⁹ As Leary puts it: “Just as computers today are more efficient, cheaper, and more reliable than those thirty years ago, so are the drugs”(ibid.). Leary predicts that the next decade will see the emergence of dozens of new, improved, stronger, safer, psychoactive drugs – and people would be ready for these new drugs:

There is an enormous market of some fifty million Americans today who would joyfully purchase a safe euphoriant, a precise psychedelic of short duration and predictable effect, an effective intelligence increaser, a harmless energizer, a secure sensual enhancer. An aphrodisiac! [...]

The last two decades have just whetted humanity’s eternal appetite for technologies to activate and direct one’s own brain function. *The drug movement has just begun* [my italics] (CC 100).

⁹ The reader who is interested in the mental and physical effects of MDMA is referred to the following books: Bruce Eisner’s *Ecstasy: The MDMA Story*. Alexander Shulgin’s *PHIKAL*. Nicolas Saunders’ *E for Ecstasy*.

According to Leary, this increase in popularity of psychedelic drugs, especially LSD, is closely linked to the fact that we are living in a world where everything is changing faster and faster. There would be an enormous acceleration of knowledge we have to keep up with in order to survive in the new information society. Psychedelics, especially LSD, would help us to cope with this acceleration by accelerating our brain functions. In his earlier theories, in the 60s and 70s, Leary suggests that LSD allows us to temporarily suspend our imprints (which means that we leave our rigid reality tunnels and enter a multi-choice reality-labyrinth) and re-imprint new, more complex, funnier realities. In terms of Leary's Quantum Psychology, this means that under the influence of the drug there is a dramatic increase in the amount of information processed per second. The more new circuits are opened in the brain (the "ROM brain-circuits"), the more new information we notice in the objects we perceive. Leary argues that those people who like LSD will always be able to deal with what is to come because they know how to "surf the waves of chaotic change" planfully. "*The future is going to spin faster and wilder, of that we can be sure*" Leary predicts. "*If you don't like acid, rest assured you're not going to like the future. Now, more than ever before, we need to gear our brains to multiplicity, complexity, relativity, change. Those who can handle acid will be able to deal more comfortably with what is to come* [my italics]"(CC 103).

4.5. Designer Dying/The postbiological options of the Information Species

Leary was definitely right when he said that "the future is going to spin faster and wilder" — no matter if we took LSD or not. In the last couple of decades there has been an enormous acceleration of technological development so that today we are literally not able to predict which new, groundbreaking technologies will be discovered tomorrow. Technology is changing faster and faster. What was still considered to be science fiction yesterday is reality today (Internet, virtual reality, cloning, etc). In Leary's opinion this accelerating change rate is a sign that things are getting better. As far as changes that new technologies introduce into society are concerned, Leary has always been an optimist: He thought that computers, the Internet, and other interactive media would help us to dissolve hierarchical social structures, create the realities of our dreams, make the world a better place to live in. More than that, decentralization of power and the emergence of a self-organizing cyber society would actually be the inevitable consequences of these new technologies. Computers, as well as psychedelic drugs, would enable us to break out of practically all (social, political and personality-brain) structures that limit our thinking and perception and force us to behave in a certain way. This means we (theoretically) have total control over the courses of our lives.

However, there seems to be one last limit: death. Is there a way to escape death? How can we solve this last problem? Can technology help us to become immortal? What does Leary say about the problem of death? I am including this chapter about death in my paper because the solutions that Leary suggests to overcome this last problem seem to be a logical consequence of his cyberpunk attitude, his utopian faith in technology, and his eternal optimism. Leary's last book, *Design for Dying* (co-authored with R. U. Sirius), makes his Quantum psychology theory complete. In this book he suggests different techniques that allow us to transcend the last limit, which is imposed on us by mortality.

In his essay "Common-Sense Alternatives to Involuntary Death"(CC 187–202), co-written with Eric Gullichsen, Leary predicted that the cybernetic age we are entering would be an age of freedom and enlightenment:

The exploding technology of light-speed and multimedia communication lays a delicious feast of knowledge and personal choice within our easy grasp. Under such conditions, the operating wisdom and control naturally passes from aeons-old power of gene pools, and locates in the rapidly self-modifying brains of individuals capable of dealing with an ever-

accelerating rate of change.

Aided by customized, personally programmed, quantum-linguistic appliances, individuals can choose their own social and genetic future, and perhaps choose not to 'die'”(CC 190).

Leary writes that first step towards solving the problem of death is to deprogram the “dying reflexes” imprinted in our brains by our culture and start thinking scientifically about alternatives to “going quietly and passively into the dark night or the neon-lit, Muzak-enhanced Disney-heaven of the Jesus Gang.” Leary points out that in pre-cybernetic cultures “the reflexive genetic duty of the top management (those in social control of the various gene pools) was to make humans feel weak, helpless, and dependent in the face of death. The good of the race or nation was ensured at the cost of the sacrifice of the individual”(CC 188). By controlling the “dying reflexes” and orchestrating the trigger stimuli that activate the “death circuits” (accomplished through rituals that imprint dependence and docility when the “dying alarm bells go off” in the brain) the gene-pool managers have maintained the attitude of dedication, obedience, and submission. For millennia the fear of death has depreciated individual confidence and increased dependence on authority. However, now that the individual is empowered by computers and other technologies, he/she would start thinking for him-/herself and question authority. People would learn to deprogram the “dying reflexes” and take personal responsibility for their dying process.

According to Leary, death is only a problem of knowledge, that is, information processing. “Once we comprehend that death is a problem of knowledge — information processing — solutions can emerge,” writes Leary (DD 143). Leary has always been very optimistic that scientists will soon develop technologies that make us immortal. In *Design for Dying*, he predicts that “the concept of involuntary, irreversible metabolic coma known as ‘death’ is about to become an outmoded, antiquated superstition”(ibid.). He suggests that it would be a wise decision to preserve one’s body (freeze the body, or store the information about the physical structure of the body digitally) and store one’s believe systems digitally, because it will only be a matter of five or ten years until the problem of biological death will be solved and we will also be able to exist as electronic life-forms on computer networks (cf. DD 149). “*To immortalize: digitize!*” is one of Leary’s slogans.

In *Design for Dying*, Leary discusses about thirty different techniques/technologies for extending our life spans and achieving immortality. Leary admits that these techniques do not give us a 100% insurance that we will become immortal. However, it is always better to be optimistic and think creatively about new possibilities than to be pessimistic and accept the bleak visions of the future imposed on us by authorities. I just want to mention three of the most spectacular techniques/technologies that Leary discusses, so the reader knows what Leary is talking about:

1. Cryonics: The body, or only the brain is frozen, preserved until a time of more advanced medical knowledge (cf. DD 153–61).
2. Nanotechnology: A nanometer is a millionth of a millimeter. Some scientists predict that we will soon be able to construct mechanical devices of this scale. Molecular robots could remove diseased DNA segments from the cells of AIDS patients, or repair cells in the body and keep the body from aging. A cryonically preserved brain that is damaged from freezing could be repaired. Machines that pick up single atoms and put them together to form molecules already exist (for more info see Scientific American homepage: <http://www.sciam.com/exhibit/040000trends.html>). Nano-machines could produce any desired article (rocket ships, sweets, a body organ, etc) from dirt and sunlight. This would mean we have total control over the material world. (cf. DD 161–67).
3. The “microtome procedure” or “downloading:” This method is suggested by Carnegie-Mellon robotics scientist and artificial intelligence theorist Hans Moravec. It generally involves a cryonically preserved brain. The brain is sliced thin. Each slice is scanned into a computer using an electron microscope. The computer reconstructs the brain’s circuitry onto some form of

hardware. Moravec's notion of "downloading" offers a theoretical but highly exhaustively worked out solution to the problem of how mind can be extracted from body (cf. Dery 1996: 299f.). The information about the brain structure could be used to build a new brain with the help of nanotechnology or we could exist as electronic life form in computer networks (cf. DD 172). In addition to Moravec's way of "downloading," Leary offers another: "Through storage of one's belief systems as online data structures, driven by selected control structures (the electronic analogue to will?), one's neuronal apparatus will operate in silicon as it did on the wetware of the brain, although faster, more accurately, more self-mutably, and – if desired – forever" (DD 149).

Leary does not only predict that we will soon be immortal. He also predicts that, "In the near future, what is now taken for granted as the perishable human creature will be a mere historical curiosity, one point amidst unimaginable, multidimensional diversity of form. Individuals [...] will be free to choose to reassume flesh-and-blood form, constructed for the occasion by the appropriate science"(CC 202). According to Leary, all the new technologies that have been developed in the last couple of decades (especially computer-information technology) indicate that natural evolution of the human species is near completion. Leary points out that some people (especially computer scientists) are no longer interested in merely procreating, they are designing their successors. He quotes Hans Moravec who writes, "We owe our existence to organic evolution. But we owe it little loyalty. We are on the threshold of change in the universe comparable to the transition from nonlife to life"(CC 199). What Moravec and Leary mean is that humanity has now reached a turning point in the operation of the process of evolution. We are entering the "posthuman" age. Leary explains:

[It is] a point at which the next evolutionary step of the species will be under our control. Or more correctly, the next steps, which will occur in parallel, will result in an explosion of diversity of the human species. We shall no longer be dependent on fitness in any physical sense for survival. In the near future, computer and biological technologies [nanotechnology, genetic engineering] will make the human form a matter totally determined by individual choice. [...]

Humans already come in some variety of races and sizes. In comparison to what "human" will mean within the next century, we humans are at present as indistinguishable from another as are hydrogen molecules. As we become conscious of this, our anthropocentrism will decrease (DD 148).

Reading Leary's predictions about future technologies that enable us to become immortal and make the human form "a matter totally determined by individual choice," we get the impression that Leary's aim, in *Design for Dying*, is to persuade people to place their faith in an end-of-the-century deus ex machina, a machine god that would free all of us from limitations of any sort, making us godlike beings – technology as the Savior of humanity. It cannot be denied that *Design for Dying* is a hymn to technological progress; however, this is not the main message that Leary tries to communicate in this book. Leary does not want people to blindly believe in his techno-eschatology. He does not want to persuade people to choose the cryonics option or to "download" their brains/minds into a computer just because *he* said that this would be the best thing to do. The aim of *Design for Dying* is to make people aware that they have choices, choices regarding how to die and, someday soon, they may have choices about whether to die. Leary tells us that we should not blindly accept the "dogmas of monotheistic-totalitarian religions" that have "cleverly monopolized the rituals of dying to increase control over the superstitious"(CC 189). The main message that Leary is trying to communicate in *Design for Dying* is "Think for yourself and question authority"(DD 2). (We will see that these are the basic guiding principles that guided Leary's whole life and work.) In "Common-sense Alternatives to Involuntary Death," Leary writes: "We do not endorse any particular technique of achieving immortality. *Our aim is to review all options and encourage creative thinking about new possibilities* [my italics]" (CC 195).

It should also be mentioned here that Leary was very well aware that technology is not intrinsically liberating and that his visions of a technotopia only show “one side of the coin.” At a talk in San Francisco in 1992, for example, Leary pointed out that the computer (which, here, stands for technology in general) can be an engine of liberation *as well as* a tool of social control. Making us aware that most funding for computer and virtual-reality research and development can be traced to the military, Leary argued that the goal of technological endeavor sponsored by governments and large corporations usually is to create rigidly controllable and predictable systems by “taking the human being out of the loop”(cf. Stafford 1992: III-48f.). In the light of this viewpoint, according to Leary, the project of developing “artificial intelligence” becomes one of duplicating or exceeding certain human capacities with machines, while eliminating the unpredictability of human intuition, creativity, free will, and whim – factors that have been responsible for many of the truly revolutionary advances in science and technology. Leary pointed out that artificial intelligence endeavors have utterly failed to approximate the responsiveness, sensitivity, subtlety, and complexity of the human brain. He summed up this perspective by referring to the phrase “artificial intelligence” as “an oxymoron”(cf. *ibid.*).

Given these facts, it is not surprising that Leary himself did not decide to “download” his own brain into a computer in order to escape death and continue to exist as electronic life-form (i.e., artificial intelligence). Nor did he choose the cryonics option or “die live on the Internet,” as he had announced soon before he died. He decided to be cremated. His ashes were placed aboard a rocket ship and sent to outer space, where they now orbit the earth. Why did he not choose the cryonics option? “I have always considered myself an astronaut, and in death this will become a reality,” was Leary’s answer to this question (DD 5). His plans for cryonic preservation were only intended as a symbolic gesture, encouraging people to investigate alternatives to “involuntary dying.”

Leary has always been of the opinion that it is not important what you do, as long as you are “doing your own thing”- which means that you keep thinking for yourself and questioning authority — and “do not lay your trip on others.” (Remember the two commandments that Leary suggested in *The Politics of Ecstasy*.) In *Design for Dying*, R. U. Sirius explains that Leary did not see himself as a messenger for the cryonics movement or any other movement because he had never liked to be part of somebody else’s “game.” As Sirius put it,

[W]hether it was Harvard, the peace movement, Eldridge Cleaver, the Californian penal system, or the Extropian movement (advocates of cryonics and nanotechnology), Tim Leary didn’t like to be a captive pawn in anybody else’s game. And so he escaped. Once again.

What is the way of the Tao? Move on.

Lao-Tzu (DD 192).

4.6. A comparison/summary of Leary’s theories

So far, I have presented only Leary’s view of the emergence of a new global counterculture which Leary calls the cyberpunks, or New Breed. Now the question arises: Is this countercultural movement Leary is talking about really going to change the world? Is this new counterculture really going to create a post-political society based on individual freedom? Will the techno-utopia that Leary’s cyberpunks believe in finally become reality? Or is the techno-eschatology that Leary’s cyberpunks put their faith in nothing more than a naive escapist fantasy that blinds us to the real (social, political, economic, and ecological) problems all around us?

Before I will try to answer these questions in a critical analysis of the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s, I want to shortly compare the three most important theories that Leary has produced in the course of his career as counterculture spokesman. There are two reasons why I think that is useful to make this comparison (which can also be read as a summary) before discussing the cybernetic counterculture of the 90s:

First of all, if we really want to understand the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s we first have to go back to the 60s, because the cyberpunks and “cyber-hippies” of the 90s have adopted many ideas and beliefs from the hippies of the 60s. One way to find out what the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s and the psychedelic counterculture of the 60s have in common is to study Leary’s theories. The comparison I am going to make will help me to show that the difference between these two countercultures is not as big as one might think. According to Leary, the 90s counterculture is actually a continuation of the 60s counterculture. As Leary might put it: The goal has remained the same, only the methods/technologies have changed.

Second, this comparison will help me to show that the hippies were not nearly as rural and anti-technology as some cultural critics argue. Leary, the controversial Harvard psychologist, was very well aware that he was “turning on the world” with a high-tech product (LSD) and that a large part of the hippies did not on principle reject technology. According to Leary, all the hippies wanted was to experience ecstasy and freedom — freedom from self-imposed limitations as well as limitations imposed on them by society — and, for them, the high-tech product LSD was acceptable because it helped them to reach their goal.

If we compare Leary’s Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness (*The Politics of Ecstasy*) to his Exo-Psychology theory (*Exo-Psychology, Neuropolitcs*) and his Quantum Psychology theory (*Chaos & Cyberculture, Design for Dying*) we find that there are at least three things that these three theories have in common:

1. They are all based on the idea that we can create our own realities, that “reality” is a construction of our minds (i.e., our nervous systems).
2. They are all concerned with how we can attain freedom, how we can break free from all limits – selfimposed as well as external, metaphysical as well as physical. All the countercultures that Leary describes in his different theories have the same aim: Individual freedom, Ecstasy (i.e., “the experience of attaining freedom from limitations, either self-imposed or external”).
3. They are all based on the belief that science and technology can help us to attain freedom, enlightenment, and immortality.

Ad 1.) All of Leary’s theories are based on the belief that “reality” is a construction of our minds/nervous systems. In other words, the observer (i.e., the observer’s nervous system) creates the universe, or “reality tunnel,” he/she lives in. It could be said that Leary’s major thesis, in all of his theories, is that in this century the human nervous system has discovered its own creativity and its own limitations. We have discovered that the realities our parents, governmental institutions, priests, and scientists are trying to impose on us are arbitrary constructions and that the only way to escape these “reality tunnels” imposed on us is to learn to understand how our brains operate and use this knowledge to create our own realities. All of Leary’s theories describe models that explain how the human brain works, and suggest different methods which, according to Leary, can help us to escape the “authorized realities” that are “jealously guarded by the ones in power.”

In the 60s and 70s, Leary used the concept of imprinting to explain how the brain works. According to Leary’s Exo-Psychology theory, there are certain brief “critical periods” in a human being’s life during which imprints are made. These imprints (fixed neural structures) determine our realities; they determine what we will see and will “not see.” Imprints are permanent. Only strong bio-chemical shock can suspend an imprint. The method/technology to change imprints that Leary suggests is to take LSD. According to Leary, during a psychedelic drug experience the imprints in a person’s brain are suspended and the person can consciously re-imprint new realities, realities he/she likes better than the old ones.

In the 80s and 90s, psychedelic drugs played only a secondary role in Leary’s theories. “The PC is the LSD of the 90s,” Leary proclaimed. In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary suggests that the computer is a tool that can help us to create our own realities. How? Leary imagines that the human brain

works like a digital computer. In his Quantum-Psychology theory, he explains that the brain converts every sensory stimulation into directories and files of 0/1 signals. The sensory input programs the brain and determines the realities that we inhabit. This means that every “reality” consists of 0/1 bits of information. According to Leary, this is the reason why for the brain digital (screen-) realities are not less real than the “material” reality and why the computer can help us to create our own (digital) realities.

Another argument that Leary uses to back his idea that reality can be consciously designed is a daring interpretation of chaos theory. In *Design for Dying*, Leary describes the world as a self-organizing chaotic system, as one big fractal. What goes on inside any one person’s head is reflected, in some manner, on every other level of reality. As Leary puts it: “As inside, so outside.” All of the different levels of reality (nervous system, social system, etc) are logically connected. This means that if we change our perception of the world and our thinking, the world will automatically change as well (because everything is logically connected). So any individual being has the ability to redesign reality at large (cf. DD 32f.). According to Leary, the fractal nature of the universe can be experienced when we take LSD.

I have just said that drugs only played a secondary role in Leary’s later theories. This is true. However, it should be mentioned here that, in *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary points out that the new “designer drugs” that are now appearing in “plentiful qualities” are also helpful tools that enable us to create our own realities (CC 100). According to Leary, the new designer drugs (e.g. Ecstasy) are much more predictable and easier to handle than the “crude” psychedelics that were used in the 60s. We just have to decide what we would like reality to be like and take the drug that will alter our observations about reality in the way we want it to be altered. In other words, the “world” will change because it is observed differently.

According to Leary, the Hippies were the first generation in human history that knew how to create their own realities consciously (with LSD). Equipped with new, refined technologies (computers, designer drugs, etc), the cyberpunks of the late 80s and 90s are already experts in creating “designer realities.”

Ad 2.) If we compare Leary’s different theories, in which he captures the most important beliefs and ideas that prevailed in the different countercultures he was part of, we find that the countercultures that Leary describes (the Beats, the Hippies, the cyberpunks) have many things in common. Most important of all, they all have the same aim: Individual freedom. According to Leary, the Beats, the Hippies, and the cyberpunks all belong to one and the same revolutionary movement. In his theories, Leary tries to show that this movement which has its roots in the 50s (the Beats) and 60s (the Hippies) is creating “a post-political society that is based on Ecstasy, i.e. the experience of individual freedom”(PE 2) Now how does Leary define the terms “Ecstasy” and “individual freedom”? For Leary, freedom means much more than free expression or having the right to vote. It is a state of consciousness in which all limits are transcended – Ecstasy. In the essay “Politics of Ecstasy: The Youth Revolutions of the 20th Century,” Leary defines Ecstasy as follows: “[Ecstasy is] the experience of attaining freedom from limitations, either self-imposed or external; a state of exalted delight in which normal understanding is felt to be surpassed. From the Greek ‘ex-stasis.’ By definition, ecstasy is an ongoing on/off process. It requires a continual sequence of ‘dropping out.’ On those occasions when many individuals share the ecstatic experience at the same time, they create a brief-lived ‘counter-culture.’ Synonyms [of Ecstasy are]: Euphoria, [...] bliss, nirvana, rapture”(PE 1). According to Leary, the “psychedelic-cybernetic revolution” that started with the Beats in the late 50s in America is a revolution based on ecstatic states of being in which politics (“the primitive struggle for power and territory”) and ethical norms are transcended. This movement has been made possible by psychedelic drugs and cybernetic-electronic technology. According to Leary, this individual-freedom movement is new to human history because it is not based on geography, politics, class, or religion. It has to do not with changes in the political structure but with changes in the individual mind. It is a “consciousness revolution.”

All of Leary’s theories contain models that explain how human consciousness has changed in the course of evolution. They describe different levels of consciousness which correspond to different stages in human evolution. According to Leary, human evolution is an evolution towards freedom. Psychedelics

and computers play an important role in Leary's vision of humanity's development towards this state of total freedom. By helping us to understand how our brains work and enabling us to activate the higher levels of consciousness (which have not been accessible to the majority of people in the past) they help to speed up human evolution. As more and more people are discovering how to activate these higher levels of consciousness — which are characterized by freedom from limitations and an endless number of choices that are open to the individual — we are moving closer and closer to the final stage of human evolution which Leary describes as “the culmination of the mystical, transcendental, spooky, hallucinatory dreams which we have envisioned in our highest psychedelic (mind-opened) states”(PE 2).

The higher levels of consciousness that Leary describes in his Theory of the Seven Levels of Consciousness and his model of the Eight Circuits of the Brain (which is an extended version of the model with only seven levels) give us an idea how our future is going to look like. When we activate the so called post-terrestrial circuits of the brain (i.e., the higher levels of consciousness) that Leary defines in his Eight Circuit model, we are able to escape from the narrow “reality tunnels” (struggle for power and territory, etc) imprinted in our brains, which Leary sees as the cause of all suffering. When we activate the Metaprogramming Circuit, we can suspend imprints and re-imprint into our brains any reality we like. When we open the Neurogenetic Circuit, we can even break free from the “constraints of the DNA.” Finally, when we activate the Neuroatomic Circuit, we reach the highest level of consciousness which goes beyond form, words, and “hallucinatory struggles.” This means we are also free from the “constraints of matter” and become immortal. In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary predicts that this final stage of human evolution “where the human form is a matter totally determined by individual choice” is not so far away. Leary argues that, right now, scientists are developing new technologies (e.g., nanotechnology) that will allow us to “manipulate matter as information,” which means that, thanks to technology, we will soon be able to assume any form we like. For example, we will be able to “download” our brains into computers and exist as ‘immortal’ electronic life forms.

Ad 3.) Leary has never been a technophobe. In fact, he has always believed that science and technology can help us to attain freedom, enlightenment, and immortality. Leary has always been open to new scientific discoveries and has embraced the new technologies as aids to positive social and spiritual transformation.

In the 60s, Leary preached that LSD could help us to create a new post-political society based on Ecstasy and it would show us the way to enlightenment. Leary was very well aware of the fact the LSD is a high-tech product and he realized that the hippies were not against technology on principle. (I want to remind the reader that LSD originally came from the high-tech laboratories of a pharmaceutical company in Switzerland, the Sandoz company.) LSD was not the only method/technology to expand one's mind that Leary suggested in the 60s. He also organized high-tech light shows (psychedelic light shows) which were supposed to produce the same effects as a dose of LSD.

In the 70s, Leary realized that LSD was not the magic cure-all he thought it was. So he started looking for other technologies that might help us to free ourselves from authority and attain freedom, enlightenment and immortality. In *Neuropolitics* (1977), he suggests that computers could be used to create a “global electronic nervous system,” an electronic communication network which would weaken the power of politicians and finally lead to the fall of representative government. However, the emergence of globe-linking electronic communication would just be a period of transition that prepares us for the next stage in human evolution which, according to Leary's Exo-Psychology, is space migration. In *Exo-Psychology* (“the psychology of post-terrestrial existence”), Leary argues that the purpose of technology is to enable us to leave this primitive planet and migrate to space where we might find our creator — the Higher Intelligence which seeded life on this planet in form of the DNA. According to Leary's Exo-Psychology, the aim of life is to find this Higher Intelligence and fuse with “hir.” Technology would help us to reach this aim.

In the 80s, when computers became accessible to millions of people and the Internet was opened to the public, Leary became an energetic promoter of the Internet and virtual reality. In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary describes the computer as magic tool which enables the individual to create his/her

own (digital) realities. As far as the social and political implications of computer-networking technology are concerned, Leary predicts that the free information exchange and feedback made possible by the Internet would create a post-political, non-hierarchical cybernetic society – a society based on Ecstasy, that is, the experience of individual freedom.

Leary goes even further and prophesies that the enormous acceleration in technological development we are witnessing right now will in the near future lead to technological breakthroughs (nanotechnology, “downloading”) that will enable us to “manipulate matter as information,” which means that the human form becomes “a matter totally determined by individual choice.” According to Leary, we have now reached a turning point in human evolution where the next evolutionary step will be under our control. This means we can actually “design” our futures. For example, we could decide to “download” our brains into computers and do away with the “old flesh” (body) all together. Newly discovered technologies such as nanotechnology would open up an unlimited number of choices. As Leary put it, “In the near future, what is now taken for granted as the perishable human creature will be a mere historical curiosity, one point amidst unimaginable, multidimensional diversity of form. Individuals [who do not like their existence as electronic life forms] will be free to choose to reassume flesh-and-blood form, constructed for the occasion by the appropriate science”(CC 202).

4.7. A critical analysis of the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s

In this chapter, I argue that Leary was a central figure in the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s. I want to show that in his Quantum Psychology theory Leary expresses the most important ideas and beliefs that prevail in this counterculture, and want to critically discuss some of these ideas and beliefs. This chapter is subdivided into four subchapters:

In the first subchapter (4.7.1.), I shortly describe the most important events in the development of the cybernetic counterculture in chronological order.

In the second subchapter (4.7.2.), I critically analyze some of the ideas and beliefs that the cybernetic counterculture is based on, by comparing two interesting analyses of the cyberdelic phenomenon: Douglas Rushkoff’s *Cyberia*, which is a very emphatic, rather uncritical approach to the phenomenon and very similar to Leary’s approach¹⁰; and Mark Dery’s *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*, which is a very critical analysis of the cyberdelic counterculture in which Dery harshly criticizes Rushkoff’s *Cyberia* and New Age visionaries like Leary whose “siren song of the nineties technophilia and sixties transcendentalism seduces the public mind with the promise of an end-of-the-century deus ex machina at a time when realistic solutions are urgently needed”(Dery 1996: 49). I argue that Leary’s theories are based on exactly the same beliefs as Rushkoff’s *Cyberia*. Dery’s criticism of the beliefs and ideas expressed in Rushkoff’s *Cyberia* uncovers some of the weak points in Leary’s Quantum Psychology theory. This critical analysis of the cyberdelic counterculture and the description of the development of this counterculture (4.7.1) shows that Leary really played a central role in this counterculture and that Leary’s theories perfectly capture the technotopian atmosphere that prevails in the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s.

In the third subchapter (4.7.3.), I show that the blind techno-euphoria that predominates in the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s is slowly wearing off because more and more cyber-hippies are realizing that their vision of the “cyber-society” — a world of intelligent, creative, self-reliant people who have free access to information, all made possible by cybernetic technology — is based on at least

¹⁰ It should be mentioned here that Leary was Rushkoff’s mentor. In various magazine articles and essays, Rushkoff praises Leary as the “godfather of cyberspace.” In *Cyberia*, Rushkoff talks about Leary and his ideas quite a lot. It should also be mentioned here that Rushkoff also wrote a novel, *Ecstasy Club* (Rushkoff 1997), in which he turns his extensive knowledge of the cyber-scene into a fictional account of the rise and fall of a rave club. Leary (in the novel his name is Samuel Clearwater) is an important character in this novel.

two problematic assumptions: First, the feedback and decentralization caused by cybernetic technology has only positive effects, that is, it creates individual freedom. Second, technology does not automatically make us more intelligent, creative and self-reliant. I will discuss these two problematic assumptions.

In the fourth subchapter (4.7.4.), I criticize Leary's techno-utopianism by using arguments from Marshall McLuhan's discourse on technology. I argue that McLuhan never was the technoutopian that Leary and other contemporary technophiles like to portray.

4.7.1. *The evolution of the cybernetic counterculture*

In the essay "Electronica: The True Cyber Culture," Douglas Rushkoff notes that if we trace back the roots of this counterculture we find that the first group of people that praised the computer as a tool of liberation and transcendence were members of bohemian communities in California in the 70s:

Culturally speaking, it was the California "bohemian" communities [sic] that first embraced the computer as a tool of artistic and spiritual expression. As early as the mid-1970s, psychedelic renegade Timothy Leary was appearing in documentaries predicting that someday in the future, all of us would be exchanging messages electronically through our "word processors." The visionary "Whole Earth Review" editor Stewart Brand announced to his hippy, environmentalist following that computers should be seen as aids to positive social and spiritual transformation (Rushkoff, Douglas. "Electronica: The True Cyber Culture." n. pag. Online. Internet. 29 Aug 1998. Available <http://www.levity.com/rushkoff/electronica.html>).

In the 70s, only very few people had access to computers and the Internet — which then was called "ARPA-Net" — was only for military communication (cf. Dery 1996: 5f.). However, it did not take long until this vision of a society in which all, or at least most of the people are connected electronically became reality. In the early 80s, the computer revolution moved beyond the esoteric subculture of researchers and hobbyists and became a mass culture phenomenon. In 1983, when universities, business companies, and government agencies connected their computers to the Internet, what had been the Arpa Internet mutated into an anarchic global network (cf. *ibid.*).

In 1984, science fiction writer William Gibson, in his cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer*, invented the concept of cyberspace, described by Gibson as a "consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation" (Gibson 1995: 22). Many young "computer-freaks" started to believe in Gibson's cyberpunk vision; and Gibson's concept of cyberspace finally became reality. As Gibson himself put it, "Cyberspace is a consensual hallucination that these people have created. It's like, with this equipment [computers, virtual reality gear, etc], you can agree to share the same hallucinations. In effect, they're creating a world. It's not really a place, it's not really a space. It's notional space" (quoted in Rucker 1992: 78).

According to Jon Lebkowsky, a contributing editor of the online magazine *Hot Wired*, the evolution of the cyberpunk subculture within the vibrant digital culture of today was mediated by two important events: One was the opening of the Internet. The other was the appearance of the first cyberculture magazine *Mondo 2000*. Lebkowsky explains:

The Internet derived much of its ambiance from a strange hybrid of 60s counterculture and 80s libertarianism. *Mondo 2000*, a glossy periodical that evolved from an earlier neopsychedelic zine [*High Frontiers*], incorporated this sociopolitical sensibility and blended it with their own peculiar sense of post-punk irreverence, drugged-up pranksterism, and high style. The result was a new cultural trend, or at least the media-generated illusion of one.

It was 1989. Computers were seen as tools of High Geekdom. *Mondo*, however, portrayed the new technology as sexy, hip, and powerfully subversive. And as Captain Picard might

say, they made it so.

It was Bart Nagel's unique computer-enhanced graphic style that pushed *Mondo 2K* [this is how its fans call it] over the top, making it something of a phenomenon in the early 90s. However, the real meat was in the cheerfully irreverent exploration of nascent technoculture and the evolving computer underground from the perspectives of the writers/editors, whose handles were R.U. Sirius, St. Jude, and Queen Mu. Besides displaying strangeness and charm, early *Mondo* was the only popular representation of the hacker ethic, described by author Andrew Ross as "libertarian and cryptoanarchist in its right-to-know principles and its advocacy of decentralized knowledge. [It] asserts the basic right to all users to free access to all information. [...]" (quoted in Kroker 1997: 16).

It should be mentioned here that Leary was a contributing editor of *Mondo 2000*. Many of Leary's essays about the cyberpunks and the subversive potential of computers (the most important of these essays can be found in *Chaos & Cyberculture*) were first published in *Mondo 2000*.

Mondo 2000 does not only report about computer hackers and the Internet. In *Mondo 2000*, we find articles about smart drugs (legal drugs that are supposed to enhance your intelligence), virtual reality, electronic music, chaos theory, artificial life, nanotechnology, brain implants, designer aphrodisiacs, psychedelics, techno-erotic paganism, etc. If we look at these different topics we see that *Mondo* tries to unite the scientific culture and the nonscientific culture. In *Mondo* the technical world and the underground world of popular culture and street level anarchy are converging. Another thing we can see if we look at these different topics is, that this cultural phenomenon that *Mondo* tries to make us aware of actually encompasses a considerable amount of subcultures, among them computer hackers, "ravers" (people who regularly go to all-night electronic dance parties known as "raves"), technopagans (this subculture combines neopaganism with digital technology), and New Age technophiles.

Now what do all of these different subcultures that express their views in *Mondo 2000* have in common? This question leads us to the discussion part of this chapter.

4.7.2. *Deus ex machina: a deadly phantasy?*

In his cyber-hippie travelogue, *Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Hyperspace*, Douglas Rushkoff gives a comprehensive survey of the subcultures discussed in *Mondo*. Rushkoff collectively calls these counter-culture Cyberia, or the cyberian counterculture of the 90s. According to Rushkoff (who was influenced by Leary's theories very much), there are at least two things that all of the cyberian subcultures have in common:

1. the belief that we can create our own realities, that "reality" is a construction of our minds.
2. the belief that technology can help us to create our own realities and break free from all limits (cf. Rushkoff 1995: 3–7).

(I decided to use the same phrasing as in the comparison of Leary's theories because I want to show that, apart from a few small details, Rushkoff and Leary share the same worldview.)

Like Leary, Rushkoff's cyberians see the world as one big self-organizing chaotic system, as one big fractal which is governed by orderly rules. According to Rushkoff, we are not able to fully understand these rules and to control this chaotic system because the system is so complex. The only thing we know is that our world is entirely more interdependent than we have previously understood. Like Leary, Rushkoff argues that what goes on inside any one person's head is reflected, in some manner, on every other level of reality. So any individual being, through feedback and iteration, has the ability to redesign reality. If you change, the world changes. (cf. *ibid.* 23). According to Rushkoff, there are different ways to experience the fractal nature of the universe, or — to use Rushkoff's terminology — there are different ways to access Cyberia, or "cyberspace." "Cyberspace can be accessed through drugs, dance, spiritual techniques, chaos maths, and pagan rituals," Rushkoff explains (*ibid.* 3), adding that,

Ultimately, the personal computer and its associated technologies may be the best access point to Cyberia. They even serve as a metaphor for cyberians who have nothing to do with computers but who look at the net as a model for human interaction. It allows for communication without the limitations of time or space, personality or body, religion or nationality. The vast computer-communications network is a fractal approach to human consciousness. It provides the means for complex and immediate feedback and iteration, and is even self-similar in its construction, with giant networks mirroring BBSs [Electronic Bulletin Board Services], mirroring users' own systems, circuit boards, and components that themselves mirror each participant's neural biocircuitry. In further self-similarity, the monitors on some of these computers depict complex fractal patterns mirroring the psychedelics-induced hallucinations of their designers, and graphing – for the first time – representations of existence as a chaotic system of feedback and iteration (ibid. 37).

If we read these two quotations we see that, for Rushkoff's cyberians, the term "cyberspace" (and its synonym "Cyberia") does not only refer to computer networks and data banks that are experienced by computer users as a boundless space. For them, the "hypertext-universe" of the Internet is only one manifestation of a mystical world where the limits of space, time, and body are transcended. Rushkoff explains: "Cyberia is the place a businessperson goes when involved in a phone conversation, the place a shamanic warrior goes when travelling out of body, the place an 'acid house' dancer goes when experiencing the bliss of a techno-acid trance. Cyberia is the place alluded to by the mystical teachings of every religion, the theoretical tangents of every science, and the wildest speculations of every imagination"(Rushkoff 1995: 5). According to Rushkoff, cyberspace, or Cyberia, is a "place" (a realm of consciousness) where we can create our own realities, a world where we can be anyone or anything we want to be. Psychedelic drugs and computers are seen as technologies that help us to access and explore this strange hallucinatory world.

Like Leary's cyberpunks, Rushkoff's cyberians believe that technologies such as psychedelic drugs and computers are a part of the continuing evolution of the human species towards greater intelligence, empathy, and awareness. To them, science/technology is the same as magic; spiritual is digital (another similarity to Leary's Quantum psychology). They all share the one vision that technology can help us to break free from limits of any sort, metaphysical as well as physical, and will finally lead us to enlightenment. Like Leary's cyberpunks, Rushkoff's cyberians believe that technological development is in some kind of asymptotic acceleration. As psychedelic philosopher Terence McKenna, one of the main figures in Cyberia put it:

Nano-technology, psychedelic chemistry, the Internet, cloning, [...] – all of these things synergizing each other are producing very rapidly a world which is almost incomprehensible to most people. There is no reason to suppose that this process is going to slow down. [...] At any point there could be a breakthrough – cold fusion, real extraterrestrial contact, a nanotechnological assembler, a telepathic drug, a longevity drug that stops aging. It could come from any of so many directions that I'm sure we will be surprised" (Eisner, *Psychedelic Island Views*, Vol 3, Issue 1: 9).

Rushkoff and McKenna predict that technology — by electronically and psychically connecting all the people on this planet and thereby creating one big collective consciousness — will help us to create the necessary conditions for humankind's "great leap into hyperspace," a hyperdimensional shift into a timeless non-personalized reality, which is the eschatological endpoint of the cyberian vision of the future of humanity (cf. Rushkoff 1995: 147). In the introduction to *Cyberia*, Terence McKenna (who in the media is presented as Leary's heir apparent) describes this "great leap into hyperspace" as follows:

We're closing distance with the most profound event that planetary ecology can encounter, which is the freeing of life from the chrysalis of matter. And it's never happened before –

I mean the dinosaurs didn't do this, nor did the prokaryotes emerging. No. This takes a billion years of forward moving evolution to get to the place where information can detach itself from the material matrix and then look back on a cast-off mode of being as it rises into a higher dimension (ibid. 7).

McKenna speculates that this "great leap into hyperspace" may usher in a cybernetic Garden Eden where "all of the technological appurtenances of the present world have been shrunk to the point where they have disappeared into [nature] and scattered as grains of sand along the beaches of this planet and we all will live naked in paradise but only a thought away is all the cybernetic connectedness and ability to deliver manufactured goods and data that this world possesses"(quoted in Dery 1996: 9f.).

Rushkoff and McKenna do not explain exactly how the interconnection of all human beings will give birth to a "planetary consciousness" so that this great leap into hyperspace can take place, but it has something to do with chaos theory – with the idea that order can arise from chaos, and the biological phenomenon that previously disconnected elements reach a critical point where they suddenly cooperate to form a higher-level entity. It should be mentioned here that Rushkoff's vision of the future of mankind is a synthesis created from the basic concepts of a number of scientific and esoteric theories: *Chaos theory's* premise that order can spring from seemingly random phenomena, James Lovelock's *Gaia hypothesis* (in which Lovelock suggests that the earth is a big self-organizing system), Teilhard de Chardin's concept of the "*noosphere*" (which could be defined as a combined field of all human consciousness) , McLuhan's concept of a *Global Village*, and psychedelic philosopher Terence McKenna's *Timewave theory*, in which McKenna suggests that this "great leap into hyperspace" (the culmination of the asymptotic acceleration of technological development, the end of history and linear time) will take place in the year 2012.¹¹ (For further explanations and references see Dery 1996: 43–48.)

The reader might ask him-/herself what it will feel like at the end of linear time when we all leap into hyperspace. According to McKenna, the only thing that comes close to how human experience in hyperspace will feel like, is a DMT trip (cf. ibid. 90). DMT is by far the strongest psychedelic drug. One user in *Cyberia* says, "It's like taking every LSD experience you've ever had and putting them at a head of a pin"(ibid. 87). Rushkoff explains that experimentation with DMT and virtual reality could be seen as a preparation for the coming hyperdimensional shift into hyperspace and can "help cyberians to discriminate between what is linear, temporary, and arbitrary, and what is truly hyperdimensional"(ibid.). (Leary also believed that experimentation with DMT and LSD is a good way of preparing oneself for the wild and chaotic future that lies ahead.)

I now want to come back to the concept that reality is a construction of our minds, because, in my opinion, this is the key idea that underlies Rushkoff's *Cyberia*. Just like Leary, Rushkoff's cyberians believe that we can learn to consciously change our realities. Rushkoff, like Leary, tries to back this belief by referring his readers to quantum theory which teaches that "just becoming aware of something changes it"(ibid. 23). We only need the right technologies (psychedelics, computers, etc) that enable us to alter our perception of the world. The psychedelic experience, for example, leads cyberians to conclude that "they have the ability to reshape the experience of reality and thus – if observer and observed are one – the reality itself"(ibid.) This means that if we alter our perception of the world the society we live in automatically changes as well. This is the cyberian's alternative to politics. Change your consciousness and the world will change automatically.

According to Rushkoff, the idea that reality is an arbitrary construction is something which strongly connects the cyberian counterculture of the 90s with the hippies of the 60s. Rushkoff points out that the hippies were the first generation that realized that reality is an arbitrary construction. The hippies would have handed on their knowledge to the cyberian counterculture of the 90s that now continues

¹¹ McKenna took a hexagram from the *I Ching* and generated from it a fractal theory of change which places the end of all things at the end of 2012 AD. This idea had been revealed to him whilst in an altered state of consciousness brought about by psilocybin mushrooms (cf. <http://deoxy.org/mckenna.html> , McKenna's home page). McKenna first described his Timewave theory in his book *The Invisible Landscape*. (McKenna 1975).

their mission. As Rushkoff puts it, “[T]he single most important contribution of the 1960s and the psychedelic era to popular culture is the notion that we have chosen our reality arbitrarily. The mission of the cyberian counterculture of the 1990s, armed with new technologies, familiar with cyberspace and daring enough to explore unmapped realms of consciousness, is to rechoose reality consciously and purposefully” (ibid. 6f.).

Cultural critic Mark Dery agrees with Rushkoff that the 90s are in a way a return of the 60s. (We will see that this is actually the only point on which Dery and Rushkoff agree.) In *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*, Dery writes that,

The return of the sixties [...] is at the heart of the cyberdelic wing of fringe computer culture. Not surprisingly, many of cyberdelia’s media icons are familiar faces from the sixties: *No* magazine cover story on the phenomenon is complete without the septuagenarian *Timothy Leary*, admonishing readers to “turn on, boot up, jack in” and proclaiming that the “*PC is the LSD of the 1990s*”[my italics], or Steward Brand, the former Merry Prankster[...] Other prominent cyberdelic spokespeople, such as the *Mondo 2000* founders Queen Mu and R. U. Sirius [...] are steeped in the Northern California counterculture of the sixties. [...] Cyberdelia reconciles the transcendentalist impulses of the sixties with the infomania of the nineties. In cyberdelia, the values, attitudes, and street styles of the Haight-Asbury/Berkeley counterculture intersect with the technological innovations and esoteric traditions of Silicon Valley. The cartoon opposites of disheveled, dope-smoking “head” and buttoned-down engineering student, so irreconcilable in the sixties, come together in [...] Rushkoff’s cyberians (Dery 1996: 22f.).

This quotation shows that Leary really played a central role in the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s. It shows that the media made Leary an icon of the cyberdelic counterculture. The media enabled Leary to attract many young people to the subversive potential of the computer and the Internet.

Dery points out that, increasingly, the media image of the “Generation Xers” who predominate in high-tech subcultures is that of the cyber-hippie, or, in England, the “zippie” (“Zen-inspired pagan professional”). Cyber-hippies, or zippies, are a combination of sixties children and nineties techno people. They are portrayed in the media as smart young people who dress in “cyberdelic softwear” (T-shirts printed with squirming sperm, leggings adorned with scuttling spiders, jewelry fashioned from computer parts, belled jester caps that are popular at raves, etc) and “meditate on psychedelic mandalas like the *New Electric Acid Experience* video advertised in *Inner Technologies*, a mail order catalogue of ‘tools for the expansion of consciousness’”(ibid. 23f.). In addition, cyber-hippies like to boost their brain power with smart drugs and “mind machines” — headphone-and-goggle devices that “flash stroboscopic pulses at the user’s closed eyes, accompanied by synchronized sound patterns, [...inducing] trancelike states characterized by deep relaxation, vivid daydreams, and greater receptivity toward autohypnotic suggestion for behavior changes”(ibid. 24).

What Dery shows is that the cyber-hippies of the 90s are a generation of young people that has found a way to live with technology – something the anti-tech, back-to-the-land hippies never accomplished. As Dery puts it, “What distinguishes the cyberdelic culture of the nineties from psychedelic culture, more than anything else, is its ecstatic embrace of technology”(ibid.). According to Dery, the cyber-hippies see themselves as the complete opposite of the anti-tech, anti-science hippies and dismiss the 60s counterculture as “a return to nature that ended in disaster.” However, there is one thing that people who characterize the psychedelic counterculture of the 60s as intractably anti-technological forget to take into consideration, namely that,

The archetypal hippie experience was not dancing naked in a field of daisies, but tripping at an acid rock concert. The psychedelic sound-and-light show was as much a technological as a Dionysian rite, from the feedback-drenched electric soundtrack to the signature visual

effects (created with film, slides, strobes, and overhead projectors) to the LSD that switched on the whole experience (ibid. 26).

Dery argues that the inhabitants of the 60s counterculture — exemplified by Leary or Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters — may have dreamed of enlightenment, but “theirs was the ‘plug-and-play’ nirvana of the ‘gadget-happy American’ – attained not through years of Siddhartalike questioning but instantaneously, by chemical means, amidst the sensory assault of a high-tech happening”(Dery 1996: 29). He refers to Theodore Roszak who, in *The Making of a Counter Culture*, points out that, “[...] the Learyite article of faith that the key to cosmic consciousness and sweeping societal change could be found in a chemical concoction sprang from a uniquely American faith in technology (Dery 1996: 25). (I think that Leary would not object to the quotation above.)

What Dery tries to show with this excursion back to the 60s is that, from a countercultural point of view, the 90s are really a return of the 60s. According to Dery, the cyber-hippies of the 90s have taken over many of the values and beliefs of the 60s counterculture and integrated them into their worldview – for example, the value of individual freedom and the belief that technology (chemistry) can help us attain freedom and enlightenment. Other ideas such as the ideal of living in perfect harmony with nature or Marx’s program to improve the social and economic conditions in our decadent (i.e., capitalistic) society, however, would have been dismissed as irrelevant to the 90s. As far as the difference between the hippies’ and the cyber-hippies’ attitudes towards politics is concerned, Dery points out that in spite of the fact that many hippies were only interested in taking drugs, politics still played an important role in the 60s counterculture (the antiwar movement, the civil rights struggle, black power, the New Left, feminism). In contrast to the hippies, the cyber-hippies of the 90s do not care about politics at all. Dery quotes cultural critic Todd Gitlin who, in *The Sixties. Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, notes that,

[In the 60s, there] were tensions galore between the radical idea of political strategy – with discipline, organization, commitment to results *out there* in the distance – and the countercultural idea of living life to the fullest, *right here*, for oneself [...] and the rest of the world be damned (which it was already). Radicalism’s tradition had one of its greatest voices in Marx, whose oeuvre is a series of glosses on the theme: change the world! The main battalions of the counterculture – Leary, the Pranksters [...] – were descended from Emerson, Thoreau, Rimbaud: change consciousness, change life! [...]
[Countercultural phrasemakers such as Leary] were antipolitical purists for whom politics was game playing, a bad trip, a bringdown, a bummer. Indeed all social institutions were games... The antidote to destructive games was – more playful games (ibid. 23).

Dery argues that this “freak-politico dichotomy” of the 60s counterculture is resolved in the cyber-hippie counterculture, by “jettisoning ‘the radical idea of political strategy’ and updating ‘the countercultural idea of living life to the fullest, *right here*, for oneself”(ibid.). According to Dery, in the 90s counterculture the victory of the countercultural tradition over political radicalism is complete. As Dery puts it, “[M]ovement politics or organized activism of virtually any sort are passé among the cyber-hippies, for whom being boring is *the* cardinal sin and ‘hijacking technology for personal empowerment, fun and games’ the be-all and end-all of human existence. After all, ‘sport, pleasure, and adventure are the only logical responses to a fractal universe”(ibid. 32f.).

The last sentence of the quotation above is an insinuation to a passage from Rushkoff’s *Cyberia*, in which Rushkoff writes that, “[To the cyberians], the truth of Cyberia is a sea of waves – chaotic, maybe, but a playground more than anything else. [To them], sport, pleasure, and adventure are the only logical responses to a fractal universe [...] a world free of physical constraints, boring predictability, and linear events”(Rushkoff 1995: 181f.).

Dery harshly criticizes the cyberian worldview for its escapism and naiveté. He argues that Rushkoff’s “fuzzily defined program for personal and social change” – the idea that we have chosen our reality arbitrarily, and that the whole world is one big fractal which changes when the individual mind changes

– bears a distinct resemblance to Freud’s concept of the “omnipotence of thoughts,” which Dery describes as “the primitive mode of thought that assumes a magical correspondence between mental life and the external, physical world. Primitives, wrote Freud, ‘believe they can alter the external world by mere thinking’”(Dery 1996: 42). To deny the existence of an objective physical reality and to place one’s faith in the liquid indeterminacy of a “quantum reality” would be naive. In Dery’s opinion the cyberians’ escape into cyberspace where they feel liberated from the limitations of space, time, and body is just a form of detachment that has nothing to do with freedom. Dery advises Rushkoff and his fellow cyberians that they would do well to heed media philosopher Walter Kirn’s admonition that “[w]hat the [cyberians] appear fated to learn from their ventures into pure electronic consciousness is that ultimate detachment is not the same as freedom, escape is no substitute for liberation and rapture isn’t happiness. The sound-and-light show at the end of time, longed for by these turned-on nerds, seems bound to disappoint”(ibid. 49).

In contrast to Rushkoff who, like his fellow cyberians, believes that technology can help us to transcend all limits, Dery is very skeptical about the cyberians’ uncritical, euphoric embrace of technology. He criticizes Rushkoff’s uncritical approach to the ideas and beliefs that prevail in the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s.

[...] Rushkoff doesn’t explore, he “groks” – a sixties verb meaning to instantly, intuitively apprehend. It is a method of uncritical inquiry appropriate to the Northern Californian corner of fringe computer culture he traverses, which is nothing if not defiantly antirational. In it, an utterly uncritical embrace of the proto-New Age aspects of sixties counterculture has been freed from the shackles of back-to-nature romanticism and hitched to the liberatory promise of technology (mind machines, smart drugs, BBSs, virtual reality).

[...] Rushkoff’s cyberians give voice to nearly all of cyberdelic culture’s received truths, foremost among them the techno-pagan axiom that rationalism and intuition, materialism and mysticism, science and magic are converging. [...] Rushkoff contends that Western reason, with its emphasis on linear, rational thought, is unable to make sense of the “overall fractal equation for the postmodern experience,” where the “rules of linear reality no longer apply”(ibid. 41f.).

The reader might have noticed that Dery’s criticism of Rushkoff’s *Cyberia* could just as well be directed at Leary’s Quantum Psychology theory and his concept of the cyber-society. Like Rushkoff, Leary believes that “reality” is an arbitrary construction and that Western reason (Newtonian physics, etc) is unable to make sense of the chaotic, fractal, non-linear world we inhabit. Both Leary and Rushkoff present technology as something which is absolutely, 100% positive. They both see technology as an “extension” of the human being.

As far as Leary’s and Rushkoff’s visions of the future are concerned, they are both based on the believe that technology will help us to realize the mystical dream of rising beyond the “prison of flesh.” Both Leary and Rushkoff predict that we will soon reach the final stage of evolution, the moment when “information can detach itself from the material matrix.” Also Leary’s and Rushkoff’s explanations of how this techno-mystical dream will become true are practically the same. Like McKenna in his Timewave theory, they both argue that the exponential acceleration of technological development we are witnessing at present will lead to unimaginable breakthroughs: “downloading” (that is, mapping of the idiosyncratic neural networks of our minds onto computer memory, thereby rendering the body superfluous), the nanotechnological assembler (which could help us to create machines that stop our bodies from aging), etc. Both Leary and Rushkoff advise their readers to prepare themselves for the “great leap into hyperspace” that Terence McKenna predicts in his Timewave theory – a world in which all limits are transcended, a world of total freedom. (It should be mentioned that here freedom is not defined in terms of social liberties but in morphological, neurological, and genetic terms. Freedom is freedom of form.)

In contrast to Leary, Rushkoff, and McKenna whose main concern is to prepare us for the “posthuman liftoff from biology,” Dery tries to bring us back to the ground: “Posthumanist visions of the mind unbound [...] are a wish-fulfillment fantasy of the end of limits, situated (at least for now) in a world of limits. The envisioned liftoff from biology and gravity [...] by borging [from cyborg @@@ cybernetic organism], morphing [the ability to change one’s form], and ‘downloading,’ or launching our minds beyond all bounds is itself held fast by the gravity of the social and political realities, moral issues, and environmental conditions of the moment,”(Dery 1996: 15). In the last chapter of *Escape Velocity*, “Cyborging the Body Politic: Obsolete Bodies and Posthuman Beings,” Dery refutes the cyberian assumption that consciousness is the result of wholly material processes and is therefore reproducible by technical means. His arguments taken from scientists of different fields try to prove that “downloading” is theoretically impossible (cf. *ibid.* 318). Dery makes us aware that the cyberdelic vision of a techno-mystical apotheosis in the “there and then” – like so many other millenarian prophecies before it – only diverts public discourse from the political and socioeconomic inequities of the “here and now.” Blindly placing one’s faith in a “theology of the ejector seat,” at a time when realistic solutions are urgently needed, would be a risky endgame. Dery points out that “the cyberians’ otherworldly trapdoor assumes various guises, among them the wiring of the human race into a collective consciousness, the technopagan ability to dream up a “designer reality” though a judicious application of the knowledge that “we have chosen our reality arbitrarily, and the “chaos attractor at the end of time [i.e., the “great leap into hyperspace,” “the freeing of life from the chrysalis of matter”](*ibid.* 49).

In truth, the cyberdelic rhetoric would represent what media philosopher Walter Kirn has called “an eruption of high-tech milleniarism – a fin de siècle schizoid break induced by sitting too long at the screen”(ibid.). The beliefs expressed in *Cyberia* would be textbook examples of what historian Leo Marx calls “the rhetoric of the technological sublime,” hymns to progress that rise “like froth on a tide of exuberant self-regard, sweeping over all misgivings, problems and contradictions”(cf. *ibid.* 316).

As far as the cyberian dream of “rising beyond the old flesh” (body) is concerned, Dery argues that it is dangerous to see the brain/mind as an object separating the body from the person/subject that lives in it. He wants to bring us back to our senses, to remind everyone of us that he/she lives in a body. Dery warns us that if we do not keep this subjective kind of body sense in mind as we negotiate our technoculture then we will objectify ourselves to death (cf. *ibid.* 311). He quotes cultural critic Donna Haraway who admonishes us that any transcendentalist ideology that promises a way of transcending the body (i.e., a way of denying immortality) contains the seeds of a “self-fulfilling apocalypse.” Haraway argues that, “[What we need, more than ever,] is a deep sense of the fragility of the lives that we’re leading – that we really do die, that we really do wound each other, that the Earth is really finite, that there aren’t any planets out there that we know of we can live on, that escape velocity [i.e., the vision of a techno-mystical apotheosis in the there and then] is a deadly fantasy”(ibid. 17).

4.7.3. *This trip is over*

The techno-euphoria that prevails in the cyberdelic counterculture seems to be slowly wearing off. More and more cyberians are realizing that the PC, the Internet, and other new technologies did not really bring the social, political, and personal changes they thought they would. Even R. U. Sirius, who used to be an euphoric spokesman of cyberculture, has finally realized that the visions of the cyber-society and the “liftoff from biology and gravity” have blinded us to the real problems on this planet. As Sirius put it:

[A]nybody who doesn’t believe that we’re trapped hasn’t taken a good look around. We’re trapped in a sort of mutating multinational corporate oligarchy that’s not about to go away. We’re trapped by the limitations of our species. We’re trapped in time. At the same time identity, politics, and ethics have long turned liquid. [...]
Cyberculture (a meme that I’m at least partly responsible for generating, incidentally) has

emerged as a gleeful apologist for this kill-the-poor trajectory of the Republican revolution. You find it all over *Wired* [an online magazine] – this mix of chaos theory and biological modeling that is somehow interpreted as scientific proof of the need to devolve and decentralize the social welfare state while also deregulating and empowering the powerful, autocratic, multinational corporations. You’ve basically got the breakdown of nation states into global economies simultaneously with the atomization of individuals or their balkanization into disconnected sub-groups, because digital technology conflates space while decentralizing communication and attention. The result is a clear playing field for a mutating corporate oligarchy, which is what we have. I mean, people think it’s really liberating because the old industrial ruling class has been liquefied and it’s possible for young players to amass extraordinary instant dynasties. But it’s savage and inhuman. Maybe the wired elite think that’s hip. But then don’t go around crying about crime in the streets or pretending to be concerned with ethics (quoted in Kroker 1997: 20–23).

For R. U. Sirius, the techno-euphoria is gone. This trip is over. Cyberpunk is absorbed into the mainstream. The real problems of our material world are still here. To deny these problems would be futile (cf. *ibid.*). It seems that we are back to normal again. This means we will have to deal with the real problems, discuss politics and ethics again. Designer realities are fun but we have to be aware of the fact that they are just an escape from the *real* world. In our real world freedom means hard work. Cyberspace, like psychedelics, seems to be a dead end. It is just not enough to philosophize about chaos theory, quantum physics and “downloading” and wait until someday, perhaps, the world will adjust itself to one’s cosmology.

It seems that Leary’s concept of the cyber-society – a postpolitical, non-hierarchical society made possible by cybernetic technology, in which the computer-literate, super-intelligent, open-minded, change-oriented, self-reliant, irreverent free-thinker is the norm and the person who is not internetted and does not think for him-/herself and questions authority is the “problem person” (cf. PE 5) – will always remain an utopian dream because it is based on two problematic assumptions:

First of all, Leary suggested that the feedback, decentralization, and connectedness created by communication-networking-technologies has only positive effects, that is, it creates individual freedom and weakens the power of the government. Leary forgot to take into consideration that decentralization is a double edged sword. It slowly dissolves old authoritarian hierarchical political structures (or so it is claimed) while at the same time creating a “playing field for a mutating corporate oligarchy.” Not only the “good guys” (the cyberpunks) are using the electronic media; the “bad guys” (the multinational corporations, politicians, etc) are using them as well, and they very well know how to manipulate people. The multinational corporations, for example, very well know how to program people to believe that you can only be free if you have the newest technology. Freedom means having the fastest computer with modem, a satellite dish on your roof, a cellular phone, a video recorder, etc. And people really believe that they can buy freedom. Even Leary himself tried to convince us that “freedom in any country is measured perfectly by the percentage of Personal Computers in the hands of individuals”(CC 45).

Like Leary, the multinational corporations promise us a cybernetic paradise, a world in which all limits are transcended. The AT&T “You Will” campaign¹², for example, is such a promise. In *Escape Velocity*, Mark Dery describes the AT&T “You Will” campaign as follows:

In AT&T’s corporate brand TV spots, all is sweetness and light. “Have you ever opened doors with the sound of your voice?” asks a familiar voice, over a countrified jingle that conjures the wide, open territories of the electronic frontier. “You will.” A young woman steps out of an elevator, her arms full, and her apartment doors unlocks at her command. [...]

Brought to you by the mother of all communication companies, AT&T’s future is, in the

¹² AT&T is one of the biggest communication services corporations in the US.

best tradition of technological Utopias, a luminous place, not far off. [...] The golden glow that suffuses the spacious interiors in the spots – light made gauzy with the aid of fog machines – sentimentalizes corporate dreams of electronic interconnectedness by premisting the viewer’s eyes. Moreover, it lends AT&T’s vision of things to come an almost metaphysical air, drawing on the long-standing equation of the luminous and the numinous – an equation that is at least as old as the seventeenth-century poet Henry Vaughn’s evocation of the ultimate virtual reality, the afterlife (“They are all gone into the world of light!”) and as recent as the radiant aliens in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Dery 1996: 11).

Oddly enough, the laptop computers, cellular phones, videophones, etc which multinational corporations like AT&T have brought us seem not to have lightened our burden as workers because “in a world where ‘we are all connected’ [...] the office intrudes on our vacations, the workday stretches into our evenings: Video screens, phones, and laptop jacks convert every seat in the Boeing 777 into an airborne office; the pagers and cellular phones provided by one resort in Vail, Colorado, turn downtime on the ski lifts into worktime”(ibid. 12). It is frightening how easily our privacy can be invaded in the digital age.

Nonetheless, many people in the Western World believe that television, cellular phones, computers, the Internet, etc make them more and more independent from authorities, and some people still hope that soon “superintelligent” machines will do all the work for them so they just have to lean back and “enjoy the show.” It is not surprising that the governments of the Western world do not lift a finger to change this delusive belief. Technotopian stories about the future do not weaken their power, quite to the contrary. Computers, the Internet, and all the other new technologies are “opium for the people;” technology keeps people happy and entertained. Why rise up against the government if you have TV (200 channels or more), Internet, Game Boys, cyber sex, etc?

The second problematic assumption that Leary’s concept of the cyber-society is based on is that the increase of intelligence is a logical consequence of the enormous acceleration of technological development we are witnessing at present. Leary calls this the “law of acceleration:” The faster the technology, the faster the speed of thought (cf. CC inside cover-page). In “Our Brain”(1991), for example, Leary states that “[i]n just the last ten years, our species has multiplied the ability to use our brains by a thousandfold”(CC 35) and “[t]he next uncontrollable fifteen years (1995–2010) will [even] accelerate this dizzy explosion of brain power”(CC 82). According to Leary, our brains are quickly learning to adapt to the speed of computers:

Speed is addictive, and evolutionary.

Individuals who work intimately with computational machinery find they grow quickly accustomed to rapid interactive responses, exulting in the quick succession of events in the culminative composition of growth of work, in the embodiment of the structure of one’s mind in the machine. Being forced to use a slower computer after addiction to rapid response speed is established is mentally excruciating in the extreme. It seems that there is no return from an accelerated frame of mind (DD 39).

The invincible optimist Leary predicted that by 2008 the super-bright, creative, imaginative, self-reliant computer adept will be the norm in our Information Society and the person who does not want to be internetted and connected will be the “problem person”(cf. CC 83f.).

The question arises: Do computers, the Internet, and other new technologies really make people more creative and intelligent? Do computers really teach us to think faster? Can our brains keep up with the speed of the electronic media? Cultural critics Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, for example, do not share Leary’s optimistic belief that faster technologies teach us to think faster and that by 2008 the super-bright, self-reliant computer adept will be the norm in our cybernetic society. The Krokers are pessimistic about the future of our digital culture. They argue that we are on “a fast trip to digital

delirium” because “we have not escaped and will never overcome the fatal destiny of the law of reversal” (which is exactly the opposite of Leary’s “law of acceleration”):

[T]he faster the tech, the slower the speed of thought... the more accelerated the culture, the slower the rate of social change... the quicker the digital composition, the slower the political reflection... the more apparent the external speed, the more real the internal slowness... delirious speed and anxious slowness... a split reality... accelerating digital effects are neutralized by deaccelerating special human effects... digital reality spins out of control, human reality slow-burns back to earth... speed bodies and slow vision... speed flesh and slow bones... speed web and slow riot... the slow mirror of speed [italics mine](Kroker 1997: x)

In contrast to Leary who suggested that “our bored brains love ‘overload’”(CC 15), the Krokroers argue that information overload (caused by computers, the electronic media, etc) numbs our brains so we cannot think clearly any more. The brain’s self-protective reaction to information overload is that it “shuts down.” As the Krokroers put it in *Digital Delirium*: “[T]he tyranny of information overload produce[s] a numbed culture that shuts down for self-protection”(Kroker 1997: xiii).

The Krokroers’ law of reversal suggests that we are caught in some kind of vicious circle. We invent faster technologies to be able to meet the demands of our accelerating culture (our culture demands that we are able to think faster and faster, do work faster and faster, etc). These faster technologies which help us to do things faster, however, produce an even more accelerated culture. This means that we have to keep inventing faster technologies. The problem is that the human brain cannot cope with the growing speed of our culture. The result is: “Speed images, but slow eyes. [...] Speed media, but slow communication. Speed talk, but no thought”(ibid. ix).

Digital Delirium (published 1997) is a counter-blast to the blast of techno-utopianism that the 90s began with. The Krokroers intention is to bring techno-utopians like Leary and McKenna back down to the ground from their “digital high.” They want to make people aware that the computer can be a dangerous and highly addictive drug because it gives you the feeling that you are omnipotent and know everything when, in fact, you know nothing. As long as you are “high” (numbed by the dizzying speed and information overload produced by computers) all problems seem to be solved (because the real problems are “screened out” so you are not aware of them). That is why it is hard to resist the seduction of computers. Leary himself admitted that “computers are more addictive than heroin” (quoted in Bukatman 1993: 139). But you cannot go on screening out problems forever. Like Mark Dery and Donna Haraway, the Krokroers want to bring technoutopians like Leary to their senses and alert them to the real problems. The longer the high, the bitterer the come-down. If we do not start to fight our computer addiction now it might be too late because “speed kills.”

4.7.4. *McLuhan revisited*

Most people in the cyberdelic counterculture of the 90s consider media philosopher Marshall McLuhan to be the grandfather of cyberpunk because as early as 1964 he was talking about a “global village” borne of communication technologies, a concept which evolved, over time, to his vision of the “[p]sychic communal integration of all humankind, made possible at last by the electronic media”(Dery 1996: 45). Many cyber-philosophers (Leary, McKenna, Rushkoff, etc) were strongly influenced by McLuhan’s work. Leary’s optimism about the future of the Internet, for example, was inspired by McLuhan who, in *Understanding Media* (1964), suggested that with electric technology (electronic media) we extend our nervous systems in a global embrace, instantly interrelating every human experience. Consequently, the electronic media would reshape and restructure patterns of social interdependence and end psychic, social, economic, and political self-centeredness (see chapter 3.4.). Throughout his theories Leary uses McLuhan’s ideas (especially the idea that “all media [technologies] are extensions of some human faculty – psychic or physical”) to support the idea that technology can

help us to liberate ourselves from all limits. Also Leary's equation that "spiritual @@@ digital" seems to be inspired by McLuhan who, in *Understanding Media*, wrote that "the current transformation of our entire lives into the spiritual form of information seems to make of the entire globe, and of the human family, a single consciousness"(quoted in Howard 1982: 390).

However, Leary never mentions that McLuhan actually had a highly ambivalent attitude towards technology. "McLuhan was never the technotopian that contemporary technophiles like to portray," writes Arthur Kroker. "To read McLuhan is to discover a thinker who had a decidedly ambivalent perspective on technoculture. Thus, while McLuhan might be the patron saint of technotopians, his imagination is also the memory that should haunt them (Kroker 1997: 89).

This chapter, which is based on Kroker's essay "Digital Humanism: The processed world of Marshall McLuhan"(Kroker 1997: 89–113), offers a new way of understanding McLuhan and is, at the same time, a criticism of Leary's techno-utopianism. McLuhan's discourse on technology provides a brilliant understanding of the inner functioning of the technological media, which might help us "to break the seduction effect of technology, to disturb the hypnotic spell cast by the dynamism of the technological imperative"(Kroker 1997: 102).

According to McLuhan, the nature of technology is paradoxical: On the one hand, all technologies are *extensions* of the human being (e.g., the wheel is an extension of the foot); on the other hand, every extension by technology is simultaneously a "*self-amputation*" of the part of the body that is extended (by using the wheel/car we "self-amputate" our feet because we do not use them to walk any more) (cf. McLuhan 1964: 42). This means that we extend ourselves by self-amputation. According to McLuhan, the history of technological innovation can best be understood in terms of experimental medicine. In *Understanding Media*, he gives much attention to Hans Seleye's work in the field of stress, especially the biological phenomenon that under conditions of deep stress an organism "self-amputates" the organ effected by anesthetizing it in order to protect itself (cf. Kroker 1997: 100ff.). (For example, when an organ of the body goes out it automatically goes numb. The organism automatically self-amputates it.) In *Digital Delirium*, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker explain McLuhan's medical approach to technology as follows:

McLuhan's historical account of the evolution of technological media was structured around a (medical) account of the evolution of technological innovation as "counter-irritants" to the "stress of acceleration of pace and increase of load. Just as the body (in Hans Seleye's terms) resorts to an auto-amputative strategy when "the perceptual power cannot locate or avoid the cause of irritation," so (in McLuhan's terms) in the stress of super-stimulation, "the central nervous system acts to protect itself by a strategy of amputation or isolation of the offending organ, sense, or function." Technology is a "counter-irritant" which aids in the "equilibrium of the physical organs which protect the central nervous system." Thus, the wheel (as an extension of the foot) is a counter-irritant against the pressure of "new burdens resulting from the acceleration of exchange by written and monetary media;" "movies and TV complete the cycle of mechanization of the human sensorium;" and computers are ablations or outerings of the human brain itself (Kroker 1997: 103)

According to the Krokers, it was McLuhan's thesis that the motive-force for technological innovation was always defensive and biological: The nervous system tries to protect itself against sudden changes in the "stimulus" of the external environment by using the physical organs (that is, the technologies which extend these organs as) "buffers." In times of high stress, humans always invent new technologies – that is, they extend, or "outer," individual organs – so the nervous system can protect itself against the stress of acceleration of pace. But each "outering" of individual organs is also an acceleration and intensification of the general environment. So it seems that humans are caught in some kind of vicious circle. (high stress > we invent new technologies to protect the nervous system > acceleration of the environment > high stress...).

According to McLuhan, in the electronic age we reached the culmination of this process. The environment changed so fast that “in a desperate [...] autoamputation, as if the central nervous system could no longer depend on the physical organs as buffers against the slings and arrows of outrageous mechanism”(McLuhan 1964: 43), the central nervous system itself was outered in the form of electric circuitry (computers, the Internet, etc). In other words, the nervous system has gone numb. According to McLuhan, this outering of the central nervous system induced an unprecedented level of stress on the individual organism (cf. McLuhan 1964: 252). McLuhan argues that the electric age is an age of “anxiety and dread” because we are unable to cope with this new situation; we are unable to understand the subliminal consequences of the fundamental changes in technostructure (cf. Kroker 1997: 101ff.).

McLuhan tried to make people aware that it is futile to deny that technology exists and that it is actually a part of us. The only way we could really understand technology is to experience it and try to become aware how it changes our perception of the world. If we are to recover a new human possibility it will not be “outside” the technological experience, but must be “inside” the field of technology (cf. Kroker 1997: 95). According to McLuhan, only a sharpening and refocusing of human perception could provide a way out of the “labyrinth of the technostructure”(cf. *ibid.*). In *Digital Delirium*, Arthur Kroker writes that “[McLuhan’s] ideal value was that of the ‘creative process in art,’ so much so in fact that McLuhan insisted that if the master struggle of the twentieth century was between reason and irrationality, then this struggle could be won if individuals learned anew how to make of the simple act of ‘ordinary human perception’ an opportunity for recovering the creative energies in human experience” (*ibid.*). According to McLuhan, we will never fully understand the subliminal effects of technology and be able to use technology to increase our intelligence, creativity, and freedom, if we do not first become aware of the “double-effect of the technological experience” — that all technologies are simultaneously extensions and self-amputations of some human mental or physical faculty (cf. *ibid.*).

When Leary talks about McLuhan, he never mentions the double-effect of technology and McLuhan’s warnings that the hypnotic spell of technology can be very dangerous. It seems that Leary himself was under the hypnotic spell of technology McLuhan was talking about, when he praised the computer, the Internet, and virtual reality as cure-all for all problems on our planet. There is a noticeable similarity between Leary’s LSD-euphoria in the 60s – Leary’s revealing LSD experiences caused him to believe that LSD would cure our “sick” society and help us create a new post-political society based on Ecstasy – and his computer-euphoria in the 80s and 90s. Unfortunately, neither LSD nor computers did bring the changes which Leary predicted. The Internet and other new communication technologies have decentralized our society, extended our nervous systems globally, but are we really free now?

5. Conclusion

5.1. Leary: a pioneer of cyberspace

Whether you share Leary's utopian faith in technology or not, Leary's impact on the cyberdelic counterculture of the 80s and 90s is undeniable. In this paper I have shown that several important figures of the cyber-movement were strongly influenced by Leary (e.g., Douglas Rushkoff, R.U. Sirius, and Bruce Eisner) and that Leary was actually one of the founding fathers of the cyber-movement. As early as 1973, Leary predicted that someday the world would be linked together through a new "electronic nervous system," a global electronic communication network which would dissolve authoritarian hierarchical structures. In *Exo-Psychology* (1977), Leary encouraged the hippies to leave the flower-power 60s behind and find a way to live with technology which, according to Leary, could help us to free ourselves from all limits. In his Exo-Psychology theory, Leary laid the ideological foundation for the cyber-movement. In his model of the Eight Circuits of Consciousness, which is explained in *Exo-Psychology*, Leary defined a "higher" level of consciousness (attained with the help of LSD) on which space, time, body, and normal speech (sending/receiving laryngeal signals) are transcended and people communicate at light speed on the electromagnetic level. This "higher" level of consciousness, the "Neuroelectric Circuit," was later interpreted by members of the cyber-movement as cyberspace or the Internet (see chapter 3.5.).

Many people are surprised when they hear that Leary, the famous LSD-guru of the hippies, reemerged in the 80s as a spokesman of the cyberpunks, because they can see no connection between the anti-technology-oriented hippies and the cyberpunks who embrace technology. If we analyze Leary's theories, however, we see that there actually is a strong connection between the psychedelic counterculture of the 60s and the cyberdelic counterculture of the 80s and 90s. We see that the cyberpunks of the 80s and 90s were heavily influenced by the transcendentalism that prevailed in the 60s counterculture (see chapter 4.7.2.). According to Leary, the hippies of the 60s and the cyberpunks of the 80s and 90s actually belong to one and the same movement because they share the same aim: Ecstasy, that is, the experience of individual freedom. Leary argues that the individual freedom revolution started by the hippies in the 60s was continued by cyberpunks in the 80s. According to Leary, this individual freedom movement, which has country by country, continent by continent, liberated much of the world in the last three decades (e.g., the fall of communism in Eastern Europe), would not have been possible without mind-expanding drugs (psychedelics) and mind-linking electronic appliances (computers, radio, TV, etc).

Leary was definitely right when he said that the electronic media (TV, Internet, etc) played a crucial role in the youth revolutions of 1989 which lead to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the resignation of the hard-line regime in Czechoslovakia. However, when Leary argued that computers, the Internet, and other electronic media have only positive effects (i.e., they create individual freedom), he was definitely wrong. In the 80s, when Leary wrote most of his essays on the cyberpunks and the Internet, it was not so obvious that the decentralization created by the Internet is a double edged sword, that it slowly dissolves old hierarchical political structures while at the same time empowering the powerful, autocratic, multinational corporations. The 80s were the heyday of the cyberpunk-computer-hackers, who dominated the Internet, cracking government files, etc. It was a time when anything seem to be possible because nobody really knew in which direction the Internet would change our society. Now, however, the cyberdelic revolution is over. The cyberdelic counterculture which Leary helped to create is absorbed into the mainstream. This trip is over. The Internet has become a "playing field for a mutating corporate oligarchy."

Leary's prediction that the feedback and decentralization made possible by the Internet would help the cyber-movement to create a post-political society based on Ecstasy (i.e., the experience of individual freedom) turned out to be wrong. Leary's utopian faith in technology blinded him to the real situation on our planet.

5.2. Think for Yourself, Question Authority

I think that this paper shows that Leary was an extremely complex man. He was, first and foremost, the man who brought psychedelic drugs into American culture. He was the undisputed leader of the psychedelic movement. But Leary was also a psychologist, a philosopher, a novelist, one of the most energetic promoters of virtual reality and the Internet, a spokesman of the "new edge" cyberpunks, and an eloquent defender of individual rights. Leary saw himself as a philosopher more than anything else — a philosopher whose duty it was to teach people to "think for themselves and question authority"(cf. DD 6).

In this last chapter I argue that the overall message that Leary wants to communicate in his theories is "Think for yourself; question authority." I want to show that Leary's whole

trip from psychedelics to computers to designer dying was to make people aware that they are capable of more than the appointed authorities would prefer to grant them. Leary's advocacy of psychedelics and computers was to show that people are capable of taking charge of their own brains, hearts, and spirits. For me, Leary is the Socrates of the Information Age because he was one of the few philosophers in our age who carried on the Socratic tradition of encouraging people to "think for themselves and question authority," his own authority included.

Leary never felt embarrassed when one of his predictions turned out to be wrong. Why? Because he saw himself as a philosopher whose job it was to teach people HOW to think, not WHAT to think (cf. NP 2). Leary wanted to teach people to "think for themselves and question authority." In every single book he wrote Leary explicitly encourages his readers to "think for themselves and question authority," his own authority included. In the introduction to *Neuropolitique*, Leary explains that philosophers in the Information Age "do not come down the mountain with truths carved in stone." The professional assignment of the philosopher in the Information Age is "to produce new paradigms which will inspire and encourage others to think for themselves. Today philosophers do not give people food for thought. They teach people how to think, how to conceive themselves"(NP 2).

"Don't believe anything I say. [...] Start Your Own Religion [...] Write Your Own Bible [...] Start Your Own Political System," Leary writes in *The Politics of Ecstasy* (PE 369f.). Also, in his last book, *Desing for Dying*, he repeatedly tells his readers that they should never *believe* anything he says because he does "not believe in belief"(cf. DD 26, DD 31). For Leary, belief – in the sense of absolute belief, i.e., a dogma – is always something negative. Dogma means stagnation, inflexibility, no choice, and therefore no freedom (cf. CC 232ff.). Leary argues that whatever you blindly believe in imprisons you. Blind belief is the death of the intellect. He compares beliefs to filters in the human perceptual apparatus which filter the information that is received from the outside world. This means that all the information from the outside world which does not confirm one's belief cannot pass the filter and therefore is ignored (see chapter 4.3.). In *Chaos & Cyberculture*, Leary explains that a person who clings to one belief system and never questions this belief system will never be able to increase his/her intelligence because his/her mind will shut out any kind of information which is new or cannot be explained within his/her frame of reference (cf. CC 35ff.). Neither will he/she be tolerant towards people with other beliefs (cf. *ibid.*).

Another reason why Leary rejects dogmas is that they can easily be used to manipulate people. All "power-hungry control freaks" try to impose dogmas on people because they very well know that a dogma is a powerful instrument to create conformity and predictable behavior. In his theories Leary constantly alerts us to the dangers of dogmas and conformity (the Inquisition, the Holy War, the Nazi regime, etc) and tries to make us aware that there is no reason whatsoever why we should accept the dogmas

that authorities are trying to impose on us. Again and again he reminds his readers that all dogmas, like all scientific theories, are arbitrary constructions. He tries to make his readers aware of the fact that science, like all cultural phenomena, is socially determined – blinkered by the biases of the society that produced it and dedicated it to the validation of its own worldview. While supposedly objective, science often aids and abets political ideology and cultural bias. Like the constructivists, Leary argues that anybody who claims that his/her belief system (model of reality) is the absolute truth is simply wrong. You create your own reality. Ergo, “think for yourself, question authority”.

Leary wants us to take responsibility for our own lives (this is a logical consequence of the constructivist worldview), not to pass on the responsibility for ourselves to somebody else – be it a politician, scientists, or an “omnipotent” God (Christ, Allah, etc) who resides somewhere up in heaven. “God is not a tribal father, nor a feudal lord, nor an engineer-manager of the universe. *There is no God* (in the singular) *except you at the moment* [italics mine],” Leary explains. “Since God #1 appears to be held hostage back there by the blood-thirsty Persian ayatollah, by the telegenic Polish pope, and the Moral Majority, there’s only one logical alternative. You ‘steer’ your own course. You and your dear friends start your own religion. [...] Write your very own Newest Testament, remembering that voluntary martyrdom is tacky, and crucifications, like nuclear war, can ruin your day” (CC 234f.).

When Leary advises us to start our own religion he does not mean that we should found a religion that is based on dogmas. Dogmas are static; they “imprison” us, which means that they are not good for our personal intellectual and spiritual development. But what are the alternatives to dogma? According to Leary, the idea of belief can be broken down into two categories: *dogmas*, which are absolute beliefs, and *meta-beliefs*, which are relative beliefs (cf. *ibid.*). The idea of meta-belief is based on the constructivist assumption that “reality” is a construction of our minds. “Meta-belief” means that you consciously program yourself to believe in something, knowing that your belief is not the absolute truth but a construction of your mind. It means that you are aware that your beliefs are programs in your brain which can arbitrarily be changed. For Leary, it was not really important that we do not (or cannot) know anything about objective reality. Leary’s aim was freedom of the mind, Ecstasy (i.e., the experience of freedom from all limits). Ecstasy, “ex-stasis,” is the opposite of “stasis”(which means that you have a static worldview). According to Leary, in the mind there are no limits except those that you set for yourself. “You can change and mutate and keep improving. The idea is to keep ‘trading up’ to a ‘better’ philosophy-theology,” Leary writes (CC 234). As John Lilly put it, “In the province of the mind, what is believed to be true is true or becomes true, within limits to be found experientially and experimentally. These limits are further beliefs to be transcended. In the province of the mind, there are no limits” (Lilly 1972: xvi).

Philosophers who encourage people to think for themselves, question authority and create their own religion/politics have always been considered to be dangerous, heretical, immoral, blasphemous by law-and-order fanatics. Socrates was one of these philosophers who was accused “by conservative minds of the dangerous game of discomfiting all authority before a circle of impressionable youths and subtracting from the state the stability of tradition [...] his unsettling effect on the young and his persistent criticism were intolerable to any establishment”(Harkavy 1991: 531). Leary is the Socrates of the Information Age. In our age there are very few philosophers (e.g., Paul Feyerabend, or Robert Anton Wilson) who carry on the Socratic tradition of encouraging people to think for themselves and question authority, their own authority included. Leary was perhaps the most enthusiastic of these humanistic philosophers.

Like Socrates, Leary tried to make people aware that what we accept as objective reality is only a construction of our minds and that the only way to realize our true selves is to question everything we have learned from our parents, teachers, politicians, etc (cf. *ibid.*). Socrates’ method to make people think about unquestioned “truths” was asking them questions until they themselves realized that they actually “knew nothing” (in the sense of absolute knowledge). This is what Socrates called the “knowledge of not-knowing”(cf. *ibid.*). Leary’s method was to confront people with his provocative theories which were intended to make people question the models of reality that authorities imposed on them, and to

encourage people to create their own (funnier, sexier, more optimistic) realities. Technology (computers, LSD, etc) would help us to liberate ourselves from authority and to create our own realities.

Leary was very unpopular among academics because he did not follow the rules an academic philosopher or psychologist is supposed to follow. Leary's theories are a mixture of fact and fiction and often you do not know if the pseudo-scientific explanations Leary gives to back his far-out ideas, are meant seriously or if they are meant as a joke. Furthermore, many of Leary's arguments involve contradictions and often he quotes somebody without giving the source of the quotation, which can drive a serious critic crazy. Leary, however, did not seem to feel embarrassed about the inconsistencies in his theories. On the contrary, I think that he *wanted* to be chaotic and uncontrollable, and defy the laws of western linear reason. Leary wanted create a language (i.e., a way of thinking) that cannot be controlled by those who are trying to impose the status quo and a linear view. People who believe exclusively in a linear straight forward way of thinking cannot understand Leary. You cannot control someone you do not understand because you are just not able to predict the person's next thought/action — and so, I believe, Leary has achieved at least one of his objectives: to be uncontrollable.

According to Leary, the basic nature of the universe is chaos, extreme complexity that cannot be understood by the human mind so far. What we know is that “change and disequilibrium are the driving forces of the universe” and that stability is an illusion (cf. DD 52f.). Leary never grew tired of pointing out that politicians, priests and (most) scientists try to make people believe in the idea of stability because they want to remain in power. They try to impose a static worldview on us because they know that you can control a stable, predictable system, but there is no way to control a chaotic system that is continually changing. According to Leary, this is the reason why the government is against psychedelic drugs. Psychedelic drugs would make us aware that stability is an illusion and “that we have been programmed all those years, that everything we accept as reality is just a social fabrication”(FB 33).

Leary's way of thinking is chaotic and unpredictable. This is why we can never fully understand Leary. However, what we can learn from him is how to become more flexible, open-minded, and creative — qualities that are very important if we want to survive in our modern Information Society in which the change rate is accelerating beyond comprehension and control. Leary wants to teach us to “go with the flow” – not to cling to idea-structures, but to change, to evolve (cf. CC xiv). “Be cool. Don't panic. Chaos is good. Chaos creates infinite possibilities,” Leary says (ibid.). To go with the flow means that you think for yourself and that you are not afraid of change. It means that you accept the fact that you live in a chaotic world that is continually changing. You cannot control chaos, but you can learn to “surf the waves of chaos.”

Surf's up. Enjoy your ride.

Sources

Abbreviations:

PsyE *The Psychedelic Experience*, 1964.

NP *Neuropolitique*, 1988b.

Info *Info-Psychology*, 1990a.

FB *Flashbacks*, 1990b.

PE *The Politics of Ecstasy*, 1990c.

CC *Chaos and Cyberculture*, 1994.

DD *Design for Dying*, 1997.

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21. Political Prisoners, Prisons, and Black Liberation

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Notes: This is a good short video to go along with the reading: <youtube.com/watch?v@@@PFz6MmtlQDw>

Despite a long history of exalted appeals to man's inherent right to resistance, there has seldom been agreement on how to relate in practice to unjust immoral laws and the oppressive social order from which they emanate. The conservative, who does not dispute the validity of revolutions deeply buried in history, invokes visions of impending anarchy in order to legitimize his demand for absolute obedience. Law and order, with the major emphasis on order, is his watchword. The liberal articulates his sensitivity to certain of society's intolerable details, but will almost never prescribe methods of resistance that exceed the limits of legality — redress through electoral channels is the liberal's panacea.

In the heat of our pursuit of fundamental human rights, black people have been continually cautioned to be patient. We are advised that as long as we remain faithful to the existing democratic order, the glorious moment will eventually arrive when we will come into our own as full-fledged human beings.

But having been taught by bitter experience, we know that there is a glaring incongruity between democracy and the capitalist economy which is the source of our ills. Regardless of all rhetoric to the contrary, the people are not the ultimate matrix of the laws and the system which govern them — certainly not black people and other nationally oppressed people, but not even the mass of whites. The people do not exercise decisive control over the determining factors of their lives.

Officials assertions that meaningful dissent is always welcome, provided it falls within the boundaries of legality, are frequently a smokescreen obscuring the invitation to acquiesce in oppression. Slavery may have been unrighteous, the constitutional precision for the enslavement of blacks may have been unjust, but conditions were not to be considered so bearable (especially since they were profitable to a small circle) as to justify escape and other acts proscribed by law. This was the import of the fugitive slave laws.

Needless to say, the history of the United States has been marred from its inception by an enormous quantity of unjust laws, far too many expressly bolstering the oppression of black people. Particularized reflections of existing social inequities, these laws have repeatedly borne witness to the exploitative and racist core of the society itself. For blacks, Chicanos, for all nationally oppressed people, the problem of opposing unjust laws and the social conditions which nourish their growth, has always had immediate practical implications. Our very survival has frequently been a direct function of our skill in forging effective channels of resistance. In resisting we have societies been compelled to openly violate those laws which directly or indirectly buttress our oppression. But even containing our resistance within the orbit of legality, we have been labeled criminals and have been methodically persecuted by a racist legal apparatus.

Under the ruthless conditions of slavery, the underground railroad provided the framework for extra-legal anti-slavery activity pursued by vast numbers of people, both black and white. Its functioning was in flagrant violations of the fugitive slave law; those who were apprehended were subjected to severe penalties. Of the innumerable recorded attempts to rescue fugitive slaves from the clutches of slave catchers, one of the most striking in the case of Anthony Burns, a slave from Virginia, captured in Boston in 1853. A team of his supporters, in attempting to rescue him by force during the course of his trial, engaged the police in a fierce courtroom battle. During the gun fight, a prominent Abolitionist,

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, was wounded. Although the rescuers were unsuccessful in their efforts, the impact of this incident "...did more to crystallize Northern sentiment against slavery than any other except the exploit of John Brown, ' and this was the last time a fugitive slave was taken from Boston. It took 22 companies of state militia, four platoons of marines, a battalion of United States artillerymen, and the city's police force ... to ensure the performance of this shameful act, the cost of which, the Federal government alone, came to forty thousand dollars.'"

Throughout the era of slavery, blacks, as well as progressive whites, repeatedly discovered that their commitment to the anti-slavery cause frequently entailed the overt violation of the laws of the land. Even as slavery faded away into a more subtle yet equally pernicious apparatus to dominate black people, "illegal" resistance was still on the agenda. After the Civil War, Black Codes, successors to the old Slave Codes, legalized convict labor, prohibited social intercourse between blacks and whites, gave white employers an excessive degree of control over the private lives of black workers, and generally codified racism and terror. Naturally, numerous individual as well as collective acts of resistance prevailed. On many occasions, blacks formed armed teams to protect themselves from white terrorists who were, in turn, protected by law enforcement agencies, if not actually identified with them.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the mass movement, headed by Marcus Garvey, proclaimed in its Declaration of Rights that black people should not hesitate to disobey all discriminatory laws. Moreover, the Declaration announced, they should utilize all means available to them, legal or illegal, to defend themselves from legalized terror as well as Ku Klux Klan violence. During the era of intense activity around civil rights issues, systematic disobedience of oppressive laws was a primary tactic. The sit-ins were organized transgressions of racist legislation.

All these historical instances involving the overt violation of the laws of the land converge around an unmistakable common denominator. At stake has been the collective welfare and survival of a people. There is a distinct and qualitative difference between one breaking a law for one's own individual self-interest and violating it in the interests of a class of people whose oppression is expressed either directly or indirectly through that particular law. The former might be called criminal (though in many instances he is a victim), but the latter, as a reformist or revolutionary, is interested in universal social change. Captured, he or she is a political prisoner.

The political prisoner's words or deed have in one form or another embodied political protests against the established order and have consequently brought him into acute conflict with the state. In light of the political content of his act, the "crime" (which may or may not have been committed) assumes a minor importance. In this country, however, where the special category of political prisoners is not officially acknowledged, the political prisoner inevitably stands trial for a specific criminal offense, not for a political act. Often the so-called crime does not even have a nominal existence. As in the 1914 murder frame-up of the IWW organizer, Joe Hill, it is a blatant fabrication, a mere excuse for silencing a militant crusader against oppression. In all instances, however, the political prisoner has violated the unwritten law which prohibits disturbances and upheavals in the status quo of exploitation and racism.. This unwritten law has been contested by actually and explicitly breaking a law or by utilizing constitutionally protected channels to educate, agitate, and organize masses to resist.

A deep-seated ambivalence has always characterized the official response to the political prisoner. Charged and tried for the criminal act, his guilt is always political in nature. This ambivalence is perhaps best captured by Judge Webster Thayer's comment upon sentencing Bartolomeo Vanzetti to fifteen years for an attempted payroll robbery: "This man, although he may not have actually committed the crime attributed to him, is nevertheless morally culpable, because he is an enemy of our existing institutions." (The very same judge incidentally, sentences Sacco and Vanzetti to death for a robbery and murder of which they were manifestly innocent). It is not surprising that Nazi Germany's foremost constitutional lawyers, Carl Schmitt, advanced the theory which generalized thus a priori culpability. A thief, for example, was not necessarily one who had committed an overt act of theft, but rather one whose character renders him a thief (*wer nach seinem wesen ein Dieb ist*). [President Richard] Nixon's and [FBI Director]

J. Edgar Hoover's pronouncements lead on to believe that they would readily accept Schmitt's fascist legal theory. Anyone who seeks to overthrow oppressive institutions, whether or not he has engaged in an overt act, is a priori a criminal who must be buried away in one of America's dungeons.

Even in all of Martin Luther King's numerous arrests, he was not so much charged with the nominal crimes of trespassing, and disturbance of the peace, as with being enemy of the southern society, an inveterate foe of racism. When Robert Williams was accused of kidnapping, this charge never managed to conceal his real offense — the advocacy of black people's incontestable right to bear arms in their own defense.

The offense of the political prisoner is political boldness, the persistent challenging — legally or extra-legally — of fundamental social wrongs fostered and reinforced by the state. The political prisoner has opposed unjust laws and exploitative, racist social conditions in general, with the ultimate aim of transforming these laws and this society into an order harmonious with the material and spiritual needs and interests of the vast majority of its members.

Nat Turner and John Brown were political prisoners in their time. The acts for which they were charged and subsequently hanged, were the practical extensions of their profound commitment to the abolition of slavery. They fearlessly bore the responsibility for their actions. The significance of their executions and the accompanying widespread repression did not lie so much in the fact that they were being punished for specific crimes, nor even in the effort to use their punishment as an implicit threat to deter others from similar armed acts of resistance. These executions, and the surrounding repression of slaves, were intended to terrorize the anti-slavery movement in general; to discourage and diminish both legal and illegal forms of abolitionist activity. As usual, the effect of repression was miscalculated and in both instances, anti-slavery activity was accelerated and intensified as a result.

Nat Turner and John Brown can be viewed as examples of the political prisoner who has actually committed an act which is defined by the state as "criminal". They killed and were consequently tried for murder. But did they commit murder? This raises the question of whether American revolutionaries had *murdered* the British in their struggle for liberation. Nat Turner and his followers killed some sixty-five white people, yet shortly before the revolt had begun, Nat is reputed to have said to the other rebelling slaves: "Remember that ours is not war for robbery nor to satisfy our passions, it is a *struggle for freedom*. Ours must be deeds and not words",

The very institutions which condemned Nat Turner and reduced his struggle for freedom to a simpler criminal case of murder, owed their existence to the decision, made a half-century earlier, to take up arms against the British oppressor.

The battle for the liquidation of slavery had no legitimate existence in the eyes of the government and therefore the special quality of deeds carried out in the interests of freedom was deliberately ignored. There were no political prisoners, there were only criminals; just as the movement out of which these deeds flowed was largely considered criminal.

Likewise, the significance of activities which are pursued in the interests of liberation today is minimized not so much because officials are unable to *see* the collective surge against oppression, but because they have consciously set out to subvert such movements. In the Spring of 1970, Los Angeles Panthers took up arms to defend themselves from an assault initiated by the local police force on their office and on their persons. They were charged with criminal assault. If one believed the official propaganda, they were bandits and rogues who pathologically found pleasure in attacking policemen. It was not mentioned that their community activities — educational work, services such as free breakfast and free medical programs — which had legitimized them in the black community, were the immediate reason for which the wrath of the police had fallen upon them. In defending themselves from the attack waged by some 600 policemen (there were only eleven Panthers in the office) they were defending not only their lives, but even more important their accomplishments in the black community surrounding them, and in the boarded thrust for black liberation. Whenever blacks in struggle have recourse to self-defense, particular armed self-defense, it is twisted and distorted on official levels and ultimately rendered synonymous with criminal aggression. On the other hand, when policemen are clearly indulging in acts

of criminal aggression, officially they are defending themselves through “justifiable assault” or “justifiable homicide”.

The ideological acrobatics characteristics of official attempts to explain away the existence of the political prisoner do not end with the equation of the individual political act with the individual criminal act. The political act is defined as criminal in order to discredit radical and revolutionary movements. A political event is reduced to a criminal event in order to affirm the absolute invulnerability of the existing order. In a revealing contradiction, the court resisted the description of the New York Panther 21 trial as “political”, yet the prosecutor entered as evidence of criminal intent, literature which represented, so he purported, the political ideology of the Black Panther Party.

The legal apparatus designates the black liberation fighter a criminal, prompting Nixon, (Vice President Spiro) Agnew, (California Governor Ronald) Reagan et al. to process to mystify with their demagoguery millions of Americans whose senses have been dulled and whose critical powers have been eroded by the continual onslaught of racist ideology.

As the black liberation movement and other progressive struggles increase in magnitude and intensity, the judicial system and its extension, the penal system, consequently become key weapons in the state’s fight to preserve the existing conditions of class domination, therefore racism, poverty and war.

In 1951, W.E.B. Du Bois, as Chairman of the Peace Information Center, was indicted by the federal government for “failure to register as an agent of a foreign principal”. In assessing this ordeal, which occurred in the ninth decade of his life, he turned his attention to the inhabitants of the nation’s jails and prisons:

What turns me cold in all this experience is the certainty that thousands of innocent victims are in jail today because they had neither money nor friends to help them. The eyes of the world were on our trial despite the desperate efforts of press and radio to suppress the facts and cloud the real issues; the courage and money of friends and of strangers who dared stand for a principle freed me; but God only knows how many who were as innocent as I and my colleagues are today in hell. They daily stagger out of prison doors embittered, vengeful, hopeless, ruined. And of this army of the wronged, the proportion of Negroes is frightful. We protect and defend sensational cases where Negroes are involved. But the great mass of arrested or accused black folk have no defense. There is desperate need of nationwide organizations to oppose this national racket of railroading to jails and chain gangs the poor, friendless and black.

Almost two decades passed before the realization attained by Du Bois on the occasion of his own encounter with the judicial system achieved extensive acceptance. A number of factors have combined to transform the penal system into a prominent terrain of struggle, both for the captives inside and the masses outside. The impact of large numbers of political prisoners both on prison populations and on the mass movement has been decisive. The vast majority of political prisoners have not allowed the fact of imprisonment to curtail their educational, agitational, and organizing activities, which they continue behind prison walls. And in the course of developing mass movements around political prisoners, a great deal of attention has inevitably been focused on the institutions in which they are imprisoned. Furthermore the political receptivity of prisoners — especially black and brown captives — has been increased and sharpened by the surge of aggressive political activity rising out of black, Chicano, and other oppressed communities. Finally, a major catalyst for intensified political action in and around prisons has emerged out of the transformation of convicts, originally found guilty of criminal offenses, into exemplary political militants. Their patient educational efforts in the realm of exposing the specific oppressive structures of the penal system in their relation to the larger oppression of the social system have had a profound effect on their fellow captives.

The prison is a key component of state’s coercive apparatus, the overriding function of which is to ensure social control. The etymology of the term “penitentiary” furnishes a clue to the controlling idea behind the “prison system” at its inception. The penitentiary was projected as the locale for doing penitence for an offense against society, the physical and spiritual purging of proclivities to challenge rules and regulations which command total obedience. While cloaking itself with the bourgeois aura of

universality — imprisonment was supposed to cut across all class lines, as crimes were to be defined by the act, not the perpetrator — the prison has actually operated as an instrument of class domination, a means of prohibiting the have-nots from encroaching upon the haves.

The occurrence of crime is inevitable in a society in which wealth is unequally distributed, as one of the constant reminders that society's productive forces are being channeled in the wrong direction. The majority of criminal offenses bear a direct relationship to property. Contained in the very concept of property, crimes are profound but suppressed social needs which express themselves in anti-social modes of action. Spontaneously produced by a capitalist organization of society, this type of crime is at once a protest against society and a desire to partake of its exploitative content. It challenges the symptoms of capitalism, but not its essence.

Some Marxists in recent years have tended to banish "criminals" and the lumpenproletariat as a whole from the arena of revolutionary struggle. Apart from the absence of any link binding the criminal to the means of production, underlying this exclusion has been the assumption that individuals who have recourse to anti-social acts are incapable of developing the discipline and collective orientation required by revolutionary struggle.

With the declassed character of lumpenproletarians in mind, Marx had stated that they are as capable of "the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices, as of the basest banditry and the dirtiest corruption". He emphasized the fact that the provisional government's mobile guards under the Paris Commune — some 24,000 troops — were largely formed out of young lumpenproletarians from fifteen to twenty years of age. Too many Marxists have been inclined to overvalue the second part of Marx's observation — that the lumpenproletariat is capable of the basest banditry and the dirtiest corruption — while minimizing or indeed totally disregarding his first remark, applauding the lumpen for their heroic deeds and exalted sacrifices.

Especially today when so many black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican men and women are jobless as a consequence of the internal dynamic of the capitalist system, the role of the unemployed, which includes the lumpenproletariat in revolutionary struggle, must be given serious thought. Increased unemployment, particularly for the nationally oppressed, will continue to be an inevitable by-product of technological development. At least 30 percent of black youth are presently without jobs. (In 1997, over 30 percent of black men were in prison, on probation or on parole.) In the context of class exploitation and national oppression it should be clear that numerous individuals are compelled to resort to criminal acts, not as a result of conscious choice — implying other alternatives — but because society has objectively reduced their possibilities of subsistence and survival to this level. This recognition should signal the urgent need to organize the unemployed and lumpenproletariat, as indeed the Black Panther Party as well as activists in prison have already begun to do.

In evaluating the susceptibility of the black and brown unemployed to organizing efforts, the peculiar historical features of the US, specifically racism and national oppression, must be taken into account. There already exists in the black and brown communities, the lumpenproletariat included, a long tradition of collective resistance to national oppression.

Moreover, in assessing the revolutionary potential of prisoners in America as a group, it should be borne in mind that not all prisoners have actually committed crimes. The built-in racism of the judicial system expresses itself, as Du Bois has suggested, in the railroading of countless innocent blacks and other national minorities into the country's coercive institutions.

One must also appreciate the effects of disproportionately long prison terms on black and brown inmates. The typical criminal mentality sees imprisonment as a calculated risk for a particular criminal act. One's prison term is more or less rationally predictable. The function of racism in the judicial-penal complex is to shatter that predictability. The black burglar, anticipating a two-to four-year term, may end up doing ten to fifteen years, while the white burglar leaves after two years.

Within the contained, coercive universe of the prison, the captive is confronted with the realities of racism, not simply as individual acts dictated by attitudinal bias; rather he is compelled to come to grips with racism as an institutional phenomenon collectively experienced by the victims. The dispro-

portionate representation of the black and brown communities, the manifest racism of parole boards, the intense brutality inherent in the relationship between prison guards and black and brown inmates — all this and more causes the prisoner to be confronted daily, hourly, with the concentrated systematic existence of racism.

For the innocent prisoner, the process of radicalization should come easy; for the “guilty” victim, the insight into the nature of racism as it manifests itself in the judicialpenal complex can lead to a questioning of his own past criminal activity and a reevaluation of the methods he has used to survive in a racist and exploitative society. Needless to say, this process is not automatic, it does not occur spontaneously. The persistent educational work carried out by the prison’s political activists plays a key role in developing the political potential of captive men and women.

Prisoners — especially blacks, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans — are increasingly advancing the proposition that they are *political* prisoners. They contend that they are political prisoners in the sense that they are largely the victims of an oppressive politico-economic order, swiftly becoming conscious of the causes underlying their victimization. The *Folsom Prisoners’ Manifesto of Demands and Anti-Oppression Platform* attests to a lucid understanding of the structures of oppression within the prison — structures which contradict even the avowed function of the penal institution: “The program we are submitted to, under the ridiculous title of rehabilitation, is relative to the ancient stupidity of pouring water on the drowning man, in as much as we are treated for our hostilities by our program administrators with their hostility for medication.” The *Manifesto* also reflects an awareness that the severe social crisis taking place in this country, predicated in part on the ever-increasing mass consciousness of deepening social contradictions, is forcing the political function of the prisons to surface in all its brutality. Their contention that prisons are being transformed into the “fascist concentration camps of modern America,” should not be taken lightly, although it would be erroneous as well as defeatist in a practical sense, to maintain that fascism has irremediably established itself.

The point is this, and this is the truth which is apparent in the Manifesto: the ruling circles of America are expanding and intensifying repressive measures designed to nip revolutionary movements in the bud as well as to curtail radical-democratic tendencies, such as the movement to end the war in Indochina. The government is not hesitating to utilize an entire network of fascist tactics, including the monitoring of congressman’s telephone calls, a system of “preventive fascism”, as Marcuse has termed it, in which the role of the judicial-penal systems looms large. The sharp edge of political repression, cutting through the heightened militancy of the masses, and bringing growing numbers of activists behind prison walls, must necessarily pour over into the contained world of the prison where it understandably acquires far more ruthless forms.

It is a relatively easy matter to persecute the captive whose life is already dominated by a network of authoritarian mechanisms. This is especially facilitated by the indeterminate sentence policies of many states, for politically conscious prisoners will incur inordinately long sentences on the original conviction. According to Louis S. Nelson, warden of the San Quentin Prison, “if the prisons of California become known as schools for violent revolution, the Adult Authority would be remiss in their duty not to keep the inmates longer” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 2, 1971). Where this is deemed inadequate, authorities have recourse to the whole spectrum of brutal corporal punishment, including out and out murder. At San Quentin, Fred Billingslea was teargassed to death in February 1970. W. L. Nolen, Alvin Miller, and Cleveland Edwards were assassinated by a prison guard in January 1970, at Soledad Prison. Unusual and inexplicable “suicides” have occurred with incredible regularity in jails and prisons throughout the country.

It should be self-evident that the frame-up becomes a powerful weapon within the spectrum of prison repression, particularly because of the availability of informers, the broken prisoners who will do anything for a price. The Soledad Brothers and the Soledad Three are leading examples of frame-up victims. Both cases involve militant activists who have been charged with killing Soledad prison guards. In both cases, widespread support has been kindled within the California prison system. They have

served as occasions to link the immediate needs of the black community with a forceful fight to break the fascist stronghold in the prisons and therefore to abolish the prison system in its present form.

Racist oppression invades the lives of black people on an infinite variety of levels. Blacks are imprisoned in a world where our labor and toil hardly allow us to eke out a decent existence, if we are able to find jobs at all. When the economy begins to falter, we are forever the first victims, always the most deeply wounded. When the economy is on its feet, we continue to live in a depressed state. Unemployment is generally twice as high in the ghettos as it is in the country as a whole and even higher among black women and youth. The unemployment rate among black youth has presently skyrocketed to 30 percent. If one-third of America's white youths were without a means of livelihood, we would either be in the thick of revolution or else under the iron rule of fascism. Substandard schools, medical care hardly fit for animals, over-priced, dilapidated housing, a welfare system based on a policy of skimpy concessions, designed to degrade and divide (and even this may soon be canceled) — this is only the beginning of the list of props in the overall scenery of oppression which, for the mass of blacks, is the universe.

In black communities, wherever they are located, there exists an ever-present reminder that our universe must remain stable in its drabness, its poverty, its brutality. From Birmingham to Harlem to Watts, black ghettos are occupied, patrolled and often attacked by massive deployments of police. The police, domestic caretakers of violence, are the oppressor's emissaries, charged with the task of containing us within the boundaries of our oppression.

The announced function of the police, "to protect and serve the people," becomes the grotesque caricature of protecting and preserving the interests of our oppressors and serving us nothing but injustice. They are there to intimidate blacks, to persuade us with their violence that we are powerless to alter the conditions of our lives. Arrests are frequently based on whims. Bullets from their guns murder human beings with little or no pretext, aside from the universal intimidation they are charged with carrying out. Protection for drug-pushers, and Mafia-style exploiters, support for the most reactionary ideological elements of the black community (especially those who cry out for more police), are among the many functions of forces of law and order. They encircle the community with a shield of violence, too often forcing the natural aggression of the black community inwards. Fanon's analysis of the role of colonial police is an appropriate description of the function of the police in America's ghettos.

It goes without saying that the police would be unable to set into motion their racist machinery were they not sanctioned and supported by the judicial system. The courts not only consistently abstain from prosecuting criminal behavior on the part of the police, but they convict, on the basis of biased police testimony, countless black men and women. Court-appointed attorneys, acting in the twisted interests of overcrowded courts, convince 85 percent of the defendants to plead guilty. Even the manifestly innocent are advised to cop a plea so that the lengthy and expensive process of jury trials is avoided. This is the structure of the apparatus which summarily railroads black people into jails and prisons. (During my imprisonment in the New York Women's House of Detention, I encountered numerous cases involving innocent black women who had been advised to plead guilty. One sister had entered her white landlord's apartment for the purpose of paying rent. He attempted to rape her and in the course of the ensuing struggle, a lit candle toppled over, burning a tablecloth. The landlord ordered her arrested for arson. Following the advice of her court-appointed attorney, she entered a guilty plea, having been deceived by the attorney's insistence that the court would be more lenient. The sister was sentenced to three years.)

The vicious circle linking poverty, police courts, and prison is an integral element of ghetto existence. Unlike the mass of whites, the path which leads to jails and prisons is deeply rooted in the imposed patterns of black existence. For this very reason, an almost instinctive affinity binds the mass of black people to the political prisoners. The vast majority of blacks harbor a deep hatred of the police and are not deluded by official proclamations of justice through the courts.

For the black individual, contact with the law-enforcement-judicial-penal network, directly or through relatives and friends, is inevitable because he or she is black. For the activist become political

prisoner, the contact has occurred because he has lodged a protest, in one form or another, against the conditions which nail blacks to this orbit of oppression.

Historically, black people as a group have exhibited a greater potential for resistance than any other part of the population. The iron-clad rule over our communities, the institutional practice of genocide, the ideology of racism have performed a strictly political as well as an economic function. The capitalists have not only extracted super profits from the underpaid labor of over 15 percent of the American population with the aid of a superstructure of terror. This terror and more subtle forms of racism have further served to thwart the flowering of a resistance — even a revolution that would spread to the working class as a whole.

In the interests of the capitalist class, the consent to racism and terror has been demagogically elicited from the white population, workers included, in order to more efficiently stave off resistance. Today, Nixon, [Attorney General John] Mitchell and J. Edgar Hoover are desperately attempting to persuade the population that dissidents, particularly blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, must be punished for being members of revolutionary organizations; for advocating the overthrow of the government; for agitating and educating in the streets and behind prison walls. The political function of racist domination is surfacing with accelerated intensity. Whites who have professed their solidarity with the black liberation movement and have moved in a distinctly revolutionary direction find themselves targets of the same repression. Even the antiwar movement, rapidly exhibiting an anti-imperialist consciousness, is falling victim to government repression.

Black people are rushing full speed ahead towards an understanding of the circumstances that give rise to exaggerated forms of political repression and thus an overabundance of political prisoners. This understanding is being forged out of the raw material of their own immediate experiences with racism. Hence, the black masses are growing conscious of their responsibility to defend those who are being persecuted for attempting to bring about the alleviation of the most injurious immediate problems facing black communities and ultimately to bring about total liberation through armed revolution, if it must come to this.

The black liberation movement is presently at a critical juncture. Fascist methods of repression threaten to physically decapitate and obliterate the movement. More subtle, yet no less dangerous ideological tendencies from within threaten to isolate the black movement and diminish its revolutionary impact. Both menaces must be counteracted in order to ensure our survival. Revolutionary blacks must spearhead and provide leadership for a broad anti-fascist movement.

Fascism is a process, its growth and development are cancerous in nature. While today, the threat of fascism may be primarily restricted to the use of the law-enforcement-judicial-penal apparatus to arrest the overt and latent revolutionary trends among nationally oppressed people, tomorrow it may attack the working class *en masse* and eventually even moderate democrats. Even in this period, however, the cancer has already commenced to spread. In addition to the prison army of thousands and thousands of nameless Third World victims of political revenge, there are increasing numbers of white political prisoners — draft resisters, anti-war activists such as the Harrisburg Eight, men and women who have involved themselves on all levels of revolutionary activity.

Among the further symptoms of the fascist threat are official efforts to curtail the power of organized labor, such as the attack on the manifestly conservative construction workers and the trends towards reduced welfare aid. Moreover, court decisions and repressive legislation augmenting police powers — such as the Washington no-knock law, permitting police to enter private dwellings without warning, and Nixon's "Crime Bill" in general — can eventually be used against any citizen. Indeed congressmen are already protesting the use of police-state wire-tapping to survey their activities. The fascist content of the ruthless aggression in Indo-China should be self-evident.

One of the fundamental historical lessons to be learned from past failures to prevent the rise of fascism is the decisive and indispensable character of the fight against fascism in its incipient phases. Once allowed to conquer ground, its growth is facilitated in geometric proportion. Although the most unbridled expressions of the fascist menace are still tied to the racist domination of blacks, Chicanos,

Puerto Ricans, Indians, it lurks under the surface wherever there is potential resistance to the power of monopoly capital, the parasitic interests which control this society. Potentially it can profoundly worsen the conditions of existence for the average American citizen. Consequently, the masses of people in this country have a real, direct, and material stake in the struggle to free political prisoners, the struggle to abolish the prison system in its present form, the struggle against all dimensions of racism.

No one should fail to take heed of Georgi Dimitrov's warning: "Whoever does not fight the growth of fascism at these preparatory stages is not in a position to prevent the victory of fascism, but, on the contrary, facilitates that victory" (Report to the VIIth Congress of the Communist International, 1935). The only effective guarantee against the victory of fascism is an indivisible mass movement which refuses to conduct business as usual as long as repression rages on. It is only natural that blacks and other Third World peoples must lead this movement, for we are the first and most deeply injured victims of fascism. But it must embrace all potential victims and most important, all working-class people, for the key to the triumph of fascism is its ideological victory over the entire working class. Given the eruption of a severe economic crisis, the door to such an ideological victory can be opened by the active approval or passive toleration of racism. It is essential that white workers become conscious that historically through their acquiescence in the capitalist-inspired oppression of blacks they have only rendered themselves more vulnerable to attack.

The pivotal struggle which must be waged in the ranks of the working class is consequently the open, unreserved battle against entrenched racism. The white worker must become conscious of the threads which bind him to a James Johnson, a black auto worker, member of UAW, and a political prisoner presently facing charges for the killings of two foremen and a job setter. The merciless proliferation of the power of monopoly capital may ultimately push him inexorably down the very same path of desperation. No potential victim [of the fascist terror] should be without the knowledge that the greatest menace to racism and fascism is unity!

MARIN COUNTY JAIL
May, 1971

22. The Anarchistic Devil

Deleted reason: unpublished, need to research author and txt a bit more

Author: Stephen Edred Flowers

Topics: atheism, civilization, God, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, materialism, Mikhail Bakunin, spirituality

Date: 1997

Source: *Lords of the Left-Hand Path: A History of Spiritual Dissent*

“If God really existed it would be necessary to abolish him.”

☒ Mikail Bakunin

In his fragmentary work, *God and the State*, the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin (1814–1876) at one point assesses humanity in terms of the Edenic myth and says: “[Satan] makes man ashamed of his bestial ignorance and obedience; he emancipates him, stamps upon his brow the seal of liberty and humanity, in urging him to disobey and eat of the fruit of knowledge.”¹ As Bakunin saw it, humanity—as an essentially bestial creature—was “endowed in a higher degree than the animals of any other species with two precious faculties—the power to think and the desire to rebel.” His understanding of humanity—his *anthropology*—held that collectively and individually the development of man was characterized by three principles: human *animality*, *thought* and *rebellion*.

For Bakunin Satan is “the eternal rebel, the first freethinker and emancipator of worlds.”² Like most anarchists who derive much of their theory from Rousseau’s idea of the “noble savage,” civilization and its institutions are the chief evils in the world. They must be struck down so that the innate nobility of humanity may emerge as a matter of natural course once freed of all socially determined conventions.

Bakunin was himself more an activist revolutionary than a writer or philosopher—he said “I have no system, I am a seeker.” He is said to have had a love for the mysterious and the irrational. This put him at odds with those he called “doctrinaire communists” who followed the more systematic philosophy of Marx. Both of these philosophies are, however, based on a positivistic materialism. “God” was firmly identified with the idea of “spirit,” so the Devil, God’s opposite, must be—if we choose to use this language—tantamount to the idea of matter. The property of “intelligence” can be ascribed to matter due to its “dynamic nature and evolutionary quality,” according to Bakunin.³

This dichotomizing of “matter” and “spirit” (or “intelligence”) is, of course, typical of the modern era. Where such dichotomies can be generated one must be accepted, the other rejected, or so goes conventional thought. All this is modern, all-too-modern. From a left-hand path perspective it is perhaps interesting to remember that ancient Hebrew mythology identified as “Satanic” *both* the existence of the flesh (nature/matter) and the presence of intelligence (as a result of rebellion).

While the ideas of Bakunin lived on in a vague obscurity—and continue to do so today among all those who oppose authority in all its forms—the ideas of Marx have had a much more doctrinaire and institutionalized history. This history was to be played out not in the industrialized capitalist strongholds of western Europe but in the still largely feudalistic, pre-industrial Russia.

¹ Michael Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover, 1970), p. 10.

² Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 10.

³ Bakunin, *God and the State*, pp. 12–13.

23. The Devil and Karl Marx

Author: Stephen Edred Flowers

Topics: atheism, communism, dialectics, God, Hegel, Karl Marx, marxism, materialism, rationalism, religion

Date: 1997

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Source: Lords of the Left-Hand Path: A History of Spiritual Dissent. <archive.org/details/StephenEFlowersLordsOfTheLeftHandPath>

For conservatives over the past century and a half or more the ideas of revolutionary communism have been virtually synonymous with a cosmic Satanic conspiracy—from Pope Pius IX to John Birch and beyond. Before these apparent ravings are dismissed out of hand, we might find it interesting to explore the philosophies of Marx and other socialist/materialist thinkers from a left-hand path viewpoint.

Karl Marx (1818–1883) did not invent communism or historical materialism, but he was an original synthesizer and codifier of a range of philosophical, economic and sociopolitical ideas into a theoretically coherent whole. This ideology could then be more forcefully disseminated than had been the case with the loose association of concepts that marked related pre-Marxist movements.

Marx was born in Trier, Germany on 5 May 1818 to an ethnically Jewish family.⁴ His father, Heinrich, had converted to Lutheranism just the year before. Karl was brought up entirely in the Lutheran faith. In 1835 he went to study law at the university of Bonn, but transferred to Berlin the following year where he was quickly “converted” to philosophy under the influence of the “Young Hegelians,” a group of intellectuals engaged in the transformation of Hegel’s historical idealism into historical materialism.

Marx had planned to become a university lecturer. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the philosophy of Epicureanism. But by 1841 the Prussian government clamped down on the Hegelian left, which caused all job prospects for Marx to evaporate. Back in the western part of Germany, in Saarbrücken, Marx met a communistic Zionist publicist named Moses Hess who was able to “convert” him to a communist philosophy. Hess was also responsible for converting Friedrich Engels, Marx’ future collaborator. Marx soon became the editor of a liberal newspaper, the *Rheinische Zeitung*, which he quickly radicalized. In April 1843, the paper was suppressed by the government and Marx emigrated to Paris. He was expelled from France in 1845, eventually settling in England in 1849. The year before, in 1848, he wrote one of his two major works—in collaboration with Engels—*The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. He was to live the rest of his life in relatively obscure circumstances in London.

In 1864 the “First International”—or more precisely the International Workingman’s Association—was organized in London. This was a federation of unions and radical organizations. Marx was able to exert his influence on this group. In place of nationally organized and loosely affiliated, vaguely liberal unions, Marx imposed his vision of an international, disciplined and federated, radical organization bent on the utter destruction of capitalist society. Because of his authoritarian principles Marx was opposed in the International by the almost equally prestigious Mikail Bakunin.

1867 saw the publication of the first volume of Marx’ *magnum opus: Capital (Das Kapital)*. By this time his thought had reached its full maturity and he could only defend the doctrines he had already developed. His support for the short-lived violently insurgent government in France in 1871, known as “the Commune,” earned for Marx the popular title of “the Red Terrorist Doctor.”

Due largely to the chaotic influence of Bakunin in the organization, the International died in obscurity in Philadelphia in 1876. In his latter years Marx developed closer ties with Russian communists. But before these ties could be exploited, he died in London on 14 March 1883. He is buried in Highgate Cemetery. It would be over three decades before his theories would begin to be put into practical use after the Russian revolution of 1917.

⁴ Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 21–22.

Marx' attitude toward traditional religion was that it is "the opiate of the masses." However, it is equally clear that he intended his philosophy to be a total replacement for religion. His antipathy toward religion began shortly after he began his university studies. He and his associates at the *Doktorclub*—the Young Hegelians of Berlin—set out on an atheistic program to destroy the superstructure of conservative authority, which they saw in religion. Although he later concentrated on certain economic theories coupled with historical materialism, the young Marx had a vision of the "total redemption of humanity,"⁵ as he wrote in the introduction to his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844). The whole of Marx' philosophy has been seen as a sort of "prophetic politics"⁶ in which a total transformation of the world is envisioned—and then promoted.

The early ideas of Marx—in which the roots of his motivations may be found—have been analyzed as being Faustian/Promethean by at least one scholar.⁷ Even the casual observer will have noticed the quasi-religious features of Marxism both as a theory and as it has been practiced in various countries in the 20th century. This perhaps has its origins in the nature of Marx' own initial impetus during his Berlin period. All this is best revealed in his own early, pre-communist, writings, e.g. the epic drama *Oulanem* (1837) and his poetry. In one of these poems, "The Fiddler" [*Der Spielmann*] (1841), he writes:

Was, was! Ich stech', stech' ohne fehle
 Blutschwarz den Sabel in Deine Seele,
 Gott kennt sie nicht, Gott acht' nicht der Kunst
 Die stieg in den Kopf aus Höllendunst,
 Bis das Him vernarrt, bis das Herz verwandelt:
 Die hab' ich lebendig vom Schwarzen erhandelt
 Der schlägt mir den Takt, der kreidet die Zeichen;
 muss voller, toller den Todtenmarsch streichen...
 (ll. 17–24)

Behold, my blood-blackened saber shall stab
 Without fail into your heart.
 God neither knows nor does he honor art.
 It rises into the brain as vapors from Hell.
 Until I brain is deluded and my heart transformed:
 I bought it while still alive from the Dark-One.
 He beats the time for me, he gives the signs;
 must more boldly, madly rush in the March of Death...

It is curious that even toward the end of his life overtly Satanic images were used to describe him, even by his close associates. His son-in-law Paul Lafargue said of him: "...he himself was known as the Moor or Old Nick on account of his dark complexion and sinister appearance."⁸

In the final analysis Marxism is a system of mystical materialism. He posits that history has an organic structure and that its evolution is driven not by the mind of God, as Hegel would have had it, but by exclusively material considerations, e.g. purely economic determination or human behavior and the change caused by struggles between economically determined classes in society. Throughout all of history classes of people—as determined essentially by economic status—who were without power would, by the inevitable force of the historical dialectic, wrest power away from those who have it at present. Thus the proletariat would, by the sheer force of history, overcome the over-ripe capitalist establishment.

⁵ Neal Riemer, *Karl Marx and Prophetic Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 64.

⁶ See Riemer, *Karl Marx and Prophetic Politics*, 1–20.

⁷ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: I: The Founders*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 409; 412; 414.

⁸ Berlin, *Karl Marx*, p. 229.

Marx claimed that his theories were purely “scientific” or rationally based, that he merely had the clearest view of historical change and its causes. But as it turns out his work had an effect less like a prophecy and more like a sorcerous incantation. Essentially Marx’ view of history appears uncannily like that of Judeo-Christian tradition—only its causal agent has been reevaluated from “God’s Plan” to “historical dialectic.” In the former there is an initial Edenic period, broken by man’s transgression against God’s law. This is followed by a long period of tribulation ended first by the incarnation of the Messiah who brings the program for salvation—the Evangelium—which is to be enacted by his earthly followers (the Church). Once this program has been spread world-wide, evil will be vanquished and a new paradise will be established on earth. The Christian version of this is, of course, highly spiritualized, while the Judaic remains largely materialistic. The Marxist view similarly posits an early period of primitive communism, broken by the institution of private property (Original Sin) and slave labor. This is followed by successive economic stages of feudalism and capitalism. The beginning of the end of the capitalistic phase is heralded by Marxist theory as a program for “redemption”—historical dialectic—which is to be enacted by socialist revolutionaries (the International). Once revolution is spread world-wide, capitalism will be vanquished and the classless, perfected Communist society will be established on earth. Such parallels between Marxist and Christian and/or Judaic views of history have also been posited by several scholars in the past.⁹

Although Marxist theory may be increasingly discredited as political systems based upon it fail and prove to be programs for ever more inefficient and intolerant systems than those the theory was designed to overthrow, elements of Marxist thinking have definitely permeated into popular political culture in the form of such things as notions of “political correctness.” The concept of “political correctness” (even the connotations of the phrase) stems from Marxist orthodoxy and is based on the premise that there is an ongoing struggle by a variety of suppressed groups who are at present viewed as being relatively powerless, e.g. women, African Americans, Hispanics, the physically challenged. It is their collective aim (each group individually) to wrest socioeconomic power from those who have it at present. This is Marx’ “class struggle.” Furthermore, those groups are assured by Marxist theory of fighting the good fight, the moral fight, because the historical dialectic (or the Marxist “God”) is on their side. Their morality and their future victory is assured by the very fact that they are *currently* powerless. This is why, for example, blacks cannot be considered “racists,” or women “sexists,” at least according to this theory based in the Marxist historical dialectic.

⁹ Riemer, *Karl Marx and Prophetic Politics*, p. 11–12.

24. Towards a New Oceania

Deleted reason: author not anarchist

Author: Albert Wendt

Topics: anti-colonialism, postcolonialism, Pacific-Islands, culture, purity, Christianity

Date: 1976

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1. A Rediscovery of Our Dead

*'These Islands rising from wave's edge –
blue myth brooding in orchid,
fern and banyan, fearful gods
awaiting birth from blood clot
into stone image and chant –
to bind their wounds, bury their journey's dead, as I
watched from shadow root, ready
for birth generations after'
(from 'Inside Us the Dead')*

I belong to Oceania — or, at least. I am rooted in a fertile portion of it — and it nourishes my spirit. helps to define me. and feeds my imagination. A detached/objective analysis I will leave to the sociologist and all the other 'ologists who have plagued Oceania since she captivated the imagination of the Papalagi in his quest for El Dorado, a Southern Continent. and the Noble Savage in a tropical Eden. Objectivity is for such uncommitted gods. My commitment won't allow me to confine myself to so narrow a vision. So vast, so fabulously varied a scatter of islands. nations, cultures, mythologies and myths, so dazzling a creature, Oceania deserves more than an attempt at mundane fact; only the imagination in free flight can hope — if not to contain her — to grasp some of her shape, plumage, and pain.

I will not pretend that I know her in all her manifestations. No one — not even our gods — ever did; no one does (UNESCO 'experts and consultants' included); no one ever will because whenever we think we have captured her she has already assumed new guises — the love affair is endless, even her vital statistics, as it were, will change endlessly. In the final instance, our countries, cultures, nations, planets are what we imagine them to be. One human being's reality is another's fiction. Perhaos we ourselves exist only in one another's dreams.

In our various groping ways. we are all in search of that heaven, that Hawaiki, where our hearts will find meaning; most of us never find it, or, at the moment of finding it. fail to recognise it. At this stage in my life I have found it in Oceania: it is a return to where I was born, or, put another way, it is a search for where I was born:

One day I will reach the source again

There at my beginnings

Another peace

Will welcome me

(from "The River Flows Back" by Kumalau Tawali, Manus, Papua New Guinea)

Our dead are woven into our souls like the hypnotic music of bone flutes: we can never escape them. If we let them they can help illuminate us to ourselves and to one another. They can be the source of new-found pride, self-respect, and wisdom. Conversely they can be the aitu that will continue to destroy us by blinding us to the beauty we are so capable of becoming as individuals, cultures. nations. We

must try to exorcise these aitu both old and modern. If we can't do so, then at least we can try and recognise them for what they are, admit to their fearful existence and, by doing so, learn to control and live honestly with them. We are all familiar with such aitu. For me, the most evil is racism: it is the symbol of all repression.

Chill you're a bastard...

*You have trampled the whole world over
Here your boot is on our necks, your spear
into our intestines
Your history and your size make me cry violently
for air to breathe*

(from *The Reluctant Flame* by John Kasaipwalova, Trobriands)

Over the last two centuries or so, that most fearful chill, institutionalized in colonialism, was our perpetual cross in Oceania:

Kros mi no wandem yu Cross I hate you
Yu kilim mi You are killing me
Yu sakem aot ol You are destroying
We blong mi My traditions

Mi no wandem yu Kros I hate you Cross
(from *Kros* by Albert Leomala, New Hebrides)

The chill continues to wound, transform, humiliate us and our cultures. Any real understanding of ourselves and our existing cultures calls for an attempt to understand colonialism and what it did and is still doing to us. This understanding would better equip us to control or exorcise it so that, I the words of the Maori poet Hone Tuwhare, *we can dream good dreams again*, heal the wounds it inflicted on us and with the healing will return pride in ourselves—an ingredient so vital to creative nation-building. Pride, self-respect, self-reliance will help us cope so much more creatively with what is passing or to come. Without this healing most of our countries will remain permanent welfare cases not only economically but culturally. (And cultural dependency is even more soul-destroying than economic dependency). Without it we will continue to be exploited by vampires of all colours, creeds, fangs. (Our home-grown species are often more rapacious). Without it the tragic mimicry, abasement, and humiliation will continue, and we will remain the often grotesque colonial caricatures we were transformed into by the chill. As much as possible, we, mini in size though our countries are, must try and assume control of our destinies, both in utterance and in fact. To get this control of our destinies, both in utterance and in fact. To get this control we must train our own people as quickly as possible in all fields of national development. Our economic and cultural dependency will be lessened according to the rate at which we can produce trained manpower. In this, we are failing badly.

In a flash he saw in front of his eyes all the wasted years of carrying the whiteman's cargo.

(from *The Crocodile* by Vincent Eri, Papua, Papua New Guinea)

If it has been a waste largely, where do we go from here?

My body is tired

My head aches

I weep for our people

Where are we going mother

(from *Motherland* by Mildred Sope, New Hebrides)

Again, we must rediscover and reaffirm our faith in the vitality of our past. our cultures. our dead. so that we may develop our own unique eyes, voices, muscles. and imagination.

1. Some Questions and Possible Answers

In considering *the Role of Traditional Cultures in Promoting National Cultural Identity and Authenticity in Nation-Building in the Oceanic Islands* (whoever thought up this mouthful should be edited out of the English language!) the following questions emerged:

1. Is there such a creature as *traditional culture*?
2. If there is, what period in the growth of a culture is to be called *traditional*?
3. If *traditional cultures* do exist in Oceania, to what extent are they colonial creations
4. What is authentic culture?
5. Is the differentiation we usually make between the culture(s) of our urban areas (meaning *foreign*) and those of our rural areas (meaning *traditional*) a valid one?

Are not the life-styles of our towns simply developments of our traditional life-styles, or merely sub-cultures within our national cultures? Why is it that many of us condemn urban life-styles (sub-cultures) as being foreign and therefore evil forces contaminating/corrupting the purity of our true cultures (whatever this means)?

1. Why is it that the most vocal exponents of *preserving our true cultures* live in our towns and pursue life-styles which, in their own terminology, are *alien and impure*?
2. Are some of us advocating the *preservation of our cultures* not for ourselves but for our brothers, the rural masses, and by doing this ensure the maintenance of a status quo in which we enjoy privileged positions?
3. Should there be ONE sanctified/official/sacred interpretation of one's culture? And who should do this interpreting?

These questions (and others which they imply) have to be answered satisfactorily before any realistic policies concerning cultural conservation in Oceania can be formulated. The rest of this section is an attempt to answer these questions.

Like a tree a culture is forever growing new branches, foliage, and roots. Our cultures, contrary to the simplistic interpretation of our romantics, were changing even in pre-papalagi times through inter-island contact and the endeavours of exceptional individuals and groups who manipulated politics, religion, and other people. Contrary to the utterances of our elite groups, our pre-papalagi cultures were not perfect or beyond reproach. No culture is perfect or sacred even today. Individual dissent is essential to the healthy survival, development, and sanity of any nation — without it our cultures will drown in self-love. Such dissent was allowed in our pre-papalagi cultures: what can be more dissenting than using war to challenge and over-throw existing power' and it was a frequent occurrence. No culture is ever static and can be preserved (a favourite word with our colonisers and romantic elite brethren) like a stuffed gorilla in a museum.

There is no state of cultural purity (or perfect state of cultural goodness) from which there is decline: usage determines authenticity. There was no Fall, no sun-tanned Noble Savages existing in South Seas paradises, no Golden Age, except in Hollywood films, in the insanely romantic literature and art by outsiders about the Pacific, in the breathless sermons of our elite vampires, and in the fevered imaginations of our self-styled romantic revolutionaries. We, in Oceania, did not/and do not have a monopoly on God and the ideal life. I do not advocate a return to an imaginary pre-papalagi Golden Age or utopian wob. Physically, we are too corrupted for such a re-entry! Our quest should not be for a revival of our past cultures but for the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly on our own pasts. The quest should be for a new Oceania.

Racism is institutionalized in all cultures, and the desire to dominate and exploit others is no the sole prerogative of the papalagi. Even today, despite the glib tributes paid to a Pacific Way, there is much racial discrimination between our many ethnic groups, and much heartless exploitation of one group by another. Many of us are guilty—whether we are aware of it or not—of perpetuating the destructive

colonial chill and are doing so in the avowed interest of *preserving our racial/cultural purity* (whatever this means). Maintaining the status quo using this pretext is not only ridiculous but dangerous. The only valid culture worth having is the one being lived out now, unless of course we attain immortality or invent a time machine that would enable us to live in the past or future. Knowledge of our past cultures is a precious source of inspiration for living out the present. (An understanding also of other peoples and their cultures is vital). What may have been considered *true* forms in the past may be ludicrous now: cannibalism and human sacrifice are better left in the history books, for example. Similarly, what at first may have been considered *foreign* are now authentic pillars of our cultures: Christianity and the Rule of Law, for instance. It won't do to over-florify the past. The present is all that we have and we should live it out as creatively as possible. Pride in our past bolsters our self-respect which is necessary if we are to cope as equals with others. However, too fervent or paranoid an identification with one's culture—or what one deems to be that culture—can lead to racial intolerance and the like. Hitler too had a Ministry of Culture! This is not to claim that there are no differences between cultures and peoples. Or to argue that we abolish these differences. We must recognize and respect these differences but not use them to try and justify our racist claims to an imaginary superiority.

All of us have individual prejudices, principles, and standards by which we judge which sub-cultures in our national cultures we want to live in, and those features of our national cultures we want conserved and those we want discarded. To advocate that in order to be a true Samoan, for example, one must be fully-blooded Samoan and behave/think/ dance/talk/dress/and believe in a certain prescribed way (and that the prescribed way has not changed since time immemorial) is being racist, callously totalitarian, and stupid. This is a prescription for cultural stagnation, an invitation for a culture to choke in its own body odour, juices, and excreta.

Equally unacceptable are outsiders (and these come in all disguises including the mask of adviser' or expert) who try to impose on me what they think my culture is and how I should live it and go about preserving it. The colonisers prescribed for us the roles of domestic animal, amoral phallus, the lackey, the comic and lazy and happy-go-lucky fuzzy-haired boy, and the well-behaved colonised. Some of our own people are trying to do the same to us, to turn us into servile creatures they can exploit easily. We must not consent to our own abasement.

There are no true interpreters or sacred guardians of any culture. We are all entitled to our truths, insights, and intuitions into and interpretations of our cultures.

No national culture is homogenous. Even our small pre-papalagi cultures were made up of sub-cultures. In Polynesia, for instance, the life-styles of priests and ariki/alii were very different from those of the commoners, women, and children. Contact with papalagi and Asian cultures (which are made up of numerous sub-cultures — and we, in Oceania, tend to forget this) has increased the number of sub-cultures or life-styles within our cultures. Many urban life-styles are now just as much part of our cultures as more traditional ones.

To varying degrees, we as individuals all live in limbo within our cultures: there are many aspects of our ways of life we cannot subscribe to or live comfortably with; we all conform to some extent, but the life-blood of any culture is the diverse contributions of its varied sub-cultures. Basically, all societies are multi-cultural. And Oceania is more so than any other region on our sad planet.

1. Colonialism: the Wounds

Let me take just two facets of our cultures and show how colonialism changed us.

[a] Education

Kidnapped

I was six when

Mama was careless

She sent me a school

alone

*five days a week
one day I was
kidnapped by a band
of Western philosophers
armed with glossy-philosophers
textbooks and
registered reputation
'Holder of B.A.
and M.A. degrees'
I was held
in a classroom
guarded by Churchill and Garibaldi
pinned up on one wall
and
Hitler and Mao dictating from the other*

*Guevara pointed a revolution
at my brains
from his 'Guerilla Warfare'*

*Each three-month term
they sent threats to
my Mama and Papa*

*Mama and Papa loved
their son and
paid ransom fees
each time*

*Each time
Mama Papa and grew
poorer and poorer
and my kidnappers grew
richer and richer
I grew whiter and
whiter*

*On my release
fifteen years after
I was handed
[among loud applause
from fellow victims]
a piece of paper
to decorate my walls
certifying my release
(by Ruperake Petaia, Western Samoa)*

This remarkable poem aptly describes what can be called the whitefication of the colonised by a colonial education system. What the poem does not mention is that this system was enthusiastically welcomed by many of us and is still being continued even in our independent nations — a tragic irony!

The basic function of Education in all cultures is to promote conformity and obedience and respect, to fit children into roles society has determined for them. In practice it has always been an instrument of domesticating humankind with. The typical formal educational process is like a lobotomy operation or a relentless life-long dosage of tranquillisers.

The formal education systems (whether British/New Zealand/ Australia/ American/or French) that were established by the colonisers in our islands all had one main feature in common: they were based on the arrogantly mistaken racist assumption that the cultures of the colonisers were superior (and preferable) to ours. Education was therefore devoted to civilising us, to cutting us away from the roots of our cultures, from what the colonisers viewed as darkness, superstition, barbarism, and savagery. The production of bourgeois papalagi seemed the main objective; the process was one of castration. The missionaries, irrespective of whatever colonial nationality or brand of Christianity they belonged to, intended the same conversion.

Needless to say, the most vital strand in any nation-building is education but our colonial education systems were not programmed to educate us for development but to produce minor and inexpensive cogs, such as clerks/glorified office boys/officials/and a few professionals, for the colonial administrative machine. It was not in the colonial interests to encourage industries in our countries: it was more profitable for them that we remained exporters of cheap raw materials and buyers of their expensive manufactured goods. So, the education was narrowly academic and benefitted mainly our traditional elite groups who saw great profit in serving our colonial masters who, in turn, propped them up because it was cheaper to use them to run our countries. The elitist and academic nature of this education was not conducive to training us to survive in our own cultures.

Colonial education helped reduce many of us into a state of passivity, undermined our confidence and self-respect, and made many of us ashamed of our cultures, transformed many of us into Uncle Toms and resonance and what V.S. Naipaul has called mimic men, inducing in us the feeling that only the foreign is right or proper or worthwhile. Let us see how this is evident in architecture.

(b) Architecture

A frightening type of papalagi architecture is invading Oceania: the super-stainless/super-plastic/super-hygienic/ super-soulless structure very similar to modern hospitals, and its most nightmarish form is the new type tourist hotel — a multi-storied edifice of concrete/steel! chromium/and air-conditioning. This species of architecture is an embodiment of those bourgeois values I find unhealthy/soul-destroying: the cultivation/worship of mediocrity, a quest for a meaningless and precarious security based on material possessions, a deep-rooted fear of dirt and all things rich in our cultures, a fear of death revealed in an almost paranoid quest for a super-hygienic cleanliness and godliness, a relentless attempts to level out all individual differences in people and mold them into one faceless mass, a drive to preserve the status quo at all costs, and ETC. These values reveal themselves in the new tourist hotels constructed of dead materials which echo the spiritual, creative, and emotional emptiness in modern man. The drive is for deodorized/sanitized comfort, the very quicksand in which many of us are now drowning, willingly.

What frightens me is the easy/unquestioning acceptance by our countries of all this without considering their adverse effects on our psyche. In my brief lifetime, I have observed many of our countries imitating what we consider to be *papalagi culture* (even though most of us will swear vehemently that we are not!). It is just one of the tragic effects of colonialism—the aping of colonial ways/life-styles/attitudes/and values. In architecture this has led and is leading to the construction of dog-kennel-shaped papalagi houses (mainly as status symbols, as props to one's lack of self-confidence). The change from traditional dwelling to box-shaped monstrosity is gathering momentum: the mushrooming of this bewildering soulless desert of shacks and boxes is erupting across Oceania because most of our leaders and style-settlers, as soon as they gain power/wealth, construct opulent dog-kennels as well.

Our government's quest for the tourist hotel is not helping matters either; there is a failure to understand what such a quest is bringing. It may be bringing money through the middle-aged retired tourist, who travels from country to country through a variety of climates, within his cocoon of air-conditioned America/Europe/N.S./Australia/Molochland, but it is also helping to bring these bourgeois

values, attitudes, and lifestyles which are compelling attractive illnesses that kill slowly, comfortably, turning us away from the richness of our cultures. I think I know what such a death is like: for the past few years I have watched myself (and some of the people I admire) dying that death.

In periods of unavoidable lucidity, I have often visualized the ultimate development of such and architecture – air-conditioned coffins lodged in air-conditioned mausoleums.

1. Diversity, a Valued Heritage

The population of our region is only just over 5 million, but we possess a cultural diversity more varied than any other in the world. There is also a multiplicity of social, economic, and political systems all undergoing different stages of decolonization, ranging from politically independent nations (Western Samoa/Fiji/Papua New Guinea/Tonga/Nauru) through self-governing ones (the Solomons/The Gilberts/Tuvalu) and colonies (mainly French and American) to our oppressed aboriginal brothers in Australia. This cultural, political, social, and economic diversity just be taken into account in any overall programme of cultural conservation.

If as yet we may not be the most artistically creative region on our spaceship, we possess the potential to become the most artistically creative. There are more than 1200 indigenous languages plus English, French, Hindi, Spanish, and various forms of pidgin to catch and interpret the Void with, reinterpret our past with, create new historical and sociological visions of Oceania with, compose songs and poems and plays and other oral and written literature with. Also numerous other forms of artistic expression: hundreds of dance styles: wood and stone sculpture and carvings; artifacts as various as our cultures; pottery, painting, and tattooing. A fabulous treasure house of traditional motifs, themes, styles, material which we can use in contemporary forms to express our uniqueness, identity, pain, joy, and our own visions of Oceania and earth.

Self-expression is a prerequisite of self-respect.

Out of this artistic diversity has come and will continue to come our most worthwhile contribution to humankind. So this diversity must be maintained and encouraged to flourish.

Across the political barriers dividing our countries an intense artistic activity is starting to weave firm links between us. This cultural awakening, inspired and fostered and led by our own people, will not stop at the artificial frontiers drawn by the colonial powers. And for me, this awakening is the first real sign that we are breaking from the colonial chill and starting to find our own beings. As Marjorie Crocombe of the Cook Islands and editor of MANA Magazine has written: *Denigrated, inhibited and withdrawn during the colonial era, the Pacific people are again beginning to take confidence and express themselves in traditional forms of expression that remain part of a valued heritage, as well as in new forms and styles reflecting the changes within the continuity of the unique world of our Island cultures ... The canoe is afloat ... the volume and quality increase all the time.*

One of the recent highlights of this awakening was the 1972 South Pacific Festival of Arts during which we came together in Fiji to perform our expressive arts; much of it was traditional, but new voices/new forms, especially in literature, were emerging.

Up to a few years ago nearly all the literature about Oceania was written by papalagi and other outsiders. Our islands were and still are a goldmine for romantic novelists and film makers, bar-room journalists and semi-literate tourists, sociologists and Ph.D. students, remittance men and sailing evangelists, UNO *experts*, and colonial administrators and their well-groomed pouses. Much of this literature ranges from the hilariously romantic thought pseudo-scholarly to the infuriatingly racist; from the *noble savage* literary school through Margaret Ead and all her comings of age, Somerset Maugham's puritan missionaries/drunks/and saintly whores and James Michener's rascals and golden people, to the stereotyped childlike pagan who needs to be steered to the Light. The Oceania found in this literature is largely papalagi fictions, more revealing of papalagi fantasies and ang-ups, dreams and nightmares, prejudices and ways of viewing our crippled cosmos, than of our actual islands. I am not saying we should reject such a literature, or that papalagi should not write about us, and vice versa. But the imagination

must explore with love/honestly/wisdom/ and compassion; writers must write with *aroha/aloha/alofa/loloma*, respecting the people they are writing about, people who may view the Void differently and who, like all other human beings live through the pores of the flesh and mind and bone, who suffer, laugh, cry, copulate, and die.

In the last few years what can be called a South Pacific literature has started to blossom. In New Zealand, Alistair Campbell, of Cook Island descent, is acknowledged as a major poet; three Maori writers — Hone Tuwhare (poet), Witi Ihimaera (novelist), and Patricia Grace (short stories) have become extremely well-known. In Australia, the aboriginal poets Kathy Walker and Jack Davis continue to plot the suffering of their people. In Papua New Guinea, *The Crocodile* by Vincent Eri — the first Papuan novel to be published — has already become a minor classic. Also in that country poets such as John Kasaipwalova, Kumalau Tawali, Alan Natachee, and Apisai Enos, and playwrights like Arthur Jawodimbari are publishing some powerful work. Papua New Guinea has established a very forward looking Creative Arts Centre, which is acting as a catalyst in the expressive arts movement, a travelling theatre, and an Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies. *KOVAVE* Magazine, put out by a group of Papua New Guinea writers, is already a respected literary journal.

MANA Magazine and MANA Publications, established by the South Pacific Creative Arts Society (owned/operated by some of us), have been a major catalyst in stimulating the growth of this new literature, especially in countries outside Papua New Guinea. Already numerous young poets, prose writers, and playwrights have emerged; some of them, we hope, will develop into major writers. One thinks of Seri, Vanessa Griffen, and Raymond Pillai of Fiji; of Eti Saaga, Ruperake Petaia, Sano Malifa, Ata Maiiai, and Tili Peseta of Western Samoa; of Albert Leomala and Mildred Sope of the New Hebrides; of Celestine Kulagoe of the Solomons; of Maunaa Itaia of the Gilberts; of Makiuti Tongia of the Cook Islands; of Konai Helu Thaman of Tonga. I am proud to be also contributing to this literature. Most of us know one another personally; if we don't, we know one another's work well. Our ties transcend barriers of culture, race, petty nationalism, and politics. Our writing is expressing a revolt against the hypocritical/exploitative aspects of our traditional/commercial/and religious hierarchies, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and the degrading values being imposed from outside and by some elements in our societies.

But they cannot erase my existence

For my plight chimes with the hour

And my blood they drink at cocktail parties

Always full of smiling false faces

Behind which lie authority and private interests

(from *Uncivil Servants* by Konai Helu Thaman, Tonga)

As I walk this rich suburb

full of white and black chiefs

I hear the barking of a dog

I listen to its calls

knowing that I am that dog

picking what it can

from the overflowing rubbish tins.

I say to you chiefs

bury the scraps you can't eat

So no hungry dog will come to eat

at your locked gate

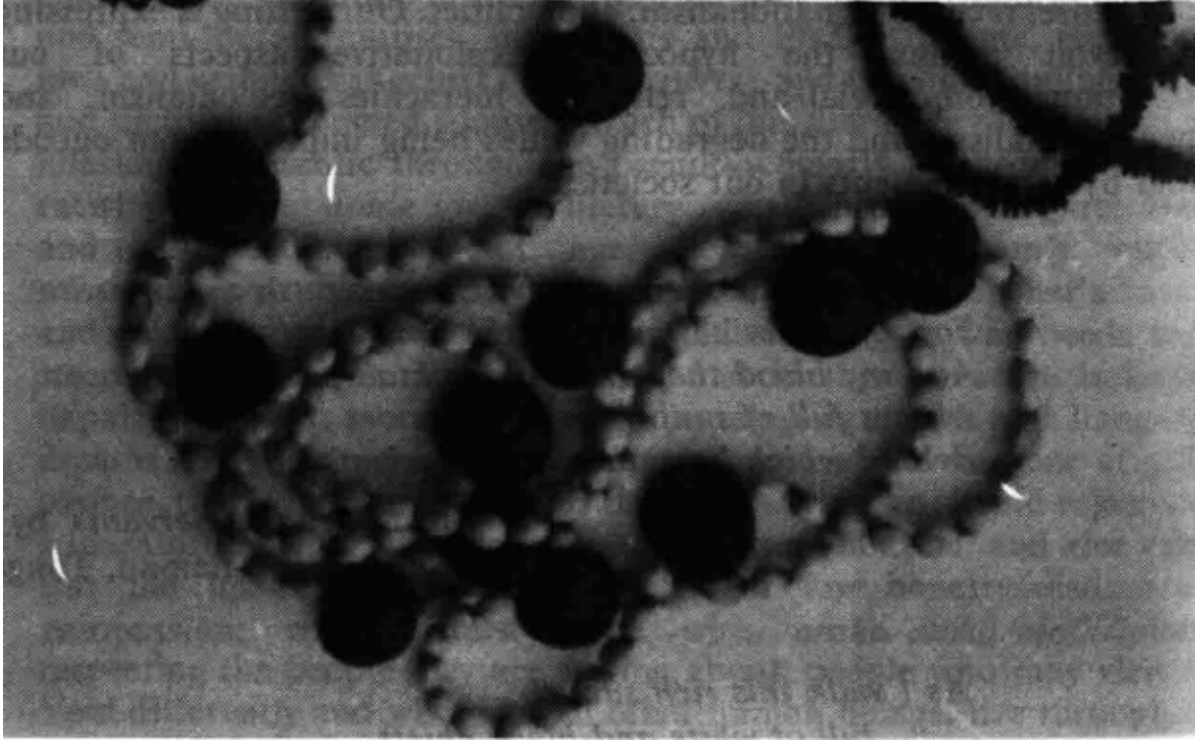
Chiefs, beware of hungry dogs!

(from *Beware of Dog* by Makiutu Tongia, Cook Islands)

In the traditional visual arts there has been a tremendous revival, that revival is also finding contemporary expression in the work of Maori artists such as Selwyn Muru, Ralph Hotere, Para Matchitt, and Buck Nin; in the work of Aloï Pilioko of Wallis and Futuna, Akis and Kauage of Papua New Guinea, Aleki Prescott of Tonga, Sven Orquist of Western Samoa. Kuai of the Solomons, and many others.

The same is true in music and dance. The National Dance Theatres of Fiji and The Cook Islands are already well-known throughout the world.

This artistic renaissance is enriching our cultures further, reinforcing our identities/self-respect/and pride, and taking us through a genuine decolonisation; it is also acting as a unifying force in our region. In their individual journeys into the Void, these artists, through their work, are explaining us to ourselves and creating a new Oceania.



25. Anarchism and Immigration

Deleted reason: author supports prison, see “The Anarchist Response to Crime”
Author: Scott of the Insurgency Culture Collective
Authors: Scott of the Insurgency Culture Collective
Topics: borders, immigration, Insurgency Culture Collective, syndicalist
Date Published on T@L: 2010-01-12 19:13:08 +0100
Source: Retrieved on January 1, 2005 from www.cat.org.au

You have the right to live where you choose.
You have the right to work where you choose.
You have the right to travel where you choose.
You have the right to associate with whom you choose.
You have the right to speak any language you choose.
You have the right to privacy.

Anarchists Believe In Free Association

This means that everyone has the right to live where they choose, work where they choose, and have social relationships with whom they choose.

Anarchists Are Anti-Racist

We do not believe in differentiating between people because of their ethnic ancestry. We believe that all privilege, discrimination, or segregation based on ethnicity, national origin, or cultural group must be eradicated.

Anarchists Are Anti-Nationalist

This means that we do not recognize the right of any government to legislate citizenship. We do not recognize the territorial sovereignty of any nation or the legitimacy of any national borders.

Anarchists Are Anti-Authoritarian

We believe that no one should dominate another, no national government should seek to dominate another, and no ethnic group, caste, social class should dominate another. We believe that society should be organized democratically and that the rich man’s government must be abolished. We believe that social peace should be maintained by the community and not racist cops.

Anarchists Are Anti-Capitalist

We believe that poverty and unemployment are intentionally created by capitalists as threats to use against and control working people. They are not caused by immigration which is simply the migration of people from areas of the World where land and labor are exploited by the capitalists to areas of the

World where capitalists own powerful governments whose laws and military forces protect them and their wealth and do their bidding. We believe that everyone who wants to work should have a well-paid job and that jobs like raising children, not compensated by capitalists, should be financially supported. Under capitalism 4 out of every 5 dollars in wealth produced by a worker is stolen by capitalists, bosses, or government before they are paid for their work. We believe that it is possible for everyone who want to work to have a job where they can earn more but, work only half as much as under capitalism. We believe that people should not be restricted in moving across national borders to work to feed their families because there is plenty of work for everyone.

Anarchists Believe In International Labor Solidarity

We believe in Syndicalism, Industrial Unionism, and the use of Direct Action including the Stay-In General Strike where workers occupy their work places to deprive the capitalists and their police state governments the resources to attack us. We believe that the people who do the work should own the work place and share the benefit of what they produce and that wage slavery, where capitalists steal the value of what we produce and call it “profit,” must be abolished. We believe that capitalists and bosses who produce nothing and exploit our labor should be done away with and replaced with cooperative work places which are run democratically. We believe that working people of all nations should cooperate to insure that everyone has an equal standard of living and that transnational capitalist corporations can no longer force us to accept wage slavery, dangerous and inhumane working conditions, and the poisoning of our communities by pollution to avoid the threat of poverty, unemployment, or death by starvation or disease. We believe that working people can take control of their lives without any need for leaders or a government to tell them what to do because they know what needs to be done and are best able to make it happen.

Anarchism is the philosophy of freedom, social equality, and respect for human life. Join us. Unite and fight for a better world.

26. Anarchists Hate Racism

Deleted reason: author supports prison, see “The Anarchist Response to Crime”

Author: Scott of the Insurgency Culture Collective

Authors: Scott of the Insurgency Culture Collective

Topics: anti-racist, class, Insurgency Culture Collective, race, syndicalist, United States

Date Published on T@L: 2010-01-09 19:17:27 +0100

Source: Retrieved on January 1, 2005 from www.cat.org.au

What we believe

Anarchists believe in Equality between all people regardless of where their ancestors came from, what color their skin is, or where they were born. We believe in social equality regardless of ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. We believe in an economy and community where everybody cooperates to make sure that we all can live healthy, prosperous, and pleasant lives. Anarchism is the philosophy of personal freedom, personal responsibility and mutual respect between all people. Anti-Racist Action is based on the ideas of Solidarity and Mutual Aid. Solidarity is our natural outrage every time we see an act of injustice or evil. Mutual Aid is the practice of people banding together to oppose a common enemy or confront a challenge that may seem insurmountable to individuals but, can be overcome when we work together as a group.

Where did racism come from?

Racism was invented by rich people to keep working people divided so they wouldn't unite and overthrow capitalism. Racism originated with the European class system where people had pigmented skin only if they had to work outdoors. The rich considered manual labor the duty of inferiors and therefore viewed anyone with the characteristics of a worker as below their station. The term “blue blood” originated from the ability to see a rich person's veins through their pale skin. The term “gentleman”, “gentlewoman” or “gentry” referred to a person raised to believe that physical exertion was the work of inferiors. Aristocrats developed strict codes of conduct to exclude any outsider from the privileges they enjoyed. The power of the ruling class originated with ownership of the land which gave them a monopoly over food production. Control of the land eventually gave them influence over the government. Capitalism originated with traders and bankers who owned no land but, bought and sold the products of craftsmen and landowners. The invention of industry enabled these traders to outstrip the wealth of landowners. When Capitalists began to dominate the economy they aspired to live like the gentry which included their class prejudices. European countries exploring the world justified taking land from non-Europeans based on religious or cultural bigotry. Aristocrats who believed workers to be inferior saw “non-Christian” or “colored” people that they sold as slaves or forced into poverty and starvation by stealing their land as less than human (Blacks were worth 3/5 of a person in the U.S. Constitution and Native Americans didn't count). They found that they could use their armies to force these people to live on less than they paid their European workers if they told the European workers that “coloreds” would only get the dirty work they didn't want to do.

There is no such thing as race

Biologists have found no genetic similarity between people who have been grouped as races because of their skin pigmentation. Human blood types have no correlation with racial groupings based on skin

pigmentation. Humans with different ethnic characteristics, including skin pigmentation, are capable of interbreeding. Most Americans who are descended from slaves have some European ancestry. Skin pigmentation is a product of the geographic origin of a persons ancestors. People whose ancestors lived for many generations in tropical climates will tend to develop darker skin pigmentation as a biochemical defense mechanism against exposure. People whose ancestors lived in forested regions with seasonal cold and snow will tend to be more pale. History shows that all major language groups in the world show evidence of large scale migrations throughout history. Language groups were created by trade between peoples who lived in geographic proximity to each other. There are many genetic characteristics which transcend language families. This is because most groups have interbred with other groups to a great enough degree to share these traits across ethnic, cultural or linguistic barriers.

How do we fight racism?

The foremost thing we have to do is to attack the institutions which “legitimize” racism: Those political and economic powers which tell people that racist behavior and ideas are respectable rather than shameful. We must show that we believe racism to be cowardly, shameful and beneath contempt. We must embarrass those who are comfortable with their racism and show others who question racism that their anti-racist instincts are correct. Our best weapons against racism are our commonsense and our unity against racist violence and exploitation. Our goal is social equality for all people. We will achieve this after we do away with all the institutions who depend on racism in order to exploit us. Racism is motivated by greed and perpetuated by power and ignorance. We want to abolish capitalism in favor of worker ownership and self-management of the workplace. We want to abolish governments which create division to protect a few wealthy and powerful people in favor of autonomous self-governing communities who coordinate their activities through decentralized federations. We want to create free schools in the community where children can grow up happy and without bigotry. Doing away with capitalists, bosses and professional politicians and returning control of work and the community to people who do productive labor in a society where people can have as much as they can earn by working in a single lifetime will create a society where everyone who wants to work can have a comfortable life.

27. Epistemological Anarchism

Deleted reason: Doesn't seem to be anarchist in orientation.

Subtitle: The Philosophy of Jeet Kun Do

Author: Danielle Bolelli

Authors: Danielle Bolelli

Topics: Martial Arts, Jeet Kun Do, Bruce Lee, Taoism, Nietzsche, Buddhism, Nihilism

Date: 2003

Date Published on T@L: 2021-12-27T15:28:04

Source: On The Warrior's Path Philosophy, Fighting and Martial Arts Mythology (Second Edition, 2003)

... whoever heeds commands does not heed himself. Break, break, you lovers of knowledge, the old tablets!

—Friedrich Nietzsche (Nietzsche 1892)

[I am] a man who wishes nothing more than daily to lose some reassuring belief, who seeks and finds his happiness in this daily greater liberation of the mind.

—Friedrich Nietzsche (Nietzsche 1892)

I must invent my own systems or else be enslaved by other men's.

—William Blake quoted in *Another Roadside Attraction* by Tom Robbins (Robbins 1971)

INTRODUCTION

Almost thirty years after his death in 1973, no martial artist has gotten even close to achieving half of his popularity. Far from fading from memory, his legacy still inspires the enthusiasm of the masses. Frozen in time by a premature death, his image has been printed over and over again on the covers of magazines throughout the world. Long past are the days when his work almost single-handedly changed the way in which Asian Americans were viewed in the United States, gave Chinese people a tremendous boost of self-esteem, and opened the road to Hollywood for other Asian actors. Gone the days when his movies made the fortune of scalpers who could sell a \$2 ticket for \$45 or when, in some countries, his titles had to be withdrawn from theatres to ease traffic jams (Little 1996). However, judging from his enduring fame, the passing of a few decades has only contributed to turn the man into something bigger than life. Even today, he is the patron saint of martial arts magazines. In lean times, when the financial future seems bleak, a martial arts magazine only needs to dedicate the cover article to him in order to bounce back and bring up the sales. In the popular imagination, he was not just another martial artist. He was The Martial Artist. For countless people around the globe, his name has become the symbol for martial arts as a whole.

The man, of course, is Bruce Lee. In case I needed further proof, a recent experience reminded me of just how far-reaching Lee's fame is. In this instance, a department chair from California State University at Hayward recommended me to consider teaching a course entitled "Bruce Lee: An American Icon." By itself this proposal, coming from a serious scholar of a respected academic institution who bears no personal interest in the martial arts, speaks volumes. What Lee was able to do, in fact, was to fascinate many different kinds of people for very different motives.

For the same reason that Western movies have attracted millions of viewers, Lee's role as a tough, lonely hero who fights injustice wherever he meets it is certainly appealing to vast segments of the

public. Lee, however, added to this role an aesthetic beauty and a philosophical depth that were lacking in most of the Old West's gunfighters. In this way, he managed to intrigue even those people (including considerable numbers of women) who are turned off by excessive displays of guns, testosterone, and machismo. It is undeniable that Lee's acting career was centered on beating people up, but he had something going for him that was different from everyone else. He had style. When other people fought, viewers would only see a fight. When Lee fought, it was poetry in motion. Martial, but also art.

Lee's popularity, however, has done nothing to endear him to the serious scholars of the martial arts, who view him as little more than the inspiration for thousands of obnoxiously bad martial arts movies. In this sense, the absence of any article about Bruce Lee in the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, which is one of the only, if not the only, forum for high-quality scholarship on the martial arts, is very telling. After all, when any fool who knows nothing about martial arts can quote every line from Bruce Lee's movies, it is understandable that experts may decide to dismiss Lee's work as a shallow example of pop culture.

In my opinion, however, that would be a big, big mistake. Unlike all other actors with iron-hard abs and ashy kicks who, once their fifteen minutes of fame are up, are not worth a minute of our time, Lee has something else to offer. Although I certainly do not believe that popularity is a good measure of depth, the fact that Lee is adored by legions of fans from several different generations, many of whom could not care less about the martial arts, may suggest that his appeal relies on something deeper than a popular infatuation with Asian fighting styles.

A clue to what exactly this "something" may be lies at the foot of Lee's tombstone. There, engraved in stone, is a single sentence left by his friends and disciples, "Your Inspiration Continues To Guide Us Toward Our Personal Liberation." This hardly sounds like a statement that is likely to be placed at the foot of Van Damme's tombstone (my apologies to Van Damme for picking on him) or at the foot of just about any other actor/martial artist's tombstone. If Bruce Lee were just another athlete or another Hollywood celebrity, I honestly doubt that he could inspire or guide anyone towards much of anything, let alone personal liberation. What inspired those who came in contact with him was something entirely different than the glamour of movie stardom. The answer to what this thing may be can be found in a revealing passage by Lee's widow, Linda Lee Cadwell, "What is this *something* about Bruce Lee that continues to fascinate people in all walks of life? I believe it is the depth of his personal philosophy, which subconsciously, or otherwise, projects from the screen and through his writings." (Little 1996)

The same feeling is echoed in the comments of Lee's own students. Basketball superstar Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who studied martial arts under Lee's guidance and appeared in one of his movies, declared, "He was a teacher first of all. He taught philosophy and tried to spread knowledge and wisdom. That's why he took on the martial arts establishment the way he did." (Ibidem) And Tai Chi master Daniel Lee, also a student of Bruce Lee, similarly stated, "This [Lee's] was a different approach to martial arts instruction. We studied philosophy with Bruce because he had philosophy as his underlying theme and direction. He was really my mentor in showing the linkage between philosophy and martial art. They're inseparable." (Ibidem) Besides these comments made by people who knew him well, Lee's personal library, made up of over 2,500 books, mostly about philosophy and martial arts, is another good indicator of his commitment to philosophical inquiry.

In case these pieces of evidence are not convincing enough, and the idea of Bruce Lee as a philosopher still seems too farfetched, we only need to examine the concepts at the root of Jeet Kune Do, the martial art created by Lee, to see how fundamental philosophy was to Lee's approach to the martial arts. Rather than setting itself up to be a new martial arts style with its codified set of unique forms and techniques, Jeet Kune Do advocates the elimination of styles in favor of a constant process of individual research aimed at finding the techniques and training methods that best fit one's needs. Anytime the practitioner of JKD finds something effective along the way, or decides that a certain technique does not work for him or her, he or she is free to change the art.

Seen in this perspective, clearly, more than a new martial art in the traditional sense of the word, Jeet Kune Do appears to be a philosophical principle applied to the martial arts. The creation of a

martial art based on such antiauthoritarian, nearly anarchist thinking points out that Lee may have more in common with philosophers like Feyerabend, Lao Tzu, and Krishnamurti than with entertainers like Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung, or Jean Claude Van Damme.

NOT NEW, YET NEW

Although this chapter has so far been introducing the idea that Lee's philosophy may have been his greatest contribution, if we want to be perfectly honest we also have to acknowledge something that Bruce Lee's aficionados usually do not like to admit. As a philosopher, Lee did not come up with any original ideas. The entire philosophy so passionately espoused by Lee derives from the writings of other people. Had someone explained the concepts of royalties and copyright to Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, the semi-mythological authors of the most famous Taoist writings, their descendants would now be swimming in gold while lifting their best champagne glasses to Lee's memory. In fact, the vast majority of the ideas widely popularized by Lee are taken directly from Taoist sources. Even the emblem chosen by Lee for his art of Jeet Kune Do is a slightly modified version of the Taoist yin-yang symbol.

Besides Taoism, Lee's most obvious sources include Zen Buddhism (which is itself partially inspired by Taoist ideas), and the writings of modern philosophers such as Krishnamurti and Alan Watts. Even if we limit ourselves only to the field of martial arts, Lee's approach is not entirely new. For example, his idea of freeing ourselves from the unnatural constraints of codified styles was expressed decades before Lee's time by one of the greatest Chinese martial artists of the early part of the twentieth century, the creator of I-Chuan, Wang Hsiang Chai (Cartmell 1998).

By stating that on a philosophical level Lee did not really create anything, am I trying to contradict my own initial position and, in a gesture of Socratic perversion, now argue for its opposite? Not at all. Paradoxes are the essence of Taoism, and since Taoism is what we are dealing with here, we should not be surprised to stumble upon what seems to be a contradiction.

Suggesting that someone made great philosophical contributions even though he clearly did not commit to paper a single original philosophical idea is not as absurd as it may sound. For example, Alan Watts, who is considered by some as one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century and who greatly inspired Lee, did not invent anything new either. His books (which I strongly recommend to anyone who has not yet had the pleasure of reading them) are based almost entirely on Taoist and Buddhist ideas. However, despite being clearly derivative, his writings beautifully convey the essence of Taoism and Buddhism in a completely new, original way. Although the topic and the conclusions found in Watt's books are not new, the freshness of his style, analogies, anecdotes, and examples infuse new life to them. Furthermore, the way in which Watts adapted Taoist and Buddhist philosophies to a Western mentality is a splendid illustration of philosophical creativity.

In a similar fashion, Bruce Lee took old ideas and applied them in new, original ways. He took Taoism and Buddhism and applied them to the competitive, ego-driven world of movie-making, to the martial arts, and to his own daily life. In the process, he drastically altered the Western perception of Asian cultures, and inspired many martial artists to explore the philosophical dimension at the root of their physical practice. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Lee's philosophical stance, popularized through his writings and his movies, was an antiauthoritarian slap in the face to the dogma and immutable tradition that still dominated the way most people practiced martial arts in the West. Although, as we have seen earlier, he was not the first to challenge the dogmatism of some martial arts schools, he was more visible and more radical than anyone who had come before him, and therefore was also in a more powerful position to affect the prevailing perceptions of martial arts' practice and philosophy.

Having so far made the case that Lee's philosophy deserves our attention, the remainder of this chapter will explore the ideological context from which Jeet Kune Do emerged and the theoretical principles on which the art is based.

THE BREAK WITH CHINESE TRADITION

Since earlier I remarked that Lee derived his entire philosophy from Taoist and Buddhist sources, readers may get the mistaken impression that Lee's approach was consistent with Chinese traditions. Nothing could be further from the truth. Without a doubt, Taoism and Buddhism have greatly affected

Chinese culture. Chinese medicine, for example, is fully rooted in Taoist ideas (Maciocia 1989). Supposedly, Bodhidharma, the mythological father of Shaolin kung fu, was an Indian monk also credited with introducing Ch'an Buddhism to China. Before Communism made finding a fully functioning religious temple as unlikely as running into a giant panda dancing in the streets of Beijing, Taoist and Buddhist monasteries filled the country. However, the forms of Taoism and Buddhism that enjoyed such vast popular following for great part of Chinese history were not the same kind of Taoism and Buddhism that inspired Lee.

Most scholars of Asian religions distinguish between the early philosophical Taoism presented in classics such as the *Tao Te Ching*, the writings of Chuang Tzu, and in the later forms of popular Taoism, which provided the basis for much of Chinese folk religion (Smith 1991, Wright 1959). Elusive poetry, beautiful paradoxes, and a nearly complete lack of concern with gods characterized the philosophical Taoism that provided the basis for Lee's philosophy. Rituals, prayers to the Gods, an alchemical quest for immortality, and the attempt to enlist spirits to one's help characterized the popular forms of religious Taoism practiced by most Chinese people.

In a similar way, Buddha's own teachings, which were favored by Lee, were much more uncompromising than the teachings passed on by most forms of Chinese popular Buddhism. For example, Buddha invited people to find out the truth for themselves rather than follow any religious authority, and to work for their own salvation without relying on gods, prayers, or rituals (Smith 1991). Chinese popular Buddhism, on the other hand, heavily emphasized prayers, rituals, devotion to Buddha and to the bodhisattvas, and obedience to the top of the religious hierarchy (Wright 1959).

As we can see, then, Lee's love for philosophical Taoism and for the most radical aspects of Buddha's teachings was hardly in line with the diluted and simplified forms of Taoism and Buddhism favored by the masses. His philosophical outlook was therefore more at odds with Chinese tradition than consistent with it.

Furthermore, another element contributes to distance Lee's approach from Chinese tradition. Chinese thought, in fact, has been heavily influenced by another philosophical current that is even more antithetical to Lee's worldview than popular forms of Taoism and Buddhism: Confucianism. Whereas the philosophical Taoism and the Buddhism embraced by Lee can be subtle and paradoxical, Confucianism offers the security of precise formulas and simple, straightforward rules. Philosophical Taoism requires great sensitivity to be grasped. Confucianism is very easy to follow. Philosophical Taoism mocks rigid laws. Confucianism reveres them. Confucian ideology dictates the rules of proper behavior, establishes the reciprocal, but unequal, obligations between family members, regulates the relationship between citizens and state authorities, and oversees every possible aspect of public life. In other words, the very matrix of Chinese society was and still is saturated with Confucianism.

With its emphasis on intellectual virtues and its disdain for anything physical as unworthy of a scholar, Confucianism has been primarily responsible for the low esteem in which, until a few decades ago, martial arts were held among the more educated, upper classes, and for the ambivalence that Chinese society as a whole felt toward martial artists (Miller 1993). Also, with its reverence for the old, traditional ways and its high praise of filial piety, obedience to the elders, and ancestor worship, Confucianism has filled Chinese thought with deeply conservative tendencies.

In Lee's philosophy, not a trace of Confucianism can be found. Rather, as we will see more in detail later, Lee stood in firm opposition to the most dogmatic aspects of Chinese tradition cherished by Confucianism. By rejecting Confucianism and choosing to embrace the antiauthoritarian viewpoint of philosophical Taoism, Lee allied himself with the fringe-dwellers, the outcasts, the mavericks, the philosophical outlaws, the misfits of Chinese culture. In fact, although some of the principles of philosophical Taoism have been incorporated into Chinese culture, its radical nature makes it appealing to only a minority of people and sets it apart from the traditions on which most of Chinese society is based.

One clear example of Lee's rebellion against Confucian ideals can be found before we even look into the actual contents of his philosophical writings. According to Confucian standards, in fact, Lee committed an unforgivable sin. He took credit for creating the art of Jeet Kune Do. Even if Jeet Kune

Do principles were not as uncompromisingly opposed to Confucianism as they are, the very act of claiming authorship of a new approach to the martial arts was unacceptable by Confucian standards.

Since Western society highly praises individual initiative and innovation, Western readers may wonder how taking credit for one's creation can be considered negatively. In Chinese martial arts, however, innovation is rarely looked upon kindly. Creating something new inevitably implies that one is at least partially departing from tradition. And tradition is exactly what Confucianism exalts. The way of the ancestors—according to Confucianism—is the best possible one. Therefore any departure from the traditions passed down since ancient times cannot but make things worse. Viewed through Confucian lenses, creating means losing the perfection of the ancient ways.

For this reason, it had been customary for Chinese martial artists wishing to create a new art to mask it in a more traditional and acceptable garb. Rather than claiming authorship, the right thing to do in order to have one's creation accepted was to attribute the new style to an old, respected source. By connecting the art to a famous lineage, the chances of receiving a good reception were substantially increased. Much in the same way in which ancient Greek poets often attributed their creations to Homer, the most famous and beloved of Greek poets, (thereby choosing personal anonymity but raising the possibility that their creation would gain fame), Chinese martial artists often pretended to have learned the new style from a mysterious descendant of one of the mythological heroes of the pantheon of Chinese martial arts.

For example, when in the 1600s Chi Long Feng began teaching Hsing-i, he said that he had learned the style from a manuscript authored by Yue Fei, the twelfth century legendary general who had defeated the armies of China's northern enemies (www.shenwu.com). In the same way, when in the late nineteenth century Tung Hai Chuan created the art of Pa Kua Chang, he declared that he had learned the style from a secret sect of anonymous mountain-dwelling Taoists (a good substitute for a famous name) (Miller 1993). Later on, when Kao I-Sheng changed the Pa Kua curriculum by incorporating elements from other arts, he similarly told the story that he had learned this new version of the art from some mysterious Taoist hermit. (If one is to believe these stories, the abundance of mysterious Taoist hermits in the history of martial arts seems to suggest that they made up the majority of the Chinese population.) (Miller 1994) Even the fact that, despite a nearly complete lack of concrete evidence, Tai Chi Chuan is popularly attributed to the Taoist Chang San Feng and Shaolin Kung Fu to Bodhidharma is probably caused by the desire to attribute the creation of a new style to a character of mythological stature.

After examining all these examples, we may now appreciate the significance of Lee's refusal to present his creation in a traditional fashion. Had Lee disappeared for a few years and had later told that he had been the disciple of an old Taoist, he would have conformed to a culturally approved way of introducing innovations. By claiming credit, on the other hand, he rejected the importance of lineage, did not even pretend to follow tradition, and therefore challenged a time-honored custom. At the time when Lee introduced Jeet Kune Do, he was a twenty-eight-year-old actor who lived in the United States, only had a few years of formal training under a recognized master (Wing Chun's Yip Man), and had never received a teaching license. Yet, he claimed that following the old ways was useless and that his own approach made more sense. Not exactly the kind of comments designed to keep down the blood pressure of Confucius' followers.

IF YOU MEET THE BUDDHA, KILL HIM: JKD'S ALLERGY FOR AUTHORITY

If we move from the way in which Lee presented Jeet Kune Do to the actual contents of the art, the chances of raising Confucian enthusiasms decrease even further. Lee's philosophy, in fact, amounts to a declaration of war against the conservative, dogmatic tendencies encouraged by Confucianism. An example representative of Lee's approach can be found in the following passage from an article written by Lee for *Black Belt* magazine.

Unfortunately, most students in the martial arts are conformists. Instead of learning to depend on themselves for expression, they blindly follow their instructors, no longer feeling

alone, and finding security in mass imitation. The product of this imitation is a dependent mind. Independent inquiry, which is essential to genuine understanding, is sacrificed. Look around the martial arts and witness the assortment of routine performers, trick artists, desensitized robots, glorifiers of the past, and so on—all followers or exponents of organized despair. (Lee 1971)

As we can clearly see from this passage, according to Lee one does not learn by simply following a formula laid out by someone else. Rather than revering the way of the ancestors and accepting their conclusions as absolute truths, Lee encouraged individuals to question everything and find out for themselves. Whereas Confucianism valued obedience and conformity, Lee emphasized creativity and freedom. As Lee himself wrote, “Art lives where absolute freedom is, because where it is not, there can be no creativity.” (Lee 1975) Lee’s commitment to individual freedom and empowerment placed him in opposition to any tradition requiring uncritical loyalty to authority.

In his quest for self-liberation, Lee had many models to draw from. Philosophical Taoism was certainly one of them. “The more taboos and inhibitions there are in the world, the poorer the people become” (Lao Tzu 1989) is one of the many Taoist battle cries against authority that Lee paraphrased several times in his books and articles.

Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti was another of Lee’s sources of inspiration. Acclaimed as a messiah since birth, Krishnamurti grew up adored and revered by members of a religious organization who believed that he was the ultimate savior they had been waiting for. Once he grew up, however, Krishnamurti kissed goodbye to their messianic dreams, declining his role and inviting people to become their own saviors. Because of his actions and antiauthoritarian worldview, Krishnamurti was included by Lee among his main philosophical influences (Lee 1975).

Buddha was also one of Lee’s role models. Born as the son of a king at the peak of the Hindu social scale, Buddha renounced it all to give his heart and soul to the ascetic practices of Hinduism. When these practices failed to bring the desired results, Buddha did not hesitate to abandon Hindu traditions and walk on the beaten path. His successful attempt to reach enlightenment outside the confines of tradition convinced him that blind allegiance to the old ways was an obstacle on the path to liberation. From then on, Buddha spread the subversive fire of a religion devoid of rigid authority. Suggesting that the gods had better things to do than playing with humans and that the Brahmins and their old rituals could not help people achieve nirvana, Buddha went against some of the most basic beliefs of Hindu society. As if this rebellion against the status quo were not enough, Buddha also went against another social convention by accepting women and people of the lower classes as students.

Even more revolutionary, however, was the fact that Buddha did not ask people to believe him, but encouraged them to find the truth for themselves. In his view, belief could not liberate anyone. Only direct experience could. For this reason, Buddha saw himself more as a guide pointing the way than as a king imposing a law. Buddha’s allegedly last words, “Work out your own salvation with diligence,” perfectly express his invitation for people to trust themselves more than any external authority (Smith 1991). Most forms of Buddhism created after Buddha’s death downplayed the antiauthoritarian aspects of Buddha’s message because they were simply too extreme and too frightening for most people to deal with. Taking charge of one’s own life and making all the decisions alone is much harder than following an established way. It requires more courage than most people can ever hope to have. For this reason, it became much easier for people to worship Buddha and turn him into another object of veneration than to follow his example and create their own path (Smith 1991).

One of the few religious currents that did not ignore these unsettling aspects of Buddha’s message was Zen Buddhism. By warning students against the dangers of dogmatism and inviting them to question authority, Zen statements such as, “If you meet the Buddha, kill him,” may paradoxically honor Buddha’s example more than any of the prayers to Buddha recited by some other Buddhist schools. Since Zen is one of the few schools of Buddhism that to a great extent emphasizes freedom from blind devotion, it should not come as a surprise that Lee’s own writings are flooded with Zen references.

As we will soon see, the antiauthoritarian ideas championed by the sources mentioned above helped Lee shape an approach to the martial arts that went against the way in which most martial arts were practiced and taught in the West. Besides rejecting many of the formalities surrounding martial arts practice, such as the elaborate bowing, the belt system, the use of special uniforms, the dojo hierarchy, the almost religious subservience to the instructor, and the many other ritualistic components that characterized some martial arts schools in United States, Lee addressed even more fundamental, methodological questions. One of them was something that most martial artists of the time took for granted and never thought of questioning: the very concept of separate martial arts styles with their separate sets of rules and separate teaching methodologies.

MARTIAL ARTS STYLES AS IDEOLOGICAL PRISONS: FREEDOM FROM “BE-LONGING”

Anyone who has ever been involved in the martial arts has probably, at one time or another, participated in the never-ending discussions about the merits or demerits of each martial art style. It is not uncommon for these kind of discussions to quickly degenerate into full-scale arguments in which practitioners of each style defend the virtue of their art of choice while denigrating the validity of all others. Much like religious fundamentalists claim that all spiritual paths other than their own (“the one true faith”) are misguided, martial artists often play the “my-style-is-better-than-yours” game and try to assert that they are right while everyone else is wrong.

According to Bruce Lee, the apologists of particular martial arts styles, irrespective of which style they belong to, are all wrong. Lee, in fact, argued that by turning personal intuitions and sound principles into absolute laws equal for everyone, all styles are guilty of turning partial truths into the only Truth and thereby failing to see the complete range of possible truths. The following series of quotations, taken from Lee’s own writings, can offer a clear testimony of Lee’s very controversial stance about martial art styles.

Styles tend to ... separate people—because they each have their own doctrine, and then the doctrine becomes their gospel of truth that you cannot change. But if you do not have styles, if you just say “Here I am, as a human being—how can I express myself totally and completely?” if you can do this, then you won’t create a style, because style is a crystallization. (Lee 1975)

Once conditioned in a partialized method, once isolated in an enclosing pattern, the practitioner faces his opponent through a screen of resistance— he is “performing” his stylized blocks and listening to his own screaming and not seeing what the opponent is really doing. (Ibidem)

Classical forms dull your creativity, condition and freeze your sense of freedom. You no longer “be,” but merely “do,” without sensitivity. (Ibidem)

When in a split second, your life is threatened, do you say, “Let me make sure my hand is on my hip, and my style is ‘the’ style”? When your life is in danger, do you argue about the method you will adhere to while saving yourself? Why the duality? (Ibidem)

The second-hand artist blindly following his sensei or sifu accepts his pattern. As a result, his action and, more importantly, his thinking become mechanical. His responses become automatic, according to set patterns, making him narrow and limited. (Lee 1971)

It is conceivable that a long time ago a certain martial artist discovered some partial truth. During his lifetime, the man resisted the temptation to organize this partial truth, although this is a common tendency in man’s search for security and certainty in life. After his death, his students took “his” hypothesis, “his” postulates, “his” inclination, and “his” method and

turned them into law. Impressive creeds were then invented, solemn reinforcing ceremonies prescribed, rigid philosophy and patterns formulated, and so on, until finally an institution was erected. So what originated as one man's intuition of some sort of personal fluidity was transformed into solidified, fixed knowledge, complete with organized, classified responses presented in a logical order. In so doing, the well-meaning, loyal followers not only made this knowledge a holy shrine but also a tomb in which they buried the founder's wisdom. (Ibidem)

All styles require adjustment, partiality, denials, condemnation, and a lot of self-justification. The solutions they purport to provide are the very cause of the problem because they limit and interfere with our natural growth and obstruct the way to genuine understanding. Divisive by nature, styles keep men apart from each other rather than unite them. (Ibidem)

As we can see, Lee wasted little love on traditional martial arts schools. Before moving on to examine what kind of methodology Lee advocated instead of following established "styles," however, it is worth pausing for a minute to consider the incredibly revolutionary implications of his critique of the very concept of "style." By questioning the loyalty of martial artists to their own particular schools of fighting (Karate, Jujitsu, Kung Fu, Aikido, Judo, and the other myriad of styles and sub-styles of martial arts ever devised), Lee was doing more than suggesting a methodological change. He was grappling with one of the most powerful forces in human history: people's sense of identity.

It was as if he had questioned people's loyalty to their own country, or to their own religion. One simply does not question such things. Doing so would be unpatriotic and blasphemous. Normally, group identity is reinforced through passionate adherence to a common set of beliefs and through consensus among members. Questioning the core beliefs on which a group is based (whether the group is a religious sect, a political organization, a street gang, or martial arts style makes no difference) is at best a dangerous threat to the common sense of identity, and at worst, an act of insubordination and betrayal. Lee went even further. He did not simply criticize the core beliefs of one particular group. Rather, he questioned the very idea of adhering to any particular group. According to Lee, the simple act of joining a group structured around a codified set of rules and beliefs ends up creating a "we-against-them" mentality, causing endless divisions and useless conflicts with those who rally under a different flag.

If we stop to test Lee's hypothesis against the backdrop of human history, the results are frightening. Racism, mass enslavement of people with a different skin color, witch hunts, inquisitions, political persecutions of ideological dissidents, gang wars, "holy" wars justified in the name of religious differences, wars rooted in ethnic pride, wars fought by combatants who do not understand the causes of the conflict but who fight nonetheless in the name of their country... The number of massacres and the amount of suffering caused by the human predisposition to fight over perceived differences can hardly be calculated.

At the origin of all this bloodshed, very often, is the human need to belong and be part of a group. The promise of a common dream and a common identity is one of the main reasons for the popularity of churches, street gangs, and of any other kind of exclusive organizations. "Your dreams are our dreams," the voice of the group reassures us, "We understand you because we are like you. We will protect you. We will love you as one of us. We are like a big family. You can depend on us. We are always there for you. If you have a doubt, we can comfort you and give you all the answers you need. If you play by our rules, you will never be alone again."

Few are the human beings who do not like to hear these messages. As any good demagogue looking to build a strong following knows, a powerful dream, a flag, and a set of symbols are the perfect magnets around which people can gather to escape the fear of being alone by building a common sense of identity. In fact, facing life's tragedies alone, filled with insecurities and with no one to turn to, is not what most people want. Having someone who chooses for us, provides the answers to all the questions, and makes us feel part of something bigger than ourselves is the perfect cure for those who need guidance (that is to say, just about every human being possessing anything less than tremendous self-confidence).

Since there can be no concept of “we” if there is no “them” representing the antithesis of everything that “we” stand for, group identity inevitably is built on opposition to something. It is not a coincidence that patriotism always runs stronger in times of war. (Not surprisingly, in Lee’s mind, patriotism, just like any other value emphasizing the power of the group over the individual, is among the diseases to be eliminated) (Ibidem). The existence of a common enemy is the fuel feeding the re of a group’s own sense of identity. This is perhaps the reason why human history, in every part of the world, is filled with ideologically justified bloodbaths.

By questioning the concept of loyalty to any particular style, Lee took the bull of group identity by the horns and challenged the sensibility of the human desire to belong. Why belong to any school of thought—Lee asked—if all that it does is divide us into opposing factions and prevent us from seeing the truth of different points of view? Our reassuring sense of identity—Lee seemed to suggest—is nothing but a comfortable prison shielding us from the intensity of unfiltered experience. It shields us from many of the dangers and doubts of life as well as from the ecstasy and the beauty of it all. Through preconceptions and dogmas, most organizations shape the quality of our experiences, force us to watch life through the lenses of an ideological form of tunnel vision, and ultimately end up limiting the range of our choices. Too afraid to bear the weight of choosing on their own, many people hide behind the security of a group that provides all the answers. According to Lee, however, this is a way to hide, not a way to live.

Lee would probably agree with Tibetan meditation master Chögyam Trungpa when he said “The key to warriorship ... is not being afraid of who you are.” (Trungpa 1988) Being fearlessly willing to make mistakes in the process of making one’s own choices free from any dogma is the only path that Lee advocated. Much more than a methodological change, Lee’s challenge to martial arts styles should therefore be seen as a challenge to do what people are most scared of doing: refusing to submit to the power of any superior authority, and taking full responsibility as the leader of their own lives.

USING NO WAY AS THE WAY: LEE’S EPISTEMOLOGICAL ANARCHISM

In contrast to the approach preached by many schools of martial arts, Lee argued that the art should serve the individual rather than the individual serve the art (Maliszewski 1990). In one of his most famous quotes, Lee declared: “Man, the living, creating individual, is always more important than any established style.” (Lee 1971) What this translated to in practical terms was a radical departure from the methodology normally used by martial arts schools. Rather than following the standard curriculum of an established style, Lee began advocating a form of cross-training aimed at picking the best from different martial arts styles. In this way, Lee moved away from the Wing Chun style that he had learned in Hong Kong from Yip Man and established his own “non-style” of Jeet Kune Do.

Most great innovators in the history of the martial arts cross-trained in several arts and created new styles by taking techniques, exercises, and ideas from different sources and molding them into new systems. Lee, however, took matters one step further. Rather than establishing a new style, he created a major controversy by suggesting that martial artists should be constantly involved in a process of research that never crystallizes its findings into a finished product.

Although in the last few years, the popularity of no-holds-barred events such as the Ultimate Fighting Championship has convinced many martial artists of the necessity to cross-train, in the late 1960s, when Lee first spoke out, the idea of cross-training was not so easily received. In order to understand why Lee’s approach was so inflammatory, we need to remember that most schools of martial arts of the time (and many schools of martial arts even today) advocated never changing the style they practiced. According to them, since the style had been perfected by great masters in ancient times, changing the art in any way would be an arrogant mistake bound to water-down its effectiveness. Only by training precisely, following the guidelines passed on by the masters, could one hope to come close to their unsurpassed skills.

In the same way that Confucianism stressed the importance of imitating the way of the ancestors without ever introducing any change, many martial arts schools considered the idea of changing any part of their training as a betrayal of the traditions upon which their style was founded. Considering

that this was the dominant philosophy among many martial artists, we can imagine the effect of Lee's public rejection of traditional styles with statements such as, "The classical man is just a bundle of routine, ideas and tradition. When he acts, he is translating every living moment in terms of the old." (Lee 1975)

Whereas Confucianism and most martial arts schools preached the meticulous conservation of the purity of the old ways, Lee believed that the very attempt to conserve anything killed any purity that may have originally been there. As Taoism clearly pointed out, only by changing and flowing could water remain pure. When still, a body of water inevitably turns into a swamp. Believing that the same analogy applied to human affairs, Lee thought that any attachment to the past was a hindrance to living in the present. "To understand and live *now*," Lee wrote, "everything of yesterday must die." (Ibidem) Just like the Taoist writers, Heraclitus, one of the most famous pre-Socratic Greek philosophers, unequivocally stated that everything is constantly changing (Wheelwright 1959).

Following this line of thought, Lee argued that no fixed formula could capture the flow of existence. What worked yesterday may not work today. What the old masters discovered was one way to fight, not necessarily the only one, or even the best one. Different conditions call for different approaches. To Lee, an endless process of trial and error was therefore preferable to establishing one day's intuition as an immutable law. Instilling in his students the ability to adapt to any situation made much more sense to Lee than teaching them a fixed method of fighting. The following quotations, clearly inspired by Taoist writings, perfectly express the spirit of Lee's revolutionary methodology.

How can there be methods and systems to arrive at something that is living? To that which is static, fixed, dead, there can be a way, a definite path, but not to that which is living. Do not reduce reality to a static thing and then invent methods to reach it. (Lee 1975)

True observation begins when one sheds set patterns, and true freedom of expression occurs when one is beyond systems. (Lee 1971)

Knowledge is fixed in time, whereas, knowing is continual. Knowledge comes from a source, from accumulation, from a conclusion, while knowing is a movement. (Lee 1975)

Jeet Kune Do favors formlessness so that it can assume all forms and since Jeet Kune Do has no style, it can fit with all styles. As a result, Jeet Kune Do utilizes all ways and is bound by none and, likewise, uses any techniques or means which serve its ends. (Ibidem)

As can be grasped from these sentences, rather than being an organized system, Lee's Jeet Kune Do was meant to be a laboratory where fighting theories and techniques could be put to the test.

Students could experiment with them without being bound to follow any unless they wished to. The words written around the very symbol of JKD stand as the catchy slogan for Lee's methodology, "Using no way as the way; having no limitation as limitation." (Little 1996)

Shortly after Lee's death, Paul K. Feyerabend, one of the most provocative Western philosophers of the last part of the twentieth century, came out with an intriguing book destined to shake the scientific and philosophical establishment of the day. The book, appropriately entitled *Against Method*, is a manifesto applying to science the same ideas expressed by Lee in the field of martial arts (Feyerabend 1975). In the book, Feyerabend does nothing less than attack the Cartesian method on which most of Western science is built. Arguing that most scientists, in their blind devotion to a particularly restrictive methodology, lack the flexibility necessary for truly open-minded scientific inquiry, Feyerabend echoes Lee's sentiments about classical martial artists. Both men, in fact, unequivocally state that the strict observance of any particular methodology inhibits intuition, represses individuality, and closes people's minds rather than opening them. Worse yet, these methodologies are too limited by their own rules to be able to grasp anything more than small, partial truths. What both Lee and Feyerabend advocated in place of such a hopelessly rigid mindset was epistemological anarchism.

Acknowledging that any method possesses strengths as well as weaknesses, epistemological anarchism is an extremely open-minded approach willing to adopt any method showing promise for delivering the desired results. Because of this, epistemological anarchism utilizes a method's strengths without being bound by its weaknesses. Just as Taoism argued that rules are necessary only for those who are too stupid to make the right choice on their own, epistemological anarchism holds that absolute laws are an obstacle to genuine understanding. Whereas guidelines can be useful, absolute laws limit the individual's flexibility to decide what is appropriate in each situation.

Clearly, such freedom is not for everyone. As Confucianism recognized, when left free, stupid people are bound to make stupid choices, and for this reason it is important that they follow laws guiding their behavior. However, epistemological anarchists, along with Taoists, would probably agree with William Blake when he said, "One Law for the Lion and Ox is Oppression." (Blake 1975) Absolute laws end up being nothing but prisons for individuals with acute minds and powerful visions. It is with these individuals in mind that, as a corollary to the idea of "using no way as the way," the epistemological anarchism advocated by Lee articulated its own very open four-step methodology (with which, no doubt, Feyerabend agreed) articulated its own very open four-step methodology.

1. Research your own experience.
2. Absorb what is useful.
3. Reject what is useless.
4. Add what is specifically your own. (Little 1996)

Through this set of prepositions, Lee gave full power back to the individual. Epistemological anarchism, in fact, does not attempt to substitute one method with another. Rather, it frees individuals to find their own methods, and invites them to change them at will if, after some time, their discovery stops producing the desired results.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche wrote a splendid declaration of epistemological anarchism: "This is my way; where is yours?"—thus I answered those who asked me 'the way.' For *the way*—that does not exist." (Nietzsche 1892) Buddha himself invited his followers to find out the truth for themselves without depending on anything or anyone, not even on his teachings (Smith 1991). In a similar spirit, Lee wrote, "... jeet kune do is merely a term, a label to be used as a boat to get across: once across, it is to be discarded and not carried on one's back." (Lee 1971) In this way, Lee resisted the temptation to turn his own intuition into dogma, downplayed his own self-importance as a teacher, and encouraged people to make up their own theories and become their own teachers. In fact, the essence of the epistemological anarchism that he espoused was in creating one's own method by taking bits and pieces from different sources and recombining them into a new format.

SIMPLICITY

Although the key words of Lee's "non-method" are creativity, flexibility, and synthesis, he recognized the danger of unchecked experimentation. Being willing to take ideas from different sources, the JKD martial artist may end up overwhelmed by an overload of information and unable to utilize the tools at her or his disposal in a meaningful way. Rather than being bound to one method, the JKD fighter gets lost in a myriad of different ideas and techniques. Always rejecting traditional methods can also turn into a new type of dogma. Worse yet, the JKD martial artist may become so infatuated with the technical variety offered by the process of picking and choosing from different sources as to turn into a collector. In this way, she or he effectively trades one prison for another. The lack of boundaries becomes as paralyzing as the oppressiveness of too many rules. Too many choices can lead astray those who are unable to choose what is useful and what is not.

In order to avoid this mistake, Lee again turned to Taoism. A few thousands years before Lee's time, Lao Tzu had written, "Learning consists in daily accumulating; the practice of Tao consists in

daily diminishing.” (Lao Tzu 1989) Following this lead, Lee came up with a rule of thumb designed to warn against the mistake of useless accumulation. In one of his most quoted statements, he reminded his followers that “The height of cultivation runs to simplicity.” (Lee 1975)

Since Lao Tzu’s poetry does not waste time on explanations, in order to clear up this concept, Lee used an illustration popularized by Zen Buddhism. According to this doctrine, knowledge comes in three stages. Before any kind of learning takes place, people are ignorant, and therefore simple. When they begin learning, they shed their ignorance and become sophisticated and aware of the subtle complexities of life. At this stage, they turn into very complex, intellectual beings. Their knowledge is vast but weighs them down. Spontaneity and innocence are lost in exchange for this knowledge. For many people, this is the end of the journey. The knowledge they have accumulated separates them from the simple, ignorant people, and therefore they go on accumulating more and more. This is the mistake of many intellectuals and is also the mistake of JKD followers infatuated with variety. Zen and Taoism, on the other hand, take a different route. They let go of the heavy, excess intellectual baggage they have accumulated and return to simplicity. However, there is a deep difference between the initial simplicity of ignorance and the kind of simplicity they search. The first lacks knowledge. The second has acquired knowledge, but has moved beyond accumulation and is not weighed down by it. It was after this deep, rich kind of simplicity, and not after accumulation, that Lee urged his followers to direct their energies.

PHILOSOPHY GOES TO THE MOVIES (AND SPILLS POPCORN ALL OVER IT-SELF)

All of the basic principles of Lee’s philosophy that have been analyzed in this chapter can be found in a variety of written sources: Lee’s own books, books written about him, interviews, articles, and even some of the notes that he left behind. However, considering that Lee gained worldwide fame mainly as an actor, any discussion of Lee’s philosophy that did not at least briefly address how the philosophy played into his movies would be incomplete. In order to fill this gap, let us now turn to how Lee’s ideas appeared (or did not) in his movies.

Generally speaking, movies are not the best form of media to convey philosophical ideas. Martial arts movies, in particular, are not exactly famous for their philosophical depth. Fast-paced action scenes and spectacular stunts are the staple of this genre in which the plot is often little more than a pretext for the fighting sequences.

Since audiences usually do not watch martial arts movies for their fine intellectual content, producers often save on the unnecessary expenditure of a decent screenwriter by recycling the same plot over and over. In these movies, the gods presiding over the destiny of the hero’s family members must be on a permanent vacation, for they always end up killed, maimed, or otherwise injured. The typical plot, in fact, runs like this: the hero of the story happily minds his own business and is reluctant to fight until forced to act by the Bad Guy who kidnaps and/or insults and/or kills and/or rapes and/or tortures the hero’s teacher, lover, parent, grandparent, or family pet, thereby giving the hero an excuse to seek revenge. At that point, the hero is either forced to join the inevitable, deadly martial arts tournament organized by the Bad Guy, or simply turns from a perfect candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize into a killing machine who does not stop until he gets revenge during the final, cathartic fight with the Evil One.

Bruce Lee’s movies, being the model for the genre, do not escape the above description. From tournaments to murdered loved ones, Lee’s four movies (five if we include the posthumous *Game of Death*) contain all the defining elements of martial arts films. Philosophy, on the other hand, seems to be (literally) missing in action. For example, in order to find any sign of philosophical life in Lee’s first two movies, *Fist of Fury* and *The Chinese Connection* (a.k.a. *The Big Boss*), one needs the gift of a very fertile imagination. As an explanation for this complete lack of philosophical substance in the works of a man who was so immersed in philosophy, we need to remember that in 1971 Lee was still not particularly famous as an actor. For this reason, it is logical to assume that he did not have much power to influence the scripts of the first two movies. In fact, as soon as Lee gained great fame, philosophy

entered into his films. In his next (and last) two movies, *Return of the Dragon* and *Enter the Dragon*, glimpses of Lee's philosophy manage to come out in between action sequences.

In *Return of the Dragon*, Lee's opposition to ideological dogmatism comes out in a friendly argument with a fellow Chinese. In this brief dialogue, Lee scoffs at his friend's patriotic refusal to study karate on the ground that it is a foreign art. To his friend's closed-minded patriotism, Lee offers an open approach willing to "take what is useful" from any available source. Although the dialogue is hardly enlightening, it provides a quick example of Lee's attempt to introduce deeper themes in his movies.

In the final fight of *Return of the Dragon*, Lee again inserts a small philosophical element. Like all movie heroes, Lee begins the fight by losing. At this point, however, unlike the heroes of other movies, who usually rely only on willpower to come back and win, Lee changes his fighting style to suit the situation. Lee's opponent, on the other hand, is bound to only one form of fighting and is therefore unable to change. This lack of flexibility proves fatal and Lee goes on to soundly defeat his opponent. In this scene, the Taoist emphasis on being able to change to suit the circumstances and on having no form in order to be able to assume all forms are the keys allowing Lee to win what started out as an unfavorable fight: a perfect application of the principles of Jeet Kune Do.

If in *Return of the Dragon* Lee timidly began introducing philosophical themes, in *Enter the Dragon* he added more philosophical fuel to the fire. The very beginning of the movie sees Lee in a temple teaching martial arts to a young pupil. In this dialogue, Lee uses plenty of Zen sayings (a paraphrase of the famous "The wise man points at the moon, but the fool looks at the finger") and stresses Zen ideas such as relying on intuition more than on abstract rationality. Just a few minutes later, Lee re-enacts a notorious samurai story about "the art of fighting without fighting." Faithfully following the Japanese story, which is said to be based on a historical event, Lee has his character on a ship in the company of an arrogant martial artist looking to practice his skills on the passengers. When the martial artist rudely asks what style he practices, Lee answers, "You can call it the art of fighting without fighting." Lee then proceeds to accept the ensuing challenge on one condition. Since his style cannot be properly performed in a tight space, the match is to take place on a nearby island. Eager to fight, the challenger accepts and jumps on to a small lifeboat. Immediately, Lee pushes the lifeboat away from the ship, thereby getting rid of the obnoxious challenger without having to fight. After this splendid demonstration of philosophy applied to fighting, the rest of *Enter the Dragon* gives way to the familiar clichés that make up most martial arts movies. Apparently, Lee had planned to include more philosophical material, but those scenes were cut for fear of being too complicated for the audience (Little 1996).

More evidence of Lee's wish to include philosophy in his films can be found in a movie in which Lee did not act at all. Based on a story written by Lee and by some of his famous students (actor James Coburn and screenwriter Stirling Silliphant), *Circle of Iron* (aka *The Silent Flute*) is perhaps the most anomalous martial arts movie ever made. In fact, whereas the fighting sequences are of extremely poor quality, the philosophical effort is commendable. References to Heraclitus as well as Buddhist and Taoist ideas fill a plot based around a search for wisdom and self-knowledge. Although the quality of the work can be debated, *Circle of Iron* is certainly a courageous project and a manifesto of Lee's own philosophy. The dedication made to Lee at the beginning of the film clearly points to Lee's desire to make philosophy a big part of his movies:

Prior to the death of the legendary Bruce Lee, he helped to create a movie story that might capture not only the spirit of martial arts, but a part of the spirit of the Zen philosophy he lived by. He was aware that a film with these dynamics would cause controversy, particularly among those unfamiliar with Zen beliefs. But it was this very uniqueness that he believed would enthrall the moviegoer... It is to Bruce Lee that this film is posthumously dedicated (*Circle of Iron* 1979)

Although, as we can see from the paucity of these examples, Lee's films were hardly full of philosophical dialogues, we can also see how, as Lee gained fame and influence, philosophy gained a more

prominent role in each new movie. Had Lee's life and acting career not met such a premature end, it seems safe to assume that Lee would have used his growing popularity to make philosophy a much more central part of his pictures. Had that happened, perhaps the entire genre of martial arts movies would have taken a different turn. Although I have a difficult time imagining Van Damme starring in Zen scripts (again my apologies to Van Damme for picking on him) and although I doubt that many people would pay to watch martial arts movies with little violence and much philosophy, Lee's early death leaves us with many unanswered questions about what might have been.

JEET KUNE DO AS THE ARCHETYPAL MARTIAL ART OF THE 1960S

The importance of the context in which ideas come to light is sometimes downplayed in the study of philosophy. For example, if most of Lee's philosophy is derived from Asian sources that are thousands of years old, one may guess that the context in which Lee lived did not contribute much to the articulation of his philosophy. The assumption is logical but, as logic often goes, terribly wrong.

In its philosophical outlook, in fact, Jeet Kune Do is the quintessential martial art of the 1960s. It is not simply because the 1960s were the decade in which Lee came up with the main concepts of his new approach to martial arts. Rather, Jeet Kune Do is the embodiment in martial arts form of many of the wild, revolutionary ideas that characterized the sixties. If we attempt the impossible task of imagining JKD being created and popularized in a more conformist cultural context, such as that existing in the 1950s, we can immediately see how Lee's art is irremediably tied to the extreme, passionate spirit of the American West Coast in the 1960s. Can any of us picture Lee's ideas being well received in South Dakota in, let's say, 1952? Forget becoming a popular hero. With his anti-patriotic, anti-organized religion, antiauthoritarian, liberal anarchistic ideas, Lee would have been lucky not to have been lynched as soon as he opened his mouth.

In any context other than the sixties, Lee would have been accused of being an ungrateful flag-burner and invited to quickly go back where he came from. As Giordano Bruno and thousands of people tried for heresy and witchery could attest, many times in history people have been burned at the stake for much milder criticisms of established authority. In most places and during most centuries, Lee's libertarian views would have been considered an intolerable threat by the religious and/or political powers of the day, and would have been immediately and severely dealt with.

In the sixties, however, it was a completely different story. Both those people who loved and those who hated the 1960s agree that they probably were the most tumultuous decade of the twentieth century and that they have drastically altered American consciousness and beliefs. Politically, it was the time of the antiwar movement and the civil rights movement. It was the time when hundreds of organizations radically opposed to the government sprung up like mushrooms. Culturally, thousands of people became disillusioned with the Euro-centric view that Western culture was the best of all, and began looking for answers elsewhere. Asian religions and philosophies gained instant popularity. Traditional values were questioned and criticized. "Question Authority"—a concept that Lee particularly loved—became one of the favorite slogans of the decade. The sexual revolution shocked the Puritan values that, up until that point, had ruled the attitude of most Americans toward sexuality. Free, uninhibited experimentation with anything, from drugs to ideology, was openly practiced. From music to cinematography, all forms of art experienced an incredible boost of creativity. It was a decade of fast, extreme change. The air was filled with the sense of possibility.

At a time when no forms of established authority went unchallenged, it seems only natural that even the field of martial arts was destined to experience some drastic change. It was in this receptive context that Lee stepped up with his radical form of Taoism and Zen. Lee's highly unconventional personal background (an interracial marriage with a young white woman, his willingness to teach anyone regardless of ethnicity, the match fought against a Chinese martial artist sent to stop Lee from divulging martial arts "secrets" to non-Chinese, the fact that he had never received a formal teaching license) united with his equally unconventional philosophy and his public role as an actor allowed him to become the man who was to take the spirit of the sixties into the martial arts world. The philosophy of JKD can therefore be seen as the gift (or the curse, depending on your point of view) of the alchemical mixing

of Taoism, Zen Buddhism, the antiauthoritarian culture of the 1960s, and Bruce Lee's own personality. Regardless of whether we agree with Lee's approach or not, his example remains as an open invitation to do one of the healthiest things that anyone, martial artist or not, can do: question one's own beliefs.

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28. Against Anarcho-Putinism

Deleted reason: fascist-apologetic (specifically Azov regiment, etc.) and cop-jacketing
Subtitle: Debunking Russian propaganda among anarchists about Russian-Ukrainian war

Author: Dark Night

Topics: Russia, anti-militarism, Ukraine, war, 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine

Date: December 2022

Source: <https://cryptpad.fr/pad/#/2/pad/view/t+tXpWJzo07LiSu4g+Nsko9FHfrmdsCBhK0g-clwUj8/>

Part of the anarchists from Central Europe wrote and published an antimilitaristic manifesto, which is called “Anarchist antimilitarism and myths about the war in Ukraine” (original in Czech: “Anarchistický antimilitarismus a mýty o válce na Ukrajině”, German translation – “Anarchistischer Antimilitarismus und Mythen über den Krieg in der Ukraine”, French translation – “Antimilitarisme anarchiste et mythes sur la guerre en Ukraine” and must, as stated in the title, debunk myths on the current Russian-Ukrainian war. Before reading this manifesto, as an anarchist from Russia, I thought that the comrades would really be exposing all the lies that the network of Russian secret services was spreading across Europe to cloud people’s minds with the message that “not everything is so clear-cut”. However, I was horrified to discover that our comrades were themselves influenced by Russian propaganda and are now broadcasting completely destructive messages to the broader European public, far removed from the context of domestic Russian and Ukrainian politics, and very skillfully obscuring them with anarchist beliefs.

Is this really your position on the war?

Before we examine the myths presented, it is worth outlining the roots of this perception. Russia really is not particularly represented in the global anarchist movement, and Ukraine even less so. The European reader, wishing to join in at this challenging time a coherent analysis of the situation from Russia’s comrades, who should know better, only comes across figures who may not have much influence on the anarchist agenda in Russia itself, but who actively broadcast their position abroad. And one such agent of influence is the CRAS and one of its representatives, Vadim Damier (<https://aitrus.info>).

The CRAS has no weight in the Russian anarchist movement, apart from Vadim Damier, we mentioned above, who, to be fair, writes some remarkable research. But it would not be a problem if the CRAS remained an organization of armchair historians. Among other things, it also claims to provide “deep” and comprehensive analysis of the current political situation – and voluntarily or involuntarily, it conveys a position that benefits the Russian establishment.

The Ukrainian anarchist Anatoliy Dubovik made a good demystification. It is important to cite it completely since I will not be able to present more consistently the contradictory essence of the “anti-militarism” of the CRAS. Unlike the authors of the manifesto, I will place great emphasis on the specific facts of Russian policy toward Ukraine, because it will be impossible to understand the theoretical rationale without this emphasis and to understand why the call to simply “lay down arms” does not work within the framework of this conflict.

About Anarcho-Putinists (Anatoliy Dubovik)

«The text is large. The text is addressed primarily to anarchists and sympathizers in Ukraine and Russia. Nevertheless, you can and should read it, and not only to anarchists, and not only in the former USSR.

We will talk about a group of Moscow “anarchists” and professionals from science, led by a leading researcher of the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of History

Vadim Damier. On the position of this group, which calls itself the “Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists” (hereafter, the CRAS), in Russia’s current war against Ukraine. It will also touch upon an equally important topic related to the attitude of the international organization calling itself the International Workers Association (IWA), of which the CRAS is a part, to this and some other issues. Thanks to Damier’s ability, the name IWA is mistakenly translated into Russian as “Международная ассоциация трудящихся” — and we will refer to it as such, MAT.

I will immediately formulate my main point: despite many loud words about internationalism, anti-militarism, condemnation of the current war, and so on and so forth, the CRAS supports the most important propaganda theses of the Putin regime ruling in Russia regarding the war, regarding Ukraine. To be sure of this, it is sufficient to carefully study the materials of the CRAS website (<https://aitrus.info>). In case anyone has suddenly forgotten or does not know what they are talking about, let me remind you. Taking advantage of the military-political weakness and many internal problems in Ukraine, which had just experienced the national-democratic revolution of Euromaidan, the Russian Federation seized the peninsula of Crimea in late February and early March 2014 and then announced its annexation; the annexation was formalized by a fake “referendum” that had no legal effect either under Russian or Ukrainian law. A month later, pro-Russian insurgencies began in eastern and southern Ukraine, inspired, and supported by Russian military equipment and expertise. Fighting between the Ukrainian authorities and anti-Ukrainian separatists began when the city of Slavyansk was seized by a group of Russian soldiers led by Federal Security Service (FSB) colonel Igor Strelkov (Girkin). In the summer of 2014, the entire Donbass was already engaged in a bloody war. In the following years, the war took on a positional character, but did not stop for a single day. Russia continued to play the most active role in the events but denied verbally its participation in the conflict. The masks were thrown off at 5 a.m. on February 24, 2022, when dozens of Ukrainian cities were subjected to missile and sabotage attacks, and the Russian army began a large-scale invasion of Ukraine on multiple fronts at once. The war is accompanied by barbaric bombing and shelling of residential areas of Ukrainian cities and villages, mass murder and violence against Ukrainian civilians (regardless of age or gender), the creation of “filtration” (in fact, concentration) camps, mass forced deportations, and the flight of millions of people to find safety from Russian aggression.

But the CRAS exists in some made-up pseudo-reality of its own. In it there is no Russian attack. It places responsibility for the war on both sides — thus the victim of aggression was equated in its “guilt” to the aggressor himself. The position of the CRAS was already stated on February 25, 2022, in the “Statement of the Section of the M.A.T. in the region of Russia”: *“The ruling elites of Russia and Ukraine, incited and provoked by global capital, greedy for power and swollen from the billions stolen from the working people, came together in a deadly battle. Their thirst for profits and domination is now being paid for with the blood of ordinary people”* (<https://aitrus.info/node/5921>).

This formula — “both sides are to blame” — was repeated later: *“The current war is exclusively about a confrontation between two states, two groups of capitalists, two nationalisms”* (“The CRAS-MAT interview on the military conflict in Ukraine”. March 16, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5933>);

“As chaotic fighting between Russian-Donbass and Ukrainian forces continues in Ukraine, resentment grows for the wives and mothers of soldiers sent to the battlefield as cannon fodder for opposing oligarchies trying to continue the redistribution of the ‘post-Soviet’ space” (“Women Protest: “There were even calls to lay down arms. May 23, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5968>).

As mentioned above, the Russian leadership has denied aggression against Ukraine for years. In full accordance with Putin’s rhetoric, from 2014 until recently, the CRAS also did not recognize any aggression, calling what was happening a “civil war”: *“The Ukrainian civil war dealt another heavy blow to those social forces in Russia that call themselves ‘leftist’, ‘anti-fascist’ or ‘anarchist movement’. (...) These groups split into supporters of one of the bourgeois camps, who clashed with each other in the struggle for power in Ukraine”* (“Ukrainian Crisis and the ‘Left’: Necessary Explanations.” September 28, 2014. <https://aitrus.info/node/3948>). The CRAS continued to use this term in 2015: *“Both sides of the civil war have violated the Minsk agreements”* (“Anti-war rally in Donetsk: ‘Leave everyone! June 16,

2015. <https://aitrus.info/node/4286>). — By the way, the same publication uses another great phrase from Putin’s propaganda vocabulary – “Kiev regime” (at the same time no “Moscow regime” or “Putin regime” is ever mentioned by the CRAS); **“Revolt against arbitrary military rule amid civil war in the country”* (“Ukraine: Anti-war Riot in Konstantinovka”. March 18, 2015. <https://aitrus.info/node/4183>).

It was repeated in 2016: *“We do not share Ruslan Kotsaba’s political views and beliefs, but we appreciate his bold statements against the civil war in Ukraine, against the mobilization of the population for this war and the fomenting of militaristic hysteria in the country”* (“Success of the international campaign: Ukrainian war critic Ruslan Kotsaba at large. July 16, 2016. <https://aitrus.info/node/4742>).

Another important thesis of Putin’s propaganda is the denial of the very existence of the Ukrainian people, the promotion of the concept that “Russians and Ukrainians are one people, maybe with slight regional differences in language. The CRAS cannot repeat illiterate statements such as “Ukraine was invented by Lenin when he worked in the Austrian General Staff”. But not everyone among Russian propagandists and top state officials voices this monstrous absurdity either. More so cannot say such things by the members of the CRAS, who are certified professional historians. They must choose words carefully to convey the same thoughts about “artificial origin of Ukrainians” and “one people” to their audience: *“History, culture and even language of Russians and Ukrainians have always been closely intertwined. The word “Russian” itself originally stood for the Kyiv state of the ninth century! Thirty percent of “Russians” have relatives in Ukraine. (...) Many Ukrainians on whom Russian bombs are now falling are Russian speakers! (...) Nationalists inflate differences or even create them artificially by imposing the exclusive use of a single language to the detriment of multilingualism, so that even yesterday’s relatives and neighbors go to kill each other”* (“Why Is ‘No War Between the Nations’ the Wrong Slogan?” May 16, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5965>).

Open anti-Ukrainian propaganda has been carried out by the CRAS since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war (recall that at first these figures referred to it as the “civil war in Ukraine”). This is how the separatist pro-Russian “republics” were equated with Ukraine in the fall of 2014:

“The regimes in eastern Ukraine are extremely repressive (like Kyiv one). International human rights organizations have documented numerous human rights violations in both zones of the country. (...) Censorship is practiced, political opponents are persecuted; arrests, kidnappings, and beatings occur. There are reports from both parts of Ukraine of forced mobilization into military formations or for ‘fortification work’” (“The Ukrainian Crisis and the ‘Left’: A Necessary Explanation. September 28, 2014. <https://aitrus.info/node/3948>).

It remains a mystery why, given the allegedly identical “extremely repressive” policy of the “two parts of Ukraine,” 1,228,000 people left Russia-occupied Donbass for independent Ukraine, according to UN data, while there has never been any significant flow of refugees in the opposite direction. Why is it that in “Nazi Ukraine” there are independent media outlets, many different public organizations, feminist and sexual minority marches, May Day celebrations, in general there is a real civil society (with all its shortcomings and problems, which no one is hiding) — but in the “people’s republics” of Donbass all this is under a strict ban and suppressed by the “people’s authorities” by the most terrorist methods?

After February 24, the CRAS website continues to scare its readers with the horrors that are happening in Ukraine:

“Anti-war protests in Ukraine are hindered to an even greater extent than in Russia. In addition to repression by the authorities, who have begun banning and arresting political opponents and passing terrorist laws (including penalties for “collaboration with the aggressor,” “looting,” and “high treason,” ranging from 15 years in prison to life in prison), the very conditions of hostilities also make it difficult to protest. How to go out to street actions under a hail of Russian missiles and shells that pose an immediate threat to life?” (“Anti-war Rallies in Russia and Ukraine. March 30, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5939>).

The main thing here is not even “how to protest?” but “why to protest?” Why should Ukrainians “go out to street actions” if the meaning of their “anti-war protests” is zero in every respect? Russia’s

goal in this war is to take over all of Ukraine, to subjugate it, to eradicate everything Ukrainian, up to and including the physical destruction of all those who disagree with this prospect. This goal is undisguised; it has been repeatedly voiced by top figures in the Russian government. This goal can be seen by the behavior of the Russian army in the currently occupied territories. Therefore, the “hail of Russian missiles and shells” can ONLY stop Russia’s military defeat. The CRAS ignores all of this. The main thing is to tell as many horror stories as possible from Ukraine, where, it turns out, some protests are “more difficult than in Russia”. In Russia! In a place where you can end up in jail for throwing a plastic cup at a police officer, for putting up a sign that reads “Two Words” (meaning “No [to] War”), and even for showing up on the street with balloons of blue and yellow — the color of the Ukrainian flag.

Here is another example of the horrible horror stories about Ukraine from the CRAS:

“The current Russian-Ukrainian military conflict has led to a savage explosion of the most disgusting, caveman nationalism on both sides of the front lines” (“Anti-war Speech in Russia and Ukraine. March 30, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5939>).

The author of these words, the venerable Dr. Vadim Damier, last visited my country nearly a quarter of a century ago, during an international meeting of Eastern European anarchists in Lvov in 1998. However, he spent most of his time during that meeting making and consuming some kind of local cannabis product (until he was threatened with a “beating his face” and thrown out the concoction he made). But that does not matter, either. Any events and processes in Ukraine are best seen from Moscow – the wise Moscow scientist is deeply convinced of that. [You should also] believe it, too, readers of the CRAS website, in the “wild explosion of disgusting nationalism” in the “Ukrainian caves”. If the members of the CRAS do not have enough words for anti-Ukrainian hysteria, they post someone else’s texts on their site. Here is an example: the statement of the “International Communist Movement”. The document was published by Moscow anarcho-professors without any comments, although those who are familiar with the practice of Damier and his friends from the CRAS and MAT need not be reminded of the care with which these people seek out the slightest deviation from their own views and statements, how easily they declare other people “traitors” and “enemies. In this case, nothing of the kind happened – so the editorial board of the CRAS website fully agrees with what the “international communists” said:

“Thanks to an intensive nationalist campaign, he [Zelensky] managed to arm the population, sometimes by force, and recruit an entire group of mercenaries and militants, elevated to the rank of ‘heroes of the nation’. As for the ‘heroic Ukrainian resistance’, it does what all the armies of the world do: it kills, robs, and does not hesitate to beat and even execute prisoners!” (“Against Imperialist War – Class Struggle! April 14, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5949>).

Is that clear to everyone? It was not the Russian army that came to Ukraine to kill, rob, and execute — it was the Ukrainians themselves who were killing and robbing themselves!

And, of course, the CRAS could not ignore one of the most important points of Putin’s propaganda, the myth of “Nazi Ukraine,” including the myth of the terrible “Nazis from the Azov battalion”. The CRAS happily picked up this theme at the very beginning of the war, almost simultaneously with Russian propaganda generals [Vladimir] Solovyov, [Margarita] Simonyan, [Olga] Skabeeva, and other scoundrels:

“The ‘Azov’ battalion is an openly neo-Nazi unit of the Ukrainian ‘national guard’”. (“The Ukrainian Crisis and the ‘Left’: A Necessary Explanation. September 28, 2014. <https://aitrus.info/node/3948>)

“Overtly ultranationalist and neo-fascist forces and groups have seized hegemony in the streets and in the discourse” (“On War in Ukraine and Social Movements. Interview with the International Secretary of the CRAS.” April 6, 2015. <https://aitrus.info/node/4217>). And here is an even more frank statement, this time about Nazis not in the streets or in the mysterious “discourse,” but controlling all of Ukraine. The CRAS website, a reprint of a statement by the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (a section of the MAT in Serbia): *“It is clear that the tendency of the strongest and most aggressive military alliance in the world, NATO, to expand into Ukraine, as well as its support of the deliberately Nazified regime created after the 2014 coup in that country, served only as an excuse for Russia to attack Ukraine, because*

the interests of the Russian ruling class were under threat.” (“Turning Capitalist Wars into a Workers Revolution!” March 5, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5927>).

It should be noted that this is the only text published by the CRAS, which directly refers to Russia’s attack on Ukraine. And it is characteristic that this text was not written by members of the CRAS: for them, as we have seen, there is no attack, no aggression, only “the confrontation between the two states”.

And again about “Azov”, already this year and again out of the mouth of the CRAS:

“Ukrainian troops also include openly pro-fascist armed formations, such as the Azov”; “the Azov battalion, a formation originally composed of neo-Nazis (with the SS Wolfsangel sign) but now welcoming nationalists of all kinds” (“CRAS-MAT interview on the military conflict in Ukraine. March 16, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5933>).

There are two things to pay attention to here.

First. the CRAS simply does not know what they are judging. There is simply no “Azov battalion” and it has not existed for an exceedingly long time. Back on September 17, 2014, this battalion was reorganized into the regiment of the same name, which then became the Azov Special Forces detachment. By the beginning of the large-scale Russian invasion, Azov was an ordinary unit of the National Guard of Ukraine. It had ethnic Ukrainians, ethnic Russians, ethnic Georgians, Jews, Greeks, and so on, and its commander was ethnic Karelian Denis Prokopenko. Perhaps this is what was meant by the words “nationalists of all kinds”. After all, for anti-Ukrainian propaganda, almost any citizen of Ukraine who does not agree to obey Russia is equal to a nationalist. *“But there are many pictures of “Azov people” with Nazi symbols! But there were several Azov prisoners with Nazi tattoos shown on Russian television!”*

That is right.

Let us just be honest with ourselves:

Nazism is not tattoos. Nazism is not some symbols and badges, flags, and pictures. The Nazis are not what Russian propaganda (and the CRAS behind it) has labeled as Nazis. The Nazis are those who mass murder and rape civilians, men, women, and children. Nazis are those who destroy entire towns and villages. The Nazis are those who “filter the suspicious” in concentration camps, who deported hundreds of thousands of people. The Nazis are those who unleashed the bloodiest war in Europe since 1945. The Nazis are those who deny the right of existence to entire peoples.

And these are not Ukrainians.

You must look at cases, not tattoos.

The only business that the Azov battalion, regiment, or special forces unit was engaged in was the protection of the people of Ukraine from the physical destruction that the Russian aggressors have carried and are carrying. Protecting people regardless of their ethnicity. If someone considers them Nazis on this basis and considers the genocide of the multi-ethnic Ukrainian people to be anti-fascism -such a person is simply insane.

Second. For some reason it seems to me that the citizens of the anarchoprofessors from the Moscow-based CRAS should be more interested and concerned about nationalism and Nazism in their own country. The CRAS website could talk about Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who as recently as less than a decade ago gave speeches at rallies about “Moscow is a city for Russians” and publicly performed Nazi salute (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v@@@K7FUpOyEdHw>). About the sabotage and reconnaissance assault groups Rusich (https://warriors.fandom.com/ru/wiki/ДШПГ_Русич) and Ratibor (https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/ДШПГ_Ратибор), which consist of ideological Russian Nazis and have been involved in the war against Ukraine since the summer of 2014. About the fighters of the Nazi “Russian National Unity” who went to war this spring (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v@@@nUDfCoushGI>).

There is nothing of the kind in the publications and statements of the CRAS. The problem of Nazism in Russia simply does not exist for Russian “anarchosyndicalists”. Just as the leading media outlets of the Russian Federation say nothing about it.

A touching consensus between Damier and Skabeeva, isn’t it?

There is another topic that makes no sense to look for in the publications of the CRAS. It is the topic of war crimes by the Russian army in the occupied territories. When at the beginning of April 2022, the entire world was stunned by the horror that opened up in the cities near Kyiv, liberated from the Russian Nazis – in Bucha, Irpen, Gostomel, Borodyanka – the CRAS was silent about it. The CRAS ignored it. To deny this horror, as the official propagandists did (“It was the Ukrainians who killed themselves!”), would have been too stupid. They had to pretend that it simply had not happened, and that there was nothing to comment. Sometimes silence is far more eloquent and far more important than words. This was one of those cases.

Also. When the Ukrainian army goes on a counter-offensive, when it liberates Mariupol, Berdyansk, Kherson, and other cities now occupied by the Russian Nazis [this text was written before liberation of Kherson and many other cities], they will find many more mass graves and the bodies of people with their hands tied and shot in the back of the head abandoned in the streets. Before the war, these cities were larger than little Bucha, which means there will be more deaths. You do not have to be a prophet to know that. But the CRAS will remain silent even then. To know this, it is enough to know the members of the CRAS.

“But the CRAS is an internationalist and anti-war propaganda! But the CRAS is calling for the war to be stopped!”

That is right. That is what the CRAS says. For example:

“We call on the soldiers sent to fight not to shoot each other and certainly not to open fire on civilians. We call upon them to refuse en masse to carry out the criminal orders of their commanders. STOP THIS WAR! BAYONET INTO THE GROUND! We call on the people in the rear on both sides of the front, the workers of Russia and Ukraine not to support this war, not to help it – on the contrary, to resist it with all your might! Do not go to war! Not a single ruble, not a single hryvnia from our pockets for the war! Strike against this war, if only you can!” (“Statement of the M.A.T. section in the region of Russia” (February 25, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5921>).

The words are beautiful in their abstraction. But where are the actions? Let us assume that the members of the CRAS did not give “a single hryvnia” to the war. But did they refuse to pay at least “a single ruble”? Did the leading researcher of the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, V[adim] Damier, go on strike against the war? How many days has D[mitriy] Rublev, associate professor at Moscow University and leading specialist of the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, is striking [against the war]? Or are they “can’t”?

However, the CRAS claims that at the beginning of March *“two of our comrades were detained and fined”* (“CRAS-MAT Interview on the Military Conflict in Ukraine. March 16, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5933>). But neither the names of these people, nor any other evidence is provided. They might as well talk about “twenty arrested and eighty executed comrades”. And I might claim that the CRAS received a cash bonus from the authorities for its stance on the war (we will get to the bottom of that later). I have no grounds for making such a claim – and I do not make them. Neither does the CRAS have any grounds for doing so, but the CRAS does say so.

Seventy-five days have passed since the release of the “Statement of the M.A.T. Section in the Russia Region”. Seventy-five days of non-stop bombing and killing of Ukrainians by Russians. And the CRAS decided to give new advice, this time only to one side of the war. Advice carelessly disguised as alleged fact:

“The main method of resistance to war on the part of the Ukrainian population is to refuse to participate in it” (“Anti-war protests in Russia and Ukraine continue. May 11, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5963>).

And here again we need to pay attention to two points. First. Refusal to take part in the war – all this “bayonets in the ground,” “do not shoot,” “do not go to war” – can have two results.

If the Russian army heeds this call, lays down their arms and goes home, the war will stop, and peace will come.

If the Ukrainian army heeds this call, if it lays down its arms and goes home, Russia will occupy all of Ukraine without a fight, and a single grandiose Bucha will begin on its entire territory. The death toll will reach millions.

It is all very simple. And there is only one way to end the war: the complete military defeat of the Russian army and Putin's regime.

Fortunately, the "Ukrainian population" — or rather, the Ukrainian people to whom I have the honor to belong — understand this very well and intend not to surrender, but to destroy the invaders until the last armed Russian soldier escapes to his country. Second. About the same days that the CRAS was giving interviews "about the military conflict," telling horror stories about "Ukrainian Nazis from the Azov battalion" and calling "to stick bayonets in the ground," Vladimir Putin, who calls himself president of Russia, also appealed to the Ukrainian military. He suggested that they "arrest the gang of Nazis and drug addicts in Kiev," after which "an agreement will be possible.

Putin's words and perhaps the intentions of Putin and Damier and his friends are different. Not very much, but different. The result of following their advice would be the same. Bucha.

Once again, I repeat what I said at the beginning of this text: the CRAS supports most of the most important propaganda theses of the ruling regime in Russia regarding the war, regarding Ukraine.

The CRAS writes about "Ukrainian Nazism," about "one nation" and "the Ukrainian nation does not exist," about "Ukraine's fault for starting the war" (even though, from the point of view of the CRAS, Russia is also a little bit to blame), and more recently about "civil war in Ukraine. And the CRAS is silent about exactly the same things that the Russian authorities and Russian propaganda are silent about. About war crimes and mass murders, about deportations, about Russian Nazism, about the open dictatorship of Putin and his gang in Russia itself.

The CRAS deserved to be considered and called the ANARCHO-PUTINIST group. I see the only explanation for this: in fact, the CRAS collaborates with the Putin regime.

It is unlikely that the leaders of the CRAS are direct secret employees of the Russian secret services. What they call "informer". This is very doubtful.

But what I personally do not doubt is that the leading figure of the CRAS, Vadim Damier (at least he is one), is what are called "agents of influence". That is, a person whose fame, position, abilities, and reputation are used to instill in the minds of certain social groups such views, ideas and concepts that the ruling regime, and/or its special services, and/or their individual groups need. Used to find out the public's reaction to the informational "inserts" made by such agents. Used for other "sensitive assignments".

An obvious example of an agent of influence is the already mentioned FSB colonel Igor Strelkov. His task is to unite and mobilize for the "fight for Russia, against the West" the most conservative, most dormant strata of Russian society, who proudly call themselves patriots and nationalists. To warn the Russian leadership about the dangerous consequences of their actions (in those places where Strelkov's handlers, for whatever reason, find it inconvenient or impossible to speak out for themselves). If necessary, to carry out purely military tasks where the open presence of the Russian army is undesirable. As was the case in Donbass in 2014. For this, Strelkov is allowed many things that are inaccessible to mere mortals: to be an oppositionist, to create and lead opposition parties and movements, to furiously criticize the government and its individual representatives, up to and including the Sovereign Emperor Vladimir the First himself [Vladimir Putin]. And he is not subjected to any persecution, even a symbolic fine. Although other Russian citizens are often imprisoned even for using the word "war" in the context of current events.

Damier as an agent of influence has a different task. He does not work within Russian society, since even among the overwhelming majority of Russian anarchists he does not enjoy the slightest authority. His target audience is abroad. Foreign countries, first of all European anarchists and other "leftists" (I do not know what the "leftists" are in the 21st century, but this is what they call themselves). Its task is to carry Putin's propaganda into this environment. Ultimately, it is to influence Western society in order to spread pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian ideas in it. Of course, this propaganda is adapted to

the terminology and belief system of anarchists and “leftists. For this Damier is allowed much of what is inaccessible to mere mortals: to be an oppositionist, to head an anarchist organization, to criticize the government and some of its actions, even to declare himself an opponent of the war. While doing so, he is not subjected to any persecution, not even a symbolic fine, on the contrary, he continues to make a successful career in the (allegedly) hated by the state system. Although other citizens of Russia are often imprisoned for merely identifying themselves as anarchists.

In addition to their quite prosperous existence under Putin’s regime, Strelkov and Damier have one thing in common: they both seem to believe what they are saying. It is understandable and easy to explain either. An agent of influence needs to be convincing. And confidence in your own rightness is perhaps the best way to influence your audience. Therefore, the handlers of both can only suggest that they emphasize this or that circumstance, but by no means can they demand to voice or do anything that contradicts the beliefs of the agents of influence. As one brave Gascon told a Cardinal of France, “I would be badly received here and looked upon badly there if I accepted your offer, your lordship.

However, there is one important difference between Strelkov and Damier, besides the different target audience and everything that goes with it.

Igor Strelkov is subjectively an honest and straightforward man, a brave combat officer, which he has proven by his actions. This is an enemy who deserves a certain amount of respect. Perhaps when he is hanged after the trial, he will be given all the military honors a military officer is entitled to. Vadim Damier is a cunning, deceitful and extremely cowardly creature, which is well known to all who know him personally. Always avoiding the slightest risk to himself, but not shy to “teach life” to other people. I remember how long ago, in 1996, when there was still a semblance of personal human relations between us, he listened to my story about the general strike of the miners of Donbass, about our, Ukrainian anarchistsyndicalists, participation in it, about the defeat of this struggle – and then he said: “You should have had an armed uprising.” “But we would all have been wiped out within two days!” I replied. “Of course. But we, our International, would have made heroes of you, written memoirs and sung songs about you”.

Vadim, I know you are reading this right now. Show that you are not an agent of influence, not a coward, and not an empty shell. Go to the barracks and hand out leaflets to Russian soldiers about “turning bayonets against the government” until you get arrested. Become a hero. Do for once in your life what you demanded of others. I will even sing a song about you. Later.

How successful are the activities of Damier and the CRAS as agents of influence of the Putin regime, as Anarcho-Putinists? Are there any results of their pro-Russian propaganda in the West?

Yes.

People who are keep up with this subject know very well HOW MUCH of Russia lovers there are among foreign anarchists, Marxists, anti-authoritarian socialists, environmentalists, and simply “leftists. How strong are the myths about “Ukrainian Nazis,” the notorious “Azov battalion,” the “Kyiv junta,” the “military coup on the Maidan in 2014,” “persecution of Russians,” and simply about “Ukrainian fascism”. This information could have come to them in two ways. Either through the Russian state TV channel Russia Today – but they do not watch it, rightly not trusting state propaganda. Or from Damier and others like him, agents of influence. The funniest thing is that they simply do not think twice about asking Ukrainian anarchists, Marxists, anti-authoritarian socialists, environmentalists, and simply “leftists” for their opinion. Why? There is Damier and the CRAS, they are in Russia, it’s practically the same as in Ukraine – and if the Ukrainian “left” says something different, they’re kind of suspicious. They are probably, in reality, fascists or, at best, nationalists themselves. That is what Damier says about them.

I remember well how in 2014–2015 European anarchist websites and magazines rushed to interview a great many of them about the events in Ukraine (Euromaidan, separatist uprisings, the war that had started)... from Moscow anarchist professors. The anarchists of Ukraine simply did not exist for them at that time. This situation began to correct itself only since about 2016. But many people have already formed an opinion.

Above is already a quote from a statement by Serbian pro-Russian anarchists. Here is another text, from a Bulgarian anarchist. Who, of course, considers himself an internationalist, but understands nothing of the events taking place in Ukraine and repeats the thesis of “equal guilt of the two oligarchic clans.

“Today the rulers of the world are again sending two nations to the carnage of war (...) On both sides of the front line, brothers from “the grassroots” are fighting and dying for the interests of “their” rulers and oligarchs. The real enemy is them, within each of the warring states. In this bloodshed and destruction, we are for revolutionary defeatism”, and so on, and so on (Georgi Konstantinov. “Comrades Anarchists!” March 11, 2022. <https://www.anarchy.bg/теория/апел-проект/>).

But the anarchists from the Spanish women’s collective Moiras are asking the CRAS how to solve the unsolvable problem of how to explain to their Spanish populations that it is not Putin who is to blame for the war, but someone else, such as the aggressive NATO bloc:

“In the European Union, the media, echoing the governments, keep telling us that Putin is solely responsible for this war. Knowing the history of NATO led by the United States, we think this is not true. How do we explain this to our population without giving the impression that we are justifying Russia’s attack and supporting Putin’s government?” (“CRAS-MAT interview on the military conflict in Ukraine. March 16, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5933>).

Señoritas, it is quite easy to explain. It is enough to prove that Ukraine is being attacked, Ukraine is being destroyed, Ukraine is being killed – not by Russian troops, but by your Spanish ones! Together with American, Belgian and other Albanian-Montenegrin ones. Overall, NATO is to blame. Prove it. Russian propagandists will surely help you in this noble cause.

Another statement. This time from MAT, but still diverting Russia from responsibility for the horror of the war in which the Ukrainian people find themselves, and hiding the essence of what is happening behind meaningless verbiage:

“There are those who go on thinking that some are merely defending themselves against an aggressor because of self-defense. But we can only talk about the aggressors and the attacked within the mental framework of WE and THEY. Because at the end of the day, it is always about WE, the workers, the people. Regardless of the language we speak, the land we live on, or the laws we obey. We are brothers and sisters who live only by the strength of our hands and minds”. (“M.A.T. 2022 May Day Statement. May 1, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5958>).

Just as I was working on this text, I received a letter from a comrade from Greece. Here is what he writes: *“I want to ask you, what is your opinion of the Russian anarchist group CRAS? A couple of their texts have been published in Greece in recent weeks, declaring most of the Ukrainian anarchists as nationalists and far-right (...) After “Borotba”, which still has some support among the Greek left, now this CRAS group also trashes the anarchists of the region”. —* I have already briefly answered the comrade what my opinion of the Russian group CRAS is. Now he can read the detailed answer.

And here are the direct results of the Anarcho-Putinist propaganda. These are no longer words and statements, but actions and deeds. There is the statement by the Anti-Militarist Assembly of Turin, which unites trade union and political activists:

“To oppose a state of military emergency, increased military spending, sending weapons to the Ukrainian government; to fight for the withdrawal of all military forces from abroad, for the closure and reconversion of the military industry, for the opening of the borders to all refugees and migrants, is a concrete and urgent front of struggle. A general strike, boycott and blockade of military bases and death factories!” (“Italy: against wars and those who supply them with weapons! April 13, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5947>).

A month and a half later, the “grassroots Italian trade unions” did indeed hold a general strike “against the war, the war economy and the war government. For twenty-four hours practically all transport – railroads, air and sea companies, public transport – was out of action. The slogan of the strike was, among other things, to refuse to send weapons to Ukraine. (“Italy: General Strike Against NATO’s ‘War Policy’ and Banker Draghi’s Government. May 26, 2022. <https://aitrus.info/node/5969>).

A comparable situation is taking place in Greece. In April in the news stream there was a report that the union of Greek port workers refused to serve any ships carrying military cargoes for Ukraine. This text was not ready at the time, and I did not save the link, but if any of the readers can confirm this unpleasant fact, I would be grateful.

So, the Anarcho-Putin propaganda of the CRAS and its MAT friends works and brings results. In various countries around the world, it has a noticeable impact on certain groups of the population, on public opinion as a whole. In Greece and Italy, it leads to sabotage of aid to Ukraine — which undoubtedly does not mean that the end of the war is near, but more deaths for civilians and the military, more destruction and violence. Regardless of the intentions and motivations of the unionists of said countries. The experts in anarchism Dr. Damier may be pleased with the work he has done on the propaganda front. If I were them, I would give the Moscow Anarcho-Putinists some money.

Thirty pieces of silver.

They deserved it».

I would like to say that there is nothing wrong with us getting to know information and adopting, consciously or not, the position that comes across to us most often. But unfortunately, it is not always right what comes across most often. When it comes to the anarchist position on the Russian-Ukrainian war, this is indeed the case, and anarchists in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus overwhelmingly condemn Russian imperialist aggression. The European public does not see it, since the Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian movements are locked, and a huge layer of our reflection inside the movement has no way out. The radical left and radical right in European countries are the most vulnerable groups, and this is very well understood by the Russian special services, which benefit from perceiving the war through the prism that one way out is to call on both sides to lay down arms (but in fact, as it turned out, only one side – the resisting one), or at least encourage radicals to put pressure on their governments so that they do not supply weapons to Ukraine or join military and political blocs.

In fact, such a position only harms. And to understand exactly how it is harmful, we should consider the “myths” presented.

MythBusters

And, since we mentioned imperialism, let us start with it. The first myth is called that.

Myth 1: We are not fighting for the State, but in defense of the people under the fire of the imperial army.

«It is interesting how the argumentation supporting military mobilization is gradually changing, even though the content is still the same. First, we heard that anarchists in the Ukrainian army are only protecting civilian lives but are not defending any State. After a few weeks, there was already talk of a temporary tactical alliance with the forces of the State, without which it was said that it would be impossible to protect the civilian population. Now they are again openly talking about fighting for liberal democracy, that is, for a particular form of State.

All these formulations are intended to convince us that it is possible to wage a bourgeois war coordinated by State structures but avoid strengthening these structures and thereby not waging a struggle for the interests of the bourgeoisie. It is always necessary to see what is actually happening, which in some cases is not the same as what the direct participants or observers claim about what is happening. The anarchists in the Ukrainian army units are effectively fighting for the State and their claim that this is not happening does not correspond to reality. It comes across more as a desperate attempt to cope with contradictions, or worse, to give the impression that there are in fact no contradictions».

One of the main arguments in the discussion concerning why anarchists interact with the state army is that they are supposedly not anarchists at all but defend the bourgeois state in a bourgeois war. Anarchists are supposed to turn bayonets against their government by taking up arms, but for some reason they are fighting in conjunction with one government against another government!

In fact, if you think about it, this is a very funny and ridiculous thesis. To begin with, Ukrainian anarchists, even if they were well enough armed to fight back against the state, would probably only help Russia take over Ukraine. A revolution is not made by automatic weapons alone, and if society obviously does not support anarchism, then an armed rebellion by anarchists against their government will do nothing to encourage the masses to build alternative grassroots institutions. When such a malignant position is put forward, it is as if anarchists forget that anarchism is primarily about organization and institutions, and then about the armed defense of them. There are no anarchist institutions to defend in Ukraine, this is indeed true. But there are people in Ukraine. And they obviously do not want to live under the occupation of another state that does not care about them. Russia obviously does not care about the Ukrainians, and we see plenty of evidence of this: the destruction of the local population, the shelling of cities and peaceful civilian infrastructure.

The only thing Ukrainian anarchists can build after Ukraine has laid down its arms on the ruins of Russia's destroyed cities is anarcho-primitivism, although it is unlikely to have many supporters. In this war, we really must choose between anarcho-primitivism with the fascist orders of the new government, which carries out "democratic" procedures at gunpoint, and the national bourgeoisie, which treats its citizens a little more leniently and can provide them with decent living conditions in a warm house with electricity, water, sewage, and other amenities familiar to European people after victory over Russia.

So, yes, anarchists choose the lesser evil. But we do so with an awareness of what is going on and an understanding of which version of the coming life is more humane for people.

Myth 2: Without military operations, it would be impossible to protect the lives of the Ukrainian population and resist the Russian empire.

«It is perfectly legitimate to protect the lives of the people of bombed-out cities. But to do so in the form of conventional warfare is effectively to protect the integrity of one State or another. Moreover, it is questionable to claim that it is in this way that the maximum number of lives can be saved. Continued war mobilization leads to the progressive brutalization of war and the death toll rises. At the same time, staying in bombing sites increases the risk of death. Moreover, it is possible to stop the bombing in other ways than by sending one's own troops to the front.»

The Ukrainian army has chosen a frontal military confrontation, which by its very nature cannot take place without people dying in large numbers. Not engaging in a warlike form of combat, however, does not mean sacrificing the population exposed to the bombs, because it is not simply a matter of refusing to fight, but also of organizing non-warlike forms of protection of threatened lives. Some organize the movement of the most endangered people to safe places. Others are attacking the economic, political and military power of the Russian empire, often doing so from various locations around the world.

The effects of militaristic propaganda are devastating. Some people came to really believe that State-led war is the most appropriate way to save lives, and moreover, in their view, the only way»

We can indeed agree with the statement that *«continued war mobilization leads to the progressive brutalization of war»* and *«it is possible to stop the bombing in other ways than by sending one's own troops to the front»*. But unlike the Anarcho-Putinists, we turn this thesis toward the **Russian** government.

No one would have died if Putin had not given the order to attack Ukraine on February 24, 2022. No one would have died if he had not declared “partial mobilization” on September 21, 2022. Putin sends his soldiers to their deaths and kills civilians in vain. Had the Ukrainians not resisted, as the Anarcho-Putinists suggest, there **would have been even more casualties**, and this can easily be confirmed by the stories of those people who have been victims of Russian aggression:

«There is one significant factor, which plays the role of a MINING COEFFICIENT and is not considered in these calculations. But it must be mentioned.

As the Chekists like to say in some cases, “it's not your credit, it's your fault”.

So, regarding the situation with the genocide of the inhabitants of Mariupol — if the REAL numbers of victims are lower than the estimated numbers, then it is NOT THE SERVICE of the Russian Armed Forces.

Because the calculations consider the CITY WITHOUT DEFENSE.

Just a defenseless city that offers no resistance. At all.

A perfect example of this is the Syrian refugee camps in Syria. Where, as you and I understand, there is no military, no weapons, no air defense systems (even if old), and no resistance to genocide.

That is, if Mariupol had not resisted, the casualty figures would have been exactly that.

Russians often blame Azov and other units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in their rhetoric for the fact that they did not surrender the city immediately and without mercy. They say that all the victims are on your conscience.

But it was strictly the other way around.

Since soldiers from Azov and other Ukrainian Armed Forces units were defending the city, helping the civilian population with advice, and destroying the enemy very actively, they played the role of that very lowering factor.

That is, if they had not been there, as in many villages and towns in Donbass, like in Volnovakha, like in Sartana, the Russians WOULD HAVE ACHIEVED THE PLANNED NUMBERS OF GENOCIDE there.

Once again: the actions of the Ukrainian military are a factor in reducing civilian casualties, not the other way around. IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND!

Because the Russian aviation that shelled Sartana and Volnovakha in the first days of hostilities (I deliberately do not say the beginning of the war, because the war has been going on since 2014), this same Russian aviation frolicked over defenseless settlements, without air defense, without any resistance, in an absolutely cynical and cruel way.

So, surrendering the city would not immediately reduce the number of victims, but would increase them.

There is no reason to believe, looking at the fate of Volnovakha and Sartana, which the Russians destroyed BEFORE encircling Mariupol, that surrendering the city would have somehow avoided genocide.

And every Ukrainian soldier who destroyed an enemy mortar or enemy “Grad” rocket launchers thereby reduced the number of civilian casualties in Mariupol».

(Regarding the “planned genocide figures,” see <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1200180859>, as well as calculations based on this normative document with regard to Mariupol <https://t.me/myvijily/11310>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11312>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11313>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11316>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11319>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11321>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11323>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11324>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11326>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11328>; <https://t.me/myvijily/11330>).

As for evacuations, this obviously did not happen either. For example, Mariupol was not evacuated, and no one organized humanitarian escape corridors, and those who were able to leave in the first days did so on their own or simply tried their luck.

«I am very annoyed by all these fakes about the evacuation of Mariupol being organized somewhere. That someone saw some photos of some people in line. That someone saw some lists.

First of all. I can write you any lists, any kind. You take a Soviet phone book and write out the names in random order, that is all. I do not understand what proves, and to whom some paper with names.

That is nothing.

I will tell you more than that. I do not know a single person who used such sources as the lists to find anyone. But I know people from Mariupol, who in March months lost contact with their parents who lived in another district of the city (and at that time the other district was as unreachable as the moon – shelling, lack of transport, lack of gasoline for personal vehicles – all this made moving EVEN BETWEEN DISTRICTS of the city the destiny of rare lucky people, who like Grandpa from my diaries, had 2–3 gasoline cans in the garage).

That is, people lost contact with their relatives in early March, then searched for them, then someone from their acquaintances allegedly saw the names of their relatives in the lists, which was very encouraging and led the search in another direction.

And in the end, it turned out that this whole family burned alive in their apartment back on March 11. That is it, yeah.

And I will say “something else” once again.

I saw how the Russians make the lists. Lists of those who would be sent from April Mariupol for filtration. It was literally “paint and throw away”: names were written with mistakes, the sheet was crumpled in the pocket, and it was unclear whether the data had been submitted anywhere or not, was it made for the sake of appearance?

Because my own ex-husband, with all the capabilities unavailable to many ordinary people, DID NOT FIND US WITH MY SON IN THE LISTS.

That is it, yeah. Even though we were being rewritten.

And if I had not called him from Nikolskoye (Volodarskoye) and asked one of the DPR people for his phone number, it would have been the same: I would not have been on the list.

By the way, my relatives from the Moscow region also looked for me using the lists of so-called Russian volunteers (military, of course). And with the same result.

That is the intermediate conclusion: all these lists that are circulating in the network – they say nothing. They do not prove anything. But they create the necessary information picture – look, there are lists. So, supposedly, there was an evacuation.

You see, two trains and a couple of buses is not an evacuation. It is a mockery. Do you have any idea what half a million people are like? For example, look at the pictures of the Russian rallies on Bolotnaya Square, where they literally count the people by their heads, and it turns out that a huge crowd of people is only 8–10 thousand people. NOT 500 THOUSAND, but 8–10.

And they tell me that they have seen some pictures of some people standing in line (not even a large crowd) to some buses.

I have not seen such pictures. If anyone has them, I ask you to show them. Because we are from Mariupol, we will know right away whether this was taken in our city or elsewhere. Dozens of details make it possible to identify locations with precision. However, we are not shown such photos for some reason, I hear only deafening rumors that there are such photos somewhere. This is also information attack in favor of those forces that should have evacuated the city but preferred to talk about other topics than saving the citizens of Mariupol.

...

There were no evacuations. Some isolated cases when buses or microcars were used, I do not count as evacuations. These are private rescue initiatives»

Those who take the position that the surrender of Ukrainian cities would result in fewer civilian casualties are not based on facts and evidence, but on pure theory, which does not correspond to reality and is therefore harmful.

Myth 3: The Russian Empire can only be defeated by military force

«The stability of an empire is not only guaranteed by military superiority, but above all by the economic base on which the military machinery depends. The other pillars are the political structures and the prevailing ideology of the ruling class.

The Russian empire seeks the most favorable conditions in international trade and geopolitical influence. In this respect, its power grows throughout the world, not just in the regions of the Russian Federation. People do not need to be on the war front to undermine the basis of the empire. For example, the bombers of the Russian military can be stopped by cutting off the resources they need to operate. Resources can be expropriated, destroyed, disabled, or blocked from moving. There are many possibilities».

Diversion is also a military way of resisting. Yes, it usually does not affect people, and that is its appeal. But sabotage itself has a purely **auxiliary** function in warfare. In this sense, the few opponents of the war who set fire to the recruitment centers in Russia and remove the rails, will not be able to stop the war machine at once. But the anarchists have really succeeded in this sense, since they have taken the position of vanguard in the field of sabotage: in Russia, the main force of underground protest consists of members of the **Combat Organization of Anarcho-Communists (BOAK)**.

As for economic sanctions, they also have an auxiliary function. The war could really be stopped if all countries would cut off Russia's oxygen at once. But in practice, Europe spends more on Russian energy than it provides to Ukraine as military aid. This is something to think about.

In other words, the main process unfolds on the battlefield. Unfortunately, war is bloody. But it is a necessary sacrifice if people's freedom from fascist aggression is at stake. Just as Hitler could not be

defeated by economic sanctions and the German underground alone, so it is impossible to defeat Putin by economic sanctions and the Russian underground alone. Although both ways are useful.

Myth 4: Ukraine's population is under fire from a well-armed Russian army, so defense will not be possible without armament support from NATO and European Union governments.

«The military invasion of Putin's imperialism can and must be fought by means other than war. The problem with the pro-war argument is that it reduces defense against imperial aggression to only one option, and that is the riskiest one: a frontal military confrontation. It takes no account whatsoever of the possibility to disintegrate military forces from within directly by those who are recruited for the purposes of war. In all wars, sooner or later there are not only desertion tendencies, but also various kinds of sabotage by ordinary soldiers who have simply stopped believing that there is any legitimate reason for their deployment. The sabotage that occurs does not require expensive resources or heavy weapons. Yet their destructive effects can disable monstrous military machineries or significantly delay the advance of army units. These sabotages are so easy to carry out precisely because they are performed directly by members of military units, who usually have relatively easy access to vulnerable points in war equipment and infrastructure. Sometimes a single nut thrown into the drive train is enough.

The problem remains that too much effort is spent on war propaganda that portrays all Russian soldiers as fanatical supporters of the Putin regime. Although information is leaking out about Russian soldiers who no longer want to go to war, very little resources are devoted to agitation and networking to encourage them to desert and sabotage the war effort. If there are countless initiatives to support civilian refugees, there should be enough to provide security for deserters and saboteurs. As long as the spirit of war propaganda views all soldiers as loyal foot soldiers of the State, there will be little incentive for rank-and-file soldiers to sabotage.

We can look at the example of the Makhnovists, who conducted agitation in the ranks of the opposing armies (both white and red), thereby increasing the frequency of desertions, defections, fraternizations, sabotages, or turning the guns of the rank and file against the officers. The ease and effectiveness of internal sabotage tactics is illustrated by the example of sabotage in the U.S. military during the Vietnam War»

Another argument often promoted by agents of influence is that not all soldiers are Putinists. Well, indeed they are. But those who really can, desert. But this is not so easy, since Russian soldiers often have barrier units behind them, and it is not always possible to surrender or run away. As for historical examples, they are not always correct. As for the Makhnovists, they were quite a weighty force, and their strength was not so much in weapons, but in broad support of the peasantry and workers. Agitation is important when there is ground for it. But now it is difficult for the anarchists to create a grassroots movement like Makhnovists' and become a third alternative.

As for fraternization, this is not observed in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Roughly the same way the German occupiers did not fraternize with the Soviet army. There are far more parallels here than with any other war because Germany's war against the USSR was an invader war and was dictated by ideology, as was Russia's war against Ukraine, while the United States did not seek to invade Vietnam, hence the soldiers were more alienated from it. Russian soldiers, on the other hand, go to war ideologically, believing that they are "denazifying" Ukraine or simply reuniting it with Russia, inspired by imperial and chauvinistic narratives.

Myth 5: Anarchists in Ukraine cannot fight except by joining the army because there is no mass workers' movement with the means and capacity to organize itself in an anarchist way.

«According to this logic, we could argue that workers everywhere should go to the polls, join parliamentary parties, and ask the police and the courts to resolve disputes with employers until they have the capacity to oppose the whole bourgeois democratic system with their own forms of mass organization. This is nonsense. It is similar to being told that we must ally ourselves with the State in Ukraine today so we can fight it later»

This argument makes no sense. In today's Ukraine there is no parliamentary debate, no disputes over delayed wage payments, especially in the occupied territories, and no laws as such. In other words, there is nothing to be compared to. And while, of course, anarchists must encourage direct action, this must not come at the expense of any working institutions, because otherwise we are likely to get neither anarchist institutions nor state institutions. In other words, instead of anarchy, we will get ruin.

«In fact, the power imbalance between the State and the workers exists even in countries where there is a mass working class movement. Anarchists cannot wait for the balance of power to tip in their favor. It is precisely by fighting every day outside the structures of the State and in spite of them that they can change the balance of power. By contrast, relying on alliances with the State helps to consolidate the position of the latter. Moreover, this is done with the help of those who may even oppose it, but only rhetorically, not practically.

Anarchists have always argued that the means must correspond to the ends. Non-State goals cannot be achieved through State structures. A mass movement cannot be built by exhorting workers to ally themselves with the organs of the State, because by doing so they will learn to accept and support these organs rather than to define themselves against them and subvert them. With every alliance with the State, the workers gradually cripple the tendency to rely on their own strength and resources. They lose the belief that they can achieve anything by self-organization and thus feed the belief that they are powerless without the help of the State».

Workers accept and support the state organs by default, and this has nothing to do with the anarchists' defense activities in Ukraine. Generally speaking, the anarchists do not intend to build an anarchist movement by taking advantage of the military ruin. We must evaluate our own forces, because otherwise it would appear that anarchists should not interact with the state in any way, even when they practice direct action – the state is a sworn enemy! No, anarchists are aware of the absurdity of this position: we live in the state, and we need to interact with it. Anarchist propaganda is necessary, but it should be understood that its spontaneous effect in the long run is negated by the fact that no new institutions have been built in place of the old ones.

In other words, even supposing hypothetically that a factory trade union could be found in some region of Ukraine which, under the influence of anarchists, would take the anarcho-syndicalist principles as its basis and thus want to conduct its economic activities separately from the state, would it really be able to do so? It is unlikely. Even if the anarchists try to defend this union, they will not have the resources to seduce other unions to revolt and build a network of grassroots institutions. The rebellion of this trade union, supported by the anarchists, will have no effect on the anarchists themselves, and such is their potential for action in the post-Soviet space: we really cannot do anything more because of our weakened and small number of supporters! The rebel factory is a downtime, an economic diversion in a country weakened by war without any revolutionary sense. Such an adventure will **discredit** the anarchists in the eyes of the vast majority of the population of Ukraine, and they will see the anarchists not as liberators, but as **saboteurs**. Revolutionary subjectivity does not come out of the blue, and it is naïve to think that workers, which do not understand anarchist principles, will be inspired by the example of the heroic anarcho-syndicalist trade union, and will go at once to build similar organizations locally.

However, this does not mean that factory workers in a country at war cannot strike, they can. But with some conditions: it should not be a defense-industry factories (for obvious reasons), and regarding civilian production actions should not reach a complete halt in production, since any sabotage is irreparable harm to people who are **already facing deprivation**. However, the question of strikes is better left to the workers, they are much better able to understand the context of the situation and their interests.

«The next chapter could then be a list of all the concessions that we would have to make in order for such an alliance to take place, whereas the State makes only a minor concession in the sense of “I’ll tolerate you temporarily”. But it gives no guarantee that when, with the help of the anarchists, it achieves its goals, this concession will not turn into a tendency of “I do not need you anymore. So as potential opponents I can and want to eliminate you now”».

Ukraine does not care about anarchists right now. It is more interested in expelling the invaders from its territories. Of course, no state likes anarchists, including Ukraine. But anarchists fight for people, for their freedom and identity, not for the blue-and-yellow flag per se. The anarchists are well aware that the Ukrainian government will not help them to overthrow itself after victory, but the goal is not to build anarchy overnight immediately after the war. Once again: anarchy is an institution, not a weapon. We cannot force people to be anarchists, and simply going to overthrow the government to “build anarchy” is utterly ridiculous. Only someone who does not understand the difference between anarchists and other, even radical opposition, can reduce building anarchy to overthrowing the government.

Speaking of ideological purity, anarchists can and do cooperate with state structures during wartime. Because there are no ideologically pure revolutions. Even in modern Rojava, anarchists openly cooperate with the state when it comes to armaments. An anarchist from the IRPGF answers a similar question.

“As you say, the conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, and elsewhere are only the beginning of what will be a protracted and messy period of global crisis. But what do you consider the proper relationship between armed struggle and revolution? Should anarchists seek to commence armed struggle as soon as possible in the revolutionary process, or to delay it as long as we can? And how can anarchists hold our own on the terrain of armed struggle, when so much depends on getting arms—which usually means making deals with state or para-state actors?”

First of all, there is no general formula for how much armed struggle is necessary to initiate and advance the revolutionary process, nor at which point it should commence, if at all. For the IRPGF, we recognize that each group, collective, community, and neighborhood must ultimately decide when they initiate armed struggle. Armed struggle is contextual to the specific location and situation. For example, whereas throwing a Molotov cocktail at police is fairly normalized in the Exarchia neighborhood in Athens, Greece, in the United States the person throwing it would be shot dead by the police. Each particular local context has a different threshold for what the state allows in terms of violence. However, this is not an excuse for inaction. We believe that armed struggle is necessary. Ultimately, people must be willing to sacrifice their social position, privilege, and lives if necessary. Yet we are not asking people to go on suicide/sacrifice missions. This struggle is not for martyrdom but for life. Should it require martyrs, like the struggle here in Rojava and Kurdistan, that will be part of the armed struggle and revolutionary process as it unfolds.

Armed struggle does not necessarily create the conditions for a revolution and some revolutions may occur with little to no armed struggle. Both armed struggle and revolutions can be spontaneous or planned years in advance. Yet, local or national revolutions, which in some cases have been peaceful, do not create the conditions for world revolution nor challenge the hegemony of the capitalist worldsystem. What remains our fundamental question here is—when should one commence armed struggle? To start, we think that one has to analyze their local situation and context. The creation of local community and neighborhood defense forces which are openly armed is a critical first step to ensuring autonomy and selfprotection. This is a powerful symbolic act and one that will certainly attract the attention of the state and its repressive forces. Insurrection should happen everywhere and at all times, but it doesn’t necessarily need to happen with rifles. Ultimately, armed struggle should always be done in relation to

living communities and neighborhoods. This will prevent vanguard mentalities and hierarchical social positions from developing.

Revolutions are not dinner parties and, what's worse, we do not choose the dinner guests. How can we, as anarchists, remain principled in our political positions when we have to rely on state, para-state, and non-state actors to get arms and other resources? Firstly, there is no ideologically clean and pure revolution or armed struggle. Our weapons were made in former Communist countries and given to us by revolutionary political parties. The base we are staying in and the supplies and resources we receive come from the various parties operating here and ultimately from the people themselves. Clearly, we as anarchists have not liberated the kind of territory we would need to operate on our own. We must make deals. The question then becomes: how principled can our deals be?

We have relationships with revolutionary political parties that are communist, socialist, and Apoist. For us, we fight against the same enemy at this point and our combined resources and fighters can only further the struggle. Yet, we remain in critical alliance and solidarity with them. We disagree with their feudal mentalities, their dogmatic ideological positions, and their vision of seizing state power. We both know that should they one day seize state power, we will be enemies. Yet for the time being, we are not only allies but comrades in the struggle. This does not mean that we have sacrificed our principles. On the contrary, we have opened a dialogue on anarchism and criticized their ideological positions while affirming the principles and theoretical positions we share in common. This exchange has transformed us both and is part of what some of them refer to as the dialectical process: the necessity of both theory and practice to advance both the armed struggle and the social revolution.

For the IRPGF, making deals with other leftist revolutionary groups we can find common ground with is a reality we live with. Yet, we also must acknowledge that the larger guerrilla structure that we are a part of does make deals with state actors. While we once again reaffirm our position against all states, which is nonnegotiable, our structure makes pragmatic deals with state actors to survive another day to fight. For the time being, all of our supplies and resources come from revolutionary parties that we are in alliance with, who also make concessions and deals with state and non-state actors. We recognize this as a contradiction but a harsh reality of our current conditions.

Anarchists must choose, depending on their particular context and situation, what kind of deals they can make and with whom. Should they need to be pragmatic and make deals with state, para-state, or non-state actors to acquire arms, to hold on to their terrain, or to, at the very least, survive, that will be addressed and critiqued when the time comes. Ultimately, collectives and communities will make decisions for how to advance in the revolutionary process and how to use the various state and non-state actors for their benefit, with the goal of eventually not needing them and destroying them all. In the final analysis, armed struggle is necessary for the revolutionary process and the various alliances we make we deem necessary to achieve this goal of a liberated world. We, as the IRPGF, believe and affirm the often-repeated phrase from Greece that the only lost struggles are the ones that weren't given" (<https://crimethinc.com/2017/04/18/the-struggle-is-not-formartyrdom-but-for-life>).

In this situation, the comrades are fighting for the revolution with much broader support among the locals. Yet they are not trying to build a dogmatic organization in a vacuum that never asks for outside help. Clearly, if any state favors the revolutionaries, it is worth taking advantage of. Even though Ukraine does not directly help the anarchists, it does not hinder them in this situation, and our Ukrainian comrades (and all those on the side of the Ukrainian anarchists) gain combat experience by fighting imperialist aggression. Under conditions of peace, an attempt to undergo military training would be a cause for criminal prosecution. So, we are unequivocally positive about our comrades fighting at the front, it strengthens our movement.

Myth 6: By not taking part in the war, the working class abandons the weapons it can use to defend itself.

«To refuse to support the bourgeois war does not mean to surrender. But it is important to answer the strategic question of against whom and how to use the weapons? In this war they are being used against a currently more aggressive imperial bloc in defense of another imperial bloc. The working class is being dragged into the war while suffering the greatest losses. Such use of arms is counterproductive».

Let anyone who talks about the “confrontation between the two imperial blocs” give at least one relevant argument as to why Ukraine can be considered an imperialist state. Did Ukraine start a war? Did it intend to alienate territories and divide markets? Was it perhaps interested in genocide and the “Ukrainianization” of the Russian-speaking population living on its territory when it announced that it would resist Russian aggression? If you do not know what imperialism is, don’t use the word (or at least learn its meaning beforehand)!

«But if the guns are turned against the bourgeoisie, the military officers, or the structures of State power (Russian as well as Ukrainian), we have no problem with that. Fortunately, we can also see such cases on both sides of the war line. If the working class is to shed its blood, it is only for its own interests, which is not the same as bleeding for the fatherland, the nation, democracy or bourgeois wealth».

Neither are we against workers becoming revolutionary actors, but we do not live in a world of fairy dreams, where this comes out of blue, but in the harsh reality that neither Russia nor Ukraine has a strong workers’ movement. But this speculative thesis has one purpose: to cover up yet another attempt to crush the Ukrainian resistance, the authors of the manifesto have mentioned that they are also against the Russian structures of state power. Well, the agents of influence attack on all fronts, trying to pull our hesitant comrades to the position they want. But the essence of the resistance is different. Russia initiated the war, and when Russian soldiers point their bayonets against Russia, they want Russia to stop the war that it itself started. When Ukrainian soldiers do the same, they help Russia take over Ukraine, which has no interest in this war. And only an irrational person would think that the two sides of the conflict have equal interests. If equal, what are they? There is and will be no answer because, as stated above, those who use the word “imperialism” in their vocabulary do not know its meaning.

«The Ukrainian State makes sure that the armed forces are under the central command of its authorities and army, to which are submitted even those “anarchists” who have fallen headlong into militaristic tendencies. It can be assumed that even if the Russian army is militarily defeated, the Ukrainian State will seek to disarm the population which it is now arming under the watchful eye of the State authorities. In the past, whenever a State allowed anarchists to arm themselves to a greater extent, it later did everything possible to disarm them. Anarchists have more than once played the role of useful idiots who first fought for the interests of the State and the bourgeoisie, which they erroneously defined as the interests of the working class, only to end up, after fighting their battles, in prisons and torture chambers, before the courts and on the execution grounds of the very institutions that supplied them with arms».

When anarchists fought as part of the anti-Hitler coalition against Nazism, can they also be considered “useful idiots” who fought for the interests of the state? Of course, only in retrospect can we understand that Russia’s war against Ukraine is analogous to Nazi Germany’s war against the entire world, although fortunately it is not as powerful and large-scale. But remembering the historical experience, it is impossible not to mention how the European powers did not see Hitler as a threat, until he gained enough power and occupied Europe. So yes, the Europeans are enviably short-sighted. But in practice, Russian aggression is not inferior to the once German aggression, fortunately the Russian command has not yet thought of putting Ukrainians in concentration camps. However, this does not make it any easier, because pro-Ukrainian citizens in the occupied territories are tortured and killed, forced to pass humiliating filtration procedures, Ukrainian literature is burned, and the heritage of Ukrainian culture is destroyed. Many parallels can be made if respected analysts and anarchist gurus occasionally

gets out of a dusty room and looks at how the war is actually going on, which, unfortunately, they prefer not to do (or deliberately ignore).

Myth 7: The involvement of the Ukrainian population in the war was forced by the invasion of Russian troops.

« The Ukrainian population had a choice, but some chose the option of joining the war by entrenching themselves and defending the territory».

What choice they had? To die from Russian shells?

*«No one made the decision for these people. The choice is related to the strong patriotic and **nationalistic** tendency of the Ukrainian population, rather than being forced by circumstances or in the absence of any other option. In short, **Ukrainian nationalists** prefer to choose dying patriotically on the war front rather than waging a less risky but effective struggle from positions outside the “homeland” or inside the country but otherwise than by frontal military confrontation».*

Ukrainian nationalists! That is where the Shoe pinches!

Without bothering the reader with too much history of Ukrainian nationalism here, I will send him to read Michael Colborn’s “From the fires of war: Ukraine’s Azov Movement and the Global Far Right”, because I see no point in retelling it here. However, I would like to make a few important points: although there were Ukrainian nationalist organizations in Ukraine in 2014, they were not made up entirely of Ukrainian neo-Nazis. These were organizations that included both Ukrainian neo-Nazis and Russian and Belarusian neo-Nazis who had escaped persecution. To consider “Azov” an exclusively Ukrainian organization is not to know the history of its formation. Moreover, today “Azov” has been reorganized into a unit of the National Guard of Ukraine and is very much mixed up with representatives of other ideological beliefs (as well as other nationalities!), and to refer to the abstract atrocities of Ukrainian neo-Nazis from the “Azov” battalion is somewhat inconsistent with the spirit of the times. This does not mean, of course, that we should forget the genesis of this or that organization, but the transformation that Ukrainian nationalist organizations have experienced allows us to say today that they are not as nationalistic today as it is commonly believed (or not nationalistic at all), and propaganda is manipulated by outdated facts.

But even if we assume that the nationalists are still as rampant as they were in 2014, and that “Azov” is a neo-Nazi organization, and there is an entire Ukrainian government, which supports them, how do we explain that Ukraine is ruled by a Jew? And how do you explain that nationalist parties don’t even get a measly 5% of the vote in parliamentary elections? Information about political parties and their support in Ukraine is in the public domain. For some unknown reason, the nowbanned party “**Opposition Platform “For Life”**”, which was clearly pro-Russian and served as an FSB agent, makes its way to the Rada, but Ukrainian nationalists do not. This cannot be purely accidental. Ukrainians **are not** overwhelmingly nationalists, **much less** neo-Nazis. Ukrainians voted for their country’s independence in an all-Union referendum, but even by voting for a pro-Russian party, they did not vote for Russia’s occupation of their country. Yet the pro-Russian party found more supporters than the Ukrainian nationalists.

As confirmation of this, it is worth citing the statement of the Azov Regiment about how they feel about Nazism:

“The Azov Regiment’s appeal to Russia.

“Catch the thief!” is usually the loudest shout of all by the thief himself. Kremlin propaganda calls us Nazis and fascists and calls ourselves liberators who have come to “denazify” Ukraine.

Today, the entire world lives in a time of great deceptions, big lies, and tiny truths. Billions of dollars are spent to create the illusion of greatness and to promote the anti-human ideas of the “Russkiy mir” ideology. The same one that brings destruction, death, suffering, hunger, and fear.

*The only weapon in this struggle is the Truth.
And the truth is this: A treacherous monster attacked our land, and it is our right and duty to defend it.*

At the forefront of this defense stands Azov.

Azov is a National Guard unit that was formed from volunteers in 2014, after Russia seized Crimea and parts of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. It is a unit in which Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Greeks, Georgians, Crimean Tatars, and Belarusians serve. Soldiers of different faiths have been serving hand in hand in this unit for 8 years: Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Gentiles, Jews, and Muslims. Where the majority speaks Russian.

We despise Nazism and Stalinism, because our country suffered the most from these totalitarian regimes and false ideology.

Russia bombs Babyn Yar, where the victims of twentieth-century Nazism are buried. Putinists drop tons of shells on hospitals, schools, kindergartens, and churches. Putin's soldiers shoot the elderly, kill children and pregnant women, just as the Nazis once did.

Nazism is the unquenchable need to kill people who dare to be free. It is the certainty of one's right as a certain super nation and it is the certainty of the right to rule over other nations while raping and pillaging other nations. Doesn't it remind you of anything?

The difference is that Azov was, is and will be a shield for Ukraine until the occupant leaves our country. We have never attacked anyone, and the main purpose of Azov is to protect and develop our country, our people, and the lives of our citizens are more important than the ambitions of any politician.

We, the defenders of the heroic city of Mariupol, have taken up the shield and sword that protect not only Ukraine from the forces of evil and lies, but the entire civilized world from the plague of the 21st century. If we put the sword down, tomorrow the same fate will befall Kyiv and Lviv, and the day after tomorrow Warsaw, Berlin, and Paris. We wish thinking Russian people to overthrow that government that sends its sons to certain death for the sake of false illusions of a poisoned reality, instead of the people of Russia living, loving, and developing.

The Azov Regiment”.

As we can see, the “Nazi” Azov itself renounces its Nazi beliefs.

In France, for example, support for far-right Le Pen was nearly 50%, but for what reason is France not considered a Nazi country? An exceptionally good question to those who like to call Ukraine a Nazi country, basing their arguments on an analysis of the political scene, what exactly is the reason they do not do the same kind of analysis for other countries. And after all, the French far-right is very supportive of Russia in the war!

«Instead of a military defeat requiring too many casualties, a different resistance against the empire can be organized with fewer casualties. We can resist without dying needlessly on the war front.

We read reports about how much money the anarchists have raised to buy military equipment for Ukrainian soldiers. We ask ourselves how many successful direct actions against the war could have been carried out if these funds had not been swallowed up by the war machinery? Even from places as far from the front as Dresden, for example, it is possible to strike blows at the Russian army, economy and bureaucracy. It is frustrating to see anarchists pouring resources into the military rather than into activities that sabotage, block and undermine the war».

You cannot stop a war if you just stand there with anti-war posters. They have no effect if they are just posters. This is roughly the same methodology that the Russian liberals used to overthrow Putin: they brought people out to peaceful rallies against corruption in the hope that former Russian president and prime minister Dmitry Medvedev (who today writes horrifying things about the war in his Telegram channel and wishes Europeans freeze to death in their apartments without Russian gas) would report on his vineyards in Tuscany, and current president Vladimir Putin would reveal the secret of whose money he built the mind-boggling palace. But dictators are dictators because instead of reporting to the people on their actions or going to jail for violating the law, they poison their whistle-blowers with Novichok poisoning agent and then put them in jail.

And if the Russians could not overthrow Putin with posters, how would they get him to stop the war with posters? The question is rhetorical. Unfortunately, the Ukrainians will have to fight.

Myth 8: By getting involved in the war on the Ukrainian side, the interests of the working class in the Ukrainian region are defended.

«Let us ask ourselves what the military operations actually save. We have already mentioned the problematic nature of the claim that it is about human lives. Next, we could deal with the material facilities that are destroyed by shelling and bombing. For those working in Ukraine, these are mainly houses, apartments, cultural centers, shops, the infrastructure of urban transport and other services. All of this is mostly owned by the bourgeoisie or the State and is used to accumulate profits extracted from the workers who use them. Even if all of this serves in part to meet the needs of the workers, it is done on the basis of exploitative principles».

Suddenly, we live under capitalism. And suddenly, capital belongs to the capitalists. Is it the anarchists' fault? No, not at all. To reproach anarchists for defending Ukraine's infrastructure, which belongs to the capitalists, instead of expropriating it, is like reproaching a homeless person for not buying a house but living on the street. Maybe is that why he lives because he can't buy a house? Maybe is that why the Ukrainian anarchists defend the capitalist infrastructure because they **objectively** have no way to socialize it now?

«We are sympathetic to situations where militiamen in the Spanish Civil War fought to save buildings and infrastructure under workers' control. But why should workers in Ukraine die fighting to save bourgeois property and territory administered by the State? The workers of Ukraine own and manage only a tiny percentage of local wealth. We believe that international solidarity can provide adequate compensation for the facilities taken from the workers by the war. We understand how hard it is to give up what we see as our home and favorite places. But to put our lives on the line in defense of such places seems to us an unreasonable sacrifice, especially when we know that it is mainly a defense of the capitalists' property, in the management of which the workers have a negligible share».

How does the Spanish infrastructure differ strikingly from the Ukrainian one? Did the Spanish infrastructure, controlled by anarchists, provide some kind of special anarchist electricity, did the plumbing have special anarchist water, did the stores provide special anarchist bread? No, you cannot label food and utilities as political orientations. Anarchists stand for a fair distribution of goods, not for the distribution of only anarchist goods (though certainly the goods produced by anarchists are more ethical). Moreover, it is very strange that the authors separate the preservation of life from the preservation of infrastructure. If you think you can preserve life at the expense of infrastructure, take a field trip to Mariupol, where 95% of the infrastructure has been destroyed, and ask the remaining inhabitants of the ruins what it is like for them to live without the benefits of life. I am afraid that when choosing between a normally functioning city run by fascists and ruins where anarchism is strong, people would still prefer to live among fascists, because what is the point of anarchism in ruins where there are no benefits, and anarchists can't implement the main point of their economic program?

«Other defended facilities are industrial, manufacturing and warehouse buildings, as well as agricultural fields, mining, and construction companies. Although these are the places where capital retains the exploited class, already long before the war many Ukrainian workers fled from them to other countries in search of a better life. What interest do workers have in defending these places directly linked to their misery, places where they are exploited, humiliated and exhausted?»

The war is also aimed at defending the existing political and economic system, that is, the particular capitalist form that depends on the exploitation of workers and the domination of the State over the

population. This war aims at nothing else than capitalist functioning and it is not in the interest of the workers to shed their own blood in defense of such a system.

We are not saying that Ukrainian workers cannot save anything that is meaningful to them by waging war. It is just that we see that war is much more focused on protecting bourgeois property and privilege, as well as the infrastructure of State power. And this is not really in the interest of the workers. We say yes to defending the lives and personal backgrounds of the working class. We say no to dying and getting maimed in defense of bourgeois property and privilege. In the case of the war in Ukraine, it is primarily the latter that is being defended».

I have a question for the authors. Why the heck do they speak on behalf of Ukrainian workers, about their “true” interests? Why do they take on the function of preachers who are trying to set workers on the right path? Most of Ukraine’s population is working people. And most of them support the defense of their country. And they volunteer to work for it. And it is their **true** interest to defend themselves and their country. Whoever speaks for the workers, condemning the workers themselves for what they do, is not an anarchist, but a Marxist-Leninist, obviously. Of course, it would be good to encourage the workers to expropriate the means of production, but it makes no sense to turn to anarchists for this. Anarchists will not hold a gun to the temple of the working class and force them to govern themselves. They can direct it, but no more than that. And after all, if the anarchists call on the workers not to defend the supposedly bourgeois infrastructure and allow it to be destroyed, what will be left to expropriate? Or, as usual, are the authors living in fairy dreams, where workers spontaneously and once imbued with anarchist ideas? Why, then, did we wait until this very restless day and did not move on to anarchism earlier, since the workers are **so** conscious?

Myth 9: An open dictatorship is a less favorable terrain for selforganization than the liberal democracy for which Ukraine is fighting.

«This claim is purely speculative. It cannot be shown that the working class will organize more and better on democratic terrain than on non-democratic terrain»

Give me some examples. History is full of examples of how reactionary societies have suppressed the labor movement. The revolution in Spain is proof of this: the labor movement died when the fascists seized power. According to the logic of the authors, it should have thrived! A truly Hegelian postulate: if facts contradict to my theory, the worse for the facts.

«In the world we can see various more or less democratic or authoritarian terrains. In some places the class struggle is in decline or stagnating, in others it is developing in quality and quantity. To conclude that the struggles are declining automatically in dictatorships while rising in democracies is very inaccurate. In the debate, such a position is just the result of a flawed analysis. On the ground, however, it means shedding the blood of thousands of people while justifying this by that very flawed analysis».

What is its inaccuracy? The burden of proof is on those who claims. If you claim that a thesis is inaccurate, why do we have to prove its accuracy by accepting this view as an indisputable postulate?

«Fighting for liberal democracy on the grounds that we will have better terrain of struggle is like risking your life on a lottery bet in which there is the possibility of a big win, but there is nothing to eliminate the high risk of a tragic loss like death».

Similarly, fighting for liberal democracy on the grounds that we will have better terrain is like risking your life on a lottery bet in which there is the possibility of a big win, but there is nothing to eliminate the high risk of a tragic loss like death. Have you noticed it? I have changed one word, I have eliminated two. But what would our opponents say to such an objection? Nothing. Because, obviously, this is a

speculative statement that is not supported by anything. I can change it as I please, refuting both my immediate opponents and my own ideology.

Myth 10: Support for the Ukrainian population is often denied, on the basis of the presence of far-right forces, which are not that strong in the country

«The reason for not getting involved in the war on the Ukrainian side should not be motivated by the mere presence of neo-Nazis and neo-fascists in Ukraine. We have completely different reasons for not supporting the war. At the same time, however, we are struck by how the same people who present the war as a fight for democracy against dictatorship also downplay the Ukrainian far right. Even before the war, the latter had a strong influence on the political direction of the country towards more totalitarian forms. Why should we believe that after the war this force and tendency will disappear to be replaced by a free alternative?»

It is not good to downplay the problem of the far right in Ukraine with figures or by pointing to its weak representation in parliament, because it is clear that neofascist and neo-Nazi forces have the upper hand here, especially in the streets. This is being used by parliamentary forces to turn the course of government policy towards more authoritarian forms».

There are neo-fascist and neo-Nazi elements in so many countries, and they are also represented in the streets. We should fight fascism as a phenomenon, not overthrow the Ukrainian government with the justification that it is Nazi and is the main reason Nazism is flourishing in Ukraine. If you are so concerned about why there are some Ukrainians who support nationalism, you should study the genesis of these ideas. The Ukrainian government is not Nazi, far from it; there is plenty of pluralism there that cannot be found in one-party Nazi dictatorships. To deny that Nazism is marked primarily by a one-party dictatorship is to admit your own ignorance. And where is the Nazi model of government?

And don't you find these "refutations" contradictory? It was written above that Ukrainian workers are ready to take up arms and expropriate property now, establishing anarchy, and now it turns out that most Ukrainians and their government are latent Nazis, and Ukraine is on the road to dictatorship. This is schizophrenic.

Myth 11: Anarchists are against wars, but this one is different from the others, so we must get involved.

«What is interesting about this approach is that it can be seen in many military conflicts, although its proponents pretend that it is something unique. World War I and World War II, the various national liberation wars, and most recently the Rojava War. In all these wars, some anarchists come up with the same argument: we refuse to support the other wars, but this one is different, and we must take the side of one of the warring parties. Each time they mention that this support is critical, although the longer the support lasts the more this critical nature disappears until finally we see only pure war propaganda, which glosses over certain aspects but conceals, ignores or downplays other very important ones».

Well, anarchists do not have to participate in the war, that's a fact. If you do not want to kill, you have the right to do so. But you must also understand who in the conflict is the victim and who is the aggressor. We cannot blame the victim for defending themselves, even if we ourselves do not have guns in our hands. The authors, unfortunately, do. And by doing so, they do not contribute to peace, but only to tearing the victim to shreds.

«So, is the war in Ukraine different from the others? Yes and no. Every war is different from others in some ways. Different actors, different places, different weapons, different ideological justifications. At

the same time, all wars except class war are the same in their basic setting. It is always a fight between different power blocs in which the working class is fooled by different ideologies according to which it is in its interest to fight on one side or the other of the battle line. All wars – and the one in Ukraine is no exception – are the same in that the working class sacrifices its lives for the interests of this or that faction of the bourgeoisie but often in the naive belief that it is doing so for the benefit of its own lives».

Anarchists realize that they are not fighting for anarchism in this war. In fact, no anarchist group has yet declared that its ultimate goal is to build anarchism immediately after the war. We live in reality. Workers do make sacrifices, so they should be protected, especially if they were not the initiators of the war. Ukrainian workers were not. And they do not mind defending themselves at all.

Myth 12: The war has destabilized the Ukrainian State, opening up new possibilities for workers to defend their needs and interests.

«Interestingly, this is often claimed by the same people who, in response to our criticism of anarchists in the State army, affirm that anarchists in the Ukrainian region cannot organize as autonomous non-hierarchical units because the Ukrainian State will not allow it and is not willing to give them resources.

If the State was truly destabilized, nothing would prevent people from taking autonomous initiative. Instead, we see the State trying to centrally control activities in the country and suppress expressions of autonomy. The talk of destabilizing the Ukrainian State reflects a wish rather than a reality. The arming of the Ukrainian population is subject to the control of the State, thereby ensuring that the armaments are not used against itself. This brings us back to why the defensive fighting of the Ukrainian troops must be seen as defense and strengthening of the role of the State, and not as mere protection of the bombed population».

In essence, this “refutation” refutes some of the points made above. First the authors claim that workers have a choice other than armed self-defense, because they can turn bayonets against the state, and now it turns out that the state suppresses autonomy, and its weapons would not be turned against itself. Insightful!

Obviously, when Ukrainian soldiers defend Ukraine and Ukrainians, they are defending not only Ukrainians, but also the state. Because, it is not surprisingly, people live in the state. And, it is not surprisingly, they are not objectively anarchists. Can we blame that on anarchists? No. I have answered above in sufficient detail why we cannot.

Myth 13: Opposing the struggle of Ukrainian troops because it benefits Western elites is like opposing industrial strikes because they benefit capitalist competitors.

In this “refutation” the authors use an analogy. Let us decipher it.

«There are many companies competing on the world market, all trying to gobble up the next competitor in order to gain an advantage over all other competitors. At one point, one company attacks another in such an aggressive way that even its employees start dying. The surrounding companies supply the employees with weapons to defend the workplace against the aggressors, not primarily to save their bare lives, but to gain partial control over the workplace resources and the surviving employees who are so fiercely defending it with their lives by defeating the more aggressive competitor.

In such a case, who other than competing companies would have an interest in supplying weapons to the challenged company? After all, it is not in the interest of the workers to defend their employer's company in order to transfer part of the company's resources to another capitalist».

Deciphering: There are many countries on the world stage, all trying to gobble up the next country to gain an advantage over all other countries. At one point, one country attacks another in such an aggressive way that even its citizens start dying. The surrounding countries supply the citizens with weapons to defend their country against the aggressors, not primarily to save their bare lives, but to gain partial control over country's resources and the surviving citizens who are so fiercely defending their country with their lives by defeating the more aggressive state.

In such a case, who other than competing nations would have an interest in supplying weapons to the challenged country? After all, it is not in the interest of the citizens to defend their country's government in order to transfer part of the country's resources to another country.

So, as we can see, another influence technique is used here: to try to push the idea that Ukraine is just a marionette in the hands of Western governments, that supply Ukraine with weapons to weaken and plunder this country, through a blurred analogy. In general, another argument from the category of "imperialistic bloc".

For what reason did the authors not want to call things by their proper names? Well, because by deciphering the analogy, its absurdity becomes quite clear. In this analogy, the attacking country is Ukraine, and it pursues the interests of the Western "imperialistic bloc". In other words, it is again Ukraine's fault that Russia attacked it.

The second aspect is that the thesis "to plunder Ukraine" is not supported by facts. This conclusion has no empirical basis. Ukraine is being plundered exclusively by Russia, not the West. The West pursues a double policy: it supplies weapons to Ukraine, but at the same time buys Russian energy resources – what kind of state trades directly with its enemies if, as is claimed, the West were to receive resources from the Ukraine it plundered? How the West plunders Ukraine is not quite clear. Perhaps, of course, the West will soon demand that Ukraine pay for arms supplies, but it would be fair to pay for it with Russian reparations, since Russia is the reason Ukraine is buying arms and getting into debt.

Everywhere we look, it appears that Ukraine is neither a bargaining chip between the supposedly opposing blocs (the bargaining chip is, however, the inhabitants of the LPR and DPR, whose protection was supposedly casus belli for the Russian invasion) nor an aggressor. The narrative that is being put forward as an argument is entirely the rhetoric of Russian propaganda, which is being propagandized mainly among Russian Stalinists.

This interpretation is further confirmed:

«That strikes will in some sense be used by capitalist competitors is a side effect, not the primary content of the strike struggle. In the case of the war in the Ukraine, the primary objective is to win resources for one or another bourgeois competitor, sacrificing mostly proletarian lives in the struggle. To achieve this sacrifice, the proletarians are mobilized for the struggle through nationalist ideology. If the struggle they undergo in doing so leads to the saving of some lives, this is a side effect of the main objective of the war, which is the redistribution of the territory and resources of the Ukraine between the capitalist competitors.

Let us recap. A bourgeois war and a workers' strike are two completely different kinds of conflict in terms of content. War pursues primarily bourgeois interests for which it mobilizes workers. A strike pursues primarily the interests of the workers, even if capitalist competitors try to wrest something from it for themselves. In a war, the resources for conflict are supplied by rival bourgeois factions; in a strike, the workers rely primarily on their own resources, because they have no reason to expect them from the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie has no reason to supply them, because it would risk them being directed against itself».

Reducing the conflict to the typical question of "who benefits from this" is a characteristic feature of the Russian "tankies". And here I should say that if everything really came down to this question, we could state that it was the Tbilisi and Yerevan property owners who arranged it all. But the world

is not black and white, and it is not reducible to one interest of the bourgeoisie and one interest of the workers. We should not operate only with the base, when we study the details of the processes going on in the world, we must also consider the superstructure. For workers, the superstructure and everything that goes into it is important: language, cultural customs, ways of life. When a hostile country comes and destroys its language, way of life, and culture, replacing them with its own language, way of life, and culture, the worker being involuntarily not only the part of his class, but also being the part of nation, and this is not always of an aggressive sort of involvement.

To reduce people to a faceless mass, to one class only, is a Marxist-Leninist tactic. It is deeply anti-individualistic. Anarchism is individualistic. In addition to the individual's belonging to society, there is the individual's belonging to the personal. Every person wants to realize basic human rights: the right to life (first!), the right to speak his own language, the right to love and respect the heritage of his culture in the context of the place where he was born. These are quite natural needs. When another country's army comes and destroys all of this, it is ridiculous to hide behind pacifism and ignore people's desires to preserve their collective identity.

As Errico Malatesta wrote: *«We abhor war, which is always fratricidal and damaging, and we want a liberating social revolution; we deplore strife between peoples and champion the fight against the ruling classes. But if, by some misfortune, a clash were to erupt between one people and another, we stand with the people that are defending their independence»* (Errico Malatesta "The War and the Anarchists").

Alexei Borovoy also made a crucial point:

“Anarchism is the science of culture! For anarchism does not call for the destruction, but for the overcoming of culture. Does not call for the senseless destruction and plundering of the heritage of the people, but for the careful preservation of the values in which the creative achievements of humankind are contained, which are necessary to our final, uninterrupted emancipation. Anarchism is the inheritor of all past human emancipatory aspirations and is responsible for their preservation”.

We cannot ignore people's culture and identity. We cannot trash people's desire to consider themselves Ukrainians and feel their connection to the land. To break this connection is to destroy the identity of the people. This is what the imperialist policy of Russia and many other imperialist countries is aiming at regarding independent nations. And although we know very well that the base determines the superstructure, we cannot say that the base denies it (in the nonHegelian sense)! Our task as anarchists, then, is to help oppressed nations find their collective identity and to destroy empires that do not take this identity into consideration.

Does Russia only commit genocide against the Ukrainian population? No, it even genocides those who inhabit its "inner colonies". According to statistics, most of those mobilized are from national republics – Buryatia, Tyva, Kalmykia, Yakutia – the so-called "national minorities". There are 87.5 Dagestanis, 275 Buryats and 350 Tuvans per one Muscovite killed in the war. Disproportionate mobilization becomes a hot topic in the media (<https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-62259319>).

Imperialism is omnipresent. And it is foolish to believe that Putin is fighting with Ukraine just because it is a fight with the West. He is fighting because he does not want Ukraine to be an independent country. And he also does not want the nations conquered by Russia to see the potential of that independence and strive for self-liberation. I am not writing any new things. What I express has been written by Mikhail Bakunin, and he can rightly be called the theorist of anti-imperialism.

Myth 14: This is not a war of imperial blocs, but an invasion by a single empire that wants to subjugate its neighbors who have nothing to do with imperialism.

«Seeing Putin's Russia as the sole imperial aggressor in this war is exactly what we are often accused of: trying to fit reality to our own ideological conclusions.»

Apparently, imperialism is reduced by some to a tendency to exercise power by military invasion, brutal usurpation of the resources of the invaded and their violent subjugation. But imperialism has other expansion mechanisms than aggressive military invasion. Domination also takes the form of economic pressures or pressure on the political configuration of neighboring countries so that the political terrain is as favorable as possible to the interests of transnational economic actors. This is precisely what is happening when the imperial bloc represented by the US, the Western countries and the European Union supplies weapons and other war materials in order to secure an economic and political arrangement in Ukraine that leaves the door open for it to plunder local resources and favor economic activities.

At the moment, Western imperialism does not want to subjugate the Ukrainian population by military force, in the same way as the Russian empire, but this still means that it exploits it for its imperial interests and that it wants to secure convenient access to resources on Ukrainian territory.

Here we see several imperial blocs waging a war for the redistribution of the territory and resources of the post-Soviet space. Some imperialists are doing this by direct military intervention in Ukraine, others by supplying arms to make the Ukrainian population on the front bleed for their cause».

If the Ukrainians have weapons to counter Russian aggression, why can't they use those same weapons against the West, if the West is really plundering Ukraine? Maybe the whole point is that it is not plundering it? After all, where is the direct and indirect evidence of this? This position does not stand up to criticism because it has no basis. Ukrainians are neither blind nor deaf, and they would have noticed perfectly well how the Western imperialists are draining resources from Ukraine. The only thing Ukraine supplies is grain. But it is not for the sake of capitalists' profits, but because there is a humanitarian disaster in the world, and the threat of world hunger looms before us. Or do the authors of this manifesto really think that feeding poor people in Africa with Ukrainian grain, which Ukraine itself exports, is robbery by Western "partners"?

«Some anarchists go very far in their cynicism. They claim that “no NATO army is fighting in Ukraine”. In this way they are merely chewing the propaganda of the Western imperialists, masking the fact that NATO is fighting in Ukraine through the Ukrainian population, which it supplies with weapons from its own warehouses. If we see and condemn imperialist Russia, it should not be in a way where we support the imperialist West while hiding its imperialist nature, strategies and goals.

Support for the armed democratic movement in Ukraine is in reality support for Western imperialism with its Ukrainian government».

NATO enters this war only indirectly, and precisely because it does not want a direct confrontation with Russia (what a confrontation!) – although, of course, things can change as long as Russian missiles “accidentally” fall on Poland. That is one point. Another is that Ukraine has no one else to ask for weapons from. We can assume that NATO countries would not supply weapons to Ukraine, and that other countries outside the bloc would do so. This would not change the situation: Ukraine would still have weapons, although not of very high quality. Ukraine would have fought the same way because the value of Ukraine is not weapons, but its independence. The thesis that Russia, having attacked Ukraine, is fighting with NATO – it is what Russian propaganda constantly broadcasts. But Russia is fighting with Ukraine only. Of course, the world is helping Ukraine to hold out. But it does so not because it is the initiator of the aggression itself, which forced Russia to “launch a preemptive strike”, but because Ukraine is objectively weaker than Russia, and if Russia conquers Ukraine, it will inflame it, and it will want to conquer more and more territory, conquering completely irrationally.

It is worth saying that the point of view expressed reproduces with precision the theses of the failed Russian ideology – Eurasianism (“Duginism”) – is developed by the right-wing radical and neo-fascist Alexander Dugin. Eurasianism is totally focused on geopolitics and believes that the struggle in the political arena is between such “opposing blocs”, and in this struggle Russia acts as an original civilization, which needs to become a point of attraction for the European and Asian tendencies of social development. This ideology is secondary, although it carries significant weight, especially among students of philosophy at leading Russian universities. One of the main ideas is Russia's expansion and the spread of its geopolitical influence. Anyone can read Dugin's opus filled with occultism, chauvinism,

and metaphysics (if, of course, you really want to torture yourself with it) to verify the truth of this description. In other words, Russian ideologues and propagandists project their desires onto others and make the public believe in the truth of this projection. After all, a country, that treacherously attacked the other country cannot simply call itself an aggressor; it needs an excuse. Russia has many such excuses, and their main message is self-defense.

But dictators often use this message. Hitler, attacking Poland on September 1, 1939, said: *“For months we have been suffering under the torture of a problem which the Versailles Diktat created – a problem which has deteriorated until it becomes intolerable for us. Danzig was and is a German city. The Corridor was and is German. Both these territories owe their cultural development exclusively to the German people. Danzig was separated from us, the Corridor was annexed by Poland. As in other German territories of the East, all German minorities living there have been ill-treated in the most distressing manner. More than 1,000,000 people of German blood had in the years 1919–1920 to leave their homeland.*

As always, I attempted to bring about, by the peaceful method of making proposals for revision, an alteration of this intolerable position”.

Just as Hitler allegedly wanted to protect the German population, Putin declared war because he allegedly wanted to protect the Russians in the Donbass. And apparently, like Hitler, he started this war for the sake of peace, making his country look like a bastion of justice, which now **is forced** to fight against Western aggression. Once again, Ukraine is guilty of simply existing and not being able to take the **forced measures** that Russia is going to take to defend itself! After all, if my perception is wrong, then why are the authors so concerned that Ukraine chooses the West over Russia, which also carries out imperialist plunder? What about revolutionary impartiality and “bayonet in the ground”? What about the revolutionary alternative? Or will Russia be the most consistent and revolutionary imperialist between the two imperialists? Obviously, the authors cannot answer the question of why they are singling out a favorite in their “refutations”. They want to accuse Ukraine of collaborating with imperialism simply because this gives them a basis for justifying Russian aggression: if Ukraine is also “imperialist”, then Russia and Ukraine are on an equal footing, and it turns out that the victim is not Ukraine, which Russia bombs with shells, but Russia, which **was forced** to start this war. It is convenient, nothing to say!

Myth 15: The analysis of anarchists and leftists, especially in the West, is short-sighted because they see imperialism only in the US, NATO and its allies, not in Russia.

«We are sure that all those who criticize the support given to the Ukrainian army do not overlook Russia’s imperial position. We also know for sure that some people, in turn, see imperialism only on the Russian side. They do not acknowledge its existence on the Western side, or they downplay it by saying that Western imperialism is not manifesting itself in this conflict in the invasive and domineering way that Russia is. We have already noted that Western imperialism is, in fact, expansionist, like Russia’s one, but that it pursues its interests indirectly by supporting the Ukrainian army, which is fighting battles for its interests.

If it is myopic to see imperialism only on the side of the US and its allies, we should measure those who see imperialism only in Russia by the same yardstick. Our refusal to support the war does not consist in denying Russia’s imperial role, nor in demonizing the imperial role of “the West”. We refuse to support all imperial powers. We refuse to see the empire only on one side of the battle line, because we see it in every State that supports the war and thereby pursues its own imperial interests above all. Yes, we see differences in the degree of brutality used by each State. However, this is a reflection of their current capacities, which is a variable. States that are less aggressive now because they are pushed

on the defensive may become as brutal as Russia tomorrow if they lack the means to do so at present. Anyone who chooses to support one empire in war against another should be aware that in doing so he is providing the weakest empire with the means for future aggression».

The authors have not yet named the imperial powers and their actions specifically. When anarchists say that Russia follows an imperialist policy, they can justify this by citing Russia's own actions as an argument. Russia is a concrete political entity, a **single** sovereign state. "The West" is an **aggregate**. Of course, we sometimes reduce certain policies to the actions of the "collective West", but we do so consciously and understand that some decisions are indeed made collectively. You can, of course, start listing in alphabetical order all the countries that have imposed sanctions against Russia, for example, but it is very convenient to use the name of the aggregate for this. As for imperialism, we cannot call the entire West imperialistic, because otherwise the word "imperialism" ceases to make sense. Imperialism is characterized by the hegemony of **one** country, and the only country that falls under this category and yet is Western is the United States. But the U.S. is not the entire West. Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Poland, Italy, Spain – it is impossible to list them all. Are they imperialistic all at once, too? Do they have the same policy as Russia? And what is it about? And how can these countries all at once become as brutal as Russia?

The West is not an empire. Only countries can be empires. It is not so much the "Western" states that are now resorting to imperialism. For example, Turkey, China, Israel. And you can justify this by referring to their practice (or desire) of expansion through the enslavement of peoples living in the territories they claim.

For Turkey it is Kurdistan, for China it is Taiwan, for Israel it is Palestine. It makes no sense to talk about Western expansion, because there is no such state, and therefore no one can talk about the geopolitical interests of the entire West.

It is worth saying that "West" has in many ways two meanings: the West as NATO countries and the West as member states of the European Union. Let us first consider the European Union and give the rationale why it cannot be imperialistic.

The European Union is a kind of confederation. But each country is autonomous, and to speak of the expansionism and imperialism of the European Union is to admit an ignorance of how it functions. But I think Europeans should know well that the European Union has no attributes of a state, although it is a subject of international law. Its organs are supranational. Any country can leave the European Union and join it, which cannot be a sign of its imperialist nature. The European Union is the most decentralized subject of international law that exists in the world today.

Speaking of NATO countries, it is more complicated than that. The NATO bloc was indeed created to confront a geopolitical adversary, the Soviet Union, and NATO was essentially a tool that the United States used against the USSR. But it made sense at the time: ideological confrontation and the fear that the Soviet Union was threatening the capitalist world. Today, the Soviet Union has disintegrated, and all the countries that were part of the USSR have become capitalistic. NATO remained as a collective military security body. And, as it turned out, the fears were justified indeed: although today's Russia, as the successor of the USSR, is no longer socialistic, it is still imperialistic. The USSR had not overcome the imperialism of the Russian Empire, and Russia had not overcome the imperialism of the USSR and was infected with the plague of revanchism. However, as the experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war shows, for 10 months NATO has never sent tanks to the Kremlin and does not seem very interested in sending them even after the incident in Przewodów, trying to put it down to an accident (and even if it is an accident – should not this "accident" be able to attract NATO's attention and make it help Ukraine by closing its sky, for example? How many more such "accidents" will there be at the very moment when Russia is shelling Ukraine with a record number of missiles?).

NATO is also not a state, and although it dances to the tune of the U.S., is obviously **not interested** in war with Russia. After all, if NATO and the U.S. were interested, they would find a way to "restore democracy in Russia". NATO does not attack even after obvious provocations from the Russian side. Is it possible to talk about American imperialism in this situation? Neither NATO nor the Americans,

who have control over this organization, are enslaving Russia. They want Ukraine not to be taken over, not the collapse of Russia (it may indeed collapse at the end of the war, although it is unlikely that it will do so as a result of “Western redistribution”, since the West is not even discussing this). This is the **key** difference.

In other words, we cannot simply put on labels and assume that if a country behaves like an imperialist in one case, it will behave the same in another. Empires, oddly enough, also have their priorities. And the Americans’ priority is to keep Europe intact, not to arrange a redistribution of Ukraine for the sake of a dubious confrontation with Russia. The thesis of a confrontation between two imperialist powers seems to have been stuck in the late 1970s. It is time to update the propagandist guides!

Myth 16: The claim that the two warring sides are the same is a common ideological justification for not standing up for the massacred Ukrainian population.

«This myth is obviously based on a misinterpretation of the statement that this is a war between imperial powers, and it is a mistake to take sides with one of them. This is not to say that the two sides are the same in all respects. What is meant is that they are both bourgeois, and therefore it is contrary to the interests of the working class to oppose one bourgeois faction while at the same time defending the other bourgeois faction.»

Both sides are the same in their bourgeois content. However, each applies different forms and means to enforce this content. The fact that some do it in more aggressive and brutal ways should not be an argument for joining with the lesser aggressors and bleeding for their interests».

This is a very subtle psychological trick! One time the authors write that no, the confrontation is between Western countries and Russia, and therefore it is two empires, and now it turns out that Ukraine, being the object of this myth, is imperialistic, and the struggle between Russia and Ukraine is a struggle of two imperial powers (no proof, as usual). The argument swings like a pendulum from side to side, but this sophistry is obvious to any thinking person. So yes, the arguments presented are a compilation of everything that can convince people not to support Ukraine. Since our much-respected comrades do not support either side, why are they so fond of criticizing Ukraine, mentioning Russia casually only? This is not accidental. Russia and Ukraine are in an unequal position. Russia has relatively peaceful sky (for now, but if they cease to be peaceful, it will be entirely Russian’s fault). In Ukraine it is not peaceful. Therefore, the question you are being asked has a different meaning. They are trying to ask you **if you are cannibals**, since you deny people the right to self-defense. But the answer is probably going to be disappointing for you.

Myth 17: People who have not experienced occupation by the troops of an imperial power will find it difficult to understand why the people of Ukraine are defending themselves through war mobilization.

«This myth is based on the stereotype that those who have not experienced something cannot understand it and certainly cannot be empathetic to those who have. It is in fact a kind of hierarchization, where the opinion of survivors has a high value, while the opinion of people without direct experience is considered worthless and fundamentally misguided. For example, the Czech Anarchist Federation states on its website:

“The historical experience of occupation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is clearly not transferable and is difficult to understand in regions that have not been occupied or even have their own imperial past.” [Anarchistická federace, O lidi musí jít především [People must come first]: <https://www.afed.cz/text/7724/people-must-come-first/>].

We disagree with statements along the lines of “you haven’t experienced it, so your positions will always be out of touch”. In fact, opinions on the issue vary considerably even among the survivors of the occupying forces’ aggression themselves. By the way, we live in a country that was occupied by Nazi troops and later by Warsaw Pact troops, yet we agree with the statement of the FAI (Anarchist Federation of Italy), which the Czech Anarchist Federation tries to counter by claiming that the position of the Italian section is based on misunderstanding due to not having lived through the occupation experience. People do not have to have been raped themselves to show an empathetic connection with those who experience rape. Likewise, people who have been raped can be callous and misguided. If the lived experience of occupation should automatically lead to greater empathy and appropriate analysis, then how do we explain the right-wing populism and nationalism that ran rampant during the Nazi and Stalinist occupation of Czechoslovakia?»

It is interesting that the occupation is compared to rape. Well, by analogy, if you are raped in the street, you should not resist it, because it is violence, and you should just politely ask the rapist not to rape you, and they will not! Don’t you see the absurdity of this thesis?

Experience does affect perception. A person who has been raped is more likely to understand another person who has been raped because it is a **traumatic** experience that he or she carries over to himself or herself. So does an occupation. Or do our comrades completely disagree that occupation is a traumatic experience for a people?

But sometimes you can empathize without being under occupation. Empathy is responsible for this. Some people have atrophied empathy and are incapable of extrapolating some people’s traumatic experiences to themselves. They are incapable of understanding that sleeping on the floor of a damp basement and running under flying shells is a traumatic experience. They are incapable of seeing people as **people**, seeing only a faceless mass that they can call whatever they want: “khokhols” [ethnic slur used by some Russians for the Ukrainians] or, in the case of those who wrote this manifesto, “workers” – having no idea that their average idea of people corresponds only to a stereotypical representation.

The human experience is unique. Although each person does experience certain traumatic events in his or her own way (some do not consider the occupation of Czechoslovakia to be any great misfortune either), on average we see that people’s way of life has significantly changed – and not for the better. The military is not fighting against each other in an open field. Russia regularly commits war crimes and does so with near impunity. It must be stopped by brute force, and there is nothing contradictory or inconsistent with the anarchist view. After all, if you think any brute force is unacceptable, then how do you come to support a revolution which, according to right-wing adherents, is violent?

No, you understand perfectly well that these two things – state or capitalist institutional violence and the attempt to resist it directly – cannot be compared. That there is, as Slavoj Žižek wrote in his essay “On Violence”, objective violence and subjective violence. But Slavoj Žižek was smarter than some anarchists; he was able to discern in the Russian military aggression the objective side of violence (Russia’s enslavement of Ukrainians), the violence, that Ukrainians resist using subjective violence (armed resistance proper). Failure to understand this difference also nullifies the anarchist argument why we do not consider it unethical to resist the state and capitalism. Or, as usual, instead of accepting this inconvenient fact that violence differs in origin and character, would the authors prefer to perform mental gymnastics and condemn Ukrainians for resisting the attempts of a state hostile to them to enslave them?

Myth 18: The resistance of the Ukrainian troops is based on the voluntary involvement of the Ukrainian population, which decided to join the fight.

«Saying such a thing is as silly as saying that all Russian citizens support Putin's invasion of Ukraine. There are thousands of people who volunteer to join both the Ukrainian and Russian armies. Just as there are many who evade the draft, desert, or emigrate to avoid having to serve in the army.

Not all Ukrainians are burning with the desire to fight for "their" bourgeois elites and the capitalist oligarchs who control them. The Ukrainian State is aware of this, which is why it tries to force participation in the army through involuntary recruitment.

According to the independent Kharkov website "Assembly", subpoenas are most often distributed in the same places in the city. Forced summonses are carried out by military police, armed soldiers, "territorial defense" fighters and police officers – in cars and in on foot patrols.

According to an eyewitness, those handing out summonses at the entrance to Klas in Odessa were very loudly indignant that they could not catch anyone. Judging by the feedback from users on the Telegram channel, these actions are causing growing public indignation.

The recruits hunting is taking place at gas stations, on streets and intersections, in stores, at places where humanitarian aid is distributed... Some people try not to accept the call, for example, by sitting in their cars and not opening their windows. Some try to resist. In response, the women of the men called up have had their arms broken and have been threatened.[<https://assembly.org.ua/kakvruchayut-povestki-na-uliczah-kharkova-i-chto-ob-etom-govoryat-yuristy/>]

The Russian anarchist portal a2day.org states:

"Although there are many people who want to fight against the aggressor, it is a common practice in Ukraine to catch draft-age men on the street and give them a draft order, then give them a medical examination in five minutes and send them to a military unit where such unprepared and often unfit recruits are not welcome. According to volunteer movement activist Valery Markus, such forcibly mobilized soldiers who do not want to fight are a potential bomb; they can desert and abandon their positions at any time; they are a waste of valuable resources and are useless anyway."[<https://a2day.org/armiya-sluzhba-i-otkaz/>]

We have no doubt that many persons engage in war activities quite voluntarily. However, this is not a proof that there are not many who are forced to do so or who avoid it. While the case of the former continues to be brought to the forefront of the media by pro-Ukrainian war propaganda, the latter are mostly ignored. If they talk about them, then it is done in the form of downplaying and belittling. There is a strong tendency to portray such people as a marginal phenomenon. A kind of aberration or exception to the rule that the Ukrainian population voluntarily joins the army units and happily rushes to the front.

If the Russian State is rightly accused of war propaganda manipulation of facts, the same yardstick should be applied to pro-Ukrainian war propaganda, which uses identical manipulative mechanisms».

I am not going to verify these claims, because I do not see the point. Amazingly, in a country where martial law is declared, men are mobilized! And it would also be quite surprising, but yes, it turns out not all men want to fight. There is always a percentage of those who do not want to fight, including in a country that is defensive. And even, surprisingly, there are collaborators in every country, both in the country that is fighting and in the country that is defending. But if you want to approach the question impartially, you have to compare how many mobilization orders Ukraine issued and how many people showed up at the recruitment center and got to the front (minus, again, some margin of error if people who did not want to fight showed up at the recruitment center). You must compare the number of refuseniks with the number of those who went voluntarily to the territorial defense of Ukraine. In other words, there must be a cross-section, a statistic. If not, then the analysis makes no sense: is it worth

laying down arms for the sake of a critical minority of citizens who do not want to defend themselves and their homes?

I am afraid that the statistics will not be on the side of those who call for laying down arms.

It is also worth noting that in this “refutation”, the focus is again on Ukraine, while the everyday life of the Russian “partial mobilization” is not mentioned. If we are really talking about desertion, the Russians have excelled the Ukrainians. It was not the Ukrainians who ran into the woods to hide, but the Russians, and it was the Russians who stormed the borders of neighboring countries to leave, because they are obviously being sent to their deaths.

You could, of course, make the argument that if Ukraine’s borders were open, Ukrainians would also storm their neighbors to escape mobilization. But this does not correspond to reality. Ukrainians themselves were lining up to receive weapons, going to the recruitment centers themselves. There is plenty of documentary evidence of this, including video footage. But there was no such thing in Russia. There was a kilometer-long traffic jam on Upper Lars checkpoint, but there was not a single kilometer-long line to the recruitment center.

That says a lot.

And as for the thesis that not all Russians support Putin, that is true. But what good is it if they do not support him if they are passive? Why haven’t the respected anarchist comrades asked their favorite question: shouldn’t the Russian deserters have taken up arms and gone to overthrow Putin? This is a reasonable question, because the respected anarchist comrades demand this of the Ukrainian workers with regard to their government, but demand nothing of the Russian workers with regard to the Russian government. There is a total inconsistency in this. If the anarchist comrades are **against all governments**, shouldn’t the condemnation of those who escaped mobilization or went to the front without wanting to turn bayonets against the Russian government follow?

But condemnation seems to work only one way.

Myth 19: Refusing to support Ukrainian military forces means sacrificing the population to the bombing by Russian troops.

«We do not want to elaborate further on why not supporting the war does not necessarily mean denying aid to people who are resisting aggressors – both Russian and Ukrainian. We will only add the information that it is the Ukrainian State that, under threat of punishment, forbids the male part of the Ukrainian population to leave the country and recruits thousands of men into the army to effectively stay in the places where the bombing is taking place. It is the Ukrainian State that is sacrificing these people against their will, possibly by mobilizing them under the pressure of patriotic and nationalist propaganda. We, on the other hand, say that no one should be denied the opportunity to move to a place of safety when they are in danger of being maimed or killed by the bombs of the attacking imperial army».

And what does, excuse me, the Russian state do in this same case? Doesn’t it send people to their deaths? Doesn’t it punish those who do not want to go to a neighboring country to kill civilians? There seems to be no impartiality in this argument. And once again we have to be convinced that what the authors of this manifesto crucified above by saying that they are not stirring up anti-Ukrainian sentiment has no weight.

This is not even mentioning the question of **which country** is bombing Ukraine and endangering not only Ukrainian men, but also women, the elderly, and children. Thank you for mentioning at least casually that the imperial Russian army is dropping bombs on people, but yes, against the background of Ukraine’s military mobilization this factor of Ukrainian men’s mortality is insignificant (no, it is significant).

The position that says that Ukraine, like Russia, should also lay down its arms since its men going to the front are dying does not consider one huge difference: Ukraine would gladly stop fighting if Russia withdrew from its territory. Ukraine would stop fighting if it restored its borders established in 1991. Russia, on the other hand, is the initiator of aggression and does not risk any of its sovereignty. Russian men are not even sent to die for freedom (in any sense of the word), but for the political ambitions of the Kremlin clique. Here lies the key difference: Ukraine **values** its servicemen. Ukraine celebrates every exchange of prisoners of war as a holiday. Russia, on the other hand, drives mobile crematoriums across the battlefield to burn the bodies of deceased “heroes” and is unwilling to remove the corpses from the Ukrainian fields, which remain there to rot. This gives us a concrete understanding of who is expendable material and who is a defender in this war.

Such a situation, of course, does not mean that someone who is left so badly scarred by his country that it does not even wish to bury everyone with dignity does not deserve sympathy. In part it does, but not as a “neighbor”, according to Nietzsche, but as a “distant one”, since the Russian soldier is pitied not because he was not honored, but because he was so badly duped by imperial chauvinist propaganda that he got all ideas of ethical and unethical off axes, and he went to make the institutionalized killings of citizens of a neighboring country. But this is a question that lies in the plane of human dignity. Since a Russian soldier does not challenge such decisions and goes along to kill because “an order is an order”, his fate is predictable, and he himself has no human dignity – and for that he is kicked in the head by those whom he, a man without conscience, has come to kill. Fair enough. For the freedom of my fist ends with my neighbor’s nose – a basic anarchist principle.

Myth 20: People who refuse to support the resistance of the Ukrainian army cling to abstract ideological dogmas that cannot practically help those affected

«Those who reject war are often the same people who help those affected by war. At the same time, some are actively sabotaging the continuation of the war, hampering the war industry, and disrupting war mobilization through practical actions. For example, the Italian anarchist federation FAI, promoting nonparticipation in the war, declares:

“The first commitment of those who oppose the war is the construction and dissemination of mutual aid practices such as networks of solidarity from below to fulfill the immediate needs of the people who suffer most from the consequences of the conflict, being these food or medical support. There is also the need of support networks for those who practice strikes, sabotage, desertion, such as transnational networks for those who hide or flee from or over both sides of the front.” [Federazione Anarchica Italiana (FAI-IAF), For a new Anarchist Manifesto Against The War, English translation: https://www.federazioneanarchica.org/archivio/archivio_2022/20220722manifestonowar_en.html].

This is not an ideology detached from life. These are concrete practical steps that save lives and help to organize them in a more just way than is conceivable in the case of any war mobilization by conflicting powers».

Helping people, of course, is great. Such initiatives that help people affected by war, including defectors (including Ukrainian ones, if there are any: after all, if people really do not want to defend their country, they have the right to do so, although this may seem cowardly to some), should be welcomed. But it is worth remembering: Ukrainian (and Russian) refugees will not live in Europe forever. They will have to return to their homes. Therefore, Ukraine is fighting now, so that Ukrainians can return home and live as normal as before the war, and Russian refugees can return without fear of being imprisoned or sent to the front to fight if they do not want to. Above I wrote why the methods proposed by the authors of the manifesto do not work – they have not proven themselves practically. However, both sabotage (again, on the territory of the aggressor country, because sabotage on the

territory of Ukraine is harmful, I also wrote why), and economic sanctions are necessary, but only as a supporting tool. These measures cannot replace a fullfledged armed struggle. Helping refugees is about treating the symptoms, not the disease. For refugees to live well, they must return to their homes, not wander around the world in search of asylum. This is a known fact. For them to return, Ukraine must liberate its territories and rebuild its cities.

Myth 21: People rejecting the military resistance of the Ukrainians are only interested in ideological purity and do not care about real people.

«The accusation of disregard for the victims of war aggression is at this point more emotionally tinged than based on truth. For the refusal to engage in war in our conception is not motivated by concern for abstract ideas and disinterest in the concrete people of the bombed-out cities. On the contrary, these people are of primary concern in our analysis.

The black and white vision that divides people into considerate supporters of the Ukrainian army and reckless opponents of support is very misleading. In reality, both camps are often driven by an equally sincere desire to be as helpful as possible to a maimed and murdered population. What differs is their position on the question of what is an appropriate and effective method of aid. Some see it in supporting the war effort on the Ukrainian side, others in subverting the war effort on all sides of the war line.

We will not accuse our opponents of not caring about the people sacrificed in the war. We do not think they are unscrupulous, only that they are mistaken in their estimates. They are wrong when they say that the lives of the bombed population are best protected by joining the war effort.

As the popular saying goes, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”. And therefore, we cannot avoid to criticize the war propagandists within anarchist circles on the grounds that “they mean well”. Our analysis goes deeper than the intentions themselves and relates to who is making the claims. We are primarily interested in what is actually happening. Thus, when people sacrifice lives for bourgeois interests on the battlefield, and others interpret this as defending civilian lives from a deadly war, then we are saying: war leads to escalating brutalization and mass murder, not to the protection of lives».

Those who believe that Ukraine should defend itself are essentially inventing nothing. We are voicing the position held by the vast majority of Ukrainians. We are talking about what they care about, not trying to invent for them what they should care about. It is not a choice between two nations destroying one another, it’s a choice between those who commit genocide and those who are the victims. That is one point. Another is that toothless pacifism is not “ideological purity”, but inconsistency. Anarchism does not happen to be “ideologically pure” at all, you can find this only with Marxists; anarchism is a practical philosophy, and it is changeable by circumstances. We say why it is rational to fight against Russian aggression by armed means, and we do so without appealing to the argument that both countries are bourgeois. After all, if we think that all countries are bourgeois, and we don’t have to get involved and figure out who is right and who is wrong, then we will have nothing else to do but write cabinet treatises about how things might have been if things had worked out the way we want them to. We should not analyze from the perspective of how things might be, but from the perspective of how things really are.

There really is no black and white vision. Including with regard to this war. But the shades of gray will not be decided by ordinary citizens, but by an international military tribunal. Right now, we need to stay on the black-and-white position: what is ethical and what is not. If Russia initiated the war, then it must be punished. Who exactly and to what extent is guilty will be revealed after the war. And now the talk that “all is not so clear-cut, we must distance ourselves from the war” is beneficial only for the Russian establishment, which wants to hide the traces of its war crimes from prying eyes. Perhaps the Ukrainian authorities made some mistakes, too. But this will become clear later in the

legal proceedings. Right now, the task is to stop the bombing of civilians in the most effective way – by fighting the aggressor and initiator of this war.

Myth 22: Criticism of involvement in war is often based on outdated quotes from anarchist classics that cannot be applied to the contemporary context.

«It is true that sometimes figures like Malatesta, Bakunin, Goldman and others are quoted as having spoken out against the bourgeois conception of war. But it is also true that the current supporters of the war on the side of the Ukrainian army have the same tendency to use quotations to give weight to their own positions.

It is easy to pick out just one part of one person's entire work and ignore others, to interpret his words in one's own way, because there is no way to verify how he really intended that part. The dead can no longer debate or redefine their positions in light of the current times and situation. That is why we see their quotations as an addition to the argument, not as its core. We find it more important to listen to the voices of our contemporaries and share our views with them than to debate in which way Malatesta saw (or did not see) something a hundred years ago. This is exactly what happens when we try to look for the anti-militarist and revolutionary defeatist manifestations of the proletarians in Ukraine, Russia and elsewhere in the world, under the layer of war propaganda.

Our attitude to war is not predefined by what some classic anarchist ever said. Rather, the theoretical rejection of war and its practical sabotage are based on the tendencies of those who today find themselves in the maelstrom of war or are threatened to be drawn into it soon. In the same way that Malatesta is quoted, we could quote the thousands of deserters from the Ukrainian army, the women who prevent the Ukrainian State from forcibly recruiting their partners, the saboteurs who have withdrawn from bombed-out cities to subvert the war infrastructure outside Ukraine with guerrilla tactics.

But this is not primarily about quotations, it is about finding a strategy to minimize the impact of the war and how best to use the situation to organize the needs of the working class. We define war as the negation of these needs for the sake of the needs of the bourgeoisie. Not because some anarchist said it a hundred years ago, but because we ourselves are part of the working class that is drawn into the war and forced to make the greatest sacrifices for interests that are alien to us».

No war is exactly like any other. Every war has certain preconditions and a certain course of events. In general, war is of course a non-anarchist thing, and it is very unlikely that you will find fervent advocates of militarism among anarchists. But one evaluation differs from another. For example, when we talk about the First World War, that is one thing, because the battles were fought mostly away from the civilians, and it really looked more like a meat grinder than a noble cause. But when we talk about the Russian-Ukrainian war, it is quite different, because in this war the main victims are the unarmed. The same Malatesta said that even if there is a war, the anarchists should side with the people that are defending their independence – and this against the idea that Ukraine should lay down their arms, because they are not being pacifist! Even Malatesta has sometimes acknowledged that pacifism is not a universal recipe for ending a war, and it applies if and only if people are conscious enough not to take up arms. Being determines our consciousness, which in turn also determines our being. In other words, capitalism, by influencing people and their thinking, preserves their worldview on the foundation of bourgeois ideology, and they act in accordance with this ideology, but it is not the people as such that are to blame for this, but the prevailing influence of capitalism and the state. It is foolish to think that the majority of those who do not adhere to anarchism can put on ideological glasses and see war as fratricidal. We have to reckon with the fact that people are not ready to remove the shell of bourgeois worldview because of its hegemonic position (although it can be overcome, but not instantly), so we argue pragmatically rather than examine spherical cows in a vacuum.

Myth 23: Antimilitarism is important, but it is a problem when it becomes dogma.

«This argument we often hear from people who are the first to issue countless proclamations and publications with anti-militarist themes at a time when the war is on the other side of the world, but when it comes to their doorstep, they start reproducing war propaganda. The reason for this tilt of opinion is supposedly due to the different context, pragmatism and non-dogmatism. The history of class struggles is replete with examples where some anarchists have tried to redefine their practice using the same justifications. Anarchists joining the republican government in Spain or the Czech ones taking their seats in the first republican government and joining the Communist Party. We can also remember the anarchists who, after 1917, preferred to join the Bolsheviks or those who took sides in the First World War. All these examples showed that although their actors talked about pragmatism, practice disproved their claims. Rather, their actions were ultimately pragmatic for the ruling class, who used these anarchists as useful idiots, as is now happening to some in the case of the war in Ukraine.

There is no doubt that there are different contexts for wars. But the core is unchanged, regardless of whether we are talking about two world wars, various “national liberation” wars or the current war in Ukraine. Different factors may vary. For example, the balance of power between the warring blocs, who acts more invasive and aggressive, or what ideology they wrap their actions in. What does not change, however, is the basic nature of wars. They are always bloody conflicts fought by different factions of the ruling class for their interests, and the working class is forced to make the greatest sacrifice in this process. The only war we can support is class war.

Anti-militarism is not an abstract ideological construction detached from reality. On the contrary, it is a living process that emerges from the life and struggles of the working class. From the experiences of real flesh and blood people. When we talk about anti-militarism, we are talking about principles tested by practice, not theoretical treatises falling from the desks of academics. We do not adhere to dogma. On the contrary, we are constantly confronting our positions with reality, which proves to us many times that being an anti-militarist made sense during WW1, just as it does in the case of the current war in Ukraine».

The problem with this position is not its anti-militarism, but its detachment from context. Anarchism, as mentioned above, is a practical philosophy. We cannot simply write slogans and proclamations and apply them in any context, as Marxists do when they read Lenin's long outdated works repeatedly and do not revise them. Pro-Ukrainian anarchists are also generally anti-militarists: they do not want the development of armaments and the creation of new forms of mass institutionalized killing, but they are also realists, because they understand that war is an objective product of capitalism, and we cannot simply overcome it. We can choose the scenario that is most likely and least disastrous for the world. Social revolution as an alternative is not very likely right now, so calling it a solution is certainly possible, but not necessarily rational.

World War I and World War II are different in character. And, oddly enough, it is the latter conflict – World War II – that sets us the trajectory of how anarchists should act, because the nature of the Russian invaders' warfare is identical in many ways with the nature of the Nazi warfare in World War II. Anarchists seems to forget that after World War I there was World War II, and it was quite different. And it is interesting that anarchists in WWII wrote rather that when choosing between the two empires – Stalin's and Hitler's – anarchists should choose Stalin's, because the world that Hitler was bringing seems far more frightening and less promising for freedom. Not to say that they were wrong in this respect, although this choice still cost the deoccupied territories a great deal: in liberating Eastern Europe from Nazi occupation, the USSR itself was establishing a Bolshevik regime in several states. However, the occupation of the USSR, if it can be called that, was less painful for these countries than the Nazi occupation. It would have been good to call people to anarchism at the time, but objectively there was little to encourage it, especially since fascism reared its head after the total defeat of the

global anarchist movement, in particular the Spanish one. There is still little that disposes to this encouragement. And so, we have to choose from what we have, if not between communist partocracy and bourgeois neoliberalism, but between two neoliberal regimes, the only difference being that one is fascist and imperialistic, while the other is a hybrid democracy, a former imperial colony that has regained its sovereignty.

Myth 24: Refusing to take part in the fight on the side of the Ukrainian war resistance is a manifestation of the Western Left's cultural arrogance.

«This myth is strange only because the people behind this text come from Central Europe, so they can hardly be accused of Western condescension. In fact, the contradiction between Western and Central-Eastern European mentality is a false contradiction. Not that there are not factors that influence people's opinions based on where they live. They exist, they just should not be stereotyped as universally valid templates.

This is not about any contrast between the unemphatic West and the empathetic center or east. It is a contrast between two different perspectives through which the problem of war is viewed. One is liberal reformist and therefore counterrevolutionary, the other is revolutionary. Both perspectives are held by people who subscribe to anarchism, which shows that this label alone does not imply agreement on fundamental issues. Importantly, both poles of these conceptual frameworks span the globe. Reproducing stereotypes along the lines of West versus East certainly does not help us to undermine the imperialist mindset that is characterized by the creation of such territorially defined opposites.

The fact is that the revolutionary defeatist position, namely the refusal to take sides with one of the warring parties, is not only present among Western anarchists, although it is more strongly articulated here. Its traces can also be found in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Russia, Ukraine itself and other places in Central and Eastern Europe.

We see the search for non-existent contradictions more as an effort to insidiously remove some people from the arena of international debate and practical coordination of anarchist activities. It is enough to label someone as condescending or unscrupulous to lead many to the conclusion that it is not legitimate to debate with such people, let alone cooperate with them. We see there a certain tendency to manipulation».

It is very, very premature to say that the contradictions outlined are insignificant. After all, the question is about the fundamental question of whether people should support Ukraine in its struggle, or whether they can only hope that Russia will take pity on it and leave, as Eastern European anarchists would like. But Eastern European anarchists (and Western anarchists in general, since they are identified with one another), if they hold this view, probably live in a different reality. And they are debating not within the framework of what is happening now, but within the framework of their own partially distorted perceptions. Of course, the war must end, but war does not end so easily. Our task as anti-militarists is to make the case that there are no devils or monsters on the other side of the barricades, but people. But the anarchist comrades had not suggested this; in fact, they have only suggested not to give weapons to Ukraine (well, and struck the right chord when they asked the anarchist militants why they could not spontaneously make a revolution).

One can, of course, wish “revolutionary defeat” in Ukraine. Not to give her weapons. To support desertion in its army in the hope that one of the opposing armies will automatically bring peace closer by disarming (the stupidest statement). But there is no analysis of the causes of the war, of its genesis. The authors almost came to an end and said nothing about dehumanization – on the contrary, they even practiced it themselves, when they groundlessly reproduced the Russian propaganda thesis that supposedly only nationalists are fighting for their independence in Ukraine, who are building a dicta-

torship. Meanwhile, the main reason for this war and its popularity among Russians is the perception that Ukrainians are not people, an inferior nation (just like other nations, though). Russian propaganda 24/7 only broadcasts the thesis that Russia is not fighting Ukrainians, but nationalists, Banderites, drug addicts, and Satanists.

While the authors acknowledge Russian war crimes (or acknowledge them only for the sake of appearance, because it is no longer possible to hide them), they do not condemn them. They do not condemn or notice the rhetoric of genocide in the Russian media. They do not notice the terrorist nature of nuclear blackmail threat. They condemn Russian imperialism casually simply because it is “bourgeois” and diverges from the interests of proletariat (trying to convince the proletariat of this). But the proletariat, for some reason, does not agree with this evaluation, neither Russian nor Ukrainian. The Ukrainians overwhelmingly want to defend their country, and the Russians overwhelmingly support Putin’s war. These are facts to be reckoned with. And consequently, the contradictions are significant. It is a matter of anarchist strategy and tactics in the matter of such destructive, unjust, treacherous wars.

Myth 25: It is easy to refuse participation in war from people who express their views in a safe place far from the war and do not have to respond to the bombing of their cities.

«Yes, indeed it is easier to organize your own view of the war from a safe distance than when you have bombers flying overhead. But is such a view inferior and should not be taken into account? Is the view of people in bombed-out places superior to other views on the basis that people in a war zone experience greater horror and suffering?»

We might as well say that it is easy to call for more weapons to be supplied to the Ukrainian army and for support for the territorial defense fighters from people who are doing this from the safety of their homes, who have never held firearms in their lives and would not be able to use them if the war came here. We see and respect their opinion, even if we do not express support for it, because we have a different opinion. Why should a different standard be applied to people who refuse to choose sides in a war and do not call for support for the troops?»

I do not have bombers flying over me either. But I can mentally take myself to the conditions in which Ukrainians find themselves and imagine what it would be like for me. Those who are unable to take themselves even mentally, if not physically, into places of deprivation and suffering are bereft of empathy. If you ask the Russian average person how he or she feels about the bombing of Ukraine, he or she is more likely to either approve or remain silent, because his or her existence does not correspond to the picture shown in the pictures. It seems that the bombedout houses are somewhere not here, not nearby, because life goes on. But war will come to the streets of well-fed European cities too, if we ignore the inconvenient fact that the bombing is taking place in front of our noses. You can have whatever opinion you want, but if you broadcast it, be prepared to take responsibility for your words and not be offended that you cannot get out of your cocoon and look around, and for your criticism you are kicked by people who have either been physically in Ukraine and seen the results of Russian policy firsthand, or are simply empathic and can imagine what it is like for Ukrainians.

Myth 26: People who criticize participation in war from a safe distance are unemphatic and condescending because they do not listen to the people on the ground.

«Although we perceive the condescending tendencies of some people, we think that the label of condescending is often mechanically applied to anyone who speaks critically about the Ukrainian army's support for the war. The idea is to belittle, stigmatize and exclude the voice of critics from the debate. The strongest impact is then on people from Western Europe or the USA, whose opinion is often not taken into account for the mere fact that they do not come from Central or Eastern Europe. At its core, such a mechanism is actually discriminatory, stereotyping and prejudiced, despite the fact that its proponents accuse others of doing just that.

Saying that we are against the war and refuse to take sides in the conflict does not automatically mean that we do not care about the opinion of the people in Ukraine and that we are indifferent when they are under fire from Russian troops. In fact, we are listening to these people, and we see that there is not just one unified voice, but a huge patchwork of many opinions, which often diverge at their very base. In fact, the same people who accuse us of not listening often extract only one tendency from the multidimensional whole and ignore or downplay the others. We try to listen to as many voices as possible, but we only support those that we find constructive. Others we criticize and refuse to support. In short, we perceive different tendencies and do not try to support war propaganda that portrays the Ukrainian population as a united community calling unanimously for involvement in the war.

Some of our critics accuse us of not listening, but they ignore the voices of the part of the population that refuses to support the Ukrainian army and opposes the forced conscription of men who do not want to fight. The voice of the Ukrainian deserters is ignored, while the voice of the Ukrainian soldiers is reproduced as if it were the only one being heard. This is called war propaganda, not listening and empathy».

These are empty words. You can say that you listen to the Ukrainians, but you do not listen to them. You first get angry at them for not overthrowing their government, then you exclaim that they are not overthrowing their government because they are nationalists, then you propose to take away their weapons against their desire to defend themselves, based on isolated facts of desertion in the Ukrainian army. You talk about not supporting either side, but you do not mention any facts characterizing Russian policy from the negative side, accusing Ukraine of not wanting peace because it does not want to disarm, while no such appeals follow against Russia. You offer silly reformist options to fight against Russia (posters, sanctions, sabotage), while the fight against Ukraine should be unfolded by all available means, including military means (overthrowing the government). All your "refutations" are contradictory, biased, and far-fetched. No wonder no one wants to listen to you, because no one wants to listen to those who tell lies, distort the facts, and force people to choose among deliberately provocative options. Your "concern" is not worth a plugged dime.

Myth 27: To criticize the resistance of the Ukrainian army from outside Ukraine is to deny the Ukrainian population self-determination and the ability to be a self-determining agent of change.

«We do not think that we have any prerogative to decide the future of the Ukrainian population. But neither do we think that they are denied that right when someone criticizes certain actions that they choose to take as part of their self-determination. Talk about the right to self-determination very often becomes an argument for overlooking the horrors that someone has chosen. It is also taken by some as

a justification for supporting reactionary tendencies that hinder emancipatory movements. This is why we then see some anarchists taking offense at the fact that a State does not respect the sovereignty of another, as if perhaps the job of anarchists should be to fight for the State and its sovereignty. We can also see the same anarchists calling for support for that part of the Ukrainian population that has decided to fight and die for bourgeois democracy. They have chosen this, they say, and we must support them in this so that we are not disrespectful, paternalistic and unscrupulous. In short, this section of the liberal democrats, who for some reason call themselves anarchists, are willing to support even the tendencies most hostile to anarchism on the grounds that we must respect the self-determination and opinions of the people who express these tendencies. If we wanted to transfer this perspective to the Czech Republic, for example, it would mean that we should support the very large part of the local population that sees parliamentary democracy as a way of defending its interests. Before every election we would call for their support and send resources to politicians' election campaigns, because that is what these people want, and we do not want to be disrespectful of their selfdetermination. And if someone from another country dared to criticize the participation of Czech workers in the elections, we should condemn them as a supercilious person who does not listen to Czech workers and wants to lecture them on how to choose their future based on a sense of cultural superiority. That would be absurd, and we do not share that perspective. That is why, just as we criticize the participation of Czech workers in the elections, we will criticize the participation of Ukrainian workers in the war. If someone calls it condescending, let it be so. We are not organizing to make the whole world think we are wonderful, but to make the world a better place to live. To do that, we certainly need links with other people, but not necessarily with everyone and at all costs. We do not succumb to the mania for quantity that says the more people you bring together the more success you achieve. Rather, we look at the content and for what purpose people are associating. Reactionary and counter-revolutionary positions will not have our support even if they are chosen by the vast majority of humanity, because we do not see this as a way to advance towards our emancipation».

The anarchist, even when he criticizes, proposes. He does not just condemn the same parliamentary democracy; he also offers something in its place. What can Eastern European anarchists offer Ukrainians if they believe that the right to selfdetermination is bourgeois and not worthy of support, other than the obviously stupid suggestion that they should send bayonets against the Ukrainian government right now to build anarchy? In essence, only a conquest by the empire. Either these “refutations” were not written by anarchists, of which I am almost entirely certain, or these anarchists have not read Bakunin. When anarchists support the right of peoples to self-determination, they support, first, the weakening centralization of the imperialist state with its subsequent long-term disintegration, and, second, the broad autonomy of groups of people who identify themselves along national lines and gain subjectivity. You can view the question of what constitutes a “nation” however you like, but it is rather difficult to ignore the national question because it is so pressing. Keeping peoples in a state that does not represent them and exploits them is a characteristic feature of imperialism, and it is quite interesting how this “refutation” contrasts with the “refutations” where Ukraine is, directly or indirectly, “imperialistic”. Now, it turns out that Ukraine defends the right to self-determination (from the empire, of course), but since the authors of this manifesto are already simply mired in contradictions, all that remains at the bottom line is: “Yes, Ukraine defends the right to self-determination, but we are against states, so we are against Ukraine gaining subjectivity, especially, as we pointed out, it is bourgeois and imperialistic”. This is somewhat reminiscent of the views of “national anarchists”, who oppose Israel supposedly because it is a state (in fact, because they are antiSemites). Why such “anarchists” single out any particular state “purely by accident” from among all states is not specified. But the reason is clear: such “anarchists” are against specific forms of the state, not its content. If Ukraine did not become a state as a result of the takeover by Russia, these “anarchists” would be silent, because their concern is not so much about the injustice of hierarchical institutions, but only about a particular government.

Myth 28: Opponents of supporting Ukrainian military forces are in fact propagandists for the Putin's regime.

«If we look at things with a sober eye, not with the eye burdened with war propaganda, we can see one important fact: war and pro-regime propaganda is present on both the Russian and Ukrainian sides. But we do not choose one war propaganda in opposition to the other. We refuse to listen to it and spread it, whichever side it comes from.

The mechanism of war propaganda is the selectivity of information. Certain parts of the colorful whole are taken out and blown up to incredibly large proportions. Other parts, in turn, are glossed over, made invisible, silenced, ridiculed and belittled. Those who want an example of such propaganda need only look at the reports circulating over and over in some anarchist media about the pride of the Ukrainian military units, but there is no mention of the numerous deserters and opponents to the war in the Ukrainian region, nor of the needless atrocities committed by the Ukrainian army. We reject this kind of war propaganda, just as we reject that of the supporters of the Putin's regime. Anti-war agitation is not proregime propaganda».

Why are they suddenly obliged to publish such information? Anarchists publish about anarchists – that makes sense. It is possible not to support these groups, but it is possible and necessary to tell about them, their true motivation and purpose. To publish unreliable or unverified information about the atrocities of the Ukrainian army is somewhat out of line with the idea of a trustworthy media. Whenever atrocities come to light, to put it this way, it turns out that they are Russian – this has applied to all or almost all (let's not be categorical, so to speak) large-scale war crimes. Even the Russian imperial public does not deny the fact that Ukrainian servicemen entering the de-occupied territories are greeted with applause. Are these the same Ukrainian servicemen who “commit atrocities”? Even if we think about it deductively, it seems that this is just a falsehood to discredit the Ukrainian army, because Ukrainians would not welcome with open arms those who would commit atrocities against civilians.

As for any other war crimes committed against members of the Russian army, the facts must be established by a military tribunal. But I am not yet aware of any high-profile incidents where the Ukrainian army systematically committed atrocities against Russian servicemen and failed to comply with the Geneva Conventions.

Myth 29: In this war, democracy must win to prevent fascism/dictatorship from winning.

«There is no question that fascism/dictatorship is a problem. It is just that the worst product of fascism is anti-fascism. Whenever the specter of fascism is raised as if it were the worst of all evils, the way is paved to support other forms of State – like democratic ones – with the consequence of supporting their crimes. Anti-fascist unity is nothing else but inter-class collaboration, where the proletarians collude with the bourgeoisie, which, despite the “temporary alliance”, never hesitate to crack down hard on all anti-capitalist and anti-State manifestations. Anti-fascist mobilizations tend to be justified by the need to confront totalitarianism, but they do so in a way that reinforces the authoritarian features of parliamentary democracy. As Gilles Dauvé has noted, “Antifascism will always end in increasing totalitarianism. Its fight for a “democratic” State will end in strengthening the State.”

Parliamentary democracy may represent a lesser intensity of State violence than a fascist regime, but it is no reason to fight and die for democracy. Those who claim that the working class is more and better organized in a liberal democracy are so caught up in their fantasies that they are out of touch with reality. Indeed, the militant working-class movement in democracy often tends to wither away; it is gradually absorbed into the structures of the State, which at the same time do not hesitate to stifle any radical tendency. It is doubtful that the democratic form of the State that has been achieved

means the disappearance of authoritarian tendencies from the State apparatus. They will remain and manifest themselves whenever the working class raises its head and begins to act combatively as an organized autonomous force. In other words, liberal democracy will never be the antithesis or negation of dictatorship; it will always be one of the ways in which the totalizing capitalist order is organized. In fact, dictatorial and democratic forces are present in every State simultaneously and are not mutually exclusive. Their mutual relation depends on the (non)combativity of the working class and the (in)ability of the bourgeoisie to secure the rule of its class over society.

The State will only fall if we subvert both its dictatorial and democratic tendencies simultaneously. If we focus exclusively on suppressing one part, it will sooner or later be restored with the help of the other. Let us not forget that the democratic State retains the ability to introduce authoritarian measures, just as the fascist State sometimes pacifies the proletariat by democratic co-optation. The dilemma of fascism or democracy is false. In fact, internationalist revolutionaries know that there are only two options before us: capitalism or its revolutionary overcoming».

Once again, the omniscient anarchists speak from the position as if people are already ready to break with dictatorships and democracies in advance. Choosing between two evils, we choose democracy, because dictatorships educate people only in servility, while democracies have the potential for free thinking and the development of various forms of collective human consciousness.

Dictatorships are characterized by atomization and depoliticization. Democracy, on the other hand, politicizes people to a limited extent and forces them to cooperate into political platforms for solving urgent social problems. Another issue is that parliamentary democracy does not bring this trend to its logical conclusion, offering largely obsolete forms of institutions, where the spirit of “interchangeable dictatorship” still prevails, which is why anarchists criticize parliamentarism. But there is always a degree to which authoritarian institutions are authoritarian. Less authoritarian institutions are preferable to more authoritarian ones, all other things being equal. We cannot turn every war into a revolution, otherwise we would already be living in an anarchic society, and when we are between one alternative and another alternative, we will advocate the alternative within which it would be easier for us to spread our ideas. I do not think that those who wrote this manifesto don't know or don't understand this. They know and understand, but they deliberately distort the meaning.

Myth 30: The statement “No war but class war” is an abstract and impractical slogan. It is useless to the bombed population.

«The people of Ukraine who are under attack must deal with the situation immediately. But they are being misled by those who claim that the solution is to fortify themselves in territorial defense, i.e. in the very places where the bombs are falling. Those who claim that it is necessary to ally with the Ukrainian army and put our lives in danger on the front are manipulators, and their solution appears to be very impractical. The same State that is driving men to war is preventing them from leaving the country and hiding from bombers outside Ukraine. The same Ukrainian State is pointing out the aggression of the Russian army, but its gestures show a willingness to escalate the conflict, even at the cost of countless more victims. Because when the State is concerned about its existence, it is willing to sacrifice the existence of those it governs. In such a situation, the effort to transform an interimperialist war into a class war is not an abstract ideology, but a matter of life and death. And this is not just a question of the survival of the Ukrainian population, but of the whole of humanity. The possibility of a third world war is not excluded, nor is the deployment of an extremely destructive nuclear arsenal».

The slogan “No war but class war” is not useless. But it must be relevant. We use this slogan when we try to justify why we do not support the outbreak of wars, particularly imperialist wars. Russia unleashed the imperialist war, and it was the top of the Russian power, allied with capital, who wanted

to realize their ambitions in this war. The national bourgeoisie, too, is undoubtedly profiting from the people, as we would expect. In Ukraine, however, there are **no** prerequisites for turning the war into a class war, because the need to build up arms and wage war is dictated by external conditions (an attack), not internal ones (the desire of the Ukrainian oligarchs to arrange a redistribution of resources). When we say “class war”, we do not automatically mean that we want to physically exterminate our enemies (although a revolution is often accompanied by a certain amount of bloodshed, it is usually caused by the reactionary resistance of the remaining old top to the new order), and therefore we cannot automatically turn the current war into a class war: class war implies mainly a struggle of ideas, not a physical struggle.

Russia has the potential to turn an imperialist war into a class war, especially since it had a precedent – the February Revolution of 1905. But this is only possible if Russia starts a war of attrition (that time it took four years) and if there is now active agitation among the people for revolutionary ideas. Speaking of the first, it is worth saying that the war will probably not go so long that it will bring the country to a state of extreme exhaustion. Speaking of the second, it is difficult to judge this, because we do not have information about the dynamics of change with respect to commitment to certain forms of revolutionary ideas (or at least about how many people are aware). Another aspect of the same phenomenon is that it is difficult to draw a line as to which ideas should and should not be considered revolutionary: after all, the 1905 revolution was primarily bourgeois and then only socialist. However, the probability of the designated event is non-zero.

Myth 31: The anti-militarist initiative must be aimed at defeating the militarism of the Russian army.

«This position is legitimate at its core, but the trouble is that it is only one part of a more complex truth. The other part is that the anti-militarist initiative should equally be aimed at defeating the militarism of the Ukrainian army and any other State army. Anti-militarism is a position based on opposition to all State armies and their wars. Such opposition implies that anti-militarists do not choose which one to side with in wars between States. In other words, they do not fight against the militarism of one State through supporting the militarism of another State. But that is exactly what is happening when some people want to fight against the militarism of the Russian army in terms of supporting the militarism of the Ukrainian army. They can wrap it in populist phrases about supporting “self-defense of the people”, but in reality, they are supporting militarism, because the units that are fighting in Ukraine are part of the structures of the Ukrainian army and are under the command of the State authorities. There can be no question of their autonomy and certainly not of their subverting militarism. They are militaristic and this cannot be changed by the soldiers pinning black and red logos on their uniforms and issuing statements full of anti-State phrases.

The anti-militarist position is not – with strictly pacifist exceptions – based on a refusal to resist war aggression. It merely prefers a different, non-militarized form of organizing this defense. Anarchists, for example, have a wealth of experience in waging armed struggle outside the structures of the State and armies. This struggle tends to be militant, but not militarized. Whenever some anarchists decided to subordinate their troops and militias to the logic of the army, they fell into a trap that later meant their defeat. A sad example can be seen in the militarization of some CNT-FAI militias during the revolution in Spain in 1936–1939. That time was contradictory, just like today. Therefore, even then, alongside the supporters of militarization, there were also consistent anti-militarists who had no problem taking up arms but refused to ally themselves with one or another faction of the ruling class and did not submit to the military logic».

Not every supporter of Ukraine’s self-defense is automatically a supporter of militarism, although there are certainly outspoken militarists among anarchists. Not every anarchist wants to turn Ukraine

into Israel with the only hope that a huge arsenal of weapons will keep it out of war. This, of course, is poor logic, because it is not weapons that keep Ukraine out of war, but social development and, hence, investment in education, culture, social security, and health care, which **will give people a concrete idea of why they can live without war**. Russia has in many ways become a militarized country because it has cultivated a military way of solving geopolitical problems as the main one, without paying attention to the social sphere. To put it crudely, Russian television fed the average person with imaginary grandeur. Ukraine did not rattle weapons or threaten to strike Washington with a nuclear warhead (and even if Ukraine had a nuclear warhead, it would hardly have done so). Militarism is more of an ideology than simply “pumping guns” or even simply accepting that there are occasional instances when the use of guns is permissible. Of course, Ukraine may become militarized after a conflict, but this is the collateral result of its neglect of the military sphere before that. Ukraine is left to build up its armaments for now, because, oddly enough, it has a heavily armed neighbor beside it who has no thought of disarming himself. In other words, the reason for militarization is a real external threat. Another matter is that Ukraine, unlike Russia, will probably not get so hung up on an external threat, because it is a self-sufficient country, and it, at least for now, is not ruled by paranoiacs.

It is worth making an important remark: the thesis voiced that the antimilitarist initiative should not be aimed at defeating the militarism of the Russian army contradicts what was said in the rationale. When the authors wrote: *“Antimilitarism is a position based on opposition to all State armies and their wars. Such opposition implies that anti-militarists do not choose which one to side with in wars between States. In other words, they do not fight against the militarism of one State through supporting the militarism of another State. But that is exactly what is happening when some people want to fight against the militarism of the Russian army in terms of supporting the militarism of the Ukrainian army”*, – they have essentially substituted the thesis. The anti-militarist initiative does not automatically mean support for Ukrainian militarism. We can simply advocate the denuclearization of Russia and the reduction of its military potential without supporting the militarization of Ukraine. Substitution of the thesis also partly affects the nature of perception, and in this situation the idea of anti-militarism has been turned back against Ukraine. Once again is Ukraine to blame?

Instead of Conclusion

To summarize, none of the stated “refutations”, with few exceptions, has sufficient evidence to be considered a valid counterargument. There is no consistency in this work: what is said in one place contradicts what is said in another place, assumptions are based on conjecture and speculation, and there is a clear, practically groundless antipathy toward Ukraine.

It is likely that this “anti-war pamphlet” was written not by anarchists, but by Russian secret services, or by their agents of influence in anarchist organizations. There is a lot of indirect evidence of this, but to avoid accusations of slander, I will say right away that this is just a guess. It cannot be a coincidence that people who accurately reproduce the theses of Russian propaganda, up to and including “Ukrainian nationalism”, yet disagree with Bakunin and his followers in their justification of why Ukraine should not be a sovereign state, putting forward an imperialist rhetoric instead of anti-imperialist, while also calling it anarchist.

It is quite unexpected, of course, that the Russian security services would begin to influence Western radicals by posting on behalf of unnamed Eastern European anarchists the rationale for why Ukraine does not need weapons on anarchist resources. Apparently, the FSB sees not only Russian anarchists as a threat, but also European ones, and tries to reap the benefits, but mistakenly believes that anarchists are too stupid not to recognize such poor manipulation. However, if something really seemed unobvious, this work should have helped to clarify many important points.

I would also like to mention such an aspect as propaganda. Both I and the authors of this manifesto have repeatedly used this word rather negatively. I do not consider the word unconditionally negative. All people are exposed to propaganda one way or another if they are interested in politics (or worse, if politics is interested in them, which is a pattern in a depoliticized society). But the point is how much propaganda is truthful. State propaganda is almost always seasoned with outright lies (not random mistakes and inaccuracies – this is important – because no one can be right about everything, especially when it comes to evaluations), both Russian and Ukrainian, but in different proportions. Russian propaganda is manipulative. It almost never tells the truth, it does not even let it pass, it forms an alternative reality. In particular, the tribunal in The Hague recently concluded its investigation of the Malaysian Boeing shot down in Ukraine and apparently concluded that Russia was involved in the shooting down (officially admitting that it was involved in hostilities in Donbass in 2014). It would seem that this would be a good starting point. But this decision has no validity for Russia. In Russia, [sic!] Ukraine turned out to be the main perpetrator: they say that there is still “no evidence”, and that the missile from which the Boeing was shot down was carried by Ukrainian servicemen. In other words, a complete denial. And this applies to any situation: Russia simply cannot by default be guilty of anything at all, and even if it is guilty of something, it passes the buck.

Ukrainian propaganda in this sense is less clumsy, because unlike Russian propaganda, it does not have to make things up, only embellish them. And this can be seen by comparing this vision with the reference one, i.e. the international position. Russia’s version of events is the version of events that only Russia supports, which makes it even more difficult, because Russia has to rely only on itself. No wonder that with the invasion of Ukraine, Russia cut off all independent media and imposed strict military censorship, banning not only the “hostile” Ukrainian media, but all media that are critical of Russian foreign policy (if it got to them, of course, because there are underground media, including Russian media itself, which are more difficult to reach). Ukraine has not introduced such censorship, because therefore almost the entire international community is on its side, and it would be foolish to think that the international community is deceived and that only the Russians know the truth about

the international conflict. But perhaps this is exactly what Russian propaganda is trying to present. That is why even in these “refutations” there was no evidence, only an assessment and postulation of its initial truthfulness, or an emphasis on only one side of the issue and “half evidence”, as in the case of the mobilization in Ukraine, when as “evidence” that Ukrainians do not want to defend themselves, only those who, as claimed, do not want to, out of context, without comparison to the whole population, were included in the sample.

So, the point is not whether we are exposed to Russian propaganda or Ukrainian propaganda, but how it affects us and what its purpose is. The purpose of Ukrainian propaganda is to reassure people that the aggressor will be defeated, even though this may not always be obvious in practice, while the purpose of Russian propaganda is to make it clear that Ukraine should not exist as a state, using the vilest means and manipulations to do so. Ukrainian propaganda in general is not so harmful, because it has a framework, even if at times it does not pick up epithets when it calls occupants occupiers or “rusnya” [ethnic slur used by some Ukrainians for the Russians] (which probably deserves condemnation, but overall, it is legitimate). Russian propaganda, on the other hand, is clearly harmful because it has no framework, and its dehumanizing effect extends to the entire world. This should be understood.

It is also worth making an important caveat: pro-Ukrainian anarchists support Ukraine exactly as long as it defends its sovereignty (the 1991 borders). If Ukraine begins to claim other territories of Russia, if it begins to promote a policy of expansion and occupy territories to which it has no right to claim, we will be just as critical of it as we are of Russia’s policy of expansion. But this is not the case now, and therefore Russia and Ukraine are in unequal positions. Thus, we do not unconditionally support Ukraine, but only within acceptable limits.

29. Insurrection and Production

Deleted reason: I read this. It's about seizing state power, establishing a 'transition period' etc. 'Insurrection' does not refer to Bannano, Weir etc. References include Group of International Communists, Paul Mason (UK Labour party), Trotsky, 'Bolchevik foreign policy,' etc.

Subtitle: An empirically heavy mind-game for the debate on working class strategy: First steps in a six-month revolutionary transition period in the UK region

Author: Angry Workers of the World

Authors: Angry Workers of the World

Topics: communization, insurrectionary, revolution, libertarian communism

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Cover:

Dear fellow travellers,

We've written a few texts on 'revolutionary strategy' before, focusing on the relationship between workers' existence within the social production process, experiences of day-to-day struggles and the possibility of a wider working class movement — termed by others as a 'social strike.'¹ While we maintain that we will only be able to make fruitful organisational proposals through an analysis of the concrete day-to-day struggles of our class, we think that it can't do any harm to discuss what we think a revolutionary situation in the 21st century could look like. Thinking about tomorrow might make clearer our view on today.

We are not alone in this. Since the uprisings in 2010/11 ('Arab Spring' etc.) and the general upsurge in social movements and global strike waves in the last ten years or so, the radical and not so radical left have had a lot of discussions about transitions, post-capitalism, social strikes or the era of riots and coming insurrections. In this text we will briefly engage with some of the main ideas that have been put forward in these recent analyses of revolution and fundamental social change. We do this to point out some limitations to these theories, as well as to draw out their political implications. The two main camps we look at here are, unsurprisingly, given the title, that of those in the radical milieu who favour an insurrectionist approach to political action (riots on the streets, spontaneous proletarian action, or that done by those on the margins, the so-called 'surplus population') and those that tend to concentrate on workers at the point of production and their collective power but who maybe don't relate this to a wider view on general proletarian impoverishment and other areas of life and struggle. We put forward our perspective that tries to move beyond the traditional insurrectionist and syndicalist approaches to think in less abstract ways about what a communist revolution would actually entail. To this end, the main part of the text consists of an empirical study of what we term the 'essential industries' in the UK region, which comprise roughly 13 million workers. We think this will be the backbone of our strength in the revolutionary transition period in order to reproduce ourselves while the counter-revolutionary forces try and crush us. While this seems like a bit of a flight into the idealistic, unknown future, we think that reconsidering the relationship between proletarian violence, insurrection and production on the level of 21st century class composition will help ground our current practical political orientation. This at a time of general political disorientation (of which we see Corbyn-mania as an obvious sign!) in the wake of defeats and containment of the upsurges we have experienced and witnessed around the

¹ AngryWorkers:

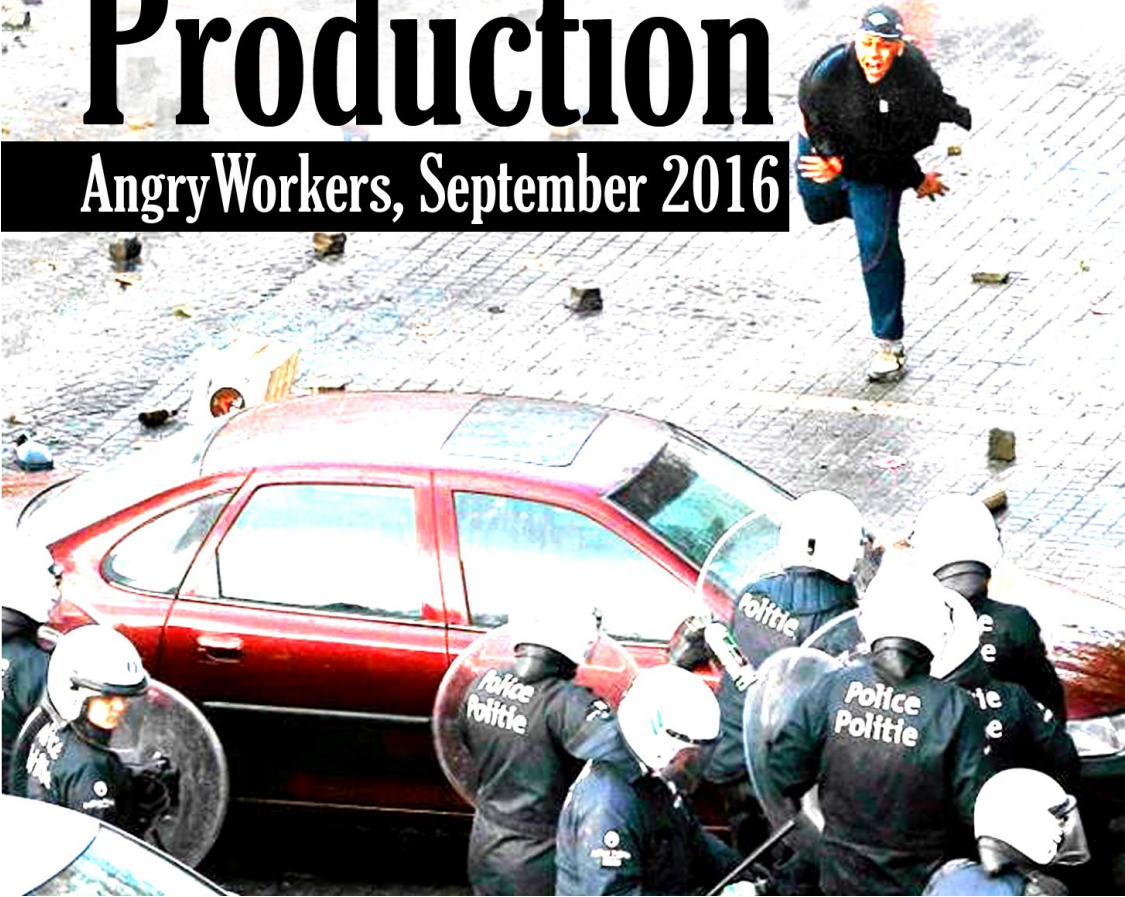
<https://angryworkersworld.wordpress.com/2015/05/26/contribution-to-debate-on-social-strikes-and-directional-demands/>
<https://angryworkersworld.wordpress.com/2015/09/11/on-the-social-strike-contribution-for-the-plan-c-fast-forward-festival-september-2015/>

<https://angryworkersworld.wordpress.com/2014/07/30/general-thoughts-on-relation-between-capitalist-development-class-struggle-and-communist-organisation/>



Insurrection & Production

Angry Workers, September 2016



world in recent years. In short, we hope that in the course of the following text we put some basic assumptions about a communist revolution into a more concrete context. We try and do this in seven steps by looking at:

- a. the reality of recent struggles with a brief review of the 2010/11 uprisings from a revolutionary perspective
 - b. the revolutionary essence of capitalism: short remarks on the debate about ‘surplus population’ (riots) vs. ‘global working class’ (global production) to tackle the question of what capitalism’s main revolutionary contradictions are
 - c. the material (regional) divisions within the working class: some thoughts on the impact of uneven development on how workers experience impoverishment and their productive power differently
 - d. the regional backbone of insurrection: empirical material about the structure of essential industries in the UK region
 - e. whether anyone can say ‘communism?’: brief conclusions on revolutionary transition
 - f. the basic steps of organising revolution: what would a working class revolution have to achieve within the first months of its existence
 - g. revolutionary organisation. Here we propose that this perspective on ‘revolution tomorrow’ does not leave us untouched today, for it asks for certain organisational efforts in the here and now. We sketch out what those could be.
-

a) The reality of struggle: a brief review of the 2010/11 uprisings from a revolutionary perspective

The 2010/2011 struggles put the question of the relation between uprisings and strikes in a revolutionary situation back on the agenda, without which the following thoughts would seem even more abstract than they are. We have to discuss political theses on revolution such as outlined above and empirical research of industrial structures and working class composition in relation to the actual struggles and their limitations. Here we refer to square occupations, street battles and strikes, in their most advanced form in Egypt, but also in Greece, Spain, and Turkey. From a revolutionary perspective — in terms of a being a threat to state power and appropriation of the means of production — the uprisings had two main limitations, which informed and determined each other:

- a. the ‘political’ focus of the movement was the governmental structure; people gathered in the public sphere, experienced mass participation and confronted the state forces. At a certain point it became difficult to sustain the occupation and movement both in terms of repressive violence and material reproduction;
- b. the strikes largely remained confined to the ‘economic’ sphere of wage struggles and became political only in so far as to challenge management connected to the governmental structures. While the strikes exercised crucial economic pressure, e.g. the strikes of railway workers or Suez port workers in Egypt, they did not develop an alternative of social appropriation and re-organisation of production — thereby leaving the street protests in a political vacuum.

We faced a similar situation during the uprising in Argentina in 2001. Piqueteros and demonstrations were able to topple government after government, but the focus remained on the government buildings as symbols of power. While companies were partially taken over, the take-overs were determined by the economic condition of the companies (bankruptcy), rather than their social significance. Market relations remained, which meant that the meat industry kept on working and exporting while infantile starvation deaths and malnutrition re-emerged in South America’s most developed nation.

Although the uprisings of 2010/11 were defeated, they resulted in the left — and not only the left — discussing ‘social transformation’ again. Some people explained the limitations of the movement by the limited outlook of its participants, e.g. the ‘democracy fetish’ of the square occupiers or the ‘trade union consciousness’ of the strikers, which, to us, seems a bit superficial. Others applied a more deterministic view when pointing out that the uprisings did not emerge out of a crisis of capitalism as such, but out of a neoliberal decline which revealed the corrupt character of the political elite. This position claims that the uprisings were therefore necessarily limited to a criticism of a particular form of governance and distribution of wealth. Although we agree that this crisis of ‘neoliberal regimes’ can partially explain the regional and geographical focus and limits of the uprisings, we also maintain that there won’t be a crisis of capitalism in a ‘pure form’ that will mechanically impose the aim of ‘communism’ on the movement as its counterpart. The struggles themselves, under the general global condition of industrial poverty, will have to put this aim on the agenda.

Apart from these rather crude idealistic and deterministic interpretations there are other positions, which try to relate the character of the uprisings to actual material changes:

- the role of precarious graduate urban youth and/or creative class (Paul Mason etc.)
- the poor surplus population (communisation theory, insurrectionism)
- the workers integrated in a larger production process or wave of migration (Beverly Silver, Immanuel Ness etc.)¹

When it comes to the role of the ‘precarious graduate youth,’ we over-focus here on Paul Mason for a reason. His essay ‘Why is it kicking off everywhere?’² on the 2010/11 uprisings made bigger inroads into the radical left. He spoke at the Anarchist Bookfair in London, comrades from the autonomist left based further research on his work.³ His initial essay emphasised the role of the ‘creative class’ and the ‘precarious graduates’ during the uprisings in Egypt and elsewhere. This went down well with a certain segment of the radical left that had bid their farewell to the ‘traditional working class.’ We think there is a certain logical cohesion between Mason’s focus on the graduate precarious youth, his believe in their ‘creative, democratic potential’ and his position that in the end it will depend on an alliance between this segment and the ‘social democratic/technocratic’ state to overcome the domination of ‘monopoly capitalism and finance’:

“History shows innovation happens best when the state shapes it. During the second world war, the US decreed that companies could only profit from making and selling their military technologies — any attempt to derive immediate profit from monopolised intellectual property stood against the public good. Once they knew the American state was trying to achieve an anti-aircraft fire control system first, and a number-crunching static computer later, the greatest innovators alive set to work on making a gun predict the ideas in a fighter pilot’s head. Mainframes — and other technologies — followed, and reaped high profits for the corporations that pioneered them. But it was the state that forced the take-off point to happen.”⁴

Paul Mason’s latest nationalist post-Brexit positions and his earlier ‘Why is it kicking off everywhere?’ seem miles apart, but they are connected by a basic elitist assumption: the creative class needs strong allies, the working class is not a viable agent, so in the end the state remains the focus. But the state is a national institution and statist attempts to reign in capital inevitably end up endorsing nationalist protectionism:

“If you wanted to give the East End set designers a route to high-skilled, high-paid work, you would need a different kind of private sector. You would need to restrict the supply of cross-border low-skilled labour, so that on leaving the local branch of B&Q you are not confronted by crowds of men begging for cash-in-hand labour. You would need to expand the supply of low-rent housing, so that young people didn’t have to spend more than half their wages on rent.”⁵

“If it were possible to conclude a deal within the European Economic Area I would favour that. But the baseline has to be a new policy on migration designed for the moment free

¹ Beverly Silver: Forces of Labor
[https://libcom.org/files/Beverly_J._Silver-Forces_of_Labor_-_Workers'_Movements_and_Globalization_Since_1870_\(Cambridge_Study_Cambridge_University_Press\(2003\).pdf](https://libcom.org/files/Beverly_J._Silver-Forces_of_Labor_-_Workers'_Movements_and_Globalization_Since_1870_(Cambridge_Study_Cambridge_University_Press(2003).pdf)

² http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/paulmason/2011/02/twenty_reasons_why_its_kicking.html

³ <http://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/occupyeverything-web.pdf>

⁴ Mason:
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/27/concorde-iphone-history-state-intervention-technological-innovation>

⁵ Mason:
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/20/young-skint-self-employed-new-labour-market>

*movement ceases to apply. It should be humane, generous, and led by the needs of employers, local communities and universities — and being an EU member should get you a lot of points. But — and this is the final mindset shift we in Labour must make — free movement is over. Free movement was a core principle of the EU, developed over time. We are no longer part of that, and to reconnect with our voting base — I don't mean the racists but the thousands of ordinary Labour voters, including black and Asian people — we have to design a migration policy that works for them, and not for rip-off construction bosses or slavedrivers on the farms of East Anglia”.*⁶

As we have seen in Spain and Greece more recently, the promotion of a middle-class ‘revolutionary’ vanguard has resulted in the aspirational, precarious, professional class managing to win government positions for themselves and turning against their former poor allies. And that is even when at many points in the last few years, they have struggled shoulder-to-shoulder with more lower sections of the working class, which has not been the case in Britain. Similar to Paul Mason, the new ‘left governments,’ first of all in Greece, quickly had to realise how state power can not be yielded freely, but is confined by its national character — and they bowed to it...

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/25/britain-rainy-fascist-island-progrexit-brexit>

b) The revolutionary essence of capitalism: short remarks on the debate about ‘surplus population’ (riots) vs. ‘global working class’ (global production) to tackle the question of what capitalism’s main revolutionary contradictions are

In terms of more serious attempts to understand the revolutionary subjectivity and limitations of the uprisings, what is left is an unproductive separation of analysis: some people emphasise the increasing numbers of proletarians expelled from the immediate production process (surplus population, unemployed) and others focus on the productive collective power of workers in the emerging global supply chains (global working class debate). Some discovered the ‘era of riots,’¹ while others proclaimed the ‘global strike wave.’² Both sides are able to provide ample sociological proof for their position — figures about slum dwellers or the global integration of production.

We can ask ourselves why this separation of political focus has emerged. While it has something to do with the social position, regional location, and political preferences of those who analyse, the main material reason will be the real separation within working class existence: how workers experience impoverishment and productive power is structured and diversified regionally, sectorially, in terms of gender etc. In that sense most theoretical analysis and their one-sided focus only mirrors reality, without questioning it.

Before engaging further in more empirical analysis, let’s take a step back and ask a fundamental political question that is hidden behind the championing of either the ‘surplus proletariat’ or the ‘productive global working class’: what is the revolutionary tendency within capitalism? We acknowledge that class societies have always been fragile and that struggle against exploitation and oppression is their main contradiction, but what is actually specific about capitalism? We claim that capitalism has two internal revolutionary dynamics:

1. *Increasing productivity leads to greater inequality and relative mass impoverishment*

Poverty in capitalism does not exist because there is a lack of something as such or because the exploiters merely take away a bigger share of the produced wealth. Capitalism depends on the expansion of production, although an increase in social productivity results in growing relative poverty for the large mass of proletarians. The application of new technology or knowledge often results in job cuts and an increase in unemployment, mainly through proletarianisation of former artisans/individual producers and peasants. In the industries workers are either over-worked or under-employed. This contradiction becomes visible mainly as an objective fact, as a result of the

¹ Era of Riots
<https://libcom.org/library/era-riots-update>

² Steven Colatrella: Global Strike Wave
<https://libcom.org/library/worldwide-strike-wave-austerity-political-crisis-global-governance-steven-colatrella>

production process: over-production and over-capacities (closing factories etc.) on one side, the development of a ‘surplus population’ or ‘working poor’ population on the other. The increase in poverty results in more of the surplus product being spent on the repressive apparatus. It shows that the potential to create a better future is objectively given.

2. *Effects of increasing productivity on workers’ co-operation and undermining the power of capital*

Whereas the first level of the contradiction appears more as an objectified result of the production process, the second side impacts on the material form of how the production process is organised. In other words, capital has to increase productivity, last but not least also to appease workers by giving them a few more crumbs of a growing cake. The main way to increase productivity is a concentration of labour and machinery (big industry) based on a close cooperation of workers involved. Historically this leads to working class collectivity and unrest, not only about the crumbs on offer, but about control of the production process as such. The closer workers cooperate, the less capital (and its representatives in the form of management) is able to appear as a precondition and necessary organiser of social production. This appearance of the necessary organiser of production is the main social legitimacy and power of capital — not its armed forces, not its media manipulation, not its jails. Capital is therefore forced to divide the production process ‘politically’ (through outsourcing or re-location of companies, through separation of intellectual labour from the production process, through the reproduction of the division between production and the domestic sphere etc.), which then ends up undermining social productivity. To workers, this segmentation appears at first as an illogical act of ‘bad management practice’ or bureaucracy; “they want us to cooperate, but they don’t let us” or as a neutral market operation (“small economic units are more efficient” etc.). This contradiction sits at the core of what capital is: the inversion of our social cooperation, whose product seems to have an independent power over us; or to put it positively: the ability of workers to discover their global cooperation and to use it to fight and create a better world.

This main contradiction of capital appears both as an internal character of production (separated cooperation) and its result (relative impoverishment). The championing of either ‘surplus population’ or ‘workers’ productive power’ separate these two dynamics instead of analysing how, in reality, the experiences of ‘impoverishment’ and ‘collective productivity’ coincide or are segregated within the global working class. The separation also leads to a different understanding of revolution and consequently of one’s own role. If we focus merely on the first aspect of the contradiction — the creation of an impoverished surplus population — we will mainly perceive the social process as a kind of automatic tendency: capital accumulates itself and churns out a growing numbers of discontented unemployed. While this results in a quite deterministic view on social developments on one side — which we can just observe and which has little to do with the agency of the exploited — it also results in a pretty superficial and mechanical view of revolution as insurrection and rupture: at some point there are just too many poor people to be controlled. Instead we should analyse how the experience of cooperation and collective productivity and struggle of workers relates to the experience of impoverishment.

Unfortunately, so far most attempts to overcome this separation of analysis (wage/industrial workers vs. other forms of proletarian existence) end up being pluralistic in a bad sense e.g. the ‘Global Labour History’ discussion, which avoids talking about revolutionary tendencies in favour of sewing together an ‘inter-related patchwork’ of industrial labour/wage labour and small scale production/ non-wage labour.³ In order to avoid deterministic views on capitalist development and struggle, they give up looking for tendencies which weaken the command of capital and point beyond it. In this sense it won’t be enough to just address this separation empirically by proving to the ‘surplus’-faction that slum-dwellers are integrated in global production or by demonstrating to the ‘supply-chain’-gang how

³ Global Labour History:
<http://www.iisg.nl/publications/globallabourhistory.pdf>

socially dominating the rural hinterland or ghetto economy in many regions actually is. A serious attempt to paint a picture of global working class existence in its various forms — not as a mere collage, but with the question of tendencies towards social transformation in mind — has been made by our comrades from the group, ‘wildcat,’ in their article ‘Global Working Class.’⁴ We encourage reading and debating the text, developing it further regarding these main questions:

- the impact of uneven development within the working class and its’ political implications: the relation of immediate experience (e.g. being part of social cooperation in the big industries vs. relying on odd jobs and benefits) and political segmentation or generalisation within class struggle
- the specific role of the ‘productive working class’ to develop a social program under the pressure exercised by ‘marginalised’ proletarians
- the question of revolutionary transition, the relation between uprising (overthrow of the state) and appropriation (taking over of means of production)
- in relation to the three previous questions: the role of political class organisations

⁴ Wildcat: Global Working Class
<https://libcom.org/library/global-working-class-wildcat-germany>

c) The material (regional) divisions within the working class: some thoughts on the impact of uneven development on how workers experience impoverishment and their productive power differently

The following paragraph is more of an excursion for future exploration. Although we didn't have the time to go deeper into the subject at this point, we think that we need to bear in mind the fact that regional differences in development forms the necessary background to the empirical part on 'essential industries and insurrection' in the UK region. It will become apparent that working class composition in the UK region is very specific, e.g. the separation of workers in the centre of social production and marginalised sections of the proletariat is less pronounced than in most other parts of the globe. It also raises the issue of how a former imperial centre that underwent a certain process of de-industrialisation relates to the conditions e.g. in regions in the so-called global south.

We have to admit that we know pretty little about the theory of 'uneven/combined development,' or if it can even be called a theory. What we know is that the debate has addressed very similar questions of revolutionary strategy to those which we are facing today: a global working class revolution has to deal with regional differences of development; these differences cannot be conceptualised in 'national' terms as such, though nation states play an important role in framing and mediating them.

Around the time of the turn of the 19th and 20th century, the question was how capitalist dynamics in developed capitalist countries with bourgeois states relate to regions with strong 'unfree labour' or peasantry aspects and monarchistic/non-bourgeois state forms. In order to exemplify we quote from a previous wildcat article:

“Marx himself focused on the revolutionary potential of the rapidly growing, visible and struggling working class for a long time, but after the defeats of 1848 and 1871 had destroyed the hope for a quick victory, the center of his analysis shifted towards finding out what made capitalism 'unstable and stable' at the same time. Once more he had a close look at what was happening in the world. In the exchange of letters with Vera Zasulich he wrote about a 'specific historical opportunity': When the crisis of the 'Asiatic form of production' in Russia coincides with the crisis of capitalism in the countries of western Europe there is a chance that the struggles of the workers come together with those of the rural population. As a result of this, something revolutionary and 'new' could develop. Marx had elaborated the 'inherent dualism' of the Russian village community: collective property and private production. A revolution in Russia could be able to stop the demise of the village community, and once the collective moments in the given 'historical surroundings' (the crisis of the western capitalism) come together with the 'workers' revolution' they might become the starting point of a new form of communisation [Vergemeinschaftung]. Usually these letters are taken as evidence that Marx did not have a 'deterministic view of history' after all or that he wanted to propagate the 'direct leap' out of the pre-capitalistic communities [Gemeinwesen]. However, more important is the way how Marx approached these concerns. Marx tackled the question

*through notions of 'global recomposition' — however, today we are able to, and must, debate this question in a different manner, e.g. today it will be less about 'the coming together of the best of two different worlds...'*¹

Decades later Trotsky pointed out that under certain circumstances the 'under-development' in backward regions is reproduced and fortified in exchange with the developed capitalist nations (e.g. the material backing up of despotism in Poland/Russia through agrarian trade or industrial investment). The same should be valid for struggles: there is a specific inter-play between struggles in the centres and in the 'backward' regions. While necessarily schematic, the concept was not static: not 'every country has to go through stages' (as proposed by social democracy), but there is an interaction between different stages. The revolutionary character of the concept was that it was not 'pluralistic,' meaning, instead of merely describing the existence of different conditions it asked: how is uneven development reproduced, e.g. how does modern capitalism and the world market strengthen 'archaic modes of production'? How can an industrial working class provide a revolutionary attraction and program beyond its reach? And how can struggles under 'pre-capitalist' conditions (village commons, against police state conditions etc.) inform struggles in the centre?

"The law of combined development of backward countries — in the sense of a peculiar mixture of backward elements with the most modern factors — here rises before us in its most finished form, and offers a key to the fundamental riddle of the Russian revolution. If the agrarian problem, as a heritage from the barbarism of the old Russian history, had been solved by the bourgeoisie, if it could have been solved by them, the Russian proletariat could not possibly have come to power in 1917. In order to realise the Soviet state, there was required a drawing together and mutual penetration of two factors belonging to completely different historic species: a peasant war — that is, a movement characteristic of the dawn of bourgeois development — and a proletarian insurrection, the movement signalling its decline. That is the essence of 1917." (Trotsky)²

Maybe because of the generalisation of the 'proletarian condition' of being wage dependent and of the generalisation of 'parliamentary democracy' across the globe it now seems obsolete to talk about the impact of uneven development. Everything appears at the same time so similar (global village) and so different, once we look into details. The problem is that we clearly see the effect of regional differences on global class struggle, but:

- a. We tend to explain these differences geopolitically or out of 'national economies' or even ethnically (oil producing nations, BRIC states, Arab Spring);
- b. we celebrate a crude pluralism ('patchwork of free and unfree labour; all sorts of proletarian income etc.);
- c. we don't develop revolutionary strategies of how regional struggles or struggles within certain stages of development relate to others.

We won't be able to just copy the broad categorisations from the past debate (industrial, democratic centres vs. agrarian, feudal regions). Instead we have to analyse the main tendencies and material forces which separate, counteract or overdetermine/override the two mentioned general proletarian experiences (impoverishment and power/productive cooperation). The map drawn by the 'global working class'-debate points at some general and global experiences, which can become a basis for global organisation:

¹ Wildcat on Peasant Question:
http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/wildcat/82/w82_bauern_en.html

² Trotsky on Combined Development:
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/>

- experiences of migrant labour undermine the national existence of the workers' movement, but not without reinforcing 'national/protectionist sentiments' amongst the local working classes; the 'national status' of proletarians becomes the focal point, the state the main mediator between different stages of development and access to territory;
- global supply-chains connect individual workplaces and sectors and question trade union / industrial union form of containment. But there is a limit as to what extent 'productive cooperation' can actually be experienced in terms of creating direct bonds between workers (it is difficult to imagine cooperating with workers from supplying factories or ports if a whole Ocean lies in-between);
- proletarianisation / being expelled from the means of subsistence is a global phenomena, creating a similar social experience for peasants in India or Bolivia. But this only results in the fact that news from the other end of the globe can be understood more easily, the condition itself does not create material links as such.

While we can visualise this as something like a 'material backbone' for international working class organising, we can also easily see that apart from language issues etc., there are various tendencies and material forces which in their immediacy override these experiences. To say it in simpler terms: proletarians around the globe experience a deterioration of conditions, similar management and state austerity strategies and they sometimes are exploited by the same corporations or in the same supply-chain. Nevertheless, these immediate experiences are often overlaid by conditions which seem to impact on workers' interests more immediately: primarily, national conflicts and war. In order to make these various conditions more debatable for the development of some kind of global strategy, perhaps we have to be more schematic. Would it be possible to categorise six, seven main 'proletarian conditions' / stages of accumulation under which the working class currently exists and to analyse what specific kind of material power and political limitations struggles under these respective conditions develop? And how they could possibly relate to each other? How are these 'regions' criss-crossed by the material backbone mentioned above (global industry, migration)? For example, we could distinguish between regions or rather the existence of:

- industrially combined labour under political conditions of a democratic state/access to national welfare
- regions where workers' struggle and struggle 'for democracy' are still more intertwined
- 'extraction economies,' with a small share of (other) industrial labour and more coercive political forms
- regions dominated by semi-proletarianisation, crisis of peasantry and strong internal migration
- regions with a higher level of urban unemployment, informal labour relations, mafia economy and violent forms of political mediation
- regions of military (national, religious) disputes and/or 'failing states'

In each one of these 'regions' the role of, and relationship between, workers in industrial centres, urban and rural poor, students and other segments of the class will be different. Struggles in each region will relate differently to the question of capitalist wealth and its distribution or the question of state power. In order to avoid becoming too schematic such an analysis would entail discussing all possible examples of working class organisation and movements which were able to bridge the gaps of immediate experience between, e.g. industrial workers and unemployed, local working class and migrants, proletarians of different nationalities during times of war etc. It would force us to re-consider past 'global movements,' such as in 1968, where the relationship between struggles in the global north and south was

less based on proletarian experiences, but on the fact that former colonial powers and imperialist centres were under attack in both centres and periphery. The political effort to conceptualise the connection between centre and periphery as an alliance of 'workers' and 'oppressed people' was already questionable at the time — but 50 years later we still grapple with the problem of understanding the commonalities and differences between workers, simplified in the picture of 'north and south' or subsumed under an outdated imperialism theory, which largely sees workers as poor citizens. An analysis from the point of view of different developmental stages, instead of nation states or 'north vs. south' will hopefully allow us to understand e.g. how far-reaching the attraction of workers' struggles in the new industrial centres (Pearl River Delta etc.) both regionally and globally actually is, and to what extent their experiences will have to be politically mediated by class organisation in order to reach the more marginalised segments.

It might therefore also show that there is still a particular role of political working class organisations, which address the issue of regionally separated immediate experiences and interests within the class, but also tackle the challenge of developing a revolutionary program of transition, relating to the class in its overall conditions. Going back to the uprisings in 2010/2011, while it is necessary to point out the material class composition which determined the limitations of the movements, addressing the lack of an organised force within the working class that was able to propose revolutionary measures beyond taking the squares cannot be discarded as voluntarism. While the industrial working class does not seem to have a social hegemony to propose a political/social program of councils (anymore), what is even more apparent is that riots and occupation of public spaces only goes so far and without touching the means of producing a different society these struggles are either buried under state repression or rely on a new political elite with links to funds (cross-class alliances). Conscious organisational links will be necessary.

d) The regional backbone of insurrection: empirical material about the structure of essential industries in the UK region

In the second part of this article we try to place the debate of insurrection and revolution and the question of regional development in a concrete context — the UK region and its industrial composition. What is the political aim of such a sociological exercise? It can act as a myth-buster amongst the largely middle-class left, whose ideology of revolutionary transition is based on assumptions that production is largely immaterial nowadays, or that everything is gonna be automatised or that work or workplaces in general don't play a major role in proletarian socialisation. Thanks to the empirical exercise we can get a rough idea of numbers: how many people are engaged in securing our material survival? In contrast and more importantly, these figures can also serve as a basis for rough propaganda amongst the working class: how much can we reduce the social necessary labour time for everyone if everyone engages in socially necessary work? The empirical summary below outlines the material framework within which a regional insurrection and takeover of means of production would take place and the basic challenges the insurgent proletariat would encounter:

- How much food is there to redistribute before the shit hits the fan and shortage-related carnage begins?
- What would be immediately lacking if our region is cut off from wider trade or an external energy supply?
- How many workers are employed in the essential industries and what is their composition?
- Where are the essential industries concentrated geographically?
- How numerous is the local middle class?
- What is the class composition of local farming?
- How does the army and police force reproduce itself materially?

(Just as a disclaimer: we are well aware that in this case the availability of bourgeois statistics (UK region) and perhaps a certain Brexit trauma determines the chosen framework. That is obviously dangerous — trigger warning! — but we will explain more about it later on).

Total population in the UK region: 64 million

Employed population: 31.58 million (23.12 million working full-time)

Unemployed: 1.69 million unemployed (official figures)

Workers in essential industries: approximately 13–16 million

Total amount of migrant (foreign born) population, largely working class and concentrated in bigger cities: 8 million

Population according to size of town (2011):

London: 8 million
Birmingham: 1 million
Number of Towns between 200,000 and 600,000: 25
Number of Towns between 100,000 and 200,000: 51
Number of Towns between 50,000 and 100,000: 108
Number of Towns between 50,000 and 10,000: 817
Numbers of Towns between 10,000 and 5,000: 522
Numbers of Towns under 5,000: 6,300

Built-up areas with a population of 10,000 or more usual residents are defined as urban. In 2011, 81.5 % (45.7 million) of the resident population of England and Wales lived in urban areas and 18.5 % (10.3 million) lived in rural areas. Residents of rural areas are also more likely to be born in the UK (94.9 % compared with 84.7 % for urban areas), to be of ‘White British’ ethnicity (95.0 % compared with 77.2 % for urban areas). To analyse the significance of the existence of over 6,300 small towns for an uprising will be a future challenge.

Size of companies in the UK (2015):

Total number of private businesses: 5.4 million
Total number of employees: 25.8 million
Companies with no employees: 4 million
Companies with 1 — 9 employees: 1 million (4 million employees)
Companies with 10 — 49 employees: 200,000 (4 million employees)
Companies with 50 — 250 employees: 32,555 (3.2 million employees)
Companies with 250 or more: 7,000 (10.2 million employees)

When we speak of 13 to 16 million workers employed in the essential industries we mean industries directly relevant for reproduction under circumstances of an uprising, for a prolonged period: what do we need for material survival and self-defence against the class enemy? To extrapolate these figures from capitalist statistics is a bit of guesswork. The number above excludes teachers and ‘local authority employees,’ though this might exclude the public swimming pool staff — essential! It includes all kind of irrelevant industries, such as the arms and car industry — due to their significance for technological/knowledge transfer. Below more of a breakdown of this figure, with some sector-related peculiarities.

Agriculture — 500,000 people

Around 53% of food consumed in the UK is produced locally, the rest is imported. Fruit and vegetables account for the biggest share of imports (measured in monetary terms!): the leading foreign suppliers were the Netherlands (5.6%), Spain (5.1%), France (3.1%), Germany (3.1%) and Irish Republic (3.0%). Three countries accounted for 90% of dairy product and egg supply (UK farms supplied 86% of total consumption). Three countries accounted for 90% of meat and meat preparation supply (UK supplied 84%). Twelve countries accounted for 90% of supply of cereals and cereal preparations (including rice). The UK supplied 56% of cereal. Import or export of staple food (potato, wheat, rice) is partly a question of market prices and not merely of production capability, e.g. in 2015 around 1,250,000 tonnes of wheat were imported from EU, but at the same time the UK exported 61,000 tons of locally produced wheat to the US. It's different with the 100g rice per head per week consumed in the UK: 30% is imported from the EU countries, the rest from the global south.

Twenty four countries accounted for 90% of fruit and vegetable supply (UK supplied 23%). So yes, if direct relations to Spanish and Netherland greenhouses cannot be established, it will be difficult to maintain the ‘five a day’ guidelines! But for a country that is said to be so ‘food-insecure’ in comparison, it does not look too harsh in terms of global dependency — at least not as bad as Egypt, where 60% of the consumed wheat has to be imported. The EU as a whole has a food production to supply ratio of around 90%.

What about the concentration of the industry? First of all it is interesting to notice that of the 2 million ton of wheat stocks (annual production around 15 million tons, 65% of all cereal crop) 38% of stocks were held on-farm and 62% at ports, coops and merchants — meaning it is stored away from the individual owners. In comparison, globally the ratio between wheat stock to annual consumption is 30% and 20% for rice. In the UK, most of the on-farm wheat is for animal feed. Not only is the storage of wheat stocks concentrated, the flour mills are also quite monopolised: In 2011, 5 million tons of wheat were milled into flour in only 56 flour mills in the UK. The two largest companies account for approximately 40% of UK flour production.

What about the composition of the farms? These are arranged on almost 235,000 holdings whose average cultivable area is around 54 hectares (130 acres). About 70% of farms are owner-occupied and the remainder are rented to tenant farmers. Some 41,000 farms (around 14% of the total) are larger than 100 hectares and account for over 65% of the agricultural area. While ‘cereal farms’ tend to be more ‘family-run,’ the meat industry is more corporate: Around 930 million meat chickens (broilers) were reared in the UK in 2012, on 2,500 farms and 30 slaughterhouses. Companies like Lower Farm produce over 1.3 million chicken a year. The UK poultry industry employs around 55,000 people in locations all over the country, on farms, in hatcheries, feed mills, processing and portioning plants and in transport operations.

Despite the capitalist nature of agriculture in the UK (the peasant question is out of the way), we can see that we have to deal with 200,000 ‘owner-run’ enterprises, depending on seasonal labour, situated outside of the urban areas — meaning that this won’t be a mere ‘workers’ takeover’ but a more complex social dynamic.

Food processing, production — 2.2 million people

Here the capitalist dynamic is blatant: of 2.2 million workers in the sector only 0.5 million work in food manufacturers, whereas 1.6 million work in ‘non-residential catering,’ meaning canteens and restaurants. While not all restaurant work is socially superfluous, it is nevertheless largely catering to individual consumption patterns — but then the food has to be cooked and prepared and the production process in a restaurant will not be much more or less productive than a collective kitchen for a domestic unit of 200 to 250 people. Productivity rates of restaurants can’t compare with those in factories, for example in four factories in Southall Noon Foods produces 2.4 million meals per week, employing roughly 3,000 workers including managers and admin staff and workers engaged in snack production. That equates to roughly 200 meals per worker per day. It is also interesting to note that these factories are not very mechanised but rather labour intensive.

For our insurrectionist, ‘blocking the economy’ and looting friends: out of personal experiences of working in the retail warehouse chain and in the food processing industry we can say that the average supermarket stock of groceries in London lasts for about 24 to 48 hours. The main warehouses are located outside of the city margins and might hold a maximum of two to five days of stock. Supply for the main food processing plants often comes from the agricultural hinterland (chicken farms, flour mills, potato farms) or from abroad (fresh fruits). The communisation-fun might last three days max!

Water supply/treatment and waste management and street cleansing / general cleaning: 166,500 and 145,000 and 480,000 people respectively

The waste management numbers are not specified, e.g. how much of this is related to the big industry how much to individual consumption. Similarly, it is not clear how many of the 400,000 cleaners are employed in domestic set-ups, but one source stated that currently 6 million people in the UK employ a domestic cleaner!

Energy industry total: around 680,000 people

Given the heavy lobbying in this sector (coal industry, but also renewable energy sector) the numbers might be less reliable:

Gas industry: 142,000
Power generation: 87,000
Coal: 6,000
Petroleum: 150,000 (around 50,000 workers are said to work off-shore in oil and gas production)
Nuclear power: 44,000 to 60,000
Renewable energy: 112,000
Rest maintenance of grid and admin

In 2014, total electricity production stood at 335 TWh (down from a peak of 385 TWh in 2005), generated from the following sources:

Gas: 30.2% (0.05% in 1990) — other sources say 54% in 2016
Coal: 29.1% (67% in 1990) — other sources say 6% in 2016
Nuclear: 19.0% (19% in 1990)
Wind: 9.4% (0% in 1990)
Bio-Energy: 6.8% (0% in 1990)
Hydroelectric: 1.8% (2.6% in 1990)
Solar: 1.2% (0% in 1990)
Oil and other: 2.5% (12% in 1990)
Imported: 7.69%

Bordiga's old question should be altered: Seize power or seize the factory ... or seize the power plant? This is probably one of the most concentrated sectors in terms of social importance and also one of the most safeguarded by the state. In the UK there are 10 nuclear power stations, 16 major coal power plants, 33 gas plants and 7 oil plants. The state will apply its military and ideological strong-hold over these workers and they are, to state the obvious, also not easily replaced. The recent 'strike-wave' in France in June 2016 showed the centrality of the sector. In the UK, as well, the number of refineries and larger oil and petrol depots has come down drastically: there are only six main oil refineries at the coast, connected by main pipelines, the United Kingdom Oil Pipeline (UKOP) — patrolled by helicopters.

It is interesting to note that together with wishy-washy people of the 'food-security' brigade, it is the 'climate change' left that is actually researching the production process in the energy sector — from an environmental transitional point of view, but at least they try to deal with the real stuff. The radical left largely has a trade union overview about job cuts in the sector.

Transport total: 1.4 million people

Some of this work will be of much less relevance (airports and ground services account for 433,000 jobs and airlines 200,000 jobs). Some means of production/transport are not so difficult to run (285,000 truck drivers), but a good chunk still depends on very specialised cooperation and knowledge, e.g. in the railways, which employ around 200,000 — not including local trains and tube.

Equally port operations require sophisticated skills, in 2014 over 500 million tonnes were handled by UK ports, roughly 380 million tonnes unloaded and 180 million tons shipped. The UK ports sector is estimated to directly employ around 118,200 people. Over 95% of imports and exports by volume, and 75% by value still pass through sea ports.

Port traffic is highly concentrated, there are 51 major ports, which handle 98 % of the overall traffic, the biggest ten ports handled 340 million out of 500 million tonnes. Grimsby & Immingham in north east Lincolnshire has remained the UK's busiest port, handling 12 % of the UK market in 2014. The new 'London Gateway / Dubai Port' will shift a lot of traffic towards the east of London. Around 80 million tonnes were crude oil and oil products, 40 million tonnes in coal import. Another major share of dry bulk goods include biomass fuels, typically in the form of wood pellets or wood chips, for Drax and Lynemouth power stations in the North of England.

Ports are specialised: Milford Haven for liquid bulk, Grimsby for dry bulk, Felixstow for containers (41% of all container movements) and Dover for roll on and off (27% of total). In 2014, 204.1 million tonnes of traffic travelled between UK major ports and EU countries (42 % of major port traffic). In 2014 there were 54.8 million tonnes of freight which passed to and from the Netherlands, accounting for 14 % of all international traffic.

A fair share of cargo traffic is pretty useless, e.g. nearly a quarter (23 %) of international unitised (containers and other 'single units') traffic was by import and export of passenger cars. There were 4.1 million import/export motor vehicles moved through UK ports in 2014.

Retail total — 2.7 million / Logistics total: 1.8 million / Warehouses total: 360,000

This is less a question about how many people are employed to 'sell things,' but more about how many people are employed to circulate goods. The total retail sector is 2.7 million, most of them shop workers, the total logistics sector is said to be 1.8 million, but this will include the truck drivers already counted in transport and some of the parcel delivery workers, as part of the postal services. Chill houses, central distribution centres and local storage will still be useful, with less specialised knowledge required by workers to run them.

IT/Communication total: 1.2 million people

Certainly a very unspecified figure. Other sources state that 280,000 people work in communications, from maintaining of communication hardware (internet cables) to admin work. Other sources say that there are 350,000 'software professionals,' working in the UK, but that obviously includes programmers of train signal systems as much as programmers for online brokering. The main challenge will be to establish a intranet-communication system between domestic units and workplaces within the short-term, which cannot be easily shut down by the internet empire. We have too little technical knowledge in understanding what kind of effort this would involve, but there is a fairly big and well organised alternative 'networking' scene.¹ We were not able to find out more reliable information about the

¹ Example of Experiments with Alternative Communication Networks:
<http://awmn.net/content.php?r@@@288-AWMN&s@@@c5217ebf903e411769286b4cefb4b80c>

material structure of internet connections within the UK, e.g. big server stations and nodes, though these will be crucial for both sides of any insurrection.

Care Sector: 3.2 to 3.5 million people

Although a lot of this work could be taken out of social isolation, back into bigger domestic units, the knowledge of the workers employed in the sector are essential and it will need time to transfer/socialise them.

Adult care: 1.55 million
Childcare: 426,500
NHS: 1.2 million to 1.5 million

In 2015, across Hospital and Community Healthcare Services (HCHS) and GP practices, the NHS employed 149,808 doctors, 314,966 qualified nursing staff and health visitors (HCHS), 25,418 midwives, 23,066 GP practice nurses, 146,792 qualified scientific, therapeutic and technical staff, 18,862 qualified ambulance staff and 30,952 managers, dealing with 1 million patients every 36 hours. (In 2010, across England, there were over 1000 NHS hospital sites with more than one bed. More than half were small community or mental health facilities with an average of 35 or 68 beds respectively. Just over seven in 10 hospital sites in 2010 had fewer than 100 beds. There are 7,800 GP practices).

Construction: 1 to 2.1 million people

Again the figures are unreliable, ranging from self-employed builders for kitchen extensions to engineering companies engaged in airport constructions. While the question might come up as to what extent construction will be relevant during a revolutionary period, we can envisage that short-term conversion of former office space into social housing or conversion of space for the domestic units will engage a significant number of skilled workers.

Engineering/Manufacturing total: around 3 million people

This includes all type of socially unnecessary labour, first of all the arms industry or passenger car manufacturing. Unfortunately it is often this type of industry that has the highest levels of productive collective knowledge and highest standards of technology, while, e.g. food processing, harvest work, garment industry etc. is characterised by cruel labour intensity. A technology and knowledge transfer can be started, also as a political measure to show that ‘communism’ is to come and that we can expect much less work once we get through the upheaval. Other manufacturing will be of more immediate necessity, from packaging material, machine tool production for spare parts, construction material, pharmaceuticals etc.

Automobile: 250,000 including supply-chain
Steel: 30,000
Aerospace: 111,000 direct / 120,000 indirect
Arms industry: 146,000
Electronics: 800,000 (Centerprise has one of the UK’s largest PC manufacturing plants in Wales; 10% of computers manufactured in the UK, no info on supply parts; there is a NXP semiconductor plant in Manchester)
Plastics: 300,000
Furniture: 115,000
Chemical/Pharmaceutical: 105,000 (Chemical) and 53,000 (Pharmaceutical) direct jobs //

500,000 indirect jobs
Garment/Textile total: 150,000 to 300,000 (20,000 designers)

Maybe it is an accountant type of revolutionary mentality to assume that, for example, furniture manufacturing would have any social relevance within a six months period of upheaval, but then people struggle only so far without knowing how society will re-organise itself.

Media — around 310,000 people

In print-media around 167,000 people, in radio around 22,000 in television around 30,000 and in film industry around 70,000 — the BBC alone employs 35,000 people, including temps, short-term contracts. Most of their broadcasting, both TV and radio is done from their headquarter in Portland Place, London.

Postal Service — 200,000 plus

In 2015 the Royal Mail alone still employed 160,000 people. It is difficult to find figures of private parcel delivery companies, couriers etc. DHL employs 18,000. Again, this is not about individualised letter delivery, but revolutionary logistics.

Public sector total: 5.1 million people

We didn't include this in the total figure for essential industry, though amongst local government employees there are certainly workers with important social knowledge, e.g. the 27,000 librarians. Also, not all of the bourgeois knowledge taught by 1.5 million people employed in public education is mere ideology, a lot of it might turn out to be useful.

Local government: 2.3 million
Central government: 2.9 million
Education: 1.5 million
Public administration: 1.1 million
Construction: 150,000
Police: 250,000
Fire Brigade: 45,000

Army: 180,000 people

We haven't had much time (and sources) to look deeper into the composition of the army: what are the main class divisions within the armed forces and how does the apparatus reproduce itself materially. At this point we can only provide two snap-shots:

- a. While nearly half of all officers were educated in private schools (only 10% of the total population is educated in elite schools), in 2009 of the 14,000 newly recruited soldiers 31% were under 18, which indicates that they come from working class conditions. The army largely recruits from 'disadvantaged schools.'
- b. The army apparatus is largely maintained by 'private companies,' meaning by workers who haven't got the conditions and job security like public sector employees. Companies like Sodexo or ESS

(Compass) organise catering, retail and 'leisure activities' for army personnel, employing between 6,000 and 9,000 staff. Amey/Carillion organises the maintenance of 280 army bases and 49,000 army flats.

e) “Can anyone say ‘Communism?’”

Before we try to envision the conditions for a working class uprising in the UK region based on the material regarding the industrial structure presented above, we want to draw some brief political conclusions. ‘Communism’ has become a fashionable term, used by an array of people with conflicting positions — so has ‘revolution.’ We therefore agree to raise the question: ‘Can anyone say communism?’, as done by comrades around wildcat.¹ Based on our brief look at the limitations of the 2010/11 uprisings, our thoughts on the main revolutionary contradiction within capitalism and the empirical glimpse at the material structure of social production in the UK region, we state:

- As we saw in France in 1936,² Chile in 1973³ or Greece in 2014, parliamentary participation and nationalisation policies do not open up space for working class movements, but instead contain the revolutionary impetus inside ‘democratic’ frameworks that will always be rigged against us (or indeed, openly disregarded to maintain ruling class power). Nor does it prepare workers for the difficult task of taking over the means of production and defending them against the class enemy — it prevents them from doing so by creating illusions in a (gradual and often peaceful) reform process, which in the end gives the reactionary forces time to prepare their counter-attack.
- The hope that ‘automation’ (Accelerationists)⁴ or other ‘technological progress’ (Negrists, Paul Mason disciples)⁵ will create the material ground for ‘communism without revolution’ or ‘revolution without the working class’ is mainly a bourgeois utopia based on elitism. Ultimately it relies heavily on the state as an ‘agent of transformation’ e.g. in the form of ‘guaranteed basic income’ demands or the hope that the state will implement ‘innovation’ against the reluctant ‘monopoly capitalists.’
- The idea of transitional or directional demands towards the state as a kind of consciousness-enhancing trick is deeply rooted within the ‘radical left.’ Consciously or not they continue the old lefty formulas of transitional programmes as a patronising policy to “overcome the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard” (Trotsky). For us transition means the time it takes to takeover the means of (re-)production and to transform them into means not only to satisfy material needs, but to break our social isolation, our condition as appendixes of machinery, our suburban or rural boredom, the spatial concentration and separation of essential infrastructure (universities to power plants) from the rest of society. This transformation takes time, it is not separate from

¹ Can anyone say communism?

http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/wildcat/86/w88_communism_en.html

² On Popular Front in France, 1936:

<https://libcom.org/library/1914-1946-third-camp-internationalists-france-during-world-war-ii>

³ On Chile, 1973:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v@@@b5GeEzBKGsQ>

⁴ On Inventing the Future and Critique of Universal Basic Income:

In November 2015, Verso Books sent a copy of *Inventing the Future* by Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams to every member of the UK’s Labour Shadow Cabinet, appealing to the helping hand of the state to accelerate the technological progress:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inventing_the_Future:_Postcapitalism_and_a_World_Without_Work

<https://libcom.org/library/aufheben/pamphlets-articles/stop-the-clock-critiques-of-the-new-social-workhouse/reforming-the-welfare-state-in-order-to>

⁵ On Paul Mason’s Post-Capitalism:

<https://peopleandnature.wordpress.com/2016/04/04/i-have-seen-the-techno-future-and-im-not-so-sure-it-works/>

struggle. It is not communism yet, but it is on the way. This transformation cannot take place under capitalist rule or under command of hierarchical structures like a state. No demand or decree prepares workers for this. No elitist insurrectionist can just take over infrastructure without the workers involved.⁶ There is a qualitative shift and the only process towards that shift is the increasing experience and organisational abilities of the working class through their experience of capitalist production and struggles.

- The flip-side of putting your political hope in some ‘neutral technological progress’ is the hope that the semi-automatic creation of a ‘surplus population’ (impoverished people who are dispelled or excluded from the production process) will provide the grounds for revolution as insurrection and rupture (vulgar communisation theories).⁷ Any closer look at the current production process and working class will tell us that ‘insurrection without production’-ideologies are mainly romantic wet dreams and have little to do with the possibility of communism.
- Analysing the global composition of the working class will also show that many traditional ‘(anarcho-)syndicalist’ models of revolution (as a gradual expansion of organisation, general strike and take-over of the means of production) leave out questions of industry and labour market-based divisions within the working class, as well as the unpredictable fact of capitalist crisis and the predictable fact of state violence.
- Similarly, experiments with common spaces, transitional towns, self-management or attempts to abolish intellectual property are potentially fertile elements of class struggle, but once they are isolated from the question of social power they degenerate into capitalism’s creative bubbles.
- We acknowledge the contribution of debates around reproductive labour and the so-called ‘care revolution’: any fundamental change must have the socialisation of domestic and care work at its centre. However, there is a danger of the debate falling back into a middle-class eurocentric perspective if we don’t take into account the produced materiality of care relations⁸ e.g. who ploughs the fields, who builds the shelters, who makes our clothes etc.
- Last, but not least, we have to question our own premises of traditional Operaismo:⁹ while the ‘refusal of work’ of assembly line workers in the 1960s and 1970s was the most radical expression of the working class at the time, the fetishisation of this expression has prevented us from discussing the challenge of how we can imagine a takeover and transformation of the means of production today.

⁶ Invisible Committee: To Our Friends
<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/the-invisible-committe-to-our-friends>

⁷ On current communisation theories:
<http://libcom.org/library/communisation-its-theorists-friends-classless-society>

⁸ Plan C on Reproduction:
<http://www.weareplanc.org/blog/a-syndicalism-of-everyday-life-a-conversation-on-the-social-strike/>

⁹ Operaismo: Refusal of Work
<https://libcom.org/library/refusal-work-workers-committee-porto-marghera-1970>

f) The basic steps of organising revolution: what would a working class revolution have to achieve within the first months of its existence?

So what does revolution mean in the 21st century? We agree with our comrades from wildcat when they say that the day-to-day struggles and behaviour of the proletarian masses ‘revolutionise’ society constantly: “How do workers’ struggles become revolutionary? Revolution evades derivation from objective conditions. If in a society characterised by patriarchal relations female workers fight collectively for the improvement of their living and working conditions, if they take risks in struggle, cross boundaries, discover new potentials and want to find out more about the world, then this process is probably ‘revolutionary.’” Nevertheless, we still have to face up to the question of what a qualitative rupture with capitalist social relations would mean.

In the text below we presuppose these struggles, the formation of a political workers’ coordination on a substantial scale, which has been formed through struggle and is able through its rootedness to propose the leap. Their own struggles have brought society to the brink of collapse, they have seen how their cooperation under capital is structured through the results of their strikes and unrest. A ‘plan’ to takeover production is not just a good idea, but a necessary act for survival, both materially and in order to obtain social hegemony. We don’t emphasise that the main character of transition has to be the creation of emancipated relationships, which is true. We set in at a point where global class struggle has tipped the control of capital and the state into crisis and the working class in certain regions will have to make the leap into the unknown, not having the privilege of waiting for the rest of the global class to take this step together with them. We don’t presuppose that the working class in the UK region will be the first to make that step, nor that the region in question will be confined to these English-speaking islands. Relating to the problems lined out above — the (regional) disparity of productive power and impoverishment within the working class — this is neither a sketch of general ‘principles of communist production and distribution’ a la Group of International Communists¹ nor a left-communist essay about the ‘relation between state, party, unions in the phase of proletarian dictatorship.’ We appreciate previous efforts such as of Insurgent Notes to discuss an ‘initial revolutionary program,’² but we hope to be more concrete. In the end it is a slightly embarrassing attempt to think about the relation of regional insurrection and taking over means of production within an initial six months or so period of proletarian revolution — it is about the bare bones.

We don’t have a clear idea about what could cause a situation of revolutionary upheaval and we don’t know what will happen once people take the streets. What we do know is how social production and reproduction is organised today and the composition of workers engaged in it. We know what keeps us apart, what creates the basis for professionalism or gender hierarchies. We can envisage something

¹ Group of International Communists:
<https://www.marxists.org/subject/left-wing/gik/1930/>

² Goldner on Transition Program:

“What follows in conclusion, then, is a program for the “first hundred days” of a successful proletarian revolution in key countries, and hopefully throughout the world in short order. It is intended to illustrate the potential for a rapid dismantling of “value” production in Marx’s sense.”

like a minimal material backbone of the revolution, something which the working class would have to achieve within a certain time-span in order to abolish the domination of the money economy, profit management and state control — and to undermine divisions between them. We might think that this is rather abstract or hypothetical, but then during the last few years people were willing to risk being killed by defending a square or storming parliament — the revolutionary will is not lacking — but in that moment it might need a social force with a) roots in the essential industries and amongst the poor and b) a concrete plan: these are the power stations, logistics hubs, flour mills, internet nodes which are central to an effort to fundamentally change things. Soldiers who shoot you as a ‘rebellious mob on the street’ might be less likely to shoot you when they know that you defend workers who know about production and who want to run the energy or food processing plant for everyone. So what are these bare necessities?

What are the potentials and challenges for an insurrection within the UK territory?

Based on the reflections above we present twelve basic theses on the primary characteristics and requirements and initial steps of a working class revolution:

1. Regional challenge

An uprising will depend on the ability to sustain itself regionally. Although we speak of global revolution, the process won’t necessarily be synchronous; we will have to deal with situations of regional insurrections which have to reproduce themselves over a certain period, temporarily and partially being cut off from world market supply.

2. Emancipation and hardship

It will furthermore depend on its capacity to improve overall conditions: a communist revolution has to be able to improve living conditions for the majority over a short timespan, guarantee material reproduction of the population at a high level, making time for re-organisation of society at the same time, dismantling hierarchies while still battling the battle. Its main attraction will be the more equal and liberating relationships created in struggle, but over a short-span of time material hardship would undermine these relationships, no matter how willing people are to bear the impact of scarcity.

3. Takeover of essential industries as productive insurrection

Large sections of the working class have to be prepared for an organised response to a spontaneous situation of crisis: this will largely depend on the collaboration of workers employed in the essential industries with the organised violence of the wider proletarian class to takeover, defend and transform the essential industries. This take-over will not happen gradually, but will be led by an ‘active minority/vanguard’ of 30 to 40 % of the working class, formed in previous struggles. This takeover is the productive and material core of insurrection, the action that can swing the rest of the population, in particular if ‘populist measures’ (re-distribution of living space, health provisions etc.) are offered to the poor and they are included in practical refurbishment. As can be seen from the empirical bits and bobs, the initial core centre of production and circulation that has to be taken over and defended is significantly smaller (not all convenience stores, but the main bulk circulation; not the entire manufacturing industry, but mainly flexible machine shops for (spare) parts production and building material etc.)

4. Formation of larger domestic units

The uprising and takeover of essential industries has to go hand in hand with the formation of domestic units comprising 200 to 250 people: communal spaces (former hotels, schools, office blocks etc.) as central points for distribution, domestic work and local decision-making. The quick formation of such domestic units is as important as the takeover of the essential industries. Mainly in order to break the isolation of domestic work and gender hierarchies, but also to create a counter-dynamic to the centralisation in the essential industries: a decentralisation of certain social tasks and decision making. The domestic units and their experience will shift the focus from 'production for production's sake' towards a situation where living together and creating the means of subsistence will be a less segregated process. 250 is a pretty random number, but it seems small enough to facilitate familiarity with people who we organise daily stuff with (childcare, cooking, washing clothes etc.) and big enough to make distribution of goods feasible. It will also create enough proximity in order to guarantee a certain revolutionary respect and commitment between individual members in case of disputes.

5. Proletarianisation of the control over agricultural production

Larger numbers of the urban working class will have to go and convince the 'owner-run' farms of the agricultural sector to share their burden and trouble with working the soil and create direct, non-market related links between town and countryside. While urban workers move towards the rural agriculture areas, supporting their seasonal agricultural workers (most of them will go back and forth between town and agriculture anyway), some of the agriculture and equipment can be brought closer to town — here we might actually be able to learn something from Cuba (significant experience with urban gardening and rapid conversion from an oil-based agriculture to a less fossil fuel based one). These two movements from town to countryside and vice versa will be a first organic step towards a dissolution of the capitalist geographic division of labour. Engage in first steps to undermine the eroding nature of industrial farming by getting perma-culture folks involved.

6. Participation of the marginalised proletarians

At the core of the takeover the essential industries have to be taken over both from within and from without. This will depend on the ability of the proletarians in less central sectors to enforce (mainly by participating in production and organising its military defence) the fact that workers in the essential industries socialise the production and free circulation of goods, as opposed to treating the former companies and products as their own property. Only the mass participation of poorer or more marginalised sections of the working class will make visible the entire scope of social needs. Their previous experiences with state violence and their knowledge about urban improvisation (from self-defence to economic networks) will be required. An immediate 'populist' program has to be launched addressing those segments of the proletariat which are at the margins of essential production — this segment might be called the 'urban poor,' or surplus proletariat. This segment is not so significant in the UK, but surely in other countries. In order to drive a wedge between them and the middle-strata which has the financial clout to 'buy them over' there has to be a coordinated action of appropriation of living space. In this sense 'construction' might be essential even in an uprising: if construction workers and the 'urban poor' take over useless office space, empty hotels etc. and convert them together, this would create a bond in order to win people over to defend the rest of the essential industries under attack.

7. Participation of workers in the advanced industries

As outlined before, large parts of the most advanced industries in terms of concentration, knowledge and machinery are not necessarily essential in terms of material survival. Apart from being potential centres of collective struggles and emerging workers' organisations, the role of workers

employed in the most advanced industries (automobile, machine engineering) is to make technology and knowledge available for an improvement of the essential industries and domestic units. Not the robots or artificial intelligence will liberate us from drudgery, but the collaboration between workers in the advanced and essential industries and domestic units will demonstrate how we can drastically reduce necessary labour-time.

8. Breaking the collusion of intellectual workers

A swift and coordinated appropriation will only be possible with the backing of a significant minority of ‘technical staff’ and intellectual workers (engineers, doctors etc.) employed in the centres of social production. It will depend on the collectively organised measures of the three main working class segments (essential industries, advanced sectors, marginalised) to break the collusion of ‘intellectual workers’ (engineers, certain segments of science) with capitalist management and the state apparatus and win a considerable section over on communist terms and conditions, i.e. the breaking down of division between intellectual and manual labour. In order to break the collusion the struggling working class has to impress with organisational knowledge of production, with liberated human relationships and social responsibility towards the environment.

9. Establishing communist internet and productive database

The takeover needs social communication and an elaborate decision-making processes, facilitated by a parallel (IT) communication structure to the internet, which is able to link domestic units, essential industries, remaining workplaces and ‘proletarian militias.’ In terms of ‘production’ necessary during the insurrection, this will be a major one. It has to be a structure which guarantees communication between production and consumption, sturdy enough to fight off attacks. Connect this communication network to taken-over printing and film/TV media (neighbourhood/industry TV) and set up a parallel physical delegate structure in case of communication break-down.

10. Curbing the influence of the middle-class

In the UK the ‘middle-class’ block is still a considerable force — there are 4 million business owners with no employees (self-employed), most of which can be seen as disguised proletarians; there are at least 1.2 million ‘bosses’ (if we assume a single boss) employing between 1 and 50 people, which can be categorised as an exploiting middle class; 1.75 million people make money as landlords — a lot of them might as well belong to the former category; 1.1 million people still get good money through being employed in the financial services sector (some of them might be data-entry typists and cleaners). There are 120,000 lawyers/solicitors in the UK, representing a professional section of the middle-class not tied into the social process of production. There are still around 50,000 local shops, the majority of which are run by individual owners, representing a lower section of the middle-class. These people have a political weight and a repressive apparatus. We are not talking about the mysterious 1%, but rather about a backbone of 15% of people who have not just money to lose, but social influence and prestige. The best way to minimise their influence is to cut them off from essential production and circulation and force them to realise that their privileged social position was largely unproductive — and that they are welcome to participate productively as equals.

11. Splitting the armed forces along class lines

Historically no revolution has been successful without a split within the army, in most cases as a result of previous war or civil war situations. The main chance for a communist revolution to split the army along class lines is therefore determined by objective conditions (soldiers not wanting to die for ‘their masters war’) and its subjective capacity to attract working class soldiers: the organised working class movement can free us from hierarchical relationships and knows how to feed, clothes, cares for everyone. Nevertheless, a revolution has to create its own material threat

by weakening the military apparatus (non-cooperation, meaning, no supply of essential goods and services for the army) and by armed defence of essential productive units. This includes the curbing of sabotage by (petty) bourgeoisie and lumpen elements (e.g. in Chile during the social turmoil in 1973 the owners of truck and bus fleets organised a ‘strike’ or rather boycott in order to create economic chaos).

12. Overcoming the regional isolation by using taken-over productive capacity

We have no illusions: no regional uprising will be able to sustain itself materially and ‘militarily’ over a prolonged period. We have seen the pitfalls of ‘Bolshevik foreign policies’³ and of anarchist regionalism. The challenge for any local working class is to discover its global dependencies and to engage in extra efforts not only to sustain itself, but to use the appeal of their experiences and appropriated means of production strategically in order to break through their geographic isolation. We don’t know what this will look like, apart from sending people and material out to explain their experiences of struggle. It will mean observing the global situation and perhaps sending proletarian militias with productive knowledge and means of production to support workers’ uprisings elsewhere — using the global logistics facilities that capitalism was forced to develop.

What will be the centres of coordination and debates to accomplish all this? In terms of social production and decision-making structures, a lot of unpredictable things will happen, people will discover new desires and knowledge of how to organise horizontally and all of that — but we think that in the phase of insurrection apart from ‘the streets and squares and barricades’ the following three locations will be central during an uprising, both in terms of production and decision making:

- a. the workplaces of the essential industries, in order to guarantee social production and establish the main body of social decision-making
- b. the new domestic units, in order to socialise reproduction and establish the second main body of decision-making
- c. the former workplaces in non-essential industries, in order to transfer knowledge and equipment.

Allocation of work takes place according to necessity and capacity of units of the essential industries and according to personal abilities, roughly as follows:

a. Four hours in the essential industries

That means a massive transfer of working-time and workforce to the essential industries in order to be able to reduce individual working hours while maintaining production levels — for a controlled winding down of excess. Participation of everyone (the former unemployed including unwaged domestic workers, but also former bankers and other former ‘privileged’) is essential, in order to socialise experiences and decision-making: ‘councils’ in the essential industries and domestic units being the main ‘productive and political units.’ Industry-internal hierarchies in terms of intellectual and manual labour have to be tackled immediately. Demand for numbers needed in the workforce has to be communicated to domestic units and remaining workplaces — the quicker and more transparent the requirements of the industries are communicated, the easier the supply. Supply chains have to be restructured, depending on the (global) expansion of the uprising.

b. Three hours in the domestic unit and territory beyond

The counter-point is participation in the domestic units, setting up of food kitchens, social (care) space, ‘communist intranet’ and communicating new social needs to the decision-making bodies

³ Bolchevik foreign policies:
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/mattick-paul/1947/germany.htm>

in the essential industries. Double participation in often centralised essential industries and de-centralised domestic units is of major importance, so as to undermine social divisions of labour and (e.g. gender) hierarchies. Only through double participation and communication will we be able to figure out which elements of social production can be de-centralised within (combined) domestic units and which are better organised in a more centralised industrial set-up.

c. Two hours in former workplaces

Maintaining control over the 'non-essential' workplaces and keeping in touch with former colleagues is important. Social developments can be discussed and stock-taking can take place: what kind of knowledge and means of production are available? What were they used for so far? What could they be used for potentially? Who were former suppliers or who did the company/workplace cater to? This information has to be added to the general productive information pool. In particular the higher developed industries (arms, automobile) will have the responsibility of a technology and knowledge transfer.

We won't go into speculations whether there will be additional regional councils or neighbourhood assemblies etc. We think that the main decisions should be taken not as 'citizens' or 'members of assemblies,' but as members of a new social (re-)production process. Debates and decisions concerning issues beyond the immediate reach of the essential industries and domestic units (global situation, movements of the class enemy, questions of larger infrastructure etc.) should evolve from the new relationships created through day-to-day cooperation — not in a separate sphere of representation.

How does the UK region differ from and relate to the wider global situation, referring back to the question of uneven development?

It would be necessary to analyse similar empirical material for other regions of the globe, but it is fairly clear that within the UK/western European region, an insurrection would not face problems as challenging as in many other regions of the globe, such as an extended rural hinterland with only fragile ties to industrial or urban centres; more desperate poverty level on a mass scale which leaves less scope and time between appropriation of resources and takeover of means of production; warlord or mafia structures that are more integrated in the lives and reproduction of the proletariat; significant numbers of medium peasantry or small trader class that are less likely to identify with a working class revolution; lack of essential energy resources — just to mention a few. It is pretty certain that no insurrection in the UK region would take place if the entire globe wasn't in turmoil — in this sense the basic connection between regional and worldwide revolution is obvious. At this point we can only envisage some general connections:

- Struggles around the globe are taking place in more and more similar industrial and social situations — meaning that the major influence of the global character of the working class will be through exchange of experience and inspirations, in particular through the channels of labour migration: migrant workers in the UK are in touch with their regions of origin and will be able to communicate experiences, in particular in the major cities. We have seen the influence of the so-called Arab Spring on migrant workers in the logistics sector in Italy or the impact of struggles in South America on the class confidence of Hispanic workers in the US. These are only glimpses of how the class will be able to communicate and learn from their global struggles.
- Seen from a regional point of view the lack of some basic goods in case of isolation is apparent, in particular when it comes to food supply, but probably also for certain raw materials for electronics

manufacturing etc. Here the workers in the essential industries will have to restructure their supply chains ‘politically,’ analysing the global struggles, emerging workers’ organisations around the globe, which could help re-establish supply. Again, migrant workers will play a significant role in assessing the situation and establishing direct links.

- The latter point is not a one-way street: the UK and large parts of western Europe are said to be ‘de-industrialised,’ but as capitalist centres they still hold significant manufacturing capacities compared to many regions in the global south. The transfer of production capacities will be part of the expansion of the uprising: support of workers’/proletarian struggles and organisations in other regions through supply with excess means of production — relying on support of global transport workers. While the ‘economic’ side of such a transfer might be common sense (evening out of regional disparities, “we get rice, they get water pump spare parts”), the ‘political’ aspect is of importance and will potentially be more controversial: temporary productive efforts beyond the immediate local needs are necessary to support the success of uprisings elsewhere. The transfer of means of production (or rather the means to create them) will be one of the main weapons to break the stronghold of reactionary forces in less developed regions.

g) The revolutionary organisation: finally we propose that this perspective on revolution tomorrow does not leave us untouched today, it asks for certain organisational efforts in the here and now

We can understand anyone who now raises doubts: “But how does this imaginary insurrection relate to the current situation in any way?! Will you go around in the streets, stopping random people, telling them where the next strategic power plant, army barracks or flour mill is located?!” We agree, at the current stage this text will mainly — hopefully! — contribute to a discussion within the milieu about what a revolutionary moment might look like, or rather, what general material framework for a social transformation we are confronted with. We think that the basic propositions sketched out in this text inform our political focus today: do we perceive ‘workers’ or ‘work’ as yet another identity category? Can participation in parliamentary politics be a gradual step towards transformation or does it potentially distract proletarians from the real challenges they are facing? Is there a role for political workers’ organisations, now and in the process of revolution, and if so, what does it consist of? We think there are certain continuities of workers’ organisation, leading from here and now to a potential situation of insurgency — which doesn’t mean that the insurgency or its success will necessarily depend on that organisation. It is us who ask the question of how we can contribute to this process — open for discussion and collaboration.

Current Stage

- Historical clarity: More important than empirical exercises such as outlined above are historical reflections on previous moments of insurrection and the relation between revolutionary workers and the state in particular. From the general strike in Seattle in 1919,¹ to the Spanish Civil War in 1936,² to Oaxaca in 2006³ to Rojava in 2016.
- Current understanding of class composition: Instead of lazy assumptions (‘everything will be automated’ or ‘we are all precarious now’) we need more precise analyses of certain processes within production, currently ideologised as ‘full automation’ or ‘immaterial labour’ or ‘general intellect.’ This means an analysis of the current division and hierarchy of intellectual and manual labour in the essential industries (‘what does the common worker know?’), as well as analyses of actual forms of global supply chains, agro-industry etc., taking into account the question of potential working class control.

¹ Seattle 1919:
<https://libcom.org/history/1919-the-seattle-general-strike>

² Spanish Civil War:
<https://libcom.org/library/workers-against-work-michael-seidman>

³ Oaxaca 2006:
<https://libcom.org/history/looking-back-oaxaca-rebellion>

- Establishing roots amongst the workers in the essential industries, the ‘engineering sector’ and amongst the ‘poor.’ We are talking about political focus here, not of exclusiveness! Within the day-to-day conflicts we should reconsider forms of ‘knowledge transfer,’ such as e.g. the type of teaching-material of the old IWW that they used to explain ‘engineering knowledge’ of a certain industry to the common labourer employed in it.
- Referring back to the problem of uneven development: we have to try to understand different proletarian stages and segments of class composition and relate them to each other; e.g. the Revolutionary Black Workers in the US in the late 1960s/early 1970s managed to have roots in the poor areas (anti-police violence, racist school policies, sexual health), amongst students, within the major car factories, in the ‘community’ (hospitals, housing) — and tried to relate these to experiences of ‘Third World’ migrants in their area (‘Arabs in Detroit’). Given the general social situation they were able not merely to create ‘alliances’ between these different segments, but forms of organisation which encompassed the entirety of proletarian life.
- Creating networks of struggle-experienced workers: While supporting strikes and struggles actively we should also look out for workers who developed the desire and capacity to engage in political activities beyond the individual conflict — not as recruiting material, but as rooted comrades. Together we could already experiment with hinting at the necessity of a social takeover of the means of production in a more concrete way during day-to-day struggles. This will require a new and more concrete language.
- Keeping up to date with other forms of ‘cooperative’ efforts or experiences of self-management (from ‘workers’ control’ to ‘urban gardening’ to ‘transition towns’ to ‘alternative medicine gatherings’ to ‘critique of science’) and encourage engagement with the wider class struggle. Create experience exchange between ‘workers’ self-management’ and strikes,⁴ between care cooperatives and struggles against hospital closures.
- Documenting your efforts and experiences for others. We encourage local groups who feel affinity towards the prospect of insurrection and at the same time try to get rooted in their working class area (from workplaces to universities to groups around proletarian issues) to make their point of view and experiences debatable by others, without having to feel defensive about their particular organisation. Based on that exchange and discussion steps should be taken to enable more coordinated efforts.

Revolutionary Stage

- Developing within a network of workers — formed through various cycles of struggles and their common reflection — a clear program for the advanced moment of uprising: what are the central facilities? How to coordinate a ‘populist’ process of appropriation? How to address working class segments within army? This has to be formulated in realistic terms, convincing more through knowledge of industrial organisation and concrete contacts, rather than through rousing political statements.
- An organisation of workers will also have to play a role in putting forward a ‘class perspective’ against the tendency of ‘workers’ control’ after takeover of individual companies. The workforce of bigger industries might try to use their position for their own privilege; experienced workers militias might use their collective strength against a more common interest. An organisation of

⁴ Workers’ Control:
<http://www.workerscontrol.net>

workers should be prepared to undermine possible regionalism (of naturally richer regions, more fertile soil, nicer beaches etc.)

- Against the background of more prolonged exchange and a wider political perspective a workers' organisation should encourage the use of access machinery/production and patents/company-specific knowledge for support of workers struggle 'abroad'; encourage extra-labour above the locally required levels if necessary; defend this position against 'localist' tendencies within the working class. This internationalist perspective cannot be enforced through a political program or as an armed force (workers' state), but through being rooted amongst and winning over of workers in the global supply chains and through facilitating direct exchange — pointing out the global interdependence.

After various longer discussions with workmates and neighbours about the question of 'what is the character of the current system' and 'is a different society possible?' we want to write a series in our workers' paper, WorkersWildWest,⁵ in which we will also try to use some of the material and thoughts presented above. It will be a challenge to make things short and precise, we are curious to see if such articles contribute to our daily interactions.

We are also curious to hear your thoughts!

AngryWorkers, September 2016
angryworkersworld@gmail.com

⁵ WorkersWildWest:
www.workerswildwest.wordpress.com

**30. A way propounded to make the
poor in these and other nations
happy**

Deleted reason: It was decided that this utopian text is not proto-anarchist or anarchistic.

Subtitle: By bringing together a fit suitable and well qualified people unto one Houshold-government, or little-Common-wealth.

Author: Pieter Corneliszoon Plockhoy

Authors: Pieter Corneliszoon Plockhoy

Topics: not-anarchist, utopianism, political philosophy, cooperatives, utopia, Christian

Date: 1659

Date Published on T@L: 2021-09-06T00:00:00

Source: <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A54515.0001.001>

Notes: Plockhoy, a Dutch radical, wrote this plan of a proto-socialist society during the regime of Cromwell. His vision was of a society in which no one was oppressed or exploited, people were equals, and labour was organized cooperatively. A society that was based on Christian virtues of justice, love, and solidarity. And lastly a society that was freed from the yoke of evil people, especially those who managed 'to live from the labour of others'. Although Cromwell showed interest in his petitions to establish his idealized societies in England, he died and Plockhoy was unable to get support from Cromwell's successors. Eventually he led a Dutch utopian colony to the New World near the abandoned colony of Swaanendael (present day Lewes, Delaware), but within 13 months the colony had been crushed by the English, where during or some while after Plockhoy is presumed to have died.

A WAY PROPOUNDED TO Make the poor in these and other Nations happy.

By bringing together a fit suitable and well qualified people unto one Houshold-government, or little-Common-wealth, Wherein every one may keep his propriety, and be employed in some work or other, as he shall be fit, without being oppressed.

Being the way not only to rid those and other Nations from idle, evil and disorderly persons, but also from all such that have sought and found out many inventions to live upon the labour of others.

Whereunto is also annexed an invitation to this Society, or little Common-wealth.

Psalm, 42. 1. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble; the Lord shall preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the Earth,*

BY PETER CORNELIUS, VAN-ZURIK-ZEE.

LONDON, Printed for G. C. at the sign of the *Black spread-eagle* at the West-end of *Paul's Church-yard*.

A way propounded to make the poor in these and other Nations happy, &c.

HAVING seen the great inequality and disorder among men in the World, that not only evil Governours or Rulers, covetous Merchants and Tradesmen, lazie, idle and negligent Teachers, and others, have brought all under slaverie and thralldom: But also a great number of the common handy-craft men, or labourers (by endeavouring to decline, escape or cast off the heavy burthen) do fill all things with lyes and deceit, to the oppressing of the honest and good people, whose consciences cannot bear such practises, therefore have I (together with others born for the common welfare) designed to endeavour to bring four sorts of people, whereof the World chiefly consists out of several sects into one Familie or Houshold-government, viz. Husband-men, Handy-crafts people, Marriners, and Masters of Arts and Sciences, to the end that we may the better eschue the yoke of the Temporall and Spirituall Pharaohs, who have long enough domineered over our bodies and souls, and set up again (as in former times) Righteousnesse, love and Brotherly Sociab' enesse, which are scarce any where to be found, for the convincing of those that place all greatnesse only in domineering, and not in well-doing, contrary to the pattern and doctrine of the Lord Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve, and gave his life a ransome for many; appointing his Kingdom unto his Apostles, as it was appointed to him from his father, answering them when they murmured, who after his departure should be the greatest amongst them, said; If any among you would be greatest, let him be the servant of all. In direct opposition and contradiction to the World where they are accounted the greatest who have most servants, and not they that do most service to others, and therefore the Worlds greatness, and the greatness of Christians differ as light and darkness, whereas true Christians being mercifull doe endeavour to ease mens burthens, instead thereof, others (as if there were not trouble enough in the World) are still making the burthen heavier with new devises setting themselves forth daily, in their sight as if their design were to vex and grieve poor people (and stir them up to Impatience) with their excesse and riot.

To this may be added those that are called spirituall persons or Clergy-men who perswade people (that they may the more willingly drudge for them) to beleve that they take care of their soules (as if they could love the soul which they cannot see, and have no compassion on the body which they see, This therefore being deceit and lies, Let us return again to mercifulness which is as well touched with the miseries of the body as with the miseries of the soul selling such order or society of mutual love whereby the oppressed (scarce able to breath) may be brought to rest and enlargment.

Taking upon them every day (except the Sabboth) soe many as are fit to work the labour of 6. houres beginning ordinarily, from 9. of the clock in the morning to 12. at noon, and from 3 till 6. at night, if any desires to have an afternoones liberty he may work from 4. or 6. of the clock in the morning till 10. or 12. at noon or labour another day soe much the more, they that have hard work to doe may begin in Sommer Mornings while it is cool, and take their rest, in the heat of the day, bestowing the rest of their time, for the refreshing of their bodies, and profitable excercises of the mind.

They that are set on work by us (being not fit to be of our Society) receiving wages shall work 12. houres in a day, from 6. in the morning to 12. at noon, and from 2 till 8. at night till any of them be fit and willing to come into us.

The Children of rich people (who are not of our society) comming to School (after we have found out the ablest masters) to be instructed in Arts Sciences and Languages are every day (except the Sabboth, learning some usefull Trade) to work 3. houres to the end they may allwaies in case of losse and want

afterwards get their living without being necessitated to fall upon such courses (as we see happen often in the world) as may prove hurtfull to their soules and bodies.

The rich people (being not of our Society) having a desire to dwell amongst us shall not be bound to work, if they will sometimes of themselves do any thing, they will hold forth a good Example to all rich time-loosers in the world, and paying for their diet, Cloathing, Lodging and other necessaries they shall be free.

For the beginning & undertaking of this great work it will be good that some able men (as Fathers) to lay the foundation, for the common welfare doe put in a summe of money to raise a Stock, employing the same to buy a piece of land whereupon the Husbandman, handy Craftsmen, Tradesmen, Marriners, and others [comming in with their moveables as Cattell, Money, or any other Commodities] may be secured.

Those that come into our Society shall not be bound to make their goodes Common for (according to the tenth Commandement) none ought to covet another mans goodes.

If any will out of a free reall and bountifull heart bring in any thing to increase the Stock it shall be used for the common benefit, without being appropriated for any mans own in particular.

They that will bring in their own landes for the Common service may have security upon the same, and for their moveables upon the landes freely given, only it shall be employed for the common welfare without giving Interest, if they die, their Children or freinds (that none may suffer wronge) shall possess the same except they gave it to the Society or otherwise.

If any be minded to leave the Society, they shall not onely receive that which they brought, but also a share of the profit which hath been made since they came to the Society if no profit hath been made in their time, they shall receive none, that so they that come into us may not seek their own private gain.

A young man or mayd leaving the society, by marrying, or otherwise, shall have a share of the profit, that hath been made since he or shee were of the Society (from their birth or otherwise) no profit being made, it shall be at the pleasure of the Society to give them what they please, for the profit made before belongeth not to them.

If any one having brought into the Society money or other commodities, afterwarde desires to go out again, they shall acquaint the Society thereof, that so there may be care taken to restore it, the summe being not above 100. l. shall be paid as the owner desires, if more, then 100. l. they shall have freedome to pay it within a yeeres time, paying them a quarter of the summe presently (if they desire it) that so none may be hindred to leave the society when they please.

In case the Society hereafter be disturbed or separated by Tyranny or otherwise, then shall the landes and monies which was freely given to raise and increase the stock (all Creditors being paid) come to the benefit of those poor onely who have brought nothing to the Society, except there be poor kindred of those that (out of love) have given to the stock, such shall have an equall proportion with the others.

For the well ordering of our businesse we shall have need of two great houses one in [or about the] Citty viz. a Warehouse for Merchants or Tradesmen, another in the Countrey near a River for the Husbandman, Handy Crafts people, Schoolmasters and Marrieners.

The house in the Citty so big that 20, or 30. families may dwell in it, having shopps of severall wares, as Cloth, sayes, linnen, men and womens apparrell, Stockings, shoes, Hatts, and other usefull and necessary thinges, being the foundation of the whole work, not onely by reason of the proffit that comes by Trading, but also because all Handy-Grafts, belonging thereunto depend thereon.

Our trade will for three sufficient reasons undoubtedly increase, the first is that there will not be overasking in price, but all will be sold at the lowest rate in a word, contrary to the Common custome of the world.

The second is, that we dwelling at a cheaper Rent and living less costly, can make all things better at the price.

The third is, that the profit is made use of for the common-good, as well for the honest people of one, as of another sect.

At the first we may bring into our Society, (besides a beginning of several Merchandizes) for the most part unmarried persons, that with laying out little money may presently be on the getting hand, as Cloth, Linnen and Saye-Weavers, Taylors, Shoo-makers and the like. Secondly, Barber-Chyrurgeans, Physitians, and Masters of severall Arts and Sciences; one that can write extraordinary well, another that understands Arithmetick, Geometry, Astronomy, Navigation, Italian book-keeping, or Merchants Accompts. Thirdly, some for Latin, Greek, Hebrew and other Languages, as also Physick, Musick, and other usefull things, referring all to a good and spirituall end.

Our Chyrurgeans or Physitians shall serve the Rich (without the Society) for money, and the poor gratis; some going abroad to visit Patients, and others staying at home (at certain times,) to speak with people, that come to them, to shew that they do highly esteem of the life and health of others, as of their own; this will give an increase to our Trading for the common good, the fame thereof being noised round about, and the more when people are sensible that we sell all things at a reasonable rate without deceiving any.

They that are Rich (without the Society) seeing that their children are not only well brought up in handy-crafts, but also in Languages and other Sciences, and in good manners, will encline very much to buy wares of us for their particular Families, and Merchandizes, and Trade increasing, we shall have need of much Cloth, Sayes, Linnen Stockings, Shooes, Hats and other things, these will require Cloth, Linnen and Saye-weavers, Whi•sters for blanching, Dyers and other Handy-crafts, here now will be use for shoep and k...e, not only for their milk and flesh, but also for their wooll and skins, &c. Here then is work for our Husband man, for the breeding up of Cattle, Poultry, &c. and especially for tilling the ground for Corne, Flax, Hemp, &c. also Gardiners having skill in gardening, for roots, plants and orchards, for fruit, flours and hearbs, as well medicinal (for our Physitians) as others.

For the building of the Countrey house (for the Husband-men, Handy-crafts people, Marriners and Masters of Arts and Sciences) we have need of Brick-makers, Brick-layers, Carpenters, Smiths, as also Ship-carpenters, not only to make Boats, wherein to fetch and carry goods to and from the City, but also to catch fish for the Society, and afterwards to build ships to send to Flanders, Holland, France and other places sailing with our own people that shall have all things common among them abroad, as well as in the Society at home, being as welcome, (having done their duties,) when they come home from a bad voyage, as from a good; Their ships or goods being lost by storm or otherwise, the loss is to come upon the Society in common, which venters no more than what the Society can well spare, and may be set forth again as they are able, their wives and children being alwaies provided with necessaries, as well as others.

This house is to be built so far from the water, that there be left a convenient key to deliver goods out of the Ships, and if it be possible to bring the water out of the River round about the house, with a drawbridge, to be secured by night from thieves and robbers, devising two Instruments whereby the fish may come out of the River into our water, and not go out again, having our Garden for pleasure and necessity behind our house.

Which house is to be built after a convenient manner, with publick and private places, for freedom and conveniency a chamber & a closset for every man & his wife with a great Hall, to lay all things ready made in order, a place to dress victuals, another to eate together a third for the children, also Cellars to keep meat and drink in, a place for the sick, one for the Physitians and Chyrurgeans furniture and medicines, one other for all kind of usefull, (as well natural as spirituall Books, Maps, and other Instruments belonging to liberal Arts and Sciences, several places for Scholars, a place for strangers, &c. who intending to stay any long time, shall do some work, or pay for their lodging and diet.

Our workfolks and School masters, with their Scholars, being brought out abroad into the Countrey the City house will be instead of a warehouse, leaving therein besides the Physitians, Barber Chyrurgeans and Apothecaries (who with some Trades-men must be in the City, so many Merchants (who shall change by turns,) as shall suffice to attend the Merchandize with ease. Our youth being

capable of being taught, shall be instructed in CIPHERING, and keeping Books of accompts, that the Merchants also may sometimes work, putting every one to that which is fittest for him, as they that have wrought in wooll, to the selling of wool and cloth, they that have been used to flax-threed and weaving, to the selling of flax and linnen, Tanners and Shoe makers, to sell leather, and so in all things else.

Also it will be necessary, that in the Warehouse in the Citty, there be some men women and Children; not only to make apparrell, and to have other things ready made; but especially to serve every one, as there shall be occasion, making all things for sale without unnecessary trimmings, unless that any buying of us would have any trimming upon them, those we shall endeavour to give content, if they bring to us those unnecessary Timmings, which we our selves have not, doing our endeavour to keep their custom, that so in time they may be convinced of their folly, being better with us, who give them reasons for alterations, than with others who bolster them up in pride and excesse.

If the making and selling of things unnecessary were sin, then it should be quite forborn, then must all unnecessary things (though a shop were worth 1000. l.) be burnt or destroyed, and all the Children be presently taken from those trades, that depend upon pride and vanity. It is to be considered that the eating of the tree of knowledg was evill, but not the making many things are for triall, what is in the hearts of men, if we will not serve those worldly people that come to us, then our youth that sometimes desire to travel into other Countryes will be necessitated allwayes to be at home, because they cannot serve any masters that work for vain-glorious men.

Every 6. or 12. Monthes an account shall be given, & what is overpluss above necessity, a part shall be distributed to men and women, also young men and maides, that so every one may have wherewithall to give to the poor, or to pleasure his freind, in some speciall manner.

One man alone (though he were chief of the whole Society) shall not be master of the cash, or treasury, but three of the uppermost in the Government, shall allwayes have the Keyes; so that one, or two, unless the third were with them should not be able to open the Chest, a threefold cord doth not easily break, saith Solomon.

None is to rule longer than one year, least he domineer in his office, and others seeking his favour, play the Hippocrites.

A man about 40. yeares of age, shall be chosen chief Governour of the whole Society, every one giving his voyce for him, that he judgeth to be fit.

This man having governed one year, a new choice shall be made, with liberty to choose him again that last Governed, as well as any body else, by this meanes he that hath a mind to continue in the Government will have an Inducement to rule well, that he having the favour of the people, may be chosen again, not that any Governour is to rule according to his own pleasure, but according to such orders, as the whole people shall make except in small matters, wherein they cannot conveniently make any certain order, but who would not rather (if no benefit come of ruling) work quietly 6. houres in a day, then to be in a perpetual disturbance of his thoughts, being employed in multiplicity of businesses.

Here none is to be chosen for his riches or wealth, as we see come to pass in the world, (to the ruine almost of all commonwealths,) but for his wisdom.

Men and women having the oversight of meat, drink and other

things, shall govern by turns, and in case some would rather keep to their ordinary work, they shall be passed by, and others put in their stead, 10. or 12. men and women. having governed half a year, 5. or 6. of them shall go off, and 5. or 6 others come in their stead, the other continuing half a year longer to instruct them that do newly come in, with what they are not acquainted, having so many young people to do the hardest work, as shall be requisite who being come to years, and having gotten experience, shall also rule over others, for it doth suit the aged to give orders, and the young to obey.

The maides shall not only be fitted to do the housewifery, and order children, but also in case hereafter they be minded to leave the Society, they shall learn a good Handy-craft Trade, that so whether they

leave the Society, or come to be married, they may be able to get a lively livelihood, sometimes taking their turns one with another, that so they may continue fit for working and housewifery.

In this house every one shall be able quietly to do his work, because none shall have more than one single work to mind: 5. women in our Society, when all things are done orderly, shall have no more business to trouble their heads with, than one woman in her own private Family.

Besides the quiet and ease that we shall have by the helping one another; it will also be very profitable to dwell together, for whereas in 100. Families dwelling apart, we should stand in need of at least 100. women to do the housewifery; now bringing 100. Families together, the same may be done with 25. women, the rest (when they shall be fit,) being employed about some work; together with men for the common good, which many women will rather do, than to be a whole day troubled with diversities of cares.

Whereas in 100. Families there will be need of 100. fires every day to be made, bringing so many Families together, we shall be able to make shift with 4. or 5. great stoves and furnaces, out to buy and roast meat, another where the children are, a third where men, women, young men and maides meet together at meals, sitting at the table in order, (as Joseph's brethren) the women over against the men, young men next their Fathers, and maides next their Mothers, the young people waiting by turns at the Table, that so one may not be respected above the other, neither will it be needfull (being assured of one another's love) to use the ceremonies of putting off the Hat, or common drinking to one another, yet not to hinder any man from shewing his hearty love to a stranger, or otherwise.

Meat, drink, and all other things will cost us the less, because we buy a great quantity at once, also we shall our own selves breed up kine, sheep, hens, ducks, and other things, having garden and orchard, fruits from our Gardeners and Husband-men, Fish from our Fisher-men, making drink for necessity, and refreshment for our selves.

Our Rules and Laws being few, are to be only for necessity, not to take away any ones liberty, leaving them alwaies open to the tryall of all rationally men, that so self seeking (to be more or above others, in natural or spirituall matters,) may be discovered and excluded.

If any desires to marry, he shall not be tyed to marry one of our Society, if he will have a vertuous person abroad, out of the Society, and dwell with her, or have her come into the Society, every one is left to his liberty.

All things wherein the Kingdom of God doth not consist, (not contradicting Scripture or reason) are to be left free, as the outward form of Baptisme, the Lords supper and the like, because in the omitting of such things there seems to be more danger than in performing of them.

The apparrel should be fitted for the body, and convenient for the work without being tyed to fashion, colour, or stuff, only the unnecessary trimmings to be forborn, that Gods creatures, which he hath made, be not misused.

If any that have an Estate, desire to have stuff, cloth, or other things finer than others, they may adde to it so much of their own money, as it will cost more, for it will be a demonstration to the poor (without the Society,) that he hath an ability above others to relieve them.

In all Handy crafts we shall appoint the best work-men for Masters, who as well as others are to work 6. hours.

Whereas now men in the World do conceal their skill from one another, for their own private advantage, here in our Society they are to bring it in, and impart it to the common well-fare, being the only way to find out the height, depth length and breadth of all things.

The children of the poor are to be brought up (to the comfort of their Parents) as well as the children of the rich, they learning instead of one, sometimes 2. or 3. Handy-crafts, being alwaies chearfull by not being oppressed with bondage and slavery, as commonly is seen amongst children of the World, especially in England, who must endure (many times) to pass through 7 years, as slaves under the Turk, on the contrary the children of our Society shall be alwaies in our eyes, working no longer every day than 6. houres; the remainder of the time, being to be spent in other usefull employments, that they may be fitted for somewhat ells besides working.

They are to be taught onely necessary and allwayes usefull trades, that they may continually, howsoever the world changes, get their li...ing, for some having learned onely useless handy-crafts, oftentimes through the change of the world, (which falls into some other way and custome) come to poverty and want.

Whereas the Traders in the world do oppress their workmen, with heavy labour, and small wages, instead thereof with us the gain of the tradesmen will redound to the benefit and refreshment of the workmen.

And whereas the traders of the world, seeking after their own particular profit and advantage, are continually betwixt hope and fear, now here in our Society, every one is quietly to mind his business, at the set time, for the loss that is suffied lieth upon none in particular.

In the selling of our commodities, seing there is no overasking, it will give occasion to others (that are not willing to lose their Customers,) to imitate us, it being the true way to rid the world of that deceitfull practise, and we being in no sumptuous expensive way, can afford our commodities at a better rate or better ware for money, whereby we reach the world (because they can get little) to keep within compass, instead whereof, they now dayly provoke and grieve poor people with their excess and riot.

In observance of the words of Christ to give to Cesar the thinges that are Cesars, we are to pay Taxes and tribute to the Magistrates, being in subjection under all humane Ordinances, which are not contrary to the will of god.

Such Tradesmen or Merchants that are honest, and cannot well provide for themselves, may timely (before they be necessitated to wronge any one) turn in to us.

Any honest persons, through sickness, want of trading, work or otherwise, being in poverty and debt, may be brought to rest, by making an agreement with their Creditors, if mercifull, or if unmercifull, to give them all they have, in full satisfaction.

A Family being united and conjoynd with us, and being come to be se●ed ●n quiet, will make known their welfare to others, and men

perceiving that the profit and benefit is extended to the refreshing of the oppressed, among all Sects, will readily come to us, to buy commodities, and provision being made beforehand, all thinges will follow in order.

Any handycrafts men, or Tradesmen, may be in fear, (the business being not settled) to make a beginning, doubting that he removing from his particuler employment to this common society (by loosing some Customers) shall want a subsistance, but considering the opportunity to have the custome of all those that dwell with him, is freed from that fear; neither doth any one stand singly by himself alone. Any by sickness or otherwise become indisposed, the rest (being united as members of one body) shall work for him; and we being assured of one anothers faithfullness, shall exceed in love, all other Societies.

It is far otherwise with us than in Hospitalls of old men, and women, where they come in out of necessity (not being able otherwise to provide for themselves) for their own benefit onely, with their contentions, opposition and deeply rooted Infirmities, having oftentimes their bodies by hard labour spoiled and made decrepitate, and their mindes corrupted by evill manners, being many times besides a deep stupid ignorance, so ill natured, that no reason can sink into them.

Some handy Craftsmen as Smithes, Carpenters, and others, do undergo often upon hope to attain ease from labour, 20. or 30. yeares almost intollerable labour, letting out their money to Interest, that it may increase; and sometimes loose principall and all, that they have so surely laboured for, or else come to dy, before they have given themselves to rest often leaving their estates to the destruction of their Children in the world, who in pleasure and voluptuousness do consume what the parents have gotten and gained with soe great labour, and sometimes it comes to such handes, which in their life time they grutched should have it, who after their death laugh at them for their labour, sometimes their Children and relations long for their death; and when they do live long enough to use their estates themselves, then oftentimes their bodies which they have spoiled with working, will suffer them to take no rest.

On the contrary, there will be no need in our Society, to take any care or to make provision for the aged time, or day of sickness, nor for children; for the aged will be better looked after than the young, the sick than the healthfull, and the children after the death of their parents, than before.

Any leaving their children in such a Society, doth better than if they left them much money, because they are under the eyes and inspection of many good people, and are sure of necessaries; whereas otherwise being brought up by others, are many times spoiled by their Parents Estates, being the fruits of their labours.

If any fall sick in our Society, he hath not only that which he stands in need of, but besides, he is freed from all worldly incumbrances, for all things being in order, all things are taken care of without him, on the contrary men commonly in the World are busied with their affairs, as long as they have understanding.

Some being healthfull, and able with their Trade or Merchandize to get more than others, are commonly not inclined to come into us, because they love their private gain more than the common good; but considering how soon their health may be lost, it will be reasonable for them, (without delay,) to desire such a wished estate and condition for themselves and families.

Covetousness, excess, lying and deceit, together with all the evils that spring up out of riches, or poverty, will be excluded from us, who maintain equality, if any be minded to live disorderly in drunkenness, adultery, whoredom, &c. he can have no entertainment in our Society, neither will he be willing to come in to the company of the vertuous, for he that doth evil, hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov'd, but who so doth the truth, cometh to the light, that it may be manifest, that his works are done in God.

Many finding no rest in their present estate and condition, and being wearied with all the differences in spirituall, as in worldly matters, will be ready to come in to us.

Some teachers being convinced of their perverting and erroneous teaching, would sincerely gain-say all falshood and errors, if they did but discern that there were an opportunity to get their living otherwise, whereas now, being not strong enough to bear poverty and reproch, they remain in their old condition to the destruction of their souls.

Many young men and maides being wearied under the slavery and service of others, would for the ease of their bodies, and advantage or profit of their souls come in to us, whereas otherwise they are often times stired up, and provok'd (by reason of hard, strict, severe Masters and Mistrisses) to wicked and desperate resolutions, either by marrying an unfit person, and so casting away themselves, or giving themselves up to some evil course, as we often see come to passe in the World.

The women in our Society having lost their Husbands, they and their children are cared for, whereas else dwelling by themselves, they are oftentimes forced (together with their little ones) to pass their lives in poverty and grief, sometimes receiving relief of the rich with reprochfull languages, to the increase of their grief, some being in the prime of their years are disregarded, but in our Society children (whether few or many) are no hinderance.

Those among us that desire to marry, will not so easily (having seen one anothers conversation) be deceived, as they are now in the World.

Young men and maides are forced oftentimes for want of opportunity to pass their years in solitariness, contrary to their natures: This trouble will be taken away in our Society when they need not look after house or household stuff; but without care they may marry, if they can affect one another, doing their usuall work as before.

Parents when their children come to marry, are not disquieted to provide what is required for an household or trade, the fear, they should have no custom or work, cannot seize upon the children, so that they may the better live together in love, whereas else for want of custom or work they wish they had never been married yea sometimes that they had never been born, they cannot mind themselves and children as is fit, partly for want of time and partly for distraction of thoughts, so that the Parents with their children instead of joy and comfort, oftentimes do live in nothing but sadness and calamity.

Some husbands and wives, instead of growing in love, and being loving, gentle and meek to their servants and children, do through too much care and vexation, fall into disorderly manner, they become murmuring one against another, whence commonly evil and wicked resolutions are begotten, the women living by themselves, are so tyed to their families, that they can go no whither with quietness, on the contrary in our Society we shall have opportunity for every thing.

The children are not to be taught any humane forms of Religion, but the writings of the Saints, and natural Arts, Sciences and Languages, that their understandings (before they have the use of reason) be not spoiled, as for the most part is done amongst all people and Nations in the World; on the contrary it is to be imprinted in them, that they ought not in spirituall matters to believe any but those that have the spirit of God, doing miracles as the Prophets, and Apostles, for our faith ought not to depend upon mens wordes, but upon the power (or wonderfull workes) of God: So doing there will be no foundation for sects, factions, and schismes layd in their heartes.

There shall be built a great meeting place, not onely for our family or Society, but also for all rationall men, round about with seates, rising one higher than another, that every one may be seen; having before them convenient leaning places, to read, and write upon; Alsoe one desk on one side, or end, to read the holy Scripture, at a set time, giving liberty (after that reading) to every one to propound somewhat for mutuall edification, none being tyed (unless himself think fit) to anothers matter to follow, or gain-say it.

For in spirituall things, we acknowledg none but Christ for head and Master; Who of old hath appoynted in his Church Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, these having through the spirit of God, (which led them into all truth) brought forth (and left behind them) the writings of the new Testament, we own for Embassadors, and their wordes (without any interpretations of men) for our rule and Plummet, keeping in remembrance when we meet together, that we must allow that liberty of speaking, to others, which we desire our selves, without tying any one to our opinion, maintaining a firm friendship with such, who have renounced all unreasonable things contrary to Scripture: without stumbling at any differences, which do not hinder love and piety: For our Children without doubt, will be of differing opinions, and yet no reason, when they do not hinder the common welfare; to exclude them from our Society. It ought also to be considered that the most differences (dwelling together) by time, and liberty of speaking, will cease to bee. The more, because with us, noe loss will be suffered, by the changing of our opinion; for the most part of the differences (in spirituall and worldly matters) arise from a consideration of a wordly advantage, which if in the world abroad as in our Society were taken away, evill and false opinions would soon fall to the ground, but the Teachers being Spirituall Captaines, would rather (as to the generallity) for there own profit have Wairs than peace in Christendome, and therefore they having made an incurable rent, do set people one against another; which makes it appear that by nature the people are not at so great a distance, as they now appear to be, contrary to this we intend, that we may bring the good people out of all sects to unity, setting our meeting-place open to all rational men, strictly watching that Antichrist (who exalts himself above others) may be continually shut out by exactly observing that no prehemineny nor sole privilege be granted to any, of offering any thing, or of speaking first, that so every one being at liberty, and unhindered may bring forth that which is most conducing to the common welfare, according to the words of *Paul*, 1. *Cor.* 14. 26. all of them sitting still so long after the reading of the Scripture (as being swift to hear and slow to speak) till any think it fit (in his judicious and humble mind) to propose any thing for edification, endeavouring withall to make his discourse short, that another may have his turn likewise, contrary to the custom of the common Teachers, who only (or solely) speaking, do lengthen their discourse, to the wearying of their Auditory, for which end the Moderators (who ought to be meek and understanding men) are to observe, that there be due order kept.

The Reader may be pleased to remember, that such onely shall be received into our Society, or little commonwealth, as are honest, rationall, impartiall persons, and for others who are not so, they shall receive wages, for their work, and go to their own houses, or lodging places, till they are fitted and prepared to be members of our Society, which consist only of four sortes of people. *viz*

1. Husbandmen.
2. Marriners.
3. Masters of Arts and Sciences.
4. Usefull Handy Craft-people:
 - Smiths of all sortes.
 - Carpenters.
 - Ship-Carpenters.
 - Brick-makers.
 - Brick-layere.
 - Masons.
 - Stone-Cutters.
 - Brasiers.
 - Pewterers.
 - Plummers.
 - Tin-men.
 - Founders.
 - Wheelwrightes.
 - Millwrightes.
 - Millars.
 - Bakers.
 - Brewers.
 - Butchers.
 - Stillars of strong waꝛters.
 - Tallow-Chandlers.
 - Basket-makers.
 - Brush-makers.
 - Turners of all sortes.
 - Instrument-makers.
 - Ioyners.
 - Weavers of all sortes.
 - Fullers.
 - Diers.
 - Tanners.
 - Curriers.
 - Shoo-makers.
 - Skinners.
 - Glovers.

- Hat-makers.
- Woll-combers.
- Knitters.
- Rope-makers.
- Sayl-makers.
- Net-makers.
- Compass-makers.
- Paper-makers.
- Printers.
- Book-binders.
- Painters.
- Potters.
- Plate-workers.
- Engravers.
- Wier-drawers.
- Pin-makers.
- Nodle-makers.
- Hooks and eyes ma~~h~~kers.
- Looking-glass ma~~h~~kers.
- Twisters.
- Taylors.
- Button-makers.
- Combe-makers.
- Coopers.
- Cutlers.
- Glass-makers.
- Glasiers.
- Glue-boylers.
- Sope-boylers.
- Sak-boylers.
- Sadlers.
- Sieve-makers.
- Spectacles-makers.
- Sheeremen.
- VWhitstars.
- VWatch-makers.
- Barbers.
- Chirurgeons.

- Phisitians. &c.

One Society being settled in order (as a nursery) about London, to imploy the poor, we may have a second about Bristoll, and another in Ireland, where we can have a great deal of Land for little money; and plenty of wood for building of Houses, Ships, and many other thinges.

AN INVITATION TO THE aforementioned SOCIETY or little COMMON-WEALTH: Shewing the excellency of the true Christian love, and the folly of all those who consider not to what end the Lord of Heaven and Earth hath created them.

MATT. 12. 50. *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother.*

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An invitation to the aforementioned Society or little Common-wealth, &c.

THOUGH men are bound one to another, upon several accounts, and knit together with very streight bonds, and that the likeness either of manners, or of life and conversation; or of parentage and education, begets a mutuall friendship between them, yet this is the most perfect, and of all others the most blessed; when God by the dispensation of his secret Counsell, joyned some such together, as do agree with his divine will, and with the rules of nature, and they will not exchange their union or fellowship for all the riches in the World.

But the more divine this state of friendship is, the seldomer it is seen amongst us, and the more is Sathan that enemie of mankind against it; who knows full well, that he hath not so much right or power to meddle with this holy fire, and the matter which maintaineth it, as he hath, where either recreation or advantage is only looked after, which kind of friendship he useth with very little trouble to dissolve; but in this way of amity God only is the bond, wherewith they are tyed together without being lyable to be unloosed, and upon which foundation being fixed, they resolve to withstand all assault whatsoever.

If then there be any felicity in the life of man, or any efficacious remedy to prevent his future miserie: I conceive nothing was ever more solacing or reviving and coming nearer to the divine nature than love, viz. true love, which doth so communicate it self in and to that wherewith it reciprocates, that it seems to have exchanged therewith, and made over thereto, whatsoever it did possess before, so that amongst true friends there is such an agreement, that no secret, no joy, no profit, nor any cross or affliction is undivided, but whatsoever befalls either of them, is no otherwise than if it were the change of one alone, so that death it self can scarce separate soules, so totally united, certainly the Heathens, who in all things pursued that which they esteemed best, found nothing more excellent, and delightfull then perfect freindship.

But how far doth Christ excell all others in love, who by his Doctrine and example, hath instituted a partnership or Society of mutuall love; by the denomination of Brethren; Abollishing amongst his disciples, all preheminency, or domineering, of one, over another, requiring that the gifts, and meanes of subsistance in the world, (for necessity and delight) should be Common; having called his people to a moderation, and to a life suitable to pure nature, so that all Christendome ought to be meerly, a certain great fraternity consisting of such as (having denyed the world and their own lustes) conspire together in Christ, the sole head and spring of love; doing well to one another, and for his sake distribute their goodes to those that stand in need.

Oh that we had this perfection? and were answerable to the end of our Creation; certainly there would not be such going to law; such intrenching and incroaching of the boundes of landes, such hiding, and close locking up of money, nor would there be such scraping together of superfluous estates.

Oh totall summ and highest pitch of all good? if any may be admitted and that in due time to this divine favour for even many decrepit aged persons do seldome attain to this; to be desirous to live after such a manner: Emperours, Kinges, Princes, &c. having spent all their yeares, all their strenght of body and soul, have little or no time left them, to serve a better master, than the world, and therefore if God do joyn some such together as endeavour after a life more regular then their former, each of them being at a losse for a Companion to better and promote his resolution, one to whom he may communicate his secrets, a freindly reprover of his Errors, a reclamer of him from the worldes allurements, a comforter in adversity, a moderator of Ioy in prosperity, and in all respects a sharer in that which God hath liberally given; and last of all one ready for all cases and conditions that may

happen I say and judge, that these are the happiest of all persons that ever were upon the Earth. For as no painfuller or miserabler thing can be thought on, than that life which a man lives according to the course of this world, so nothing is more acceptable and lovely in the universe, then that harmony and concord, which hath its Originall from God, and influence upon the man, that is joynd with his fellow man, so agreeable to his mind; which certainly can be found, no where but there onely where a firm love, agreement and conserning will in well doing, as also a liberall distribution and imparting, of all created things is entertained.

It is euident, that the most wise God, would honour the sacred society of Matrimony, with the utmost perfection of this so great love; since they that are so joynd together and built upon the right foundation, have not onely their Goodes, but also their joyes and griefes, common; And cannot be severed, by any kind of reproaches, or malicious endeavours of the envious.

The world hath her delights in different degrees of Dignities, States, Titles, and offices; exalting themselves one above another; But Christ on the contrary will that every one shall perform his office as a member of one and the same body, In which no one exalteth it self, nor accounteth it self worthier than other, the eye is not puffed up because it sees; the foot is not grieved that it sees not: If any member in the body be blemished it is carefully covered by the other, if any be weak it is dilligently provided for by the rest, whereas on the contrary Every one in the world, which by his office or Title is differenced, from others Conceives he is quite another thing and in himself better than others and must be reputed, for one that is set together and composed, of some finer substance, and designed to a sweeter life, yea to an higher place in heaven then others.

Now if you do but divest and strip the world of her Riches, Honours, and State; how naked, and refully forlorn will she remain, and how far different will she be found from that she seems to be; and then it will be easy to beleave, that she is shored up by nothing ells but wormeten propps, which if they were once pulled away they would be fitted and made free for the imitation of Christ.

Do but see oh man! what kind of thinges they are, which do shut the door against true love; and hinder communion or fellowship with Christ viz. Nugatory, frivelous thinges and trifles which onely consisteth in avain esteem and opinion, which some of the very Heathens who saw a little further than others, did oftentimes laugh at.

First Riches and Estates, which assoon as our Natures are satisfied, are altogether superfluous, and very troublesome; the vanity

whereof who doth not see it they are a burthen to the rich, causing them to fill their houses with variety of costly furniture, which in many years (or never) happens not to be usefull to them; they are a trouble to get them, a perplexity to keep them, and a grief to part with them; their houses are spacious and great, so that there is either much void and empty room within, or else they put themselves to a great deal of trouble and molestation in furnishing and filling them; Their cloths are so dainty and curious, that they cannot sit down any where with freedom, nor stand with ease, nor scarce walk any where without fear of spoyling their apparel, and unless they have some to behold their splendor, all is little to them, but if they have spectators, they fear some will lurch, and others fi•ch away from them, their sleep is almost none, Oh how great a misery and burden is it to be laden with riches!

Secondly, honour and dignities, which if we measure according to the design of nature, and the rule of Christ, may not otherwise be distinguished than by several names or denominations of divers members of one and the same body, the name of the tongue is that any more worthy name than the name of the finger, the name of the eye, is that more excellent than the name of the brest, no certainly, that whereby the members are differenced, doth not lift them up, as with us the name of Lord and Gentlemen puffeth up, and what else is it but a meer name, the vanity whereof who sees it not? the very foundation of it is nothing else but the noyse of the tongue, and the report of others, or the knee, or the hat, all fleeting and variable things that are to be bought for a very small matter, and yet we are often times so foolish, that though such things commonly come not from the heart, neither are fruits of an upright and sincere mind; nay when on the contrary our own mind do suggest to us, that there is I

know not what kind of tacit derision in it, and doth often times signifie nothing else but hatred and ill will, yet we do delight in such trifles, and give way to them so far, that we will rather hear a lye from a notorious parasite or slatterer, if it be but on our side, then to hear the truth from an honest man if it cross our interest.

Do but now cast up thy account; Oh man! how dearly thou hast ventured to buy the friendship of the World, which yet thou never foundest to be thy friend, but feignedly and that for a spirt, on the contrary consider how little or almost nothing thou hast bestowed to answer the love of God, who nevertheless would have been the most assured, and most faithfull, and unchangeable friend.

Thou hast trimmed and decked thy body, and in apparel thou hast been passing sumptuous, that some silly creature might gaze on thee with admiration: In feasts thou hast been prodigall that thy companions and associates might commend thee; thou hast distributed thy gifts and presents, that thou mayst seem liberal; thou hast put forth thy art and skill, that thou mayst be called and accounted learned; thou hast dawbed thy house with many colours, to cause them to stand still that pass by. In the mean time thy reward hath been nothing else but a great toyl, and the suddain uncomposed disagreeing and unreasonable. judgement and censure of other men; consider in the mean while, whether thou hast provoked God thereby, or honoured him, it is most certain that thou mightest have served God, and have performed the office of love to thy Neighbour, at a far cheaper rate, for by how much profuse & lavish thou hast been in the service of the World, by so much the more hast thou been partimonious and sparing in the service of God, for it is evident the World requires costly attendance, as to all her matters, being never solicitous of the heart, how it stands with that, if you be but carefull that nothing be wanting in outward appearance, in dissembling and complemental deportments; or if there be but ceremony and externall semblance, and fine shew enough, so that by the very aspect, it is plain that the slaves of the World may be discerned from the true servants of God; in as much as the first are movable, flexible, fickle and variable; but the latter have their eyes alwaies fixed upon the mark, which is set before them. If we but once bring our selves to the touch, and travel through the World with a free and pure mind; we shall be able to obtain so much from our selves, as in Christian simplicity, silence and unincumbredness to exclude the wisdom, eloquence and prudence of the World, concluding, (as in truth it is) that nothing is to be compared with our Master Christ, and that none other knows any thing or can give any counsell that is savingly profitable but he, nor shall we repute them happy who have no other character or superscription than the Worlds endowments, knowing that worldly knowledge is not so great a thing as it is commonly esteemed; forasmuch as under the title and disguise of learned, the very shame of being found ignorant doth with many inventions and cheating subterfuges, endeavour the hiding of it self from being discovered to the eyes of the common people.

Shall we never be able to attain to that equal judgement in putting a true value upon reall vertue where so ever it be found, as well in a prince; and to leave of more to admire the ornaments of a Magistrate, than the office he sustaines, and esteeming less of poverty, than of superfluity, of the honour, then of the state, of a good conscience less then of a popular or vain applause, of a peice of bread, then of dilicious dainties, of water then wine; of a green bink of Turf, then of a costly Couch, shall we not be able to arive to this, to esteem one only sentence of the holy Scriptures more, than the highest accuteness, of all the worlds Philosophy, we shall be able to do it, if we did well weigh, that the worldes turn, is but a short Comedy, and that we are but Actors, who appear no more than once upon the Stage: and if we did seriously consider, that all thinges are described, and represented to us in the world, far otherwise, than they are in themselves, but especially when we have well pondered, that honest and godly people, after a very little while are to expect, a participation and enjoyment, of another kind of honour and dignity, than any the world promisseth.

Shall we never be able to attain to this, to choose rather to lay up our estates in the hungry bellies of the poor, than in a few bags, to lay the foundation of our prayse upon the prayers of the poor to make the cross of Christ our glory, and not to eschew the disfavour of man, as the reward of our weldoing; in a word, to put of all desire of fame and renown, as also to refer all desire of Revenge to the Iudgment of Christ, we shall be able to do all this if we forgetnot, that our God is the most faithfull of all Debtors,

and the most sure of all securities if also we never forget, that his praise which shall be given to us, in the presence of men and Angells is the most glorious praise, and that his renumerations and recompences are the most noble, and everlasting.

To how happy an hour are we born, if we do enter upon this communion or fellowship, and from how many vexations will it release us whereof the Heathens, having attained but a shadow, how magnanimously did they in their mindes, sore alost above all Kinges and worldly glory; how did they despise all terrene affayres (as they that from above look down upon that which is below) and had pittie on them, and so did indeed a voyd the greatest miseries of mans life.

But since Christian Religion is come into the world it is a wonderfull thing to consider, what a light brake in together with it, viz. Such a light that all they whose hartes were touched therewith; throwing all from them, betook themselves to it for refuge, as to a true and sledfast liberty after a long and horrible captivity, easily forgetting their Riches, State, Rule and possession, forsaking Parents, Wife, Children, Relations and whatsoever before was most near and dear unto them, not being by any Temptations of Tyrants, to be drawn from the sweetness of the Christian life.

The same have appeared in the memory of our forefathers, when the bondes of Antichrist (it is strange to think how firm they were) were broken when they who a little before were forced to creep upon the ground, began to rise up, with what readiness, that Tyrannicall worship of Invocating so many deceased Saints, was rejected, and the unconfinde worship of God reentertained, and with what readiness that vain (though gainfull) fancy of Invocating Christ by so many Intercessions came to nought; So that it appeares in all respectes, how much God hath Chalked out in nature it self, the pure and true worship, as also the amicable and freindly conversation of man, and likewise how easily those things which are contrary thereto perish, and come to nothing, and how far our Religion with draweth us from all theatricall or stageplay, gestures, and countenances, and all those troublesome Ceremonies, wherewith we torture our selves, in speaking, eating, saluting, walking, cloathing, yea and in all the actions of our life: But on the contrary how conformable it maketh us, to the celestial Hierarchy and naturall pollicy, and yet in these petty and altogether childish things, men are so hard to be convinced, and drawn of from them, as if all their well being depended thereon; and the beatitude or happiness of all mankind, had all its foundation therein and never give so much scope to reason and well guided understanding, as either to acknowledg their vanity, or if it be known to them rather to throw it of, then to retayn and daily augment it, with new and exotic bawbles.

Intruth as often as we do strictly ponder, to what end God the Creator and ruler of all things, hath brought every one of us into this great Fabrick of the world, and yet for us to observe. that the life of almost all men is either unprofitable, idle, wicked, or hurtfull to mankind we have reason to be affrayd, and jelous of our selves, least peradven ure either by the Corruption of the times, or our education, we have applied our selves to some manner of life, which is not suiteable to the will of God, and the end of our Creation being not able to give a just accompt, wherein we have lived to the glory of God, and the advantage of mankind.

Certainly to have eaten, to have drank, to have slept, yea, to have read much, writ much, seen, heard and travelled much, and let this also be added, to have managed an Estate, to have kept hounds, horses and servants, to have had arts and learning in great esteem, to have trimmed up houses, to have often made banquets, to have borne Titles of Honour, to have collected many books together; in a word, to have been employed, and very busie, to the uttermost, in things that do not relate or belong to Christ, let them be what they will: Certainly all that will neither, satisfie God, nor endure the touth or tryall of the fire but being consumed as stubble, will leave man bare and naked, a male factor, and guilty in the presence of God, for his lost time, and his neglect of friendship and union with God, together with the neglect of the endowments, as well of body, as of spirit, so that there will be an horrible distance between them, and those whose faith in God, and love to man, have been sted fast and firm.

Let us take heed bretheren, least those among us who either in understanding, learning, riches, beauty or arts, excell others, do conceit that God is therefore more gracious and favourable to them than others, and that they have attained to the best life, for such men do grossely deceive themselves,

because the manner of Gods judging is quite different from that of the World, his eyes are quite other kind of eyes, and his policy differs from the Worlds policy, as much as Heaven from Earth, as one who choseth the unworthy; and despised, rejecteth and abhorreth that which the World do highly esteem.

If any think this our Society or fellowship to be a new thing, so that he cannot (as it was in old time,) so much as poynt out five pair of such friends, he hath reason with me to lament, that while men do curiously, and with anxitie of mind, search into the other course of the Stars and Planets; the vertues of plants and vegetables, yea, into the very bowels of the Earth; yet they are so neglective of their Salvation, that they do not in the least so much as seek and look after that life, for which they would not need so much silver and gold, so many Titles of Honour, so many buildings, such clothes, so much furniture for their houses, so many messes and dishes at their meals, so many arms and ammunition, or warlike provisions, so many judgements or decrees of Law, so many medicines, nor so many bookes, all which are causes of vast trouble; so that the men of the World themselves (if they were but wise) would avoid these occasions, or (as they themselves do confess) necessitis of sinning.

This Society or fellowship hath not alwaies been so rare, and so thin sowed, but was very rise in the primitive times, till the enemies of the first innocencie did insinuate themselves thereunto, whereby the life which men were bound to live, as in obedience to the Laws of Christ, began to be accounted such as a man may chose whether he would embrace or no, and take up a meritorious and supererogatory life, comprising such a sanctimony or holyness as was more than necessary to Salvation, and was only to be used by such as desired a greater reward in Heaven than others; which opinion gave a beginning to many orders of lazie and wanton beasts, (I mean Monks and the like) and of many thousand fables and cheats, which things when men came to themselves, they did justly reject, and when they are grown wiser, they will again totally cast off. even those poor ones, who now scrape and take together the riches of the World; as also those (seeming) humble and lowly persons that now take up the high seats of the World, and such pretended simple ones, who now fill and disturb the whole World with their cunning and deceit.

But for us let us hold fast that which is in this life, the best thing, viz. the universal love to Gods creation, and if we be insufferable to the World, and they be incorrigible, or unbette able, as to us, then let us reduce our friendship and society to a few in number, and maintain it in such places as are separate from other men, where we may with less impediment or hinderance, love one another, and mind the wonders of God, eating the bread we shall earn with our own hands, leaving nothing to the body, but what its nakedness, hunger, thirst, and wearyness calls for to help our necessity and health, then it will appear how many things we may well be without, what things we may refrain, and what kind of matters we ought not to know how many things we may avoid, in what things we may best quiet our selves, and how far easier we may satisfie Christ in his little ones with a penny, than the World with a pound.

For Princes are not born on purpose to reare up stately Palaces, the Learned are not born for the writing of many unprofitable, and for the most part frivolous Books; the rich are not born to boast of their gold, silver, and christal vessels; the rest of the people are not born for so many various unprofitable Handy-crafts; In a word, mankind is not born, for so many kinds of education, of being rich, and running into excess, but all these racks of the mind, it hath invented of it self, and now made a custom and habitual, so that it hath made the life more grievous, to it self every day, under so many painfull and labour-some inventions.

Now I would that they that stand and admire, at the fine wits of our age, and the sublime learning of our times; did but consider with me, whether those things which daily please our eyes, with their novelty; be indeed such, for which we may justly rejoyce or whether on the contrary, it were not much better, since they are the cause of so many griefes, and troubles in mans life, that we were wished and advised, by our learned men, to put them away far from us.

For what greater fruit of wisdom, or what greater glory of the new revived learning, could their possibly be, then by that to bring humane matters to such aposture, that we may attribute our well being, and felicity, in this life, to them under God, that by the whole some instruction thereof,

that which is superfluous, useless and unnecessary, might be thrown away, and that which is Nugatory, trifling and unprofitable might be cut of, and that we might truly be distinguished, from the life of the Barbarous and savage people, not by bookes, nor by Titles of honour, nor by universitys but by such morality as Christian Philosophy doth prescribe.

Let there come forth from the Studdies, and libraries, of our wisemen, into the light, not a continuation, or prosecution of old Errours; or an heaping up of new to the old but on the contrary, a rule or direction, for a new and reformed life in Christ, which may demonstrate, that as we are professors of the best Religion, we are also imitators of the best life; then shall we return to their Society or fellowship, and be subject to their good lawes, and Orders; and observe their rationall customes.

In the mean time, let them not take it ill, that we do not make any great accompt, of these Sciences that are voyd of Christ; that we do not desire to know them, and if we have drunk in any such, yet we desire to unlearn them, and with singleness of hart, to become as Children, who are altogether unacquainted, with voluptuousness, ceremonies, Riches, and foolish labour, hence forward we desire to live towards God in unincumbredness, voyd of carking for the multiplicity of superfluous things, exercising a delight, in real equality, & for the rest acknowledg Christ onely, for our Lord and Master, and in this School of his, we hope that neither divine misteries, nor secrets of nature, nor the contemplation of rare matters, shall be wanting to us, since he so merly hath made it evident by the example of his Apostles and wisely men, how powerfull he is in teaching, and then especially he displayeth his riches, and openeth his unexhaustible treasures, when humane wisdom ceased, and the skill of the World melteth a way.

But that we now are so weak, and that the strength of our Religion is grown so faint with us, that the Majesty of the divine presence, with the miraculous working is removed from us, whom shall we accuse for this, but our selves, who in the midst of the divine light, have scarce retained any more than the bare name, being content if we may but be called Christians, as to the rest being altogether like to the World; so that it is no mervail that we who do not excell others in the pursuit of honest actions, as Justice, Mercy, and the propagation of the name of Christ, nor in the education of children; do not also in the least go beyond them in those gifts which were peculiar, to upright and zealous Christians, and yet we ought in so clear a light of the Gospel, as we have to be so far distinguished, as to excell other men, so that if others do not commit Adultery, we should not so much as desire another mans wife, if they do not commit Murther, we should not at all be angry with our brother; if they love them that are like to them, we should love our enemies, if they do lend to those that have to give again, we should lend to those from whom we cannot hope to receive any thing again: For it becometh us who hope for the inheritance of an eternall fe, in all things to go beyond those that know only this present life. But if nevertheless we be found beneath these, or if we are found but like to them, and no more, how much will their accusation presse us down, and condemne us to the like, yea, to a more grievous punishment.

Let us look back to the former ages, and it will appear that the divine power was then most of all vigorous and eminent, when there was not such ostentation of fine wits, but the supream knowledge and happiness then was placed in the Crosse of Christ; but now while matters go quite otherwise, and the creatures of our brain do obumbrate, or over shadow and obscure the works of God, we do things according to the will and pleasure of Sathan, who being the most subtile of all Phylosophers, Logicians and Artists, is not affraid of us, if we go his way, and by that occasion he insinuateth himself more and more into us, and glideth in by means of such things which we most admire.

Do not you see Brethren, that by the goodness and long suffring of God, It is in our hand and power, now we have tasted, of the bitterness of this worlds pleasure to rid our selves, of very many troubles going on by a way that is not crooked, and rugged, but straight and smooth, tending to the true best, and highest pith of our actions by applying our selves to this Communion or Society, which we have made mention, which suffereth no pride, Riot, excosiveness, iniquities, or any evils, which have been pourtrayed in their lives. We have coloures, from which Society no man that professeth the name of Christ, and practiseth his doctrine, is excludted of what part of by what name soever he is called or known.

We desire therefore, that all who love their own peace and welfare, will consider of our Order or institution, which is propounded for a generall rule ¶¶¶ For we Judge it to be, not onely a true opposition to all evill, but also a meanes to rid the world, of all unprofitable, and hurtfull handy Crafts, being the cause of sin and slavery. To which we hope that God who is the Husband of Widdows, and a Father of the Fatherless, will vouchsafe his blessing, through Jesus Christ, that so the pure and uncorrupted, worship (which consistes more in well doing, then in much speaking) may break forth to the glory of his holy name and the good of all mankind.

If any have a desire to speak with him who is instrumentall in the promoting of so good a work; may have knowledg of his residence by in quiring of the Book setler noted in the title page.

FINIS.

A Letter written in order to the now mentioned Society or little Common-wealth; By some well affected persons, whose hearts and hands have already joyned therein: to stir up all such who are truely sensible of the poor and needy, to carry on this so necessary and charitable a work.

HAVING not only considered the poverty, afflictions and streights of many well minded people; Together with the evil consequences that arise from the corrupt customs and waies of most employments, and the general disorder proceeding from riches and poverty: But also the way propounded by the endeavours of our friend Peter Cornelius; to rectifie all such and many other inconveniences, by bringing together a fit, suitable and well qualified people into one Houshold government or little Common-wealth, wherein every one may keep his propriety, and be employed in some work or other as he shall be fit, without being oppressed, as is more at large expressed in a Platform to that purpose.

Whereupon we are resolved, judging it to be necessary, and our duty to promote so good and pious a work, with the assistance of other mercifull and rational men, to lay such a foundation, as may tend to the relief of the oppressed, the preserving of such as are in danger of falling into snares, and the increase of understanding and mutuall love, as also the exemplary ordering of such acts as may be accomplished by prudential charity.

And hereunto we do earnestly invite all Persons that have a willing mind to do good according to their abilities; some by their Wisdom and Councill, others by money and credit, or by both, as they shall be able and free, that so a stock may be raised for the carrying on of this good and beneficial work.

To which end we have subscribed our names, and the summs of money which we are willing to give. Hoping that all such as are for so general a work, will upon due consideration likewise subscribe for such a summe of money as they are willing to give towards the accomplishment of the Premisses, and meet together to confer and order the said summes of moneys into the hands of some trusty Persons for the use and benefit of the Society only, and what else shall be found conducing to the perfecting of this work, till the Society can subsist of it self in order, which we believe may soon be from the credible information of divers persons, relating that many hundreds in Transilvania, Hungaria, and the Paltsgraves Countrey, from a small beginning have attained, not only to a very comfortable life among themselves, but also ability of doing much good to others, not of their Society.

31. The Problem with Nonprofits

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Author: Another Slice
Authors: J
Topics: industrial complex, nonprofits, capitalism, activism
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The problem with nonprofits
Adapted from Another Slice

What is the Non Profit Industrial Complex?

In 1961, Republican president Dwight Eisenhower used the term “Military Industrial Complex” in a farewell address to the American people. “We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the Military Industrial Complex.” After Eisenhower coined the term “Industrial Complex” in 1961, it didn’t get used a whole lot outside of a handful of academic publications until Angela Davis adopted it to introduce the concept of the Prison Industrial Complex in 1996, which eventually inspired Michelle Alexander’s book, “The New Jim Crow,” which inspired Avid Duverney’s now extremely well known documentary titled “13th.”

An Industrial Complex is when one for-profit industry successfully develops an interlocking, inter-dependent systems of institutions that serve to maintain profits for that industry. Everyone involved needs for that industry to keep growing profits indefinitely because they all now depend on those profits for their own institutions to survive.

For the Military Industrial Complex, it starts with companies needing to make and sell more weapons every year to maximize profit, which results in interlocking relationships between the military, department of defense, construction companies, steel manufacturers, engineering firms, political lobbying consultants, etc. Same goes with the prison industrial complex, but instead of selling weapons it’s about building prisons, keeping those prisons full, making sure there’s always a highly criminalized population to put into those prisons, and contracting out to corporations, who compete to access prisoners as a cheap source of labor.

So on the concept of the nonprofit industrial complex, at first, it probably seems nonsensical, because if an industrial complex is defined primarily by for-profit industries endless need for more profit, to the point where it’s going to establish a system of interdependency across tons of other institutions to sustain their ability to make more profit, how the hell could nonprofits ever fit into such a thing?

In 2004, a collection of essays were published in an anthology called “The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond The Non-Profit Industrial Complex” by a group called INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. INCITE! defined the Non Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) as a system of relationships between the state (local and federal governments), the owning classes, foundations, and social service/social justice focused nonprofit organizations. This system of relationships results in the surveillance, control, derailment, and every day management of political movements. They go on to say that the state uses nonprofits to monitor and control social justice movements, divert public monies into private hands through foundations, manage and control dissent in order to make the world safe for capitalism, redirect activist energies into career-based modes of organizing instead of mass-based organizing

capable of actually transforming society, allow corporations to mask their exploitative and colonial work practices through “philanthropic” work, encourage social movements to model themselves after capitalist structures rather than challenge them.

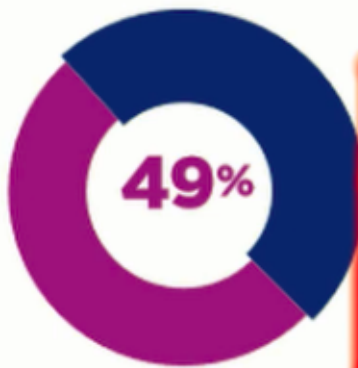
To translate this into a way that working class people can understand and apply into our daily lives, here’s why the concept of the NPIC is so relevant. As of 2015, the nonprofit sector had become 10% of the American workforce, and is now the 3rd largest employment sector in the United States. To put that into perspective, here are a few non profits that you might be familiar with: Ikea, Direct Relief, Feed the Children, Harvard University, Sustainable Economies Law Center, National Policy Institute, Best Friends Animal Society, Kaiser Hospital, Greenpeace, Smithsonian Institute, Blue Cross insurance Company, the Brode Museum, Food and Water Watch, PragerU, Chan Zuckerberg Foundation, Feeding America, the NFL (prior to 2015), The Salvation army, and the NRA.

All a nonprofit is, is an organization that the IRS allows not to pay federal income taxes because it determines that the organization provides some kind of public benefit. If you and your friends wanted to start one, all you’d have to do is form a group and call it a board, develop bylaws, and write a group purpose called a mission and submit the proper forms to the IRS. The National Policy Institute went through these steps, and the president of their board is Richard Spencer, an infamous neo-fascist Nazi. In their 2016 tax forms, they reported over \$300,000 in revenue. And while I’m sure most nonprofit presidents aren’t Nazis, the system of nonprofits creates a platform for white supremacists to fund each other.

Most people would consider nonprofits– volunteering at one, or donating at one– as “good.” But as we’ve discussed here, how Richard Spencer is the president of a white supremacist nonprofit, and that Ikea is a nonprofit, shows that most people don’t really know about nonprofits. That’s not to say all nonprofits are bad, in fact the most prevalent nonprofits found in all 50 states are focused on medical help, education, or public services, but they still are not, in basic terms, “good.”

Nonprofit Hospitals and Universities

On the national council of nonprofits website, they have a graphic that points out that only 2.9% of funding within the nonprofit sector comes from foundations, and how the majority comes from private fees for services, or when someone pays out of pocket for some kind of service. In their report, they elaborate on what that means.



Final Point: Final Point

A huge chunk of this revenue goes to nonprofit hospitals (think insurance payments for heart surgery or delivering a baby) and higher education (tuition, room and board). Other examples include donations to a community theater or

The nonprofit sector brings in \$1.1 trillion in revenue per year, nearly half of that revenue goes to nonprofit hospitals and universities in the form of heart surgeries and college tuition (which are the two industries that are almost universally guaranteed throughout the entire industrial world except the United states, one of the richest countries in the world).

Medical doctor and activist Niran Al-agba writes in their op-ed, The Fairy Tale of a Non-Profit Hospital, “non-profit hospitals have higher profit margins than most for-profit hospitals after accounting for their tax obligations.” To break this down for you, Hospital A makes \$1M per year, and pays lots of taxes. Hospital B also makes \$1M per year and pays no taxes. Both hospitals provide the same services for the same price, but the non-profit hospital makes more end of the year revenue than the for profit hospital. Al-agba goes on, “62% of US hospitals are nonprofit, and therefore tax exempt. They pay no property tax, federal or state income tax, and no sales tax. An article published in health affairs found 7 of the nation’s 10 most profitable hospitals were of the nonprofit variety, each earning more than \$163 million in patient care services.” Al-Agba later cites a London school of economics study that state’s “Not-for-profit hospitals don’t price any less aggressively than for-profits. We subsidize nonprofits to the tune of \$30 billion annually in tax exemptions. We have to ask what that money is getting us.”

The industry standard for the healthcare sector due to corporatization over the last few decades, so hospitals will argue that CEOs for their hospitals require millions of dollars in compensation due to that industry standard. Any hospital board that chooses not to pay the millions will find that the executive will just work at a different, better paying hospital, not to mention that upper management has a closer relationship to nonprofit boards than other workers, so the executive voices carry more weight. They have collective bargaining...

Dean Harrison, Memorial Hermann Health CEO in Chicago, IL
\$10 Million a year

Gregory Adams, Kaiser CEO in Oakland, CA
\$11 Million a year

Joseph Impicicche, Ascension St. Louis CEO in St. Louis, MO
\$13 Million a year

Charles Stokes, Memorial Hermann Health CEO in Houston, TX
\$18 Million a year

Peter Fine, Banner Health CEO in Phoenix, AZ
\$21 Million a year

One thing to consider is how people continue to die from a lack of health insurance because people like these listed above make sure that the nonprofit hospital lobby successfully pressures congress to keep the cost of care high, and actively fight against medicare for all. A lot of people are being harmed by nonprofit hospitals because they don’t pay taxes and spend so much money on executive compensation instead. The political advocacy arm of the hospital industry commonly referred to as the hospital lobby, consistently fights to keep healthcare costs higher than they need to be in the name of profit. In 2018, a coalition comprised of big pharma, insurance companies, and the hospital industry spent a total of \$143 million to put a stop to medicare for all becoming a mainstream policy platform within the democratic party establishment.

However, most workers do provide charity care, which is healthcare provided to people who can’t afford it for free. However, as far back as 2004, there were some big class-action lawsuits against 13

nonprofit hospital groups for going after uninsured patients who couldn't pay their hospital bills, so for working class folks it's a bit of a dice roll; on one hand, the nonprofit hospital might help you for free, on the other hand, they might send debt collectors, lawyers, and ultimately the cops to your door. The class action lawsuits were almost 20 years ago, however nonprofit hospitals continue to sue poor patients who can't pay, resulting in many having to file for bankruptcy (medical bills account for 2/3rds of bankruptcies in the US).

The George Washington University's school of business says the difference between for profit and nonprofit hospitals are "for profit hospitals tend to serve lower income populations, while nonprofit hospitals tend to be located in communities with less poverty, higher incomes, and fewer uninsured patients." George Washington University is also a nonprofit, with their president, Thomas LeBlanc makes over \$800,000 per year, which is not much compared to his counterparts.

Slate.com did a series called the Slate 90 in 2015 on the multibillion-dollar nonprofit sector which included some focus on nonprofit universities. As you can see, nonprofit universities bring in tens of billions of dollars in revenue every year. Slate focused mainly on Harvard since it was the top earner in 2015, and in particular its business school. The kinds of people who got advanced business degrees from this program include CEOs of companies like Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch, Boeing, Enron, General Motors, etc. People like Mike Bloomberg, George Bush, Steve Bannon, and LL Cool J.

Harvard's function has always been to uphold our inherently exploitative, racist, unsustainable economic and political system, and recently they're putting famous black entertainers upfront in their marketing efforts by inviting them to these four day business classes, giving them certificates that say harvard on them, and putting out press releases to generate headlines- woke nonprofit capitalism.

Harvard as a nonprofit university rakes in tens of billions of dollars but doesn't pay taxes because it "does something good." The issue goes back to the question: why are these universities nonprofits? Remember the national council of nonprofits talking about how it's only a myth that foundations give a lot of money to nonprofits, and that the majority of nonprofit funding comes from fees for service. This narrative obfuscates the fact that the vast majority of nonprofit funding is either from rich people paying for shit they can easily afford or poor people going into massive amounts of debt and quite often resulting in financial ruin to pay for necessary services such as healthcare and education. The ones who profit from such economic injustice tend to be the same business elites who pass through nonprofit universities, and because the system works so well for them and the multimillionaires running the so-called nonprofit healthcare industry, they fight to keep the system intact. They could, of course, be "doing something good" by making sure the US guarantees healthcare and higher education to all of its citizens, but that's not what they're interested in because it wouldn't be profitable.

Capitalist Workplace Structures

You may have seen in the news in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic that healthcare workers in california, particularly within the non profit hospital system Kaiser went on numerous strikes. The typical non profit organizational structure today exactly resembles capitalist corporate structures. They're top down and authoritarian, not bottom up and democratic. There are exceptions but very, very few. Within these workplaces, a CEO tells everyone what to do and the board typically sides with the CEO. Upper management gets paid a lot of money and they don't want to lose that money, so they'll go along with the CEO, even if they disagree. Within these structures, the more money you make, the more power you have to keep that amount of money because of your place within the structure. The more raises you'll get (because your voice carries more weight with the board) and the more you're able to make it look as if your work is more valuable than everyone's work below you within this structure,

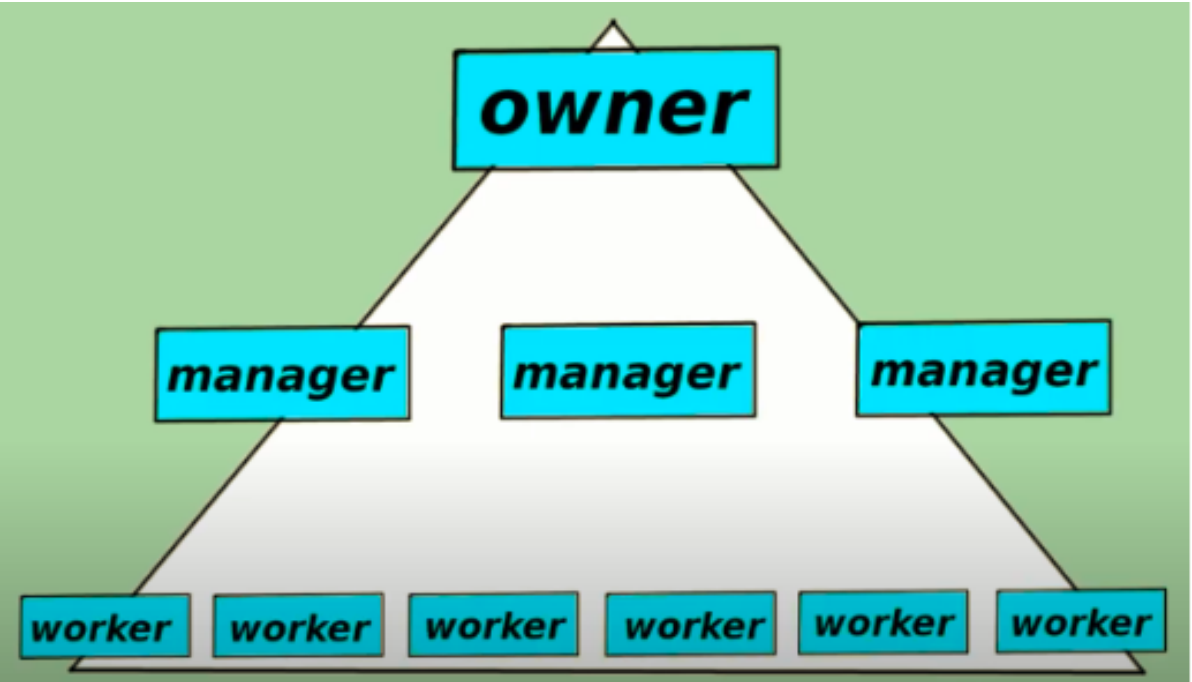
once you're higher within rank, you can begin to abuse in subtle or overt ways that power by talking down to, gaslighting, and coercing workers to love you, knowing workers of lower rank are generally fearful of speaking up and typically don't know their rights and usually aren't organized and therefore aren't prepared to even know how to fight back, even if they wanted to. Employees within these non-profit firms sign at-will employment contracts just like in for profit firms, which gives employers the right to fire them for almost any reason they want. This workplace model is sometimes referred to as "workplace authoritarianism" as opposed to "workplace democracy." Authoritarianism is just when one person has all the power and authority, democracy is when the majority get to decide. Examples of workplace democracy include labor unions and worker cooperatives. But nonprofit management hates unions as much as for profit management does. This is because the democratic nature of how unions operate threatens workplace authoritarianism and non profits tend to love workplace authoritarianism.

The good news is more and more nonprofit workers these days are unionizing. But let's remember that non profit leadership can never and will never lead this effort or support it. It's the workers within the nonprofits doing this. At first, secretly, behind nonprofit managements back, until a majority is reached and they go public despite management not wanting them to. At this point, in most cases, management wages a little war against the majority of workers trying to get them to stop trying to have control over the direction of their work.

However, even in these circumstances, management can oppose recognition of a union. Nonprofit managers and executives pay themselves a lot more than the frontline workers, and a union may result in demands for higher wages which may result in the top of the structure having to cut their own salaries. But the deeper reason has to do with power. People with more power just tend not to give it up without a fight. While we most comfortably talk about this, these days, in the context of historical racism and sexism, like racism wouldn't end unless there was a war to stop it, women couldn't get the right to vote until they were throwing molotov cocktails at cops in the streets in 1910, this principle applies within authoritarian managerial nonprofit structures due to the capitalist logic they've all adopted within the past 40 to 50 years. Which leads us to another problem, which is not only that nonprofits oppose unions and democracy in the workplace, but they depend on the inequalities produced by capitalism to the point where the worse the divide between the rich and poor becomes, the better the nonprofit sector does.

Good Allies! (to inequality)

Let's make the case that the nonprofit sector, as a whole, does better when the gap between the haves and the have-nots gets worse. The best way to understand this is to first start with workplace income inequality, and copy paste that workplace throughout society. Let's briefly view what the capitalist workplace structure looks like.

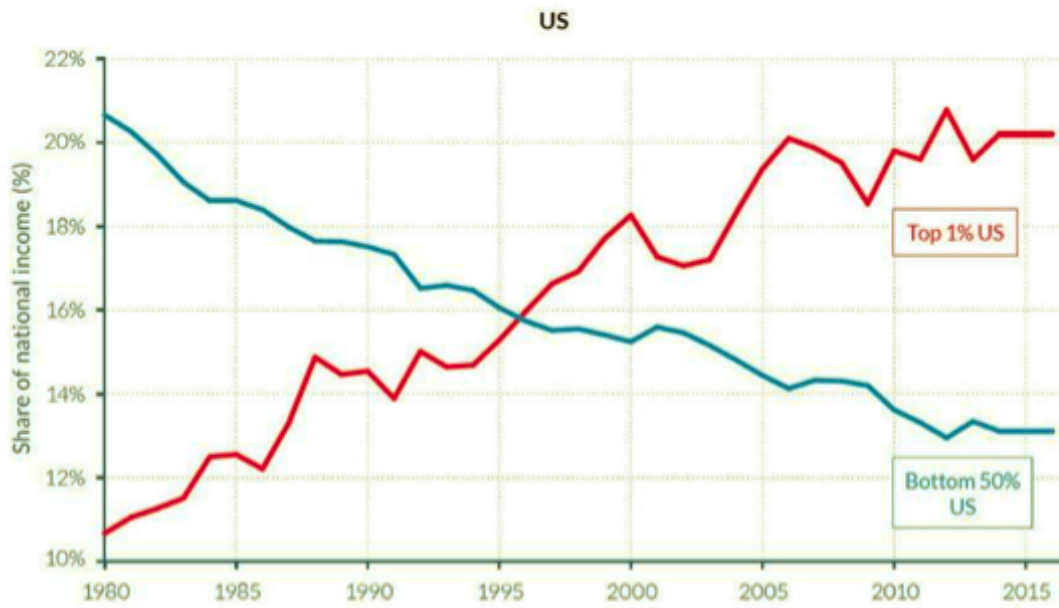


It's a pyramid. At the top, you have the owner. In the middle, you have some managers, and at the bottom you have workers. Workers typically make up the majority but since the capitalist workplace is anti-democratic, they don't get a right to vote on anything. Consequently, they get paid the least, and part of the reason for this is because the less they get paid, the more money the owner makes in profit. Managers typically get paid more than the workers because they help the owners keep the workers more productive, converting more of the workers labor into dollars that move up the pyramid and to the owner's pockets.

This is a blueprint for economic inequality. The owner likely owns a nice house in a nice area. The managers live a decent life, and the workers who are the majority struggle to get by. When we copy and paste this one single pyramidal structure thousands of times over, now we have the entire capitalist economy. The 1% v the 99%

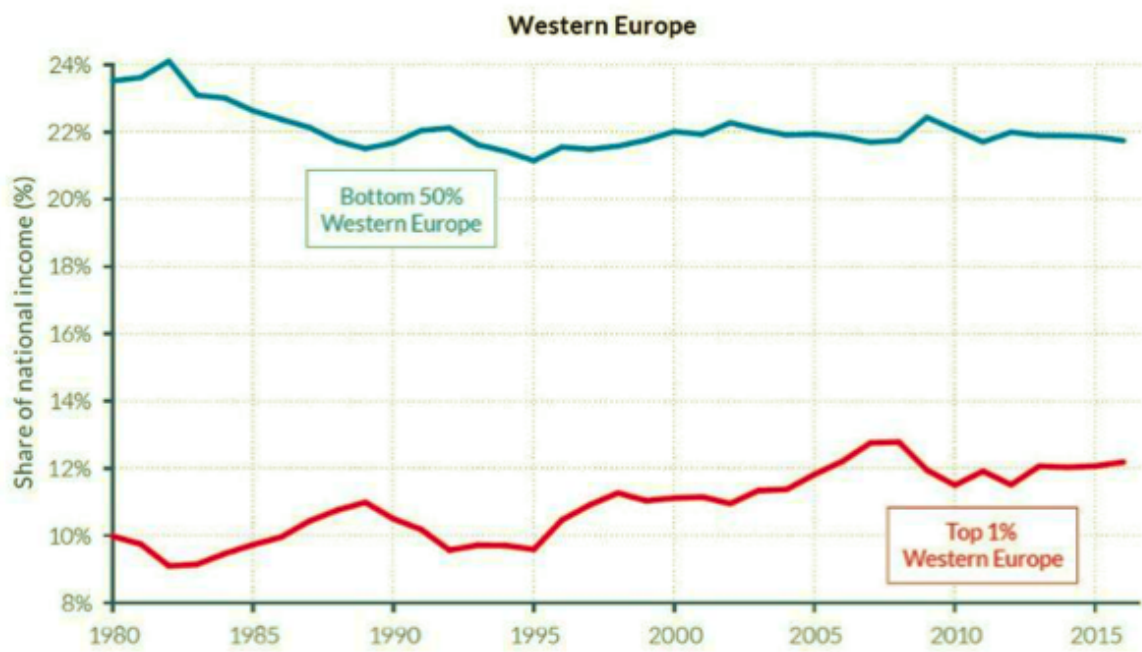
For those of you who haven't become leftists of some kind, you might think "well, that's just how workplaces are! That's how economies are. That's just the way it is." But in the US alone, the gap of inequality between rich and poor has actually changed drastically over the last century.

**Top 1% vs. Bottom 50% national income shares in the US and Western Europe, 1980–2016:
Diverging income inequality trajectories**



Source: WID.world (2017). See [wir2018.wid.world](#) for data series and notes.

In 2016, 12% of national income was received by the top 1% in Western Europe, compared to 20% in the United States. In 1980, 10% of national income was received by the top 1% in Western Europe, compared to 11% in the United States.

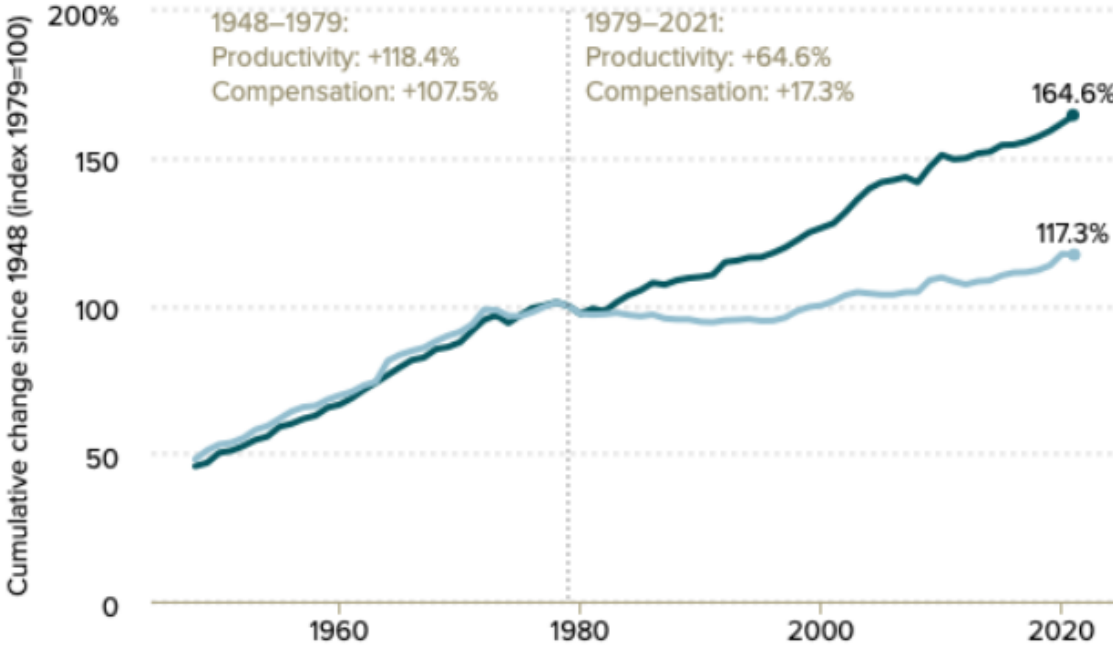


Source: WID.world (2017). See [wir2018.wid.world](#) for data series and notes.

The red line is the rich and the blue line is the poor. In the “neoliberal” era starting around the 1980’s, the rich got richer, and the bottom 50% of earners in the US got poorer. Compared to western europe, things stayed almost the same over the same period. Something significant is going on in the US.

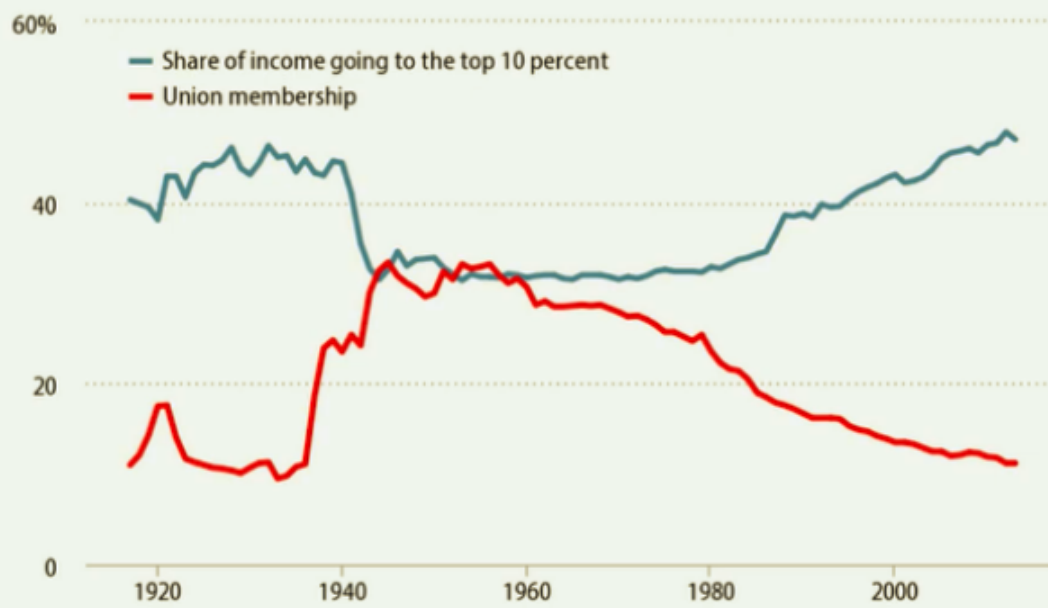
The gap between productivity and a typical worker's compensation has increased dramatically since 1979

Productivity growth and hourly compensation growth, 1948–2021



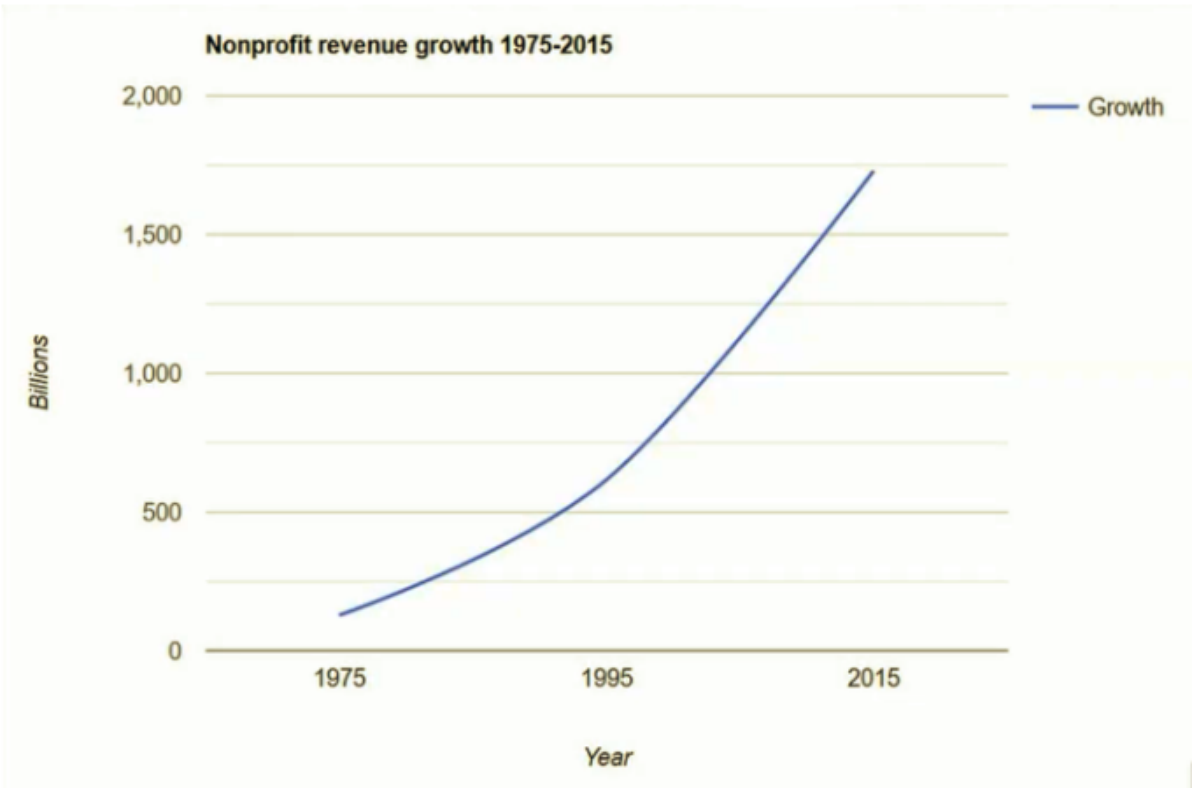
One of many interesting features about this era in the US is something that emerged called the “productivity-wage gap.” Wages stayed about the same for workers when adjusted for inflation, but their productivity rose dramatically. Productivity is the financial output a worker produces, also known as profit. So under capitalism, only management and board shareholders can decide what happens to profit, not workers. So within the last 40 years in particular, workers have produced far more profit for their bosses through their work than they ever did before, yet still get paid the same wage.

Union membership and share of income going to the top 10%



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Piketty and Saez (2013)

There are reasons economists explain the productivity-wage gap, but one of the most significant has to do with the fact that union membership decreased significantly during this era. But not because workers wanted weaker unions, but because CEOs and management made sure that workers could not create successful collective bargaining agreements. The main strategies the people on top used were large donations to politicians in exchange for anti-union legislation, and outsourcing jobs to countries with no unions or labor laws, not to mention a massive propaganda effort that got millions and millions of Americans to start thinking that unions were crooks and associated with communism. When workers are unionized, they act as checks and balances against the top level management who typically hoards all the profits at the expense of the workers. As attacks on unions during this neoliberal era intensified, those checks and balances were removed.



During the period between the 1970's to 2015, nonprofit revenue skyrocketed. Worker income went down, but worker productivity went up. Union memberships went down, and owner profits went up. At this same time, nonprofit revenue skyrocketed. To be fair, however, correlation is not the same as causation. However, Writers such as Anand Giridharadas, Linsey McGoey, Rob Reich and others have made the case that the rise of private philanthropy and income inequality are related. But let's go further and say that the nonprofit sector's growth as a whole is also related to income inequality.

First, foundations. As the rich got richer, many of them stashed billions of dollars of wealth into foundations. This was wealth that was amassed from tax cuts on the rich, decimation of unions, outsourcing, the widening of the productivity-wage gap, and so on. Foundations themselves are also registered with the IRS as non profit organizations, and so the growth of foundations alone accounts for some degree of the growth in the sector. If you weren't aware, foundations are basically private investment firms that avoid having to pay taxes as long as they donate at least 5% of their investments into nonprofits.

Second, austerity. Social services related to healthcare, education, housing, and so on, were cut drastically based on the neoliberal theory that the market will solve those problems. The nonprofit sector would become the perfect vehicle to test this theory, becoming an entire ecosystem of social services that would receive voluntary funding from people out of pocket, from insurance company reimbursement, private foundations, and government grants and contracts. As worker protections rapidly eroded, more and more people needed more and more services. The nonprofit sector became a vehicle for "helping" and was shaped over the last 50 years into a more and more corporatized, professionalized, business-like sector of the economy.

The mainstream understanding of the nonprofit sector and its growth in this period is that people just want to be good people and help each other. But, as we've seen, climate change, police violence, more nuclear weapons than there ever have been, the private prison industry is thriving, student loan debt is higher than it's ever been, human cultures are going extinct, medical debt is consistently on the rise while minimum wages aren't meeting rent requirements, gentrification has worsened in every major city in America, normalized mass shooting, uptick in suicide rates, Flint, Michigan still has no clean water, and we are currently in what biologists call "the 6th extinction."

If the nonprofit sector as a whole really is making the world a better place, why is it that nearly every economic, environmental, and social issue is far worse than it's ever been? The nonprofit sector cannot possibly continue to grow unless the problems they are looking to solve continue to worsen. The worse racism gets, the more racial justice nonprofits spring up. The worse child abuse gets, the more money is going to pour into nonprofit child abuse treatment clinics. The more domestic violence we see in any given city, the more we see donations given to any nonprofit domestic violence shelter. foundations and governing bodies will respond to these problems by allocating portions of funding which nonprofits can compete for by rapidly filling out grant applications so each competing nonprofit can attempt to expand services. The nonprofit sector isn't a non-capitalist or external-to-capitalism entity, it's survival depends on the inequalities built to the capitalist market in order to meet the "demand" these problems generate throughout society.

Lets say there's some evidence that suggests that a variety of social problems very much are caused by economic inequality, and that studies show that child abuse rates are higher in regions with lower minimum wage, that domestic violence rates are higher in relationships where there is more financial instability, and that police violence occurs at much higher rates in poorer areas. If these studies exist (and they do, cited in sources) wouldn't we come to the conclusion that many of these problems have roots within economic inequality itself, so we should try to combat those problems of economic inequality?

Because nonprofits are structured like capitalist workspaces, should we expect the nonprofit sector as a whole to advocate for solutions to the problems they tackle, like strong and militant labor unions,

ending the productivity-wage gap, and taxing billionaires into non-existence? No. If nonprofits do anything that seems radical and appears more political than professional, they risk losing that tax exempt status.

Social Services, not social change

In the anthology of essays referenced earlier, “The Revolution will Not Be Funded: beyond the non-profit industrial complex” by INCITE! One of the essays featured in it titled “social service or social change” by Paul Kivel, discusses the difference between social service and change. Here’s an excerpt from his opening paragraph.

“My first answer to the question in the title is that we need both, of course. We need to provide services for those most in need, for those trying to survive, for those barely making it. We need to work for social change so that we create a society in which our institutions and organizations are equitable and just and all people are safe, adequately fed, adequately housed, well educated, able to work at safe, decent jobs, and able to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

Although the title of this article may be misleading in contrasting social service provision and social change work, the two do not necessarily go together easily and in many instances do not go together at all. There are some groups working for social change that are providing social service; there are many more groups providing social services that are not working for social change. In fact, many social service agencies may be intentionally or inadvertently working to maintain the status quo.”

To illustrate the point made, in 1852 when there were 1.5 million slaves in America, “drapetomania” was coined and diagnosed, where slaves had a desire to leave the plantation, or were seen as lazy or emotionally distressed. A group of southern leaders consisting of plantation owners, politicians, etc. formed a nonprofit board called the “F.R.E.E” initiative, which provided services for mediation, counseling and psychiatric services, medical care, etc. While they are challenging a social problem with social services, the nonprofit didn’t join the abolition movement, which would have solved this social problem with actual social change.

Erika Cole Arenas refines the distinction between social services/social change and frames it as self-determination/self-help, which was a difference she noted in the 1960’s farm workers movement after it began to receive funding from the owning class. Megan Ming Francis focuses on a different historical movement, the movement for black lives, and how the NAACP’s founding and demands for radical change shifted after receiving funding from the owning class as well, what she calls “movement capture.”

Movement Capture

INCITE! had an experience they discussed in their collection of essays. In 2004, INCITE! received an email from the Ford foundation with the subject line “Congratulations” and an offer of a one year or two year grant of \$100,000 to cover their operating expenses. They committed to two major projects after receiving the funding. Then, unexpectedly, on July 30th, 2004, the Ford foundation sent another letter explaining that it had reversed its decision because of the organization’s statement of support for the palestinian liberation struggle.

INCITE! Realized from this experience that there are some serious consequences for social movements when they rely on foundation funding. Let’s say those \$100,000 would cover two full time organizing positions. Those jobs rely on that funding, and in an economy that relies on having an income, the foundation’s power to give you or take away your job, and if you’re passionate about that job’s social impacts, you’re more likely to do whatever the foundation funders tell you to say or not say.

Erika Cole Arenas, as stated before, talks about the effect funders can have to shape the direction of a social movement. In her research of the migrant farmers movement, one of her case studies was on Cesar Chavez, who fought to organize farm workers in California and Florida. He and Dolores Huerta co-founded the national farmers association which employed traditional labor-focused tactics such as boycotts and strikes to help farm workers get their needs and demands met. The movement for farmworker rights became more militant throughout the 1960's with both successes and failures but the emphasis was rooted in a radical vision that workers should have the most say when it comes to the work they do, the land they work on, etc.

Such radicalism of vision and militancy of tactics made foundation funders increasingly uncomfortable so by 1970, after Chavez and others decided to form a 501(c)3 nonprofit, called the national farm workers service center. Tons of funding poured in. Why? Because the service center focused on things like housing for farmworker families, education for their children, and healthcare services. Over time, the radicalism and militancy of the movement died down. One thing to take away from this is when your movements' most militant and inspiring leaders give up on radical demands because they won't be funded and shift towards shuffling paperwork around in order to tend to nonprofit managerial duties, there is just no way for such a radical vision to become realized.

Movement capture is the term used to describe this phenomena; foundations and philanthropists using funding as a means to superficially embrace social movements giving activists and their organizations more money and full-time activist jobs to then redirect and shape those very movements in whatever form those funders would prefer to see. This is to point out how funders aren't comfortable with a radical approach within a movement, and so won't fund that approach, but will fund less radical approaches which shifts the direction of that entire movement. Francis mainly focuses this argument on the behavior of the NAACP in the early 1900's, drawing on economic theories of regulatory and state capture.

The NAACP was made in 1909 with it's top priority being to stop lynching, which was a widespread issue, but realized they needed money to sustain their movement, and funders had shifted their direction from anti lynching to the desegregation of schools, a problem they saw as easier to tackle. The focus on education sidelined concerns of criminal procedure, siphoned resources away from the campaign around workers' economic rights, and undermined the concerns of black labor.

Professionalism

The first known use of the word professionalism was used in the year 1856 in *The Culture of Professionalism* by Burton J. Bledstein. The way they dressed, acted, and accessories were rooted in the Victorian era and carried on until the present day, mainly as a way to differentiate the classes and make professionalism the higher living standard.

When we think of what isn't considered professional in workplaces, such as tattoos, dreadlocks, casual clothing, fragrant foods, it becomes clear that professionalism is a class based form of codeswitching, and rooted in white supremacy. It's main purpose is for you to lie about your economic status as a way to differentiate yourself from working class, poor people. The arguments for professionalism in the nonprofit sector is basically reliability, people conducting themselves ethically, people taking professionals more seriously, however this need to professionalize did not come from the nonprofit workers of volunteers, or from the communities they serve, but from capitalists.

The culture of professionalism, however, has three key side effects on nonprofit social justice movements. The first is depoliticization. As discussed earlier, certain political stances can risk a nonprofit

to lose funding. The second is cost. Professionals can only become professionals if they have degrees, certifications, license, etc. which can be inaccessible, as those who can be professional either have to have wealth to begin with or run themselves into debt to receive those certifications. The third is psychology. The largest damage the professionalism of the sector did was to transform ordinary people's psychology where people began to see themselves as helpless, and that professionals in nonprofits would be helpful, which is a very disempowering way for non-professionals to think of themselves (though this is mainly due to neoliberalism).

Success Stories

Nonprofit success stories are basically testimonials about the success of particular nonprofit programs, in basic terms, nonprofit marketing made to emotionally appeal to foundations and other donors. The thing is, however, nonprofits fail more often than they succeed, however due to professionalism, nonprofits feel the need to create the appearance of only doing things the right way. With a lot of situations, workers would have to craft language for the board and donors based on what they wanted to hear, rather than the way the workers would see how management would make decisions that would make the workers and clients lives harder, along with socioeconomic forces that would worsen situations.

The 501(c)3 model of organizing, as discussed before, is a charity model, which depends on economic inequality. You need a helping population and a helpless population. In other words, the success stories that nonprofits rely on are needed to reinforce the power imbalances that keep people in a position of disempowerment.

The criminalization and medicalization of violence

In INSITE!'s collection of essays, Ana Clarisa Rojas Durazo writes in “we were never meant to survive,” she writes: “the criminalization of domestic violence created a dual advantage for the state: the perpetrator became the sole party responsible for the violence against women while the state positioned itself against the perpetrator and thereby as an ally of battered women.”

One big thing that came out of the women's movement in the 1960's and second wave feminism was the so-called battered women's movement. The phrase “battered women” is no longer popular but whenever you see or hear about a rape crisis center or domestic violence shelter for women, such places exist because of the battered women's movement. As the movement advanced through the 1970's-80's, more shelters and centers were formed all over the US, incorporated as 501(c)3 nonprofits. Consequently, they needed to find funding to sustain their operations.

Durazo writes in her essay, “Federal funding to address violence against women was a key strategy to align the antiviolence movement with the criminalization project.” She explains how the evolution of the feminist movement intending to protect women from violent men came to grow parallel to the extent to which the state would offer funding to these shelters and centers. This parallel between nonprofits and the state's apparent need to build more prisons and lock up more men (and of course disproportionately men of color) sort of crescendoed in the 1990's with the violence against women act.

“The act provided \$1.6 billion toward investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women, imposed automatic and mandatory restitution on those convicted, and allowed civil redress in cases prosecutors chose to leave un-prosecuted. The act also established the Office on Violence Against Women within the department of justice. VAWA I and II merged in policy the interests of the state- to criminalize society, populate the cheap labor force of the prison industrial complex, manage the nations shifting racial demographics (specifically, a declining white population) by quarantining more people of color in

prison and deflecting attention from its role in the production and reproduction of domestic violence—with the interest of the anti-violence movement. To affirm and structure this merger, the VAWA created the US office on violence against women and housed it in the department of justice, the federal arm of the PIC. Thus federal funding has entrenched the ideology of the criminalization of violence against women, doling out billions of dollars of funding. “

In simple terms, the women’s movement in the nonprofit anti-violence sub-sector, whether on purpose or not, helped to grow the prison industrial complex into what it is today in the name of punishing bad men for hurting good women. In Danielle Sered’s book, *Until We Recon*, she breaks down the four basic goals of incarceration. First is deterrence, which is making violent men not do it again (evidence shows that incarceration doesn’t achieve this). The second goal is rehabilitation, which is to teach people a lesson to make them better (evidence shows that incarceration doesn’t achieve this goal). The third goal is incapacitation, or to force the violent person not to hurt people while incarcerated (which promotes prisoners to hurt each other instead, a goal not achieved). The fourth goal is retribution, which is to make the violent person suffer proportionally to the violence they did because that makes it fair (this doesn’t work out either). In summation, the incarceration of violent men doesn’t make society safer, but instead makes it much less safe.

Durazo continues, “Through policy, ideology, and the NPIC, the state began to break into pieces the radical social justice agenda of the movement against women. First, by prohibiting nonprofits from engaging in “politics,” it separated interpersonal violence against women from state-based, economic, and institutional violence against women. This individualization of violence excluded the experiences of women of color surviving the multiple forms of state violence.

“Then the state splintered anti-sexual assault work from the movement to end domestic violence, while certain state-based forms of sexual assault were kept out of the discourse of violence against women (for example, militarized and prison sexual assaults, militarized border rapes, and sterilization and other population control practices.

“At first, women doing anti violence work sought tax-exempt status for shelters. But the price of achieving non-profit status became obvious early on as organizers were taunted with lesbian-bating and misogynist jokes- and as funders demanded of the institution certain policies and practices, including professionalization. Soon, funders were expressing their preference for degree-bearing professionals instead of community organizers; organizations were expected to have hierarchical structures; and therapeutic social services were funded over popular education work.

Ideologically, violence against women became more and more a behavioral, criminal, and medical phenomenon rather than a social justice issue. When violence against women is understood this way, interventions and attempts at prevention are overly reliant on therapy and the courts— an individualized method of intervention that fails to address and combat the social organization of violence against women.”

What’s the point?

I think Durazo and others who wrote the *INSITE!* anthology and those still critical of the nonprofit industrial complex overall would argue that socialism just makes more sense than nonproftism when it comes to addressing gender based violence, and every other social problem . The reason is if the capital we have floating around in service of more investment and more profit and more competition for more profit were converted into universal healthcare, childcare, education, and housing programs,

the conditions that give rise to things like gendered violence would be addressed and likely be less institutionalized state-sanctioned violence.

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32. Imagination and the Carceral State

Deleted reason: none of the four texts mention anarchist word
Author: Joshua Bennett
Authors: Joshua Bennett, Elleza Kelley, Che Gossett, Matthew Spellberg
Topics: blackness, abolition
Date: December 2020 — January 2021
Date Published on T@L: 2022-12-15T02:30:48
Source: Retrieved on 14 December 2022 from cabinetmagazine.org

We're trying to understand the relationship between abolition and exodus.

—Fred Moten

This portfolio of essays is an occasion to celebrate the fugitive practices of those forced to live in flight from the ever-expanding reach of the carceral state and its extractive everyday protocols. The four texts vary in tenor and form, but all share this emphasis on the irreducible beauty of stolen life, this sociality that persists under unthinkable duress. Our central objects of concern vary widely. The work you will find here explores graveyards, prison education, defunct but exemplary revolutionary art schools, and the search for a political grammar of Black freedom. We have gathered here in the name of an age-old pursuit: the elaboration of our most radical dreams, and a larger commitment to honoring moments of persistence, of meditative tenacity, that might otherwise fall outside of our vision. What forms of conviviality, evasion, recalcitrance, and play have the incarcerated, the undocumented, and the unsung cultivated in order to survive? And how might we more thoughtfully study these practices in the present? In the name of such collective envisioning, we assemble under the banner of imagination, dedicated to the revelation of another world.

No Man's Land

The architecture of abolition
Elleza Kelley

Usually he left his boots in the shed and put his walking shoes on along with his day clothes in the corner before he went home. A route that took him smack dab through the middle of a cemetery as old as sky, rife with the agitation of dead Miami no longer content to rest in the mounds that covered them. Over their heads walked a strange people; through their earth pillows roads were cut; wells and houses nudged them out of eternal rest. Outraged more by their folly in believing land was holy than by the disturbances of their peace, they growled on the banks of Licking River, sighed in the trees on Catherine Street and rode the wind above the pig yards.

—Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

These days I get anxious in the cemetery when I see people having picnics and doing yoga, though I wonder if the dead don't mind. I think maybe the dead are grateful for the children feeding ducks in the pond, climbing over their headstones, playing on the mausoleum benches without fear. Happy to be seen not as toxic or terrifying but as present, gentle, loved. I don't know. The hikers, the photographers, the joggers—a special kind of whiteness has taken over and settled in the crevices. I read a tweet that said quarantine had turned the park into a nightclub, but it also seems to have turned the cemetery into a park. But before they became parks, cemeteries had always been nature reserves. Because they are enclosed, protected, tended regularly by groundskeepers and gardeners, children and the widowed,

the left behind. Because when we were there we tried to be quiet and we tried not to walk too heavily or leave our trash behind. From time immemorial, we have shown our reverence for the dead by making space for them. That's why at the cemetery you can see egrets, mourning doves, cedar waxwings, tiger swallowtail butterflies, every species of bird and plant.

In May of 2015, at the James Weldon Johnson Community Center in East Harlem, New York City mayor Bill de Blasio announced a plan that proposed leasing to private developers the “underutilized land” of public housing developments: parks, gardens, basketball courts, parking lots, walkways, baseball fields, little green cuts of color where trees made oxygen. On this land—considered to be excess, wasteful, dead zones—developers would build profit-generating “mixed-income” housing.

(I can see these new buildings if I close my eyes—glass cladding over reinforced steel, windows that look out but not in, military-grade security infrastructure hidden by self-effacing modernist embellishment, facing the sun, backs to the projects.)

Mayor Bloomberg tried it first, several years earlier. Back then it went by a more explicit name: infill.

1. infill. *noun*.

1: material that fills in something (such as a hole or the spaces between a building's structural members)

2: new buildings constructed in the space available between existing structures¹

That holes must be filled is some white man's conceit. “Phrenology was a white way of knowing,” Nathaniel Mackey writes, “it valorized obtusion, surface, apparency, warding off the obscurities and indeterminacies of recess, crevice, fold.”²

I can hear them now: *What will we put in its place? Who will we call instead? Where will the criminals go?*

A hole is not always a grave. In her poem “Coal,” Audre Lorde wrote, “There are many kinds of open.” An urban dead zone refers to space that is unrentable, unprofitable. Such areas are discursively produced as dangerous blind spots, places that evade the scopic gaze of the state. Alleyways, underpasses, airshafts, rooftops: places that on paper are uninhabitable but in practice are lived in and utilized, typically in clandestine, ephemeral, collective ways. They harbor life against and outside of the state. It is no wonder the state wants us to believe they're “dead.”

De Blasio's proposal targeted projects that were located in “high-value sites”: Chelsea, Williamsburg, Hell's Kitchen, the Upper East Side, the Lower East Side, Boerum Hill. Areas that had become gentrified, their property values skyrocketing while the projects themselves languished. As of today, the New York City Housing Authority faces a \$40 billion backlog of necessary repairs and improvements.

Tenants continue to resist, refuse, and sue to stop these settlements, these occupations, these disavowals and dispossessions of spaces for living and playing. At many public housing developments, the plan was abandoned. Green archipelagoes, asphalt inlets, parking lots, and basketball courts, all left untouched.

• • •

If you needed to think of Cameron Rowland's 2018 work *Depreciation* as an object, it could be:

1) seventeen pieces of paper—legal documents that record the purchase of a piece of land by a nonprofit called “8060 Maxie Road Inc.,” a subsequent restrictive covenant preventing “all development and use of the property by the owner,” and an appraisal report, indicating the market value of the land: \$0.

Or perhaps:

2) a one-acre plot of land on Edisto Island, South Carolina, formerly belonging to the Maxcy Place plantation.

Or perhaps it is 3) something less tactile, something we cannot hold or behold. The work, maybe, exists in the act itself—the depreciation of the land's market value to \$0, to nothing. As such, it would be the description of a movement; a labor of disinvestment, of defunding, of abolition.

In the caption to *Depreciation*, Rowland cites Sherman's Special Field Order 15, which stipulated that "the islands from Charleston south, the abandoned rice fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea, and the country bordering the St. Johns River, Florida, are reserved and set apart for the settlement of the negroes now made free by the acts of war and the proclamation of the President of the United States. ... Each family shall have a plot of not more than forty acres of tillable ground."

Field Order 15 was "effectively rescinded" in 1866 by President Andrew Johnson, after Lincoln's assassination. Johnson ordered that these lands be returned to their previous Confederate owners. "Former slaves," Rowland writes, "were given the option to work for their former masters as sharecroppers or be evicted. If evicted, former slaves could be arrested for homelessness under vagrancy clauses of the Black Codes. Those who refused to leave and refused to sign sharecrop contracts were threatened with arrest."

By the 1870s, nearly all of the abandoned plantation land that had been settled by free black people in the months following Sherman's order, including the site of the Maxcy Place plantation, was returned to their former owners. As Du Bois described it, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, "The eight hundred thousand acres of abandoned lands in the hands of the Freedman's Bureau melted quickly away."

"As reparation," Rowland writes, "this covenant asks how land might exist outside of the legal-economic regime of property that was instituted by slavery and colonization. Rather than redistributing the property, the restriction imposed on 8060 Maxie Road's status as valuable and transactable real estate asserts antagonism to the regime of property as a means of reparation."

Edisto Island is part of the Sea Islands, which make up the eastern boundary of the Gullah Geechee Nation. Since Field Order 15, the Gullah Geechee, descendants of those enslaved on the Sea Islands, have managed to preserve ancestral traditions and keep out mainland culture, holding their land in common through a system of heirs' property. In recent years, developers have exploited loopholes in this system—places where the customary laws of the commons and the laws of enclosure rub up against each other and cause friction. The Gullah Geechee estimate that they have lost nearly 90 percent of their land through intensifying gentrification. Resorts, condos, and golf courses have been settled uneasily atop Gullah Geechee burial grounds, while the living community is fractured and displaced.

Brunswick is a coastal town adjacent to the Sea Islands chain, which stretches from South Carolina to Florida; the Gullah Geechee Nation live on both the islands and the coastal plain. *Marsh Ruins* is made from concrete and tabby, a widely used building material in the South that incorporated oyster shells and was often utilized in the construction of plantation buildings such as slave quarters. Extremely labor-intensive to make, tabby was no longer produced on the same scale after Emancipation.

In July, several news outlets reported that a police squad formed by the Louisville Metro Police Department had "deliberately misled" narcotics detectives to target a home on Elliot Avenue in West Louisville, Kentucky, in order to accelerate a monumental gentrification effort, "the city's multimillion-dollar Vision Russell development plan." The squad, called Place-Based Investigations, had been created expressly to target Elliot Avenue and "focus on areas needing to be cleared for development projects to proceed." During the execution of this no-knock warrant, police officers murdered a young woman while she slept. Her name was Breonna Taylor.

The regime of property and the regime of carcerality that upholds it are a monument whose foundation is sunk deep in our soil. Rowland imagines reparation as excavation, as negation, as abolition. *There are many kinds of open*. What does refusal to reform, to rebuild, to restore allow us to imagine?

• • •

I always thought utopia meant heaven until I went to college and found out that its etymology is "no-place," that the fantasy of utopia is not its perfection or beauty or ethics but the fact of its impossibility. That always seemed silly to me, that the world we most wanted had to be something that didn't exist. But maybe instead it's that the world we desire is the absence, the recess, the fold: the hole

left behind by the prison that we refuse to fill. The space we insist must be sacred—not the building or its air rights, but the land beneath, what was there before settler colonial violence, before regimes of property, before enclosure, before a fortified building, a fort on the shore with a door through which no one returns. What if utopia is the place we arrive at when we get rid of place—its markers, its border walls, its statues, its flags, its forts, its pens?

In Charles Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman*, an abandoned plantation is alive, its ghosts having become inseparable from the earth itself—entwined with grapevines, the wood of a cabin that moans. Julius, the archivist and groundskeeper, insists that the land should not be sold, that the cabin must not be touched. The form this haunting takes is negation, the refusal of development, of restoration, of renovation.

The people I come from were born in blank spots on the map, tended provision grounds on the road’s shoulder, turned stoops and rooftops into yards and gardens, got free in their grandmother’s garret, were raised in the razed-and-paved-over, raised on the grounds underneath the new condos, underneath Central Park. They know that unoccupied land is not uninhabited land, but land crowded with dead Miami, with our ancestors, with animal, plant, and mineral life whose invisible motion—sighing, breathing, shimmering—fills the air. They know that land belongs to no man.

(What if we didn’t build another monument in the place of the toppled one? What if we left the hole instead—a negative space, a gaping archive of the terror we planted.)

There are many kinds of open.

Imagining abolition as one form of reparation refuses the conflation between the unused and the useless, between habitation and settlement, between invisible and absent. It refuses the dead zone. It asks us to reimagine entirely another use for nothing, for nowhere, for no-place.

As reparation, the rendering of land as unusable is strategic, creative—the genius of our ancestors and folk heroes, Brer Rabbit or Jack. But it also necessarily evokes our burial grounds, our holy grounds, the places where we whisper and walk softly, where we lay offerings. It evokes the sacred emptying of the land that acknowledges and honors its absolute fullness; acknowledges and honors that we share it and hold it in common with others—with those who have passed through and those who are yet to come. And what is held in common slips away. What is held in common refuses the terms of ownership, it “constantly violates the boundaries of so-called home.” What is held in common, what we hold with our dead, we hold with the life that crowds the air.

Abolitionist Alternatives

Black radicalism and the refusal of reform
Che Gossett

So much of the work of oppression is about policing the imagination.

—Saidiya V. Hartman

The political contours of the early modern Black abolitionist movement were shaped by Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Olaudah Equiano, Harriet Tubman, and countless others in their everyday forms of resistance, and politically enunciated in the flashpoints of rebellions, uprisings, and insurgency against the violence of racial slavery. Abolitionist solidarity in the early period fractured along the fault lines of the political antagonism of anti-blackness. This chasm between abolitionist camps was the result of an incommensurable parallax. One viewpoint was the racial paternalism of white abolitionists who aimed to determine liberty for Black people. The other was the Black radical imagining of what Robin Kelley terms “freedom dreams” irreducible to the perennial unfreedom of “emancipation.”

Blackness radicalizes both emancipation—its legal etymology tracing to the relinquishing of property—and revolution. Blackness revolutionized the subject and object of revolution itself—the Haitian revolution is emblematic of this radicalization. The slave, as Saidiya Hartman argues, was

the ground for the modern political subject. “The enslaved were neither envisioned nor afforded the privilege of envisioning themselves as part of the ‘imaginary sovereignty of the state.’” The slave was ground for emancipatory and revolutionary struggle and these political categories, and the category of the political in its totality, were reserved for white citizens, as can be seen from the anti-Black backlash, carceral state violence, and domestic warfare against every iteration of ongoing Black insurgency, from Nat Turner’s uprising to the Civil Rights Movement, which James Baldwin deemed “the latest slave rebellion.”

The political grammar of Black freedom requires the abolition of the given terms of the political, classical, and philosophical ontology of freedom. Black freedom struggle puts the coordinates of freedom into question. Abolition is about ending what Hortense J. Spillers calls the “grammars of capture,” which include the racial, liberal grammar of “freedom,” the political ontology of which is slavery. “Slavery is the threshold of the political world.” *De jure* abolition did not end anti-Blackness; it re-formed it. “The abolition of American slavery started the transportation of capital from white to black countries where slavery prevailed,” observed Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction*, articulating how capitalism is slavery’s afterlife. Freedom—as Hartman has so rigorously demonstrated—is a scene of subjection. Perhaps the very grammar of “world” itself—as the colonization and rending-into-property of Earth—is one of capture as well. The prison abolitionist movement demands and envisions social emancipation, and the end of all forms of social exile, banishment, criminalization, or incarceration. Abolition remains an ongoing project against the general institutionalization of the afterlife of slavery and its carceral and racial capitalist topology: from the site of the prison to the site of the psych ward, from the neoliberal corporation of the university to the detention center and more. Ruth Wilson Gilmore explains the abolition project in its particular and universal totality: “Abolition requires that we change one thing, which is everything.”

What Mariame Kaba terms the “horizon of abolition” is both temporal and spatial. What is the temporality of abolition? How is it different from modes of secular eschatological and messianic revolutionary time? Abolition is untimely, casting off the illusion of capitalist and colonial time as a measure of civilizationist progress. Not atemporal to but rupturing of the racial liberal temporality of post-“emancipation” time, abolition—as Audre Lorde says of revolution in her essay “Learning from the 60s”—is “not a one-time event” but rather, as Angela Davis contends, “a constant struggle.” Abolition shifts the social and political ontology of revolution. Key to this is who can participate, ending the ableist and heteronormative policing of the revolution from within it, and also how revolution is reconceptualized not as a one-time event—or even through the register of the event at all—but rather as an immanent modality. Abolition therefore inheres in, as Jared Sexton phrases it, “an interminable radicalization of every radical movement,” such that policing and the carceral are constantly interrogated within the very forms of revolutionary sociality dedicated to their opposition. Returning to Lorde’s essay, which reflects on the lessons gleaned from the period’s revolutionary schemas and the need to constantly revise and rewrite the revolutionary itself, the full passage reads: “Revolution is not a one-time event. It is becoming always vigilant for the smallest opportunity to make a genuine change in established, outgrown responses.” The revolution—and abolition as both revolutionary and the radicalizing of the terms of revolution itself—are not only external but also internal processes.

What is the spatiality of the horizon of abolition? What is the (an)architecture of abolition and how might architecture be a place for abolition—as housing for all, as the repurposing of the built environment? Gilmore terms abolition a “presence” in the life-affirming sense of collective power and possibility with which she imbues that powerful concept. “Abolition is building the future from the present, in all of the ways we can.” To return to Sexton’s concept of interminability, abolition might be seen as “two trains running,” to use Frank Wilderson’s metaphor. Or even analogous to a Möbius strip—an infinite fold—with one side being the struggle against carceral form and reform (the carceral continuum) and the other, following Gilmore, presence as abolitionist becoming and flourishing. In its presence making, abolition pursues non- and anti-fascist living.

In his preface to Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, which he called an “Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life,” Foucault shows how fascism (of which we might consider the carceral a genre) operates

not only at the level of the state but also internally, at the level of psychic and interior life. Foucault identifies not only the fascism of state authoritarianism but also “the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us.” Further, Foucault poses and anticipates questions that are live for and intensified by abolitionist praxis—especially if we read and substitute “carceral” for “fascist,” which are interchangeable after all. Foucault asks: “How does one keep from being fascist, even (especially) when one believes oneself to be a revolutionary militant? How do we rid our speech and our acts, our hearts and our pleasures, of fascism? How do we ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behavior?” The abolitionist phrasing of this is succinctly put by Paula X. Rojas as “the cops in our heads and hearts.” Fascism, as George L. Jackson defined it, is not only the form of the carceral state but also (its) reform. “We will never have a complete definition of fascism, because it is in constant motion. ... But if one were forced for the sake of clarity to define it in a word simple enough for all to understand, that word would be ‘reform.’” Jackson’s Black radical study of fascism, his reworking of its definition, reveals its plasticity and endurance, and its naturalization as “reform.” Abolitionist living is anti-fascist living.

Myth Lessons

The carceral state and the limits of sentimental realism
Matthew Spellberg

Education in the Era of the Crime Bill: What Questions Can We Ask?

The Violent Crime Control and Enforcement Act, signed into law by Bill Clinton in 1994, is widely considered to be the capstone in the architecture of American mass incarceration. Among its many harsh provisions was a measure forbidding prisoners from receiving Pell Grants, the most important form of debt-free aid the government offers for higher education. Until 1994, there had been hundreds of college programs operating in the nation’s prisons. These were mostly affiliated with community colleges; the cost of faculty and overhead was paid for by Pell Grant tuition. After the crime bill, many of these programs vanished, or were drastically reduced.

A new model of prison education arose in their place. Where the old programs had been extensions of existing colleges, the new programs were formed expressly for the purpose of teaching in prisons. Some had no accreditation at all; others worked out improvised accreditation arrangements with other institutions. In the old programs, most, if not all, of the teachers worked in the prisons as part of their day jobs. In contrast, initiatives formed after the crime bill largely recruited *volunteer* faculty, and this widened considerably the range of people involved in prison education. Graduate students, professors, teachers, artists, lawyers, and undergraduates gave their free time to work in prisons, which in turn meant that, in addition to community colleges, many research universities, nonprofits, and other institutions became involved in prison education. Eventually some of these new programs were able to hire and pay regular faculty, but this could not be done with federal money, so they were required either to raise funds specially, or to ask that their supporting institutions redirect money from other sources. These altered material conditions, in conjunction with a rising awareness of the incarceration crisis, gave a more precise political valence to prison teaching. It became something like a movement, one with two goals, one longstanding, the other historically contingent: educating incarcerated men and women as individuals, and fighting mass incarceration *itself* with education.

I am part of the long generation (at this point, *generations*) of educators who felt themselves called to work as prison teachers in the world the crime bill made. The time I spent teaching in prisons changed forever my sense of what education could be. It was for me a sacred honor, and it was a model for the life of the mind. In prison classrooms, I found that ideas and knowledge were pursued with zeal, urgency, and an incredible frankness. Some of my incarcerated students were the best I’ve ever had, anywhere;

they were also some of my most important teachers. I similarly loved and respected many of my teaching colleagues who came with me from the outside.

But for all the joy and excitement that came from this work, it was impossible to forget that we were acting within a ubiquitously rotten and incomprehensible system. We teachers witnessed only some tiny portion of its capacity to debase the human being, but what we saw was enough for a sobering lesson: the prisons awakened savior complexes, desperation, dishonesty, petty feuding, greed, self-delusion, self-doubt, abuse, and outright corruption. Such things are not unexpected within a reality as catastrophic and bizarre as the American prison-industrial complex. But it was its own kind of education to see them firsthand. It was also an education to learn about the things I did not see, and I am still haunted by what I know transpired just beyond my ken.

My experience is representative of a national phenomenon. Prison education in the era of mass incarceration has been deeply meaningful to many people, incarcerated and not. Its reverberations have been felt in communities across the country at every socioeconomic level. It has become entwined with the culture and policies of universities, foundations, and even museums.

One day it will be possible to ask many important historical questions about American prison education at the turn of the millennium: Whether and to what extent it played a role in dismantling the carceral system; what these education programs were able to offer the generations of men and women who encountered them behind bars; what the long-term effect of these programs was on the communities ravaged by incarceration; how the rise of these prison education programs responded to the collapse of the academic humanities at American universities; how artists, scholars, and scientists across all disciplines sought in non-traditional education programs an alternative to the ever-more transactional, expensive, bureaucratized, competitive, and precarious institutions at which they worked.

To ask these questions now would be premature, maybe even counterproductive. There are, however, two questions that I am ready to pose now, and even answer in a preliminary fashion. These questions are philosophical rather than historical. In fact, they are somewhat anti-historical; they express a certain dissatisfaction with the way the lens of history frames the pressing concerns of our era, a dissatisfaction that may even extend to the narrative I have rehearsed in the first paragraphs of this essay. These questions are also in my opinion quite practical. I see them as everyday questions for teachers in the classroom. The first is, what tools do we have in the realm of culture for representing the enormity of carceral America, and the extremities of stress and suffering it has inflicted on millions of our fellow citizens? And the second, what forms of representation should we be teaching to students who are themselves caught up in this carceral state—whether directly (in prisons or surveilled communities), or indirectly (everywhere else in the country)? My response to both is, in a word, *myth*. To many people this may seem quite unexpected, even a non-sequitur; the rest of this essay will be an attempt to explain what exactly I mean by this response.

I realize that such questions are minor compared to the one that screams at us every day, from every direction: *how do we make this stop?* But they—along with myth itself—may offer some clues as to why we find it so hard to come up with an answer to this very cry, even as it plunges the knife into our hearts.

The Myth-world in the Everyday Life of the Prison Classroom

For six years, I taught literature and composition classes in the New Jersey prison system. The subjects were various: literature, philosophy, journalism, basic writing, also tutorials designed specifically around individual students' interests. But one through line in my teaching practice was myth. The word has suffered from unfortunate misrepresentations in the last hundred years. It has often been defined as literature for children, or fantasy fiction, or a synonym for "falsehood," or as a handmaiden of nationalism, or as a word that obtains only for a small corpus of ancient Greek stories. But when I talk about myth, I mean *the human impulse to narrate at the limits of the cosmos*, the desire to give an account from a mind standing "at the circumference and not at the center of its reality," to quote Northrop Frye. One

of my most important teachers on the subject, Robert Bringhurst, defines myth further as “a theorem about the nature of reality, expressed ... in animate, narrative form.” In this sense at least, myth is a rich and foundational aspect of human cultures from across the globe. It is one of the oldest, and was once the most treasured, of narrative forms. It originates in orality, but has made a home in nearly every medium, whether text or painting or film. It often calls to tradition and the ancient times; but it is also a protean, metamorphic thing, built from variation, dissent, and the violation of taboo. Sometimes myth’s detractors claim that it is monolithic, imposing its values on a community. This can and does indeed happen, but it seems to me a late deformation of myth’s true nature, which I believe is *anarchic*: myth circulates in many forms and versions from many mouths, and therefore it allows for fluid, democratic, constantly revisable thinking about the nature of the world.

I presented myth to my students as such a divinely ambitious, fluid, and powerful form of reasoning about the cosmos. I devoted lessons to myths and mythically inspired texts from cultures around the world—the Bible, *Paradise Lost*, Native American oral traditions, Greek and Middle Eastern stories as they appear in epic or theater.

I once taught a story by a great Indigenous American oral poet of the early twentieth century named Ghandl (or Gandll, or Walter McGregor, as he was called in English). Originally told in the Haida language, and translated by Bringhurst, the story is about a man abandoned by his jealous in-laws on a rock while hunting sea lions. It’s a difficult work to enter into, built on a lattice of metaphysics and ecology from the Pacific Northwest. I had the students perform it as a play. They barked as they imagined sea lions would, and stumped their hands into flippers. One of them narrated the hero’s descent to the bottom of the sea at the invitation of a grebe; his encounter there with a chief of the Killer Whale People; then his return home inside the stomach of a sea lion; and finally his elaborate revenge on those who had left him to die. Our performance led us into a discussion of exchange, honor, the potlatch, and the limits of human experience. At the end of the semester, many of the students wrote in their evaluations that it had been their favorite class of the term.

Another time, on the recommendation of my co-teacher Antonio Iannarone, I taught a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne called “Earth’s Holocaust”—a latter-day fable, aspiring toward myth, in which the do-gooders of the world set out to purge all the impure elements of society by starting a great bonfire on the American Plains. Eventually they decide they must burn everything—liquor, clothes, books, all the trappings of civilization—and start the world afresh. But their efforts are in vain, for evil still lingers among the men watching the blaze. On the day I assigned this text, only one student had done the reading. But the story had so kindled his excitement that he asked if he could teach it to the rest of the class. I said of course, and he spoke with unbroken intensity for twenty minutes, narrating the work in his own words, pointing to key passages, abstracting the ideas he thought important. The students became engrossed, particularly one, who kept trying to guess at the ending. He was calmly parried by the presenter, who kept saying: “I’ll get there, bro.” The student had elegantly transformed Hawthorne’s text into an oral performance, complete with a call and response, and so he restored the story and its themes to the human voice, that earliest angel of meaning.

Many times I asked students to write stories in the style of one of the texts we had been reading. The student who had loved “Earth’s Holocaust” wrote a similar parable of an Eden destroyed. Another added a leaf to the Bible, “The Book of Cain,” in which we learn that God allows Cain to grow old, marry, and have children—but only to see his wife and children die before he does. This, Cain learns on his own deathbed, has been the slow-gestating punishment for that first murder. Yet another student wrote *Paradise Lost*, *Book* ☒, having fallen in love not only with Milton’s grandeur, but also his habit of dropping vowels for scansion:

Awake my first, and look upon my world;
I am God; thou Creator, Father, and Master.
As th' beautiful creature stood and look'd upon th'
Powerful brighten light and mov'd its body in an circle
Looking at the nothingness, that surrounds it.
Th' creature speaks once it faces the powerful light.
Why; why; why? How; how; how? When; when; when?
Who; who; who? What; what; what? No?

I am wary of making generalizations about incarcerated students. Like students on the outside, they manifest a range of abilities and interests. Some of them will like myth, and some will prefer lyric poetry, or business, or trigonometry, or physics. This is as it should be. But two things might be said about why myth should be taught in prisons. First, myth is a complex and complete way of thinking, a form of reasoning about reality, that originated in an oral world. It can serve as a bridge between talking and writing, especially for students who are brilliant at the former but uneasy with the latter. An exploration of myth can serve to undo certain hierarchies of knowledge based on the distinction between the written and the spoken. To understand that a folk storyteller can be a major philosopher, handling questions of cosmic value in an idiom nourished on the front stoop, in a fishing boat, or at the many other Academies of the Everyday—this can awaken a love for ideas and stories unencumbered by their association with certain markers of status. It can also restore one's ability to see the genuine beauty and power of the written word, since its vitality can always be traced to the immediate aliveness of speech, which is at once writing's ancestor and sibling.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, myth presents narratives at the limit of reality, in which the stakes could not be higher: birth and death, the creation and destruction of worlds, the human and more-than-human all at once. Most of the literature currently taught in high schools and universities (as well as prisons) is—to be blunt—bourgeois literature. Even most of the novels and poems set in poor communities or written from the margins (at least those that end up on syllabi) are largely built on the scaffolding of the Western realist bourgeois style: domestic, inward-facing, self-conscious, sociologically and historically minded, secular. This style was, and perhaps could still be, a great achievement. I do not mean to denounce it altogether, or claim it should be excluded from study. But we should not fall into thinking that it furnishes the only possible medium for picturing the world. There are other forms of expression—wilder, grander, older, more anarchic, less deferential to the barrier between representation and reality, less interested in pity, justification, or judgment, more concerned with the sheer unavailability of action and consequence. Sometimes to see a picture, in story, of the grand, cold, and indifferent universe is to realize you have the power to shape a commensurately grand picture for yourself. Sometimes this can be the more perfect mirror, the more resonant frequency.

The Limits of Sentimental Realism

And it is here that my two questions—how to represent the carceral state, and what to teach when everyone lives in it—begin to inform one another. It would be harsh, but not entirely inaccurate, to argue that American society has created a class of person who is consigned to live through certain extremes of deprivation and violence while progressive-minded people read and disseminate sentimental literary forms that impart to them the intensified feelings of extremity without exposing them to its dangers. (Perhaps it is right to say *us* here, rather than *them*.) It would be still harsher, though again not without a glimmer of truth, to make the same allegation against the whole project of prison education, with its heavy reliance on inspirational stories about incarcerated men performing Shakespeare and attaining moral uplift. Though such critiques are salutary to entertain, I continue to believe deeply in the twin projects of prison education and education about prisons. They are as urgent as any endeavor worth undertaking in the present.

But we ask both too much and too little of education in the fight against the carceral state and its economic allies. We ask too much in the sense that some people behave as if school and its adjacent fields will solve all our problems. Ideologically correct curricula in classrooms and at colleges, these people seem to think, will suffice to reshape the nation's mind and bend it toward justice. These people, usually themselves part of the educational system (or in related fields, like the arts), have a misplaced idea of education's power. There are many things it cannot achieve in the public sphere. By itself, it cannot change old laws or enforce new ones; it cannot redistribute capital in any meaningfully widespread way. I wish that some of the energy that went into reforming syllabi went instead into transforming the reprehensible behavior of corporations, banks, certain local governments and federal agencies, certain unions, and many other actors who disenfranchise poor people and people of color, and who hold up the carceral system in all of its ramifying branches. I sometimes despair that leftist activism's agon with education and the arts is actually a retreat from contesting the more intractable institutions that perpetuate inequality and racism and have so far refused to bow to any pressure to change their ways.

At the same time, we ask far too little of education, and have an impoverished sense of its importance in the fight for justice. The energy of education—whether in prisons or beyond—is stifled by a thick layer of sentimental piety, and the rhetoric surrounding education is enveloped by a certain *sentimental literary style*, born from, and reinforced by, the realist novel. It's a style possessed of an important political and aesthetic history. But confronted with recent crises, it has fallen into self-congratulation, impotent critique, and sententious admonishment.

Bourgeois realism (including many works written in that style by people who do not think of themselves as bourgeois) is of limited use in depicting the absurdity and cataclysmic immensity of the carceral system, to say nothing of the history that bred it. This realism is at least partly responsible for the present difficulties we have in translating a sentimental education into concrete political action.

It is not just that we teach literary works written in this particular sentimental style, and so impart its values. It is that we teach *everything* in a manner saturated by this style. The study of literature and the arts has become almost entirely a historical and sociological project. It seems to me that scholars learned how to do this from the novel (and all the forces swirling around its rise), and it therefore makes sense that the nineteenth-century novel remains (even more than the lyric poem) the defining genre of the academic humanities. The sentimental realist style is embarrassed by any appeal to an authority beyond the societal. James Baldwin diagnosed this, with his usual apocalyptic accuracy, as the problem of the "protest novel": "The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended." The sentimental realist style says we must analyze people, situations, stories, and artworks as embedded within a specific historical context. It says that this context is by far the most powerful element in our lives, and that therefore the only possible intervention that can be made in the world is to change the moral valence of the context itself, that is, to *reform* society.

Context is massively important, of course, but the sentimental worldview takes agency away from those trapped within the contexts of injustice and confers it only on those who can situate themselves beyond it. In other words, the sentimental style encourages top-down structural interventions by sufficiently educated and morally vetted actors motivated by notions of social (*merely* social) justice. Now, sometimes this style and the structural interventions it endorses have genuinely contributed to positive societal change, even if that change has not been as thoroughgoing as is sometimes claimed. (I think of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or *The Jungle*, or *Native Son*, or those masterpieces *Bleak House* and *Germinal*.) But the problem is that if such changes are delayed—or if they fail to occur at all—then the sentimental style breeds in its partisans an affected, stagnant, and superior outrage that goes nowhere and helps no one: "We know there must be reform, and our contribution to the cause will be to make known our indignation at those who don't acknowledge this fact." In his fearsome attack on the American protest novel from Stowe to Wright, James Baldwin once again exhumes the dead heart of the matter: "Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his

arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of a secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty.” It incidentally seems to me (and I think to Baldwin) that this style is more insidious, more prone to dishonesty, and therefore more dangerous, in “literary” works than in the more nakedly sentimental productions of mass culture.

The sentimental style demands structural change, but when a corrupted structure proves intractable, hard to describe, protean, inaccessible to rational analysis, and deeply entwined with everything that is comfortable and good in our lives, then the sentimental style can do nothing but click its tongue in disapproval. (Some might even argue for a reversed causality: that the style is adopted precisely so as to make doing nothing seem like the only option.) If ever there was a time when the carceral structure was all those things, it is definitely now. In the meantime, as sentiment treads water, other tools are thrown out of reach. The visionary, the ecstatic, the religious, the cosmic, the absurd, the chaotic—these deep sources of human power—are discouraged for being dangerous and irrational, or dismissed as mere ideological epiphenomena, or caramelized into a harmless Sunday-school piety. Academic leftists continue to lecture the world on how giving up the delusion of eternity is the only path toward social utopia, willfully blind to the fact that America is a nation whose struggle to bend toward justice owes an enormous debt to the Black Church, the Catholic Worker movement, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, the Transcendentalists, and the Great Awakenings. (And how much closer to justice would we be if we had not tried to destroy, and then subsequently sentimentalize, Native American religion, with its profound and often severe theories about the human relationship to this continent.) I cannot count the number of men and women I have met in prisons for whom religion, or even visionary mysticism, is no prudery or opiate, but rather the well of meaning, the source of life, of perseverance, of courage, of resistance. The sentimental style of bourgeois realism has little respect for these things, and it tries to hinder their becoming instruments of political change, for fear of their unseemliness and extremity.

I have recently heard of a juvenile detention center in the Bronx where the young men who have attained the highest marks for good behavior can work at a café within the facility walls. They train to be baristas and learn to make macchiatos and cappuccinos. It would be very easy to make a sentimental literary reading—even several—of this café. If you believed in capitalism, you might read it as a grand project of uplift, young men preparing a new life for themselves. If you didn’t, you might conceive of a protest novel in Baldwin’s sense, pitched as a critique of late capitalism: the young men are forced to surrender their dignity in order to work in the service economy of a New York City where all meaningful labor has been replaced by playgrounds of privilege. Neither of these readings is entirely wrong so far as they go, but they do not go very far. In offering rational explanations, both gloss over the true bizarreness of the situation. Some of these young men (all under 18) are facing ten-year sentences as they sprinkle cocoa powder on milk foam, and all of them are living a life between the espresso machine and the threat of serious violence on the tier. Furthermore, I am told by a teacher in the facility that the men involved in this café are immensely proud of what they’ve built. We must reckon with this last fact in good faith, yet without ignoring the devastating context in which this pride was formed: we cannot allow ourselves to gloss over the paradoxical tension between feeling and experience here if we are to grasp what is happening. The sentimental style commonly falls prey to two symmetrical mistakes, arranged on opposite sides of the ideological spectrum. As long as the disenfranchised do not revolt, it can say that either they are cheerfully on their way to being reformed, or they are simple-hearted prisoners of false consciousness. This is a hollow, demeaning binary, whose apparent oppositions in fact reinforce one another.

Myth Lessons

There are alternatives to the sentimental style all around us. The writer and prison educator Edyson Julio often says that Kafka is a great writer of the American ghetto. And there are American authors who have summoned, in bursts or even in whole books, the unforgiving intensity of myth to depict

the American project above and beyond mere sociological description: Baldwin, of course, William Faulkner, Ralph Ellison, Herman Melville, Cormac McCarthy, Toni Morrison, to name only a few. We need to learn afresh how to read them as more-than-realists, more-than-moralists, more-than-reformers, more-than-sociologists.

Even better would be to go to the source: to world mythology, and the oral literature in which it is most directly expressed. I think, for instance, of the central trickster figures in Native American mythology, Coyote and Raven. Their blundering, mad, greedy, destructive, lustful, gluttonous antics are as good a mirror as any I know for the representational (and actual) clusterfuck that is the year 2020. That these crazed carnivalesque jesters are also the bringers of balance and renewal—indeed, creators of the world—might offer some genuine philosophical hope for the future. How exciting it would be to see Native American storytellers take their rightful place as great and prophetic verbal artists of the American Canon. The twentieth century witnessed an incredible series of oral masters working in Indigenous languages: the Haida poet Gandll, the Tlingit storytellers Deikeenaak'w and Robert Zuboff, the Maidu master Hanc'ibyjim, the Kiksht teller Victoria Howard, and hundreds of others. To immerse ourselves in their stories might help us overcome one of our most dogged binaries, one that I, too, find my thinking trapped within: the binary of Modernity versus Everything Else. As we follow Coyote and Raven on their crazed paths, they might lead us to the medieval French Renart, to a renewed appreciation for Norse and Greek story, to contemporary reciters of the Mahabharata, to folktales and proverbs that arise in cities and factories and on the internet. It might even be possible to learn fresh historical and philosophical lessons about our present crisis from the spider Anansi and his sometime companion Adanko, the West African hare who crossed an ocean in a slave hold and became Br'er Rabbit. To borrow from Dipesh Chakrabarty, these crazed animal world-makers might provincialize Europe and enlarge the constrained modernity it birthed—constrained in its range of imaginative possibility, but also literally reliant on the prison and other institutions of constriction for its self-definition.

In the struggle to teach about and within the carceral state we need a change of style, a reorientation of mode, a refreshed approach to genre and therefore to narrative and knowing—an approach that stands a chance of undoing some of our present complacencies, and one that genuinely draws on the wisdom and force of cultures from around the world. Such a change must begin in the study of literature and art. If we were to take myth seriously in our classrooms, we might be able to recover a cosmic agency within narrative representation. This would be a complex and even risky project. Myth is a form of representation that makes claims on reality itself, and lacks the shield of the counterfactual: to declare something “a novel” or “a work of fiction” somewhat insulates it from responsibility for consequences in the world. Myth, on the other hand, is certain about its responsibilities in the world, and therefore does not know the dishonesty of sentiment, how sentiment cleaves heart from hand and refuses to cop to the deed. Myth's certainty can be used for many purposes, beneficial or damaging, and we must learn to deploy it carefully. But the problem now is precisely that our sanctioned forms of narrative representation have been stripped of consequence (allowing other forms, like global conspiracy theories, to run rampant). No surprise then that our professional makers of narrative and our professional teachers of narrative have lost society's respect.

To enter into myth as a mode of thought, most literature scholars would have to change what they do, and what they teach. They would have to recover the folkloric and mythic elements already present in European, Euro-American, and African American culture, and move beyond their narrowly sociological and historiographical methods. They would have to learn other stories and other conventions; they would have to take orality and oral tradition seriously; and they would have to make a sincere study of the world's non-imperial languages, like those of Indigenous America, the Pacific Islands, or of sub-Saharan Africa.

To say again, there is much in realism and the sociological method it engendered that should be admired, and retained. But they are not enough. We need to embrace other modes for the future of narrative, and for the future of education in literature and the arts. The mode we eventually find will not be a mere imitation of anything that has come before, but it must have a foundation in forms that

are available to us now. Myth makes an awesome claim about the purchase a narrative might have on the shape of reality. We would do well to investigate and teach this claim, to see if we can forge narratives of such consequence going forward. They will be needed if we want to meet the future as agents, and not merely as critics blinded by our own inconsequential tears.

Wherever We Are Gathered

The Black Arts School and its afterlives
Joshua Bennett

I've come to understand what people in power have long known—education can be used both to oppress and to liberate. Ideas are indeed powerful things. I further came to understand that America's colonization of Blacks employed the textbook as often as the bullet.

—William H. Watkins

I had proposed that the task of Black Studies, together with those of all the other New Studies that had also entered academia in the wake of the 1960s uprisings, should be that of rewriting knowledge.

—Sylvia Wynter

1. The Dilemma

One of the more difficult parts of raising a Black child in the United States of America—and it bears mentioning from the beginning that the joys are innumerable—is the question of where they will go to school. Most of us know, through both memory and a wealth of empirical data testifying to this difficult truth, that the classroom is a battleground. It is a site of suffering. It is, in the first instance, a space wherein our hair, our diction, our social practices and modes of cognition are denigrated as a matter of institutional mission and everyday protocol. The Black aesthetic tradition, in one sense, is a single front in an ongoing war against this and other forms of asymmetrical violence against our children. In the poems and plays, stories and essays, we are mapping out a set of alternatives. Another world, another way that things might eventually be if we are brave.

My wife and I recently welcomed a baby boy. My days are thus filled with impossible figures, vexed remembrances. I think of my nephew, Miles, told at nine years old that his now hip-length locs were a *distraction*; that he made his teachers, most of them white, feel threatened, incompetent, small. I think of myself in 1993, almost his age, overhearing a kindergarten teacher telling my parents that I would never function in a classroom. The stories, the data sets, are more than familiar. I keep the relevant charts and graphs at hand. I know their truth in a place where no one can steal it. I hear a colleague from Princeton mention a Pan-African homeschool that meets via Zoom; boys and girls across the country greeting one another each morning, a new collectivity born in the midst of converging pandemics—both COVID-19 and global anti-Blackness, that age-old ecological catastrophe. In quiet moments, I envision the invincible beauty of this gathering. I feel the strength of everything the world can't take away anyway come back to me. In a flash, it is as the old saints say: *I feel like going on*. My dreams drift to other such social experiments throughout the history of Black people in the Americas. I was raised uptown, so Harlem, naturally, is the first place that comes to mind; 125th street and all that we built there, however briefly. How this too has been my son's inheritance since the day he arrived. A legacy of freedom struggle and indomitable splendor, unfettered dreaming in the face of brutality beyond measure. And a love that makes such living, such abiding courage at the edge of life itself, worthwhile.

2. The Flag

The second page of the 4 May 1965 edition of *Challenge*, the then-weekly newspaper produced by the Progressive Labor Party, tells the story of this photograph in miniature. The title of the article is “Black Arts School Set,” and it details—in cramped space, to be sure, but with vigor and a muted though unflinching optimism—the opening of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre School (BARTS) at 109 West 130th Street, on April 30th of that same year. The article describes an entire week of community events: a reading featuring LeRoi Jones—who in the course of the next three years will change his name to Amiri Baraka—Ishmael Reed, and Larry Neal; a jazz concert; a panel on “The Black Artist and Revolution,” which was to include Cecil Taylor, Selma Sparks, and Harold Cruse, among others; a production of Jones’s play *The Toilet*, and, of course, the parade featured in this image, which was led by none other than the Albert Ayler Quartet, Jones, and Sun Ra’s legendary experimental jazz collective, The Arkestra. The final line of the article reads, “Everyone was invited to join the opening weekend activities,” and it was precisely this spirit of welcoming and collective endeavor that characterized the early life of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre School, a spirit that is captured in the grainy exuberance of this image of their inaugural public event, this festival to let folks know that a new way of reading the Word and the World had arrived. Put another way, this is a photograph of two Black human beings carrying a flag down 125th Street years before Whole Foods or Starbucks will indelibly mark the street as a sad casualty of our ever-shortening collective memory, of this warp-speed rendition of modernity in which any revolutionary figure’s legacy must contend with the strength and outsize influence of late capital’s invective against remembrance.

At its very core after all, Black Art—as Jones and his comrades defined it—demands that we remember. Over and against the myriad temptations of an implicitly *presentist* US American cultural milieu, the vision of Black Arts embodied in this moment of marching is a call back to a much longer tradition: one of Black marshals and majors and bearers of banners of nations that live only in the freedom dreams of the marginalized. The flags of nations that have never existed and are yet to come. A captive nation *within* a nation. Or, *a Nation on no map*, if you prefer Gwendolyn Brooks’s approach. Or the America Langston Hughes calls into being in the fourteenth stanza of his classic poem, “Let America Be America Again”: *The land that has never been yet—And yet must be.*

Although BARTS existed for only a year, it had a meaningful impact on the arts landscape of its day. In this sense, it stands as a historical monument to what I would like to imagine here as a kind of *Black temporality*. Black life as measured not in minutes but moments, Black social life itself an everyday, ongoing set of practices and protocols rooted in the fact that we all ultimately lose what we love, and thus must embrace loss and love not as antipodal, irreconcilable forces, but as irreducibly bound up with one another, entangled as the individual obsidian coils of a baby cousin’s braid, or the internal wiring of a microphone on a makeshift stage from which that child will recite an ode to their neighborhood corner—Lenox or Nostrand or King’s Boulevard—at the very top of their dark and holy voice, as if it were the most urgent news any listening audience could imagine, or else a trumpet to signal the end of the present world and the arrival of another. BARTS comes to us in the present, then, not as an institutional failure in any traditional sense, but instead as an unbound, unbroken meditation on how we might plan outside of the easy binary of success and failure in any terms we might easily recognize within our present order, constrained as it is by the sort of *cruel optimism*, *pace* Lauren Berlant, that warps our ability to see the successful school as one in which the children play, grow, learn on and in their own terms. BARTS attracted artists such as Albert Ayler, Sun Ra, and Sonia Sanchez as teachers, and ultimately left an impact in the collective imaginations of both the young people of Harlem whom it immediately served and countless other programs throughout the country.

The man holding the left side of the flag is LeRoi Jones. Today, he is wearing sunglasses and a jacket made of military canvas. The flag reads *The Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School*. A small procession follows the flag and the men who hold its body as it is carried toward West 130th Street. What does this particular flag make possible? What does it gesture toward or concretize? The symbol on the front

of the banner is blurred into obscurity, though we know from archival sources that it is a pair of masks meant to stand in for the dramatic arts: one representing comedy, the other tragedy. Seen at a distance, through the cloud of possibilities that this blurring makes available, one can imagine the silhouette of a student, a pirate, a warrior, some rebel or outlaw figure behind each mask, a fugitive with his mind on a different world. *The literate slave as the fugitive slave*. The acquisition of knowledge as the means through which one might steal (themselves) away.

3. The Figure

How might we think of BARTS then not as a singular, isolated event—lightning in a brownstone, as it were—but simply as a nodal point in a much broader constellation of fugitive projects operating under the aegis of what we might call the *Black School* as an alternative site of social life? A countervailing force to the brutal reality of what Jarvis Givens has termed the *American School*: an institutional mechanism through which some of the most violent whims of the settler imagination are instantiated and ingrained. Black drama as the aestheticization of a communal impulse toward the creation of other worlds. The Black School as a *figure*, of which BARTS was merely a short-lived, though nonetheless influential, concrete exemplar. The Black School *as such* as the institutional arm of a much larger historical impetus anchored in the pursuit of Black freedom and human dignity. One immediately thinks of the classic line from Carter G. Woodson on this front: *There would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom*.

In addition to core classes in acting and poetry, BARTS also offered courses with titles such as Business Machines, Clerical Job Training, Cultural Philosophy, Dance, Cinema, Music, Political Science, Psychology of Migration, and Social History of the West. Spanning an entire range of methods and disciplinary formations, the Black Arts Repertory Theatre School course catalogue makes clear, in one sense, that Jones's vision of what comprised a sound *anti-colonial education* was quite unorthodox. The BARTS curriculum also included a course in Remedial Reading and Mathematics, an entry which, to my mind, clarifies more completely the stakes and aims of the school itself. The goal was not solely to train a cadre of revolutionary artists, but to prepare a generation of young people with every instrument they might need to flourish in an anti-Black world. The aim was a robust liberal arts education with an emphasis on the unheralded peoples of the planet Earth, and the cultivation of not only what Jones then termed "socially responsible" citizens of "the ghetto," but of Black people everywhere. Jones's revolutionary vision was one in which the seemingly permanent Black American underclass would find both the necessary psychic instruments to sustain themselves against white supremacist ideology and the everyday skills needed to feed themselves. The school's broader purpose was essentially inextricable from that of the Black Arts Movement: to encourage a socially relevant set of Black aesthetics that would further build up the global struggle against anti-Black ideology. The theater and school passionately advocated for African diasporic art in all its myriad forms, with dance recitals, poetry readings, visual art shows, and new dramas created by the instructors.

The troupe brought the theater arts into the local community through a number of divergent means, including a vehicle that Jones famously dubbed the Jazzmobile. Instructors from the school would drive the Jazzmobile up and down 130th Street, often enlisting Black youths from the neighborhood to serve as library assistants, teaching assistants, stagehands, and maintenance workers. These young people would eventually teach these crafts to children even younger than they were, creating, in their own way, a tradition within a tradition, a legacy of apprenticeship and childhood collaboration that would remain, no matter the fate of any individual building or community institution. BARTS also brought the theater to the community by putting up improvised stages in playgrounds, parks, in empty parking lots, and on street corners. Anywhere the people were gathered, they showed up and showed out.

Funding from Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, a local social activism organization in turn funded by the US government's Office of Economic Opportunity, provided much of BARTS's support early on. In the end, having so much of their financing tied to this single source would help contribute to

the school's tragic demise. BARTS was founded with the help of a \$40,000 antipoverty grant, and eventually, following a concerted disinformation campaign by a network of concerned white citizens in varied positions of social and political power, controversy erupted over such a flagrantly *anti-American*—at least in the minds of the school's detractors—use of public funds. In his autobiography, Jones remembers the problem beginning when he denied Sargent Shriver, the head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, entry into the BARTS building while school was in session. On 30 November 1965, an Associated Press release accused the group of anti-white racism, claiming that its productions supported secession and portrayed the general white American populace in a negative light. Several other published articles claimed that BARTS employed members of “Black terrorist groups” such as the Five Percenters, going so far as to cite the theology of the sect at length in print. The public outcry culminated in an armed police raid on the brownstone building that resulted in several arrests and reportedly uncovered firearms, drugs, bomb materials, and an underground gun range. A number of representatives from Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited and other antipoverty programs defended the school's activities, going so far as to argue that young people in danger of criminal involvement were, in actuality, the very individuals the programs were intended to help. Despite these efforts, public funding all but disappeared. This absence of cash on hand, coupled with a number of internal disputes among the faculty and the exit of Jones, saw the collapse of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre School around that same time.

Or, at least, this is the most familiar rendition of the story. But what if there were another rendition of the BARTS creation myth available to us, calling out from the gaps in the historical record? What version of this tale lives on in the darkness? In spaces unattended to or altogether obscured from view? It is my sense that the most compelling, complete versions of this tragedy have yet to be told. Ones that can only be approached by reassembling the fragments and shards left in the wake of the school's untimely implosion. Such a project is beyond the scope of the present essay. But one such fragment deserves at least a preliminary look for everything it might potentially reveal about the rise and fall of BARTS: the organization's FBI file.

4. The File

The FBI case file on BARTS is over 140 pages long, but even a relatively small cross-section conveys several core elements of the story. From its very inception, BARTS was infiltrated by agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and kept under heavy surveillance by the agency, largely for fear that it was secretly a front for the Progressive Labor Party. And yet, rather surprisingly, given what we now know about the role of government agencies in the covert annihilation of Black social and political organizations of all kinds, the FBI was not the sole author of the school's destruction. Once it was discovered that BARTS was not, in actuality, a front of any kind, but rather an organization committed to providing educational opportunities for underserved youth in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the country, the surveillance concluded. The agents were removed. And the school shut down anyway.

The affective through-line of the FBI files—though the tone is, unsurprisingly, rather muted throughout—is one of both requisite suspicion and genuine surprise. Various out-of-context BARTS pamphlet passages on the teaching of Black Art as a mystical practice, for example, are no doubt meant to signal for readers at the bureau the sense that they are dealing not with any *revolutionary* sect in the way they have been trained to understand such a term, but an organization whose central principles are countercultural along an entirely different vector. Page after page, agents describe in great detail an organization energized primarily by its radical pedagogy and loving relationship to Harlem, but always existing at the precipice of destruction given its relationship to financial support from outside the neighborhood. Though their aim—as stated clearly by both Black writers of the time and later scholars such as William J. Maxwell—was to upend the organization, and not merely monitor or oversee it, aspects of the file tell a story marked not just by internal struggle but also by dazzling flashes of pedagogical breakthrough.

This atmosphere of surveillance—the sense that the window of opportunity for this particular revolutionary project was closing for the students and teachers involved, or else would actively, forcefully, be closed for them before long—was no doubt a contributing factor in the collapse of the school. But there were a number of other elements as well, not the least of which was a clash between Baraka, Harold Cruse, and a host of newcomers around how best to guide the institution into the future. In Cruse’s own words, the school was taken over by a group who “destroyed [it] from the inside” and eventually “forced out everyone else who would not agree with their mystique.”

In the present, we would do well to continue the study of the life cycles of revolutionary projects like BARTS. Such study might yield important lessons for arts spaces and organizations that have likewise set their sights on the transformation of the present milieu through the cultivation of revolutionary ideas, and the empowerment, through the singular power of performance, of the narratively condemned peoples all over the globe. In this sense, the institutional history of BARTS serves as powerful historical example and cautionary tale. Especially for those who likewise imagine Black poetics, Black Art, as a kind of collective incantation, a poetics and a praxis *made to the measure of the world*.

33. A Half Revolution: Making Sense of EDSA '86 and Its Failures

Deleted reason: not anarchist

Author: Allen Severino

Authors: A Half Revolution: Making Sense of EDSA '86 and Its Failures

Topics: after the revolution, reformism, Bourgeois ideology, Philippines

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Notes: This is originally published in Esquire as a sort of a critical retrospect on the EDSA Revolution from a perspective that it has failed to deliver anything or everything, aside from the return of the status quo. For all intents and purposes, we can say that EDSA is nothing more but a conservative restoration. It hides itself in a progressive veneer from time to time, while justifying the repressions and atrocities that its agents have committed against the people in the name of its ideals.

“Citizens, do you want a revolution without a revolution?”

This stirring provocation was delivered by the French revolutionary Maximilien Robespierre before the National Convention in 1792. Both adored and reviled, he stood as the apostle of a defining moment in European history, which saw the unraveling and the destruction of feudal ties and absolute monarchies based on divine exegeses. Whatever opinions that we may have on this figure, whether he was a dedicated servant of the cause of mankind, or its worst tyrant, is pedantic and irrelevant. What is at stake here is this flash of insight: Revolutions are not designed to only last a fortnight.

This was perhaps the greatest tragedy of the so-called EDSA Revolution of 1986. The hagiographers of the moment, stating that there was no seizure or force involved in deposing a decaying and byzantine autocracy, had embellished the affair as a “bloodless uprising.” Understandably, this hagiography would carry itself into great heights, and EDSA would be cited as the impetus of the Autumn of Nations that characterized the late 1980s: a massive show of global resentment and disapproval of the regimes of power that trampled on basic humanity. Unsurprisingly, the collapse of the Iron Curtain, and the Soviet Union itself, can be only interpreted in an angle that involved EDSA: It is a testament of democracy, or in the words of Bill Clinton, of freedom against fanaticism.

But is it really?

Fast forward to 2021, we cringe at these episodes of “victories”—of victories contra totalitarianism, of victories against oppression, of victories against dictatorships. We no longer share the exaltations or the mutterings of the pundits and journalists of the past 30 years or so. One by one, individuals and groups are beginning to realize that their liberation from the supposed domination of one system would only pave the way for another. This can be said of the fate of the Philippines that is anchored to this single celebration.

In 1987, just barely a year after this so-called bloodless uprising, the deputies and constables of the state had opened fire on the peasant farmers in Mendiola, culminating into a massacre. Almost immediately, the defenders of these actions would justify the response as a fight against communism. Isn't communism, the bogeyman that was paraded in propaganda, the worst of all repressions? Ironically, communism in the Philippines would not be reviled as it is now had the government recognized it and its supporters as early as 1946. But no, the money from the War Reparations was too tempting to be resisted, and the delegates of the populist-socialist Democratic Alliance were excluded, inaugurating an unnecessary ongoing conflict that has killed thousands of lives, all in the name of the fat-cat barons, kingpins, and banks.

The same justifications would be recycled over and over in the succeeding years and decades. The so-called promises of the state on upholding basic services, providing welfare, and altering the status quo have melted as quickly as they were scrapped. Political dynasties are still here, because as one framer of the Constitution would put it, banning political dynasties is against the principles of having everyone run for public office. This same framer would be against it because she has a relative working in the National Economic Development Agency of the first Aquino regime. These, and other ridiculous excuses can be found at the very Constitution that this “revolution” had birthed: a document that merely added flowery prose here and there, while keeping the order of things untouched. For some reason or another, the supporters of this document have delivered nothing, and one can even conclude that the Commission that was drafted was a sham.

EDSA '86 In 2021

A generation since this mess is a generation wherein apathy and cynicism have become rife. This is a part of a global shift: In the age of no ideologies (since liberalism is the hegemonic way for us on doing things), everything must be obscured and sanitized. Politics is a game of management. Economists are upgraded to technocrats. Social activism reduced to sloganeering, of incremental acts similar to a bunch of customers threatening to speak to the manager. The spectrum across all persuasions settled down and told themselves that there is no alternative from this current option. Corporate social responsibility is more doable than raising the minimum wage. The only concern we have is inclusivity in corporate boardrooms. Our professional and existing selves have merged to facilitate the needs of HR. And so, they rested on their laurels.

In retrospect, this “pragmatism” was a total and absolute catastrophe. No longer having principles or any shred of responsibility to its people, the ruling classes all over the globe would parrot that they are here to protect us from our nightmares, the lurking unknown in which extremism and barbarism are rife. The War on Terror is still ongoing, the two economic crashes of this century have made prospects worse for everybody, and in general, the outlook that we have is bleak. The populist reaction would be one of the anti-theses that offered a liberation and a silver bullet to our inaction, and hence its traction. But overall, it had mixed results: for any system that limits itself in perpetual reforms will find itself petered out and alone. Our nationalism that was previously esteemed within and without has morphed into a mélange of frustrations and a huge dash of inferiority complex. As Pinoy Pride, our opium wanes on its effectiveness, the frustration that we have has turned into rage, confusion, and despair.

These disappointments cannot be blamed on EDSA as an event alone. But EDSA did play a role of introducing an impotent program of the most vapid of reformisms. Looking closely at what we have as a government, we can say that this is the logical conclusion of the underwhelming presidency of its immediate predecessor. The man was elected in a gasp of a breath by the people for emancipation, bolstered by the passing of its icon. But what it accomplished was to destroy the hopes and dreams of many. It therefore makes sense that this regime would be upended by a president and a cabinet that displayed open disregard for the hypocrisies that it inherited.

Time and time again, what the Marcoses are doing is not historical revisionism: It is denial, the denial of their atrocities. Revisionism is a terrible choice of describing their acts, because history’s praxis will be always the stories or narratives that we tell to ourselves, and we alter those stories either because of new evidence or the order that benefits from it. The popularity of Marcos-stoked conspiracies, like its version of history, should and must be viewed from an existential aspect. Their resonance is a confirmation of a nation in despair, and having no vision aside from what is presented to us, we retreat to the phantasms of the past glories, even if they are no glories at all.

We have this feeling of dread in our hearts and minds. We have this undercurrent of trying to just make ourselves disappear. In the age of isolation caused by this pandemic, it is a sentiment that is echoed and murmured. We are at a crossroads, and as long as we continue to uphold a half-revolution,

all efforts will come into naught. The ghosts of the past will continue to reign, and we shall continue to amuse ourselves and numb our pain. If this process goes on without interruptions, the road to purgatory is just around the corner. And that road will be our graveyard; it is the betrayal of the ancestors who fought and died in this soil of ours.

Which way do we go now, Philippines?

34. Pushed by the Violence of Our Desires

Deleted reason: not anarchist

Author: Anonymous

Authors: Anonymous

Topics: anarcha-feminism, feminism, 1970s

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Notes: Notes from the zine: This piece was written anonymously. Published in *Italian Feminist Thought: A Reader*, 1991, edited by Paola Bonno, Sandra Kemp. Thanks & love to Yadira and “the team”.

You’re asking me about woman today as a militant in fighting units. I can’t tell you anything based on personal experience, because I have never belonged to any armed organizations. But I can tell you about some of the things I’ve thought about over the past few years, starting with my work in prison, relationships I developed inside, my knowledge of some fighting units right from their very beginnings, and my being a little more aware as a woman.

Are men and women driven differently to take up arms in order to change the world? Put like that the question is ridiculous. It depends what level of motivation we are talking about. The conscious motives are the same, obviously, the political analysis, revolutionary perspective and so on. The individual motives of character and personal history are infinite, and naturally have nothing to do with the sex of the person. And yet a collective female unconscious exists, and so perhaps there are profound motivations specific to the fact of our being women, which can become channeled into the armed struggle.

Perhaps it’s our relationship with reality. We have a relationship with reality that is simultaneously concrete and fantastic. Men have a relationship which is abstract and rational. I’m not speaking about any man or any woman in particular, but things which have settled into our unconscious down the ages and which we have to get to grips with, even if to rebel against them. Man organizes reality into rational patterns, and superimposes a whole lot of other ideal patterns by which he can modify reality. So he chooses a strategy for struggle based on abstract but precise political considerations. Women on the other hand have always been used to being practical and, the other side of the coin, to creating fantasies. We are used to small, daily, concrete acts which visibly and immediately modify reality. At home we wash, iron, clean up, cook. But even in areas of work which are traditionally our preserve we are not the ones to produce ideas or plans; rather, we carry them out, we translate male plans into concrete terms. It is precisely this ant- like concreteness which brings into being our grasshopper-like imagination, our dimension of fantasy. It’s a reaction, a secret and private revenge, proof of our own worth. We don’t think the transformation of the world comes about by synthesis, by rational analysis of forces or whatever. We actually imagine the new world in a fundamentally analytical way, and we start with the particular: it means not being afraid to go out at night, it means discovering a new dignity, it means being able to contemplate the future of our handicapped child without terror ... We are talking here about a different mental process.

The duality of our relationship with reality can also carry us towards armed struggle, especially after so many years of disorientation. We want to see practical results, we think it’s possible to go beyond the abstraction of round- table politics, we want to see some concrete action. The urge to construct forms of action for ourselves is sometimes very strong, since we’ve had to put up with so many years of empty speeches. And imagination? It helps us to bear the clash with reality; in this case it helps us to avoid seeing what we don’t want to see. Certainly it slips into and supports fanaticism. But men become fanatical under the yoke of their ideological schemas while we, more often than not, are driven by the violence of our dreams.

Assuming that everything I've said so far hasn't been completely wide of the mark, perhaps we can begin to see why it is that when there is an armed struggle going on women, both past and present, have always proved such good material to work with, have been so invaluable as organizers, providing an irreplaceable, concrete network of support

I'll say it again; I'm not talking about individual choices or circumstances, but about something inside us which sooner or later, in one way or another, will always come out; it is something very ancient which comes from way back, even beyond our lives, something that you feel as a memory, even as a child.

I remember when I worked a number of years ago in a support group for the Algerian National Liberation Front. I remember feeling useful and important because I worked as driver, interpreter, secretary to the comrades, or because they sent me to buy a car or pick up a cache of rifles. I was satisfied because I was doing things, even if it was never me who took decisions, even if I barely knew what was going on. The Algerian revolution was round the corner, and that was enough for me. I just imagined the revolution, when it would happen, and I thought of it as a big party, a little sad maybe but wonderful, and at the end of it the comrades would invite me too, because after all I too ... and I would go to Algeria with all its red flags and music, the hugs and the frenzy to begin building up again, and love which would find its place there ... how often did I lovingly imagine the scene ... and instead what happened? After the revolution, which found itself somewhat betrayed, our comrades all went off to Cabilia to wage a bit of civil war; all in the nick or killed; no party. I never got to Algeria and who knows what is left inside me from that period of my life; something is left, certainly, but not what I imagined then.

Certainly, I saw the birth of the NAP¹. Since I took part in the prisoners' movement, I could see it coming. A long time ago it was possible to talk to some comrades from NAP. I was desperately opposed to their plans, and I did everything I could to convince them. What a ridiculous word, "convince"! Many of them are dead and live on in my memory like brothers. They were men, I don't recall any women coming in at the start of NAP from the prisoners' movement; any that there were — and I never met any of them — came from abroad.

Now it's common knowledge that the embryonic political movement of the detainees found a detonator in 1968 and the following years, when so many comrades were coming and going from jail; from that ferment of activity sprang the Rome prison collective, the prison commission Lotta Continua and other groups dotted around.

What was not clear at the time to those of us who worked on the outside was why comrades in jail felt the need to join together even over objectives which were "modest" or "reductive" as Lotta Continua liked to put it: the right to vote, for example, the right to one's sexuality in prison, the abolition of censorship of the post and the newspapers, the abolition of criminal records, compulsory call-ups and so on. Too many of us thought the revolution was going to happen the next day; for people who had to get through on average ten years inside, these issues raised a lot of hopes destined to be brutally disappointed when finally they got out, with no job, no arms and perhaps repatriation papers in their hand. Then Lotta Continua went in for some self-criticism, changed its political strategy and finished up dissolving the prison commission. But in the meantime the repression inside had got very heavy, and the growth of the movement had a logic of its own, which allowed it to ignore the directives of the organizations; it was easy to foresee a bit of a reaction, a bit of adventurism.

I remember Sergio, who got out of prison when he was 17 and turned up at my house. He had always been a thief and when he was of an age to be convicted he'd been put inside. He was a street-kid from Naples who at the time only spoke dialect. His eyes were shy and watchful, as he tried to work out quickly and infallibly whether he could love and trust people or not. He wanted to make spaghetti, he was kind to my parents, he greedily read everything he could lay his hands on, he listened, he asked questions, he was always in a hurry, a damnable but very understandable hurry. Once I told him the

¹ Nuclei Armati Proletari — Proletarian Armed Nuclei

famous sentence “the fundamental qualities of a revolutionary are irony and patience”, and he smiled: “Must have been a bourgeois, that one.” He went to work as a bodyguard for Sofri: “I’d die for him”, he used to tell me. Instead he got himself killed with the NAP, together with Luca Mantini, in the shooting at Piazza Alberti, Florence, in 1974.

There are several reasons for the late birth of the female protest movement, which is still very sporadic if you don’t count the women in the fighting units. The first might seem banal, but in 1969 there were no female comrades going into prison, and so it was difficult to make contacts. Who with? How could we be at all sure of them? Another reason is women’s passivity, what I call our “inner prison”, the need for chains, the desire for expiation which all of us have inside us in one way or another, because sacrifice is ingrained in our existence, ingrained in our history over the centuries. This need to give without sparing ourselves, and to pay for it at the same time, to pay a very high price, almost religiously, is not an illness; it’s a way, however twisted it might be, of somehow legitimizing ourselves, as if only by expiating both our sins and those of others can we win, I don’t know, the right to be loved, liked, considered, in other words some kind of reflected identity. Women are extraordinarily resigned to the organization of prison correction. Sometimes I’ve even heard them taking pleasure in it, like some kind of self-flagellation: “It serves me right, it’s right like this, I have to pay for my mistakes...” and so on. This never happens among men. All us women have within us a sense of sacrifice as normality, which has taken root within us. Besides, this prison masochism is not really any worse than the other kinds of masochism of the women “outside”, who excel in building themselves horrific cages in which they can suffer and which it takes them a lifetime, if ever, to get out of. And all this goes for me too, for example.

In prison there are women detained for crimes which their men committed. Unlike their male comrades, women don’t get together on the basis of politics, or games, or gangs. Instead they go to mass, they take communion, each of them believes she is a case apart, and that her fate may be very unfortunate, but it is hers alone. They don’t think of breaking the rules collectively, on the whole they accept their sentences, deep down they are on the side of those who punish them. They are in a state of monstrous insecurity. This is something of what I mean by an “inner prison”.

When the prisoners’ movement was born, we tried to establish contacts with the women detainees. The first link in the chain was a woman who had been a prostitute and who had had enormous difficulties, but was not altogether unaware of the political implications of her condition. Through her we began the usual contacts: books, letters, discussion of the news, the search for a possible future platform for struggle ... but we found ourselves in the role of patronesses, which they made us play, asking us for money, recommendations, information on the private life of someone or other. We never got away from just two main tracks, one of which was spending a huge and frustrating amount of energy only to feel like a Lady of San Vincenzo, the other becoming indoctrinators, following a political line such as “Come here, dear comrade, you don’t know anything and I’ll explain everything to you.”

Those women had no major part to play in their lives, and they were especially impervious to what we thought should have been their “logical” rebellion. Yet if we had thought about it a little more instead of just giving up, we would have understood something not only about them but about ourselves. It’s very difficult to uncover the real source of rebellion in a woman, and it’s true that when you find it you have no need to nourish it; it’s like a fire which is more violent the deeper it goes. It doesn’t need to be nourished, as we naively thought following the models which the male prisons had imposed on us, by reasoning, short programmes to follow, righteous indignation over the speculation on the cost of food. The questions which we should have been asking both them and ourselves were much older than that: why am I writing to you? Why am I your sister? Who are you? What do you still want to do with your life? What can you still do with it? Is it right to experience love the way you (or I) have experienced it? Perhaps there is some other way ... there has to be some other way ... and what is this love anyway? What are you sure of in your life? Is there a free zone or have you too never managed to say “Now, that’s it”? Or perhaps you were too scared and so you lived in the dim shadow of received truths, then you found yourself here and you marked out your monstrous little refuge with its curtains and Saint

Theresa on the wall and the doll lying on the straw? So many other questions and missed opportunities! It seems to me now that this was the way not only to release energy and radical feeling in women inside, but also to recognize them in us, which we always need to do.

As for the other women, the ones in the armed struggle, it's a completely different matter, and they should talk about it for themselves. I believe that all differences disappear: you are not there, you're neither a man nor a woman, you are the struggle, you are one with it. You become the task, the function, the signal. What counts is the integrity of the group, its material and affective cohesiveness. And this seems only right when you are tied together not only by faith, by complicity, by fear, but also by the monstrous sacrifice of having to watch your comrades die. I also believe that if you go down that road, it's the first step that decides everything; after that "you are on a path with only one possible direction."

35. Black liberal, your time is up

Deleted reason: not anarchist

Subtitle: Yes, tell the world that we are fed up. But, Black liberal, know that we are finished with you, too.

Author: Yannick Giovanni Marshall

Topics: George Floyd uprising, black liberation, anti-liberalism

Date: 1 Jun 2020

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/6/1/black-liberal-your-time-is-up/>

As you ready yourself to attempt to hijack the work of radicals, to go undercover dressed in our clothes and slip into the crowd pretending that you were always there and that you are us, know that we see you. Even now, as you are preparing your watered-down Black Lives Matter syllabi and your “Hope and the Black Spring in the Time of Corona” book manuscripts, which are by now ready for press, filled as they are with the same dimly lit, unimaginative pablum about “improving race relations”, feel-good “anti-racism”, and “ways to move forward”. We see you. We know why you have come.

You are here to translate an uprising. You are here to show your black skin so that you can claim the mantle of authority on anti-Blackness that white liberals have bestowed upon you. You are here to sit at their pundit tables, before their cameras. Your face beaming across the world as it provides the safest possible interpretation of a revolution in order to police its possibilities and pave over the threat of abolition with as mild and ineffective a reform as possible.

Although uprisings are spearheaded by radicals, we are shut out of the public discussion. Neither the Black radical, nor Black radical thought is given air time. Instead, we are forced to endure being talked about and having the revolution we fought for be defused and repackaged to be palatable to a white liberal audience.

We see you gearing up for your mission. You will not be able to blend into the crowd this time.

No interpretation of a revolution is needed. Its commentators should not be the people who yesterday were only too happy to sit at the table with white nationalists and who took smiling pictures with the “good police”.

It cannot be narrated by the same people who – alongside their white liberal colleagues – jump Black radicals, beating us down with tired Martin Luther King Jr quotes in an attempt to discipline our anger and fix the boundaries of our action. Not by the same people who spew King at every opportunity, wielding him as a cudgel against those whom they have trained in the belief that King is king and his word is law.

It is a cult of King sustained, on the one hand, by the power of white liberal media, schools and corporate offices that have bled him of what little anti-colonialism he had in order to parade him for their purposes, and on the other hand, by the effective silencing of his contemporaries and his contemporary critics.

We have had to endure the silencing of people like Kwame Ture, who said, “In order for nonviolence to work, your opponent has to have a conscience. The United States has no conscience.” We have endured the silencing of people like Assata Shakur, who said, “Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them.”

You have not only been complicit in the silencing of the radicals, but by hogging the mic and having the prerogative on how Black struggle is spoken of and its history remembered, you have engineered it. Even as our people are permanently incarcerated or are made refugees and hunted, they die a second death in your willful amnesia.

Black radical critics have proven to be right although you would not know it by how little their names are known and how little room you have given them. Get off the mic and give it to the people. Get off the platform and out of the newsroom. Your time is up.

For far too long, Black liberal, you have been allowed to domesticate Black radicalism. Because our oppressors prefer you to us and at any sign of trouble, rush out to find you to speak on behalf of all Black people, you have eagerly taken the chance to hog all of the mics and silence us. You weaken our revolt with your narration.

We know that even now you are preparing to invade us with your linked arms performing that played out “we shall overcome” nonsense in order to reframe destruction in the colony and of the civil order as a quest for policy changes.

You have come to firehose the fire in our uprising while pretending to be angrier and more rebellious than the rebels. As if it were not just yesterday that you were standing shoulder to shoulder with police and politicians begging for calm and agreeing that this is sad.

We know that by the immensity of your power and the relative strength of your megaphones you will have some successes in the coming fraud. But no matter how well you carve and gut this revolution and lay its skin on your face as your mask, we will still see you.

We know that when we say abolish prisons and police you will intercede on behalf of the state and white power with your deliberate mistranslation saying we asked for “less harsh sentences and more trust between the police and Black community.”

When we say we want this thing over with, you will say we want “change”.

When we say this white supremacist settler-colony has anti-Blackness in its DNA and is incapable of providing any adequate liberation you say, “America is failing Black people”.

We say we want to get out of here. You ask “how do we move forward?” As if we do not hear in your tone the hope that all this “unrest” can be quelled and we can move quietly onto the next killing.

You insist on mistranslating us.

Black liberal, your time is up. You have held the mic for too long. Give the mic to any random protester on the street. Any one of them will have something more insightful and analytically sound to say than you do. When you dress up in clothes with our slogans and go on TV all you do is cry. What are you crying about? I cannot remember the last time I have smiled so much.

You have been smiling too long with our oppressors. There is no reason to cry when the resistance comes out. We would have thought you would be ecstatic, all you who have professed to be interested in change.

You who would speak lovingly of the English peasants of 1381 who, torch in hand, emerged from the ruins of the Black Death to burn the property of the ruling classes in the hope of emancipating themselves. But now, when Black people who are forced to witness themselves publicly hunted and tortured to death on a weekly basis rise up, you attempt to coax them away from their cigarette lighters.

When the Target starts burning down, the Black liberal will fight harder to put it out than its owners. But as Malcolm X said: “You had another Negro out in the field. The house Negro was in the minority. The masses – the field Negroes were the masses. They were in the majority. When the master got sick, they prayed that he’d die. If his house caught on fire, they’d pray for a wind to come along and fan the breeze.”

They gave you the platform, but there are more of us than there are of you. The greatest trick you ever pulled off was to make it seem that it was you who represented the majority of Black people and it were those radically against colonial policing who were few and far between. Now you see us in our thousands. Stop crying.

X: “That Uncle Tom wore a handkerchief around his head. This Uncle Tom wears a top hat. He’s sharp. He dresses just like you do. He speaks the same phraseology, the same language. He tries to speak it better than you do. He speaks with the same accents, same diction. And when you say, ‘your army,’ he says, ‘our army.’ He hasn’t got anybody to defend him, but anytime you say ‘we’ he says ‘we.’ ‘Our president,’ ‘our government,’ ‘our Senate,’ ‘our congressmen,’ ‘our this and our that.’ And he hasn’t even got a seat in that ‘our’ even at the end of the line. So this is the twentieth-century Negro.”

Black liberal, as we brace for the second wave of repression from your government, remember that we still see you. When your police, your National Guard, your dogs are sicced on us, when your P W Botha/Bull Connor of a president who agitated for a Sharpeville 1960 against the migrants, prepares to commit atrocities, despite our masked shouts, stones and placards, we still see you. We know why you have come. But you are too late.

For the first time in a long while we have also been seen and know that we are not alone. Before we might have stepped out sheepishly, politely asking to consider more radical solutions, thinking that we were moving, vulnerably, naked and alone, into an open field of attack dogs.

But now that we have stridden bravely forth, without shields, into the centres of white supremacy, we have discovered that we are covered by a multitude of good people. Look at the world. We are not alone. As you jump the bandwagon and attempt to wrestle the reins away from us, know that this is a Black radicals' moment. See us.

Black radicals are here to stay. Come up off that mic and get out before you get "looted". And take those Barack and Michelle posters with you. They never belonged to us.

The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards Malcolm.

Peace after revolution.

36. Politics at the End of History

Deleted reason: DELETED not anarchist

Author: Cam Cannon

Authors: Cam Cannon

Topics: criticism and critique, teleology, marxism, communism, anti-state, dictatorship of the proletariat

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“The end of history will be a very sad time,” Francis Fukuyama wrote in 1989, as the party-State experiments of the Eastern Bloc gave way to mass uprisings, protests erupted in Tiananmen Square, and the Soviet Union pulled out of Afghanistan.² The material referents by which Marxism laid claim to History as its guarantee — socialist states, workers’ movements, national liberation struggles — ceased to exist, throwing the tradition deeper into crisis.³ Fukuyama has been correct in his prediction that social and political life would become increasingly technocratic, and that no serious challenger to parliamentary democracy would arise. While it is true that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and growing tensions with NATO may remind us of the inter-imperialist antagonism Lenin wrote about, or seem like a symptom of a newly emergent multipolar world order, brought about by the unfolding of the dialectic of uneven and combined development which promises to render imperialist domination an impossibility, it is not a struggle of new and old, for a “higher” stage of human civilization — no such thing appears to be on the agenda.⁴ Indeed, Fukuyama accounted for such occurrences at the end of history.⁵ The various crises from the 1990s through today, including at least two major global financial crises and a global pandemic, have failed to generate a final confrontation between labour and capital. The homogenizing processes of global capital have proceeded without interruption, without exception.⁶ As Mark Fisher wrote, “It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”⁷ What a sad time it has been, indeed.

My central thesis, however, is that it does not *need* to be. This essay is an investigation of the role of history in politics, or at least in its thought. The conjuncture is characterized by widespread depoliticization, in which there is a proliferation of fidelities to lapsed historical modes of politics incapable of effectively raising prescriptions *or even recognizing the conjuncture for what it is*.⁸ More specifically, this essay is an investigation of historicism, and the ways in which it orients subjectivities to external invariants, foreclosing the possibility of egalitarian invention at a distance from the State.

² According to Neocosmos in *Thinking Freedom in Africa*, the National Liberation Struggle (NLS) mode of politics existed in the 1950s and 1960s. The name of a mode is the name of a specific relation of a politics to its thought, but not the name of the politics itself. NLS is strongly associated with the Leninist influenced decolonial and anti-imperialist uprisings that took place in Africa during that period. cf., Salar Mohandesi’s *Red Internationalism*.

³ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 8–15; Desai, *Geopolitical Economy*.

⁴ Alessandro Russo, “Mummifying the Working Class: The Cultural Revolution and the Fates of the Political Parties of the 20th Century,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 227 (2016): 653–73.

⁵ Amílcar Cabral, “Presuppositions and Objectives of National Liberation Struggle in Relation to Social Structure,” in *Unity and Struggle*, trans. Michael Wolfers (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 119–37.

⁶ Anonymous and Bruno Bosteels, “The Dialectical Mode: With Regard to Mao Zedong and Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 13, no. 3 (2005): 663–68. It is highly likely that this anonymous author is Sylvain Lazarus.

⁷ Asad Haider, “On Depoliticization,” *Viewpoint Magazine*, December 16, 2019, <https://viewpointmag.com/2019/12/16/on-depoliticization/>.

⁸ Badiou, *Can Politics Be Thought?*, 43.

The Specter of Hegel

That we received “liberal democracy plus VCRs and stereos” rather than “Soviet power plus electrification,” is the great irony that awaited us at the end of history. Rather than the vindication of the militant subject of Truth, finally free of the constraints of State and Market, we have the homogenizing circulation of commodities, the reduction of the world to technical, quantitative operations. This is the meaning of the crisis of Marxism — today it is simply impossible to claim that history is a process with the proletariat as its subject and communism its goal.⁹ Here, I expose myself to an immediate objection: *is this not a defeatist capitulation to “bourgeois” ideology?* At this stage, it certainly seems so, but what standpoint could be better suited to an investigation of history than its end? As such, this section discusses the Hegelian philosophy of history, and the non-Marxist adaptations of it, before proceeding to Sylvain Lazarus’s conception of “classist historiography.”

For Hegel, world history is the dialectical process of World Spirit, understood as Reason and therefore Freedom (Reason is self-sufficient, thus not reliant on anything external to itself), developing consciousness of itself and actualizing itself towards a final end point in which the State secures the maximum freedom possible for its people.¹⁰ In this view, history is propelled by the imperfection of its various stages; it is the increasing perfection of the State, a movement towards freedom and the self-conscious reign of reason.¹¹ The essentials for our purposes are as follows: subjectivity is conditioned relative to objective processes that are primarily embodied in the State; these objective processes tend towards a definite goal, inevitably so; everything that occurs is included in the overall development of World Spirit, and is thus *progress*.

This approach to history can be understood in a single word: teleology. The world is rendered into a totality which, through its self-movement, ascends towards perfection and freedom. Social transformation becomes a matter of grasping the Spirit in its movements, where the individual, or subject, so long as it is of a “historic people” (possesses a State), is determined by the objective factor, the subjective operating back on it in a dynamic interplay; its contingent needs and desires ultimately contributing to this end according to what is possible.¹² Politics, then, arises from the objective and is subordinated to it: political upheaval is then self-conscious subjectivity, aware of its relation to the objective factors and therefore capable of acting on them, viz., , it is in some sense the manifestation of Reason.

It should also be noted that the State is seen as embodying the Spirit of the nation over which it presides. What is possible is determined by *what is*, understood as the result of a long process which has culminated in the present and will continue beyond it. Woodrow Wilson asks¹³:

Even if we had clear insight into all the political past, and could form out of perfectly instructed heads a few steady, infallible, placidly wise maxims of government into which all sound political doctrine would be ultimately resolvable, *would the country act on them?*

He raises a deeply Hegelian point. Since the State must be a reflection of the Spirit of the nation and of the age, the State itself must only proceed according to that which is possible, which is in turn determined by that which has happened. It is not a matter of devising universalist maxims but acting on what arises on the basis of the history that produced what is. He continues¹⁴:

⁹ Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (MIT Press, 1988), 57.

¹⁰ Engels, “The Role of Force in History,” in *Marx & Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 453–510.

¹¹ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 18.

¹² Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” 18. Fukuyama’s argument provides the best way into the subject matter of this essay, despite the misgivings many have towards it. His argument is best appreciated for presenting a liberal Hegelian view of the philosophy of history and clearly grasping the impending period of depoliticization that was to follow the exhaustion of the revolutionary sequences of the 20th century. For Fukuyama, history has ended in the sense that there is no existing project which presents a higher form of human society than liberal democracy. There will of course still be wars, and other forms of state or governance, but the key is that they do not present themselves as transcending what already exists.

¹³ Fukuyama, “The End of History?” 5.

¹⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (Batoche, 2004).

The bulk of mankind is rigidly unphilosophical, and nowadays the bulk of mankind votes. A truth must become not only plain but also commonplace before it will be seen by the people who go to their work very early in the morning; and not to act upon it must involve great and pinching inconveniences before these same people will make up their minds to act upon it.

Which is to say that the State must only proceed according to the nature of what it is in the particularity of American society. Similarly, when he writes, “The cosmopolitan what-to-do must always be commanded by the American how-to-do-it,”¹⁵ it should be understood as a call to investigate the status of the overall progress of the unfolding of Spirit but only implement lessons which are in accordance with the particularity of his own State and of his time.¹⁶ Speculatively, there is no need to rush ahead of what is accepted in the moment, for knowing what has happened, is to know what is happening, and to know what is happening is to know what will happen — history will march on, and that which is in accordance with the objective process will arrive on the scene according to its time. As Carl Schmitt put it: “An ‘ought’ is impotent. What is right will make itself effective, and what merely should be, without actually existing, is not true but only a subjective mastery of life.”¹⁷

Wilson deploys the Hegelian philosophy of history — his politics are authorized by the same view of history. His thought, like that of Marxism, lays claim to history as a process with an endpoint, which provides the basis for him thinking what is possible politically, and ultimately, what such politics mean. To him, history was the gradual unfolding of the struggle between good and evil, culminating in the triumph of the former over the latter.¹⁸

To return to Fukuyama, who lays a different claim to history: “The Battle of Jena [1806] marked the end of history because it [...] actualized the principles of the French Revolution.”¹⁹ Much was left to be accomplished but “the basic *principles* of the liberal democratic state could not be improved upon.”²⁰ While this conclusion may seem like low hanging fruit for Marxists, the ability to draw it within the same thought of history to announce precisely the impossibility of the Marxist project is of great significance.²¹ The recourse of the Marxist in the face of Fukuyama is to maintain faith that despite the disappearance of material referents which guarantee its claim to history, all that has happened is ultimately still leading to the inevitable coming of communism. What seems now to be a detour or a low point, will eventually be redeemed, and may even retroactively appear to have been a necessity. To paraphrase Plekhanov, “as long as needs remain unsatisfied the revolutionary movement will continue.”²² History only moves forward, and with a sufficiently long view, the irrationality becomes rationality.

The Science of History

The certainty with which Marxism lays claim to history, to the coming revolution, the advent of classless, stateless society, derives from its claims to scientificity, which are themselves underpinned by the Hegelian philosophy of history. The final victory of the proletariat is assured, because, quite simply, *that’s just how history works*, and Marx and Engels have demonstrated as much. As they declared in the 1848 *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”²³ This history of class struggle is one between oppressor and oppressed, the oppressed

¹⁵ Georgij Valentinovič Plekhanov, *Essays in Historical Materialism*, Foundations, #9 (Paris: Foreign languages press, 2021), 72.

¹⁶ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*.

¹⁷ Hegel, 64–88.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid, “Mummifying the Working Class.”

²⁰ Ibid, 183.

²¹ Ibid, 221.

²² Ibid, 657–58.

²³ Ibid, 662.

eventually negating the oppressor in accordance with the level of development of the productive forces. Each epoch generates the force(s) which, through the development of several contradictions (oppressor/oppressed, productive forces/relations of production, base/superstructure, etc.) will inevitably be resolved in the passage to a higher stage of society, or result in the common ruin of the contending classes. There are objective, historical processes which must be grasped — in Hegelian terms, the Spirit of the time — if one is to transform the situation. It is a matter of consciousness of classes in history, and as the struggle between classes develops, this consciousness will too. Ultimately, “What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own gravediggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.”²⁴

In an 1852 letter to J. Weydermeyer, Marx clarifies that his “discovery” was not that of history as class struggle, but rather the recognition that it “necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat,” which of itself will only “constitute” the transition to communism.²⁵ For Schmitt, this very claim to history, this declaration that *this will happen because this is how history works*, is what granted communists the “right” to use force in pursuit of what he terms “rationalist dictatorship.” He writes²⁶:

Only when it was scientifically formulated did socialism believe itself in possession of an essentially infallible truth, and just at that moment it claimed the right to use force. The scientific certainty of socialism appeared historically after 1848, that is, after socialism had become a political power that could hope to realize its ideas one day [...] Convinced Marxism holds that it has found the true explanation for social, economic, and political life, and that a correct praxis follows from that knowledge; it follows that social life can be correctly grasped immanently in all of its objective necessity and thus controlled.

And further²⁷:

The tautology of Hegelian as well as of Marxist certainty moves in such circles, and provides a “self-guarantee” of its own truth. The scientific certainty that the historical moment of the proletariat has arrived is first produced, therefore, by a correct understanding of the process of development. The bourgeoisie cannot grasp the proletariat, but the proletariat can certainly grasp the bourgeoisie. With this the sun begins to set on the age of the bourgeoisie; the owl of Minerva begins its flight. But here that does not mean that the arts and sciences have progressed, but rather that the passing age has become an object of the historical consciousness of a new epoch.

That the science of history secured its own verification as truth, through its own conception of development, and that its claim to inevitability is what gave it its subjective purchase, it “authorized” the project of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the struggle to bring it about, is not only recognized by opponents of Marxism like Schmitt.

In *The Role of the Individual in History*, Plekhanov affirms the “dialectical materialist” understanding of history — all that happens, or can happen, is determined by history, which produces determinations in the form of social relations and needs — in order to defend it against charges that it reduces the role of the individual to nothing and allows no room for free will. Indeed, he writes that fatalism, knowledge of inevitability has been “psychologically necessary,” for action, remarking: “Those who think that as soon as we are convinced of the inevitability of a certain series of events we lose all psychological possibility to help bring on, or to counteract, these events, are very much mistaken.”²⁸

²⁴ Ibid, 663.

²⁵ Ibid, 670.

²⁶ Ibid, 671.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

It is this understanding of history, and that politics stems from it, that makes it possible to deny that history has ended: everything is progress. Even in terms of events occurring unexpectedly, or not according to class struggle, events still appear as a series of steps towards the end point of communism. Because history unfolds in a rational way, it is knowable as such — for Plekhanov, even an “accident” like European colonization in North America, which did not occur on the basis of the development of the peoples on that land, but rather was the collision of different inevitable trajectories, is explainable by recourse to the economic.²⁹ Engels’ *The Role of Force in History* is fascinating in this way. For Engels, Bismarck was not a bourgeois, but a junker, and while he did not consciously set out to fulfill a “historic task” like elevating the bourgeoisie to the ruling class, through his unification of Germany and various policy decisions, Engels argues that he acted as a force capable of completing the historic tasks of the bourgeoisie even when they were not conscious of the tasks.³⁰ Going even further, Amilcar Cabral leans on this notion of history, declaring that history (along with Plekhanov, who also effectively argues this) is the history of the productive forces, and that European imperialism in Africa has been a *necessary* and *progressive* process in itself, it brought history to otherwise “non-historic” peoples.³¹

This understanding of history, this science, is itself used in heterogeneous ways to explain the experiences of the 20th century: objective conditions were not right for the transition from capitalism to socialism, imperialist aggression intervened, the capitalist road won out, State policy was not properly informed by the scientific, socialism will be achieved only after a long period of capitalist development, and so on. Regardless of one’s position on the Soviet and Chinese experiences, it is seldom the case that a Marxist will put forward an analysis which meaningfully interrogates this science of history, and what it *does*. No matter the *content* of events, they are born out of a matrix of social relations, which are themselves the results of history. They are all steps towards the eventual end of history: communism.

Condemned to Win

Marxism is all powerful because it is true, and it is true because it finds verification in the operation of history itself. Millions of lives have been lost in service of the idea that a better world is possible, and all lessons have been hard won. Today, it seems that more and more people are tapping into this tradition by attending rallies, engaging in mutual aid, and struggling to build revolutionary organizations suited to the tasks that lay ahead of them. There exists a wide range of intellectualities one could adopt, and events to swear fidelity to.³² In the end they all take this received truth of history as their real — *we are condemned to win*. They re-enact the debates of the Second International and know exactly what they would have done if they were in “so and so’s” shoes during “such and such” point in history. They immerse and submerge themselves in the modes of politics of long exhausted sequences, and raise categories to the status of concepts. They know what *not* to do, and are preparing themselves, because they know that they are *condemned to win*. Science is on their side, and it is only a matter of time and the correct application of hard won theories. The revolution is coming, its inevitability is encoded in the very fabric of everyday life – we just don’t know when. Such is the promise that history offers the dialectical materialist.

But there is something about this history: why is consciousness of history, of class, insufficient for producing social transformation in this conjuncture? There is something in the line of sight of the dialectical materialist, yet unseen. It is that this history, our inheritance, through the very same mechanisms with which it has reassured us of victory, has led us astray.

The dialectic is a tyrant. It offers politics a guarantee, but in exchange for its replacement by a thought of the State. Which is to say, history offers politics only its own annihilation. Rather than

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

politics being a subjective process of *creation* or invention, in which humans break with the laws of motion governing their situation, and present new possibilities for egalitarian social organization, politics becomes a matter of the objective operating on itself through an epiphenomenal subjective factor. Rather than invention, politics becomes subsumed under the processes of the state, “the economy,” and so on, becoming associated primarily with the conquest of power. The dialectic proposes that the subjective can only be understood in its operation on, and determination by the objective; the dialectic always leads back to a thought which centres on the State.³³ The dialectic proposes that the subjective is only ever *expressive* of the objective. As Lazarus explains³⁴,

History is a thought relation of the State. What then can be said of history with respect to operation and determination? The question is all the more complex in that, depending on the case, it makes use of one or the other or both. Marx, for his part, maintains that history pertains to determination and operation. It is in this capacity that it can subsume politics and include it. Identified through operation and determination, history is tied up with politics through operation and to the State through its double determination.

Now, why does this matter? It has consequences on the ways in which politics is thought by Marxists. A consequence of dialectical thought is this idea of revolution as *the* category of politics (and history), which is what sustains thinking in terms of politics as the struggle *for* a revolution, rendering the dictatorship of the proletariat *synonymous* with the revolution, and ultimately relying on sustaining the revolution, understood as sustaining a revolutionary state, until class is abolished, and it is withered. In this sense, politics (which express the objective as subjectivity, thus *class* consciousness, *class* politics etc.) is centered on antagonism with the State, which then becomes management of the State in the name of the proletariat, which then requires one to put faith in the State for the completion of emancipatory politics, which it cannot accomplish.

To offer an example from the National Liberation Struggle³⁵ mode of politics, Kwame Nkrumah put forward the statement “Seek ye first the political kingdom and all shall be added unto thee.”³⁶ Such a statement indicates a thought of politics which identifies emancipation with the seizure of State power. Once State power has been conquered, the State machinery smashed, etc., then harmonious development can take place, imperialism overcome, socialism established, and so on. However, Michael Neocosmos argues, once State power was taken, politics became centered on the State itself, in effect creating a disconnect between the masses and the State/party, and generating a situation in which politics became centered on managing interests and technical administration.³⁷ Contrary to Nkrumah’s statement, the belief that the seizure of State power represents a transition to a new situation in which the new State serves as a guarantor of emancipatory politics continuing to unfold, as a safeguard against national enemies the State dropped any pretense of carrying through emancipation, and neocolonialism kicked in.³⁸

This is partly built on the notion that politics is expressive of the objective (this is the very meaning of the dialectic of subjective-objective), and that because the new State will have a progressive character,

³³ It is considerable that the age old debate over “socialism in one country” versus “permanent revolution” is merely a disagreement over the role of objective determinants and the ways in which a proper “dialectical” understanding sees a post-revolution state transitioning to “socialism.” In thought, the “Stalinists” and “Trotskyists” are not very different.

³⁴ It is significant that in such thoughts of history, one’s politics, one’s state, cannot help but take the position of protagonist, with an infallible grasp on laws of human development. To Fukuyama, the Marxist project was but a fleeting moment in the overall trajectory of history which culminates in the liberal state and market society. Marxists would likely argue the same of liberal democracy, of fascism, etc. Same system of logic, different subjects and ends.

³⁵ J.V. Stalin, “Dialectical and Historical Materialism,” in *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1951), 165–206; Alessandro Russo, *Cultural Revolution and Revolutionary Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 94.

³⁶ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in *The Political Writings* (London: Verso, 2019), 61.

³⁷ Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (London; New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957), 164.

³⁸ Lazarus, *Anthropology of the Name*, 101.

it will sustain forward momentum through its conditioning of subjectivity and the reaction back upon it. However, as Neocosmos writes³⁹:

The politics of the state, like politics in general, understood as subjectivity, as consciousness, as capacity, as agency, as choices, cannot be deduced from the class(es) these are said to represent, whichever these may be. Class representation can at best only enable the identification of policies with reference to class interests, and not politics as such. For the study of politics as subjectivity to advance in order to enable a grasping of political choice, it has to distance itself from the analysis of interests, for these ultimately propose little more than an objectivist determinism.

This interplay between subjective and objective, which centers the State, is at hand when Lenin writes about “habits”⁴⁰:

We set ourselves the ultimate aim of abolishing the state, i.e., all organised and systematic violence, all use of violence against people in general ... In striving for socialism, however, we are convinced that it will develop into communism and, therefore, that the need for violence against people in general ... will vanish altogether since people will *become accustomed* to observing the elementary conditions of social life *without violence* and *without subordination* ... In order to emphasise this element of habit, Engels speaks of a new *generation*, “reared in new, free social conditions,” which will “be able to discard the entire lumber of the state” — of any state, including the democratic-republican state.

And even more clearly⁴¹:

The expression “the state *withers away*” is very well-chosen, for it indicates both the gradual and the spontaneous nature of the process. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect; for we see around us on millions of occasions how readily people become accustomed to observing the necessary rules of social intercourse when there is no exploitation, when there is nothing that arouses indignation, evokes protest and revolt, and creates the need for *suppression*.

Which is to say, the interplay between subjective and objective, according to the State, is expected to condition the people in their *habits* — the dictatorship of the proletariat representing a higher form of state — while these habits, in tandem with economic development, will bring about the end of history, communism. History has brought about the increasing perfection of the State machinery, perfected to the point that its highest level enacts its disappearance through its shaping of *habits*.⁴²

In 1923, Lenin reflects on the results of the project⁴³:

Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched, that we must first think very carefully how to combat its defects, bearing in mind that these defects are rooted in the past, which, although it has been overthrown, has not yet been overcome, has not yet reached the stage of a culture, that has receded into the distant past. I say culture deliberately, because in these matters we can only regard as achieved what has become part and parcel of our culture, of our social life, our habits ... We have been bustling for five years trying to improve our state apparatus, but it has been mere bustle, which has proved useless in these five years, or even futile, or even harmful. This bustle created the impression that we were doing something, but in effect it was only clogging up our institutions and our brains.

³⁹ Lazarus, *Anthropology of the Name*, 177.

⁴⁰ Lazarus, *Anthropology of the Name*.

⁴¹ Lazarus, 102.

⁴² Lazarus, 182.

⁴³ Lenin, “Better Fewer, But Better,” in *Collected Works*, trans. David Skvirsky and George Hanna, 2nd English, vol. 33 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 487–502, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/mar/02.htm>.

In the period of 1917 to 1923, there were attempts to find footing in a situation in which existing thought was inadequate, and experience was showing the difficulty associated with erecting a *non-state* state worthy of the name. The solution was to empower the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, to train people in new habits, and not to proceed ahead of what is possible in the conjuncture. The victory of socialism could only be assured by the success of proletarian revolution in the East, "but what interests us is not the inevitability of this complete victory of socialism ...".⁴⁴ In the face of unfavourable objective conditions, it is a question of survival against counter-revolutionary states. Stalin would later rise to power and systematize the ideology of "Marxism-Leninism," which contains strong themes of inevitable victory, historical necessity, strict expressivity between politics and the objective, and so on.⁴⁵ It is worth noting here that Schmitt saw the possibility of an endless "rational dictatorship" being justified on the basis of the Hegelian philosophy underpinning Marxist thought, and that Badiou views this in terms of projecting the political categories of one's conjuncture into eternity — the suturing of politics and philosophy.⁴⁶

As Alessandro Russo writes in connection to the Chinese experience⁴⁷,

In the doctrine of historical materialism, victory ... was much more than the overthrow of a government. It was above all the converging point of historical contradictions between advanced and retrograde classes, new productive forces and old modes of production, counter-poised ideologies, and even between worldviews. Revolutionary culture carried the historical guarantee that socialism, which has led the way to complete victory over capitalism, would triumphantly march on to communism.

When Lenin speaks of habits, of culture, in the Chinese experience it is "revolutionary culture," which is justified on the same basis of subjectivity and objectivity. However, Mao did not believe in "inevitable" victory — in fact, he thought in terms of probable defeat, in terms of the Chinese state existing as an exception to the general rule of capitalism.⁴⁸ Mao steps out of the historicist focus on the State with the notions of revisionism, and capitalist restoration — the Party and the State can generate its own bourgeois, capitalism restored without a bloody counter-revolution.⁴⁹ Going further, rather than an end of history, and thus of politics, Mao predicted that struggle between the old and new would remain.⁵⁰

The lessons of the Cultural Revolution are too many to summarize here with adequate attention, but the sequence marked something profound: the withering of the State has more to do with the creativity of the masses and their ability to invent new egalitarian forms, than it does with the seizure and maintenance of power by a party as the representative of a class.⁵¹ Enthusiasm for socialism, politics in command, it is right to rebel against reactionaries (especially if they are in the communist party), are all thoughts which do not rely on the authorization of history or the objective. Rather, they are de-dialecticized and de-historicized, placing politics as subjective, recognizing that emancipatory politics come from *outside* of the State, and are not merely expressions of the objective.⁵² Of course, it goes without saying that Mao still adhered in some ways to the historicism which comes along with dialectical thought.⁵³

⁴⁴ Lenin, 410, 415.

⁴⁵ Lenin, 467.

⁴⁶ Leo Strauss, "German Nihilism," *Interpretation* 29, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 353–78.

⁴⁷ Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, 255

⁴⁸ Mao Tse-Tung, *On Practice and Contradiction*, Reissue edition (London; New York: Verso, 2017).

⁴⁹ Mao Zedong, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," Marxist Internet Archive, 1957, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_58.htm.

⁵⁰ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (John Hunt Publishing, 2009).

⁵¹ Marx and Engels, 73.

⁵² Marx, "Marx to J. Weydemeyer in New York," Marxist Internet Archive, 1852, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/letters/52_03_05-ab.htm.

⁵³ Michael Neocosmos, "Analysing Political Subjectivities: Naming the Post-Developmental State in Africa Today," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 45, no. 5 (October 2010): 534–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909610373895>.

The Cultural Revolution can be described as a mass political laboratory, where the masses, independent of, and often against the party, engaged in experiments to generate new egalitarian forms of human relationships, throwing the party as representative of class into question.⁵⁴ According to Russo⁵⁵:

The communist parties proclaimed to embody a historical paradigm that guaranteed the political existence of the workers and of all possible egalitarian politics that had the “working class” as central. The experimental results of the 1960s proved, instead, that despite any alleged “historical connection” between the communist parties and the “working class,” the political role assigned to the workers was fictitious...

In the final stage of the sequence, Mao concluded that capitalist and socialist states were not very different, save for the ownership of the means of production, and that capitalist restoration would happen more easily than the transition to communism.⁵⁶ However, Russo argues that these lessons were adopted by Deng Xiaopeng and the party leadership in a manner that would *depoliticize* the masses. Rather than following through on the campaign to study the dictatorship of the proletariat, an ongoing attempt to foster egalitarian inventions put forward by Mao in 1974, a policy of thorough negation of the Cultural Revolution was adopted and the political assessment of the question was banned.⁵⁷ Russo continues,⁵⁸

Deng was aware that he could not simply restore the previous system of command but instead would have to create a new one. He also had to be able to map out a protracted strategy for effectively establishing “order,” that is, to re-establish authority over workers in the factories. By considering the whole process of reform, it is possible to identify at least three basic consistent moves: the suppression of the Maoist experiments in the factories; the full commodification of labour-power; and the maintenance in the government discourse of the ideological reference to the “working class” and its “historical” connection with its “class vanguard,” the Communist Party.

The new governmental discourse made clear that the State was willing to repress harshly, while also proclaiming itself to be the sole representative of the working class.⁵⁹ This depoliticizes the working class, insofar as it denies the legitimacy of mass political experimentation, thus denying the possibility of a distance between workers and the State.⁶⁰ The Party represents the working class, and operates according to the laws of historical development — which require capitalist development.⁶¹ Working class politics become associated with State development policy, with being a “good” worker, in faith that the objective laws of motion will someday bring about the emancipation of humanity. In representing the working class, the party eviscerates it politically.⁶²

As Russo summarizes,⁶³

⁵⁴ Neocosmos, 537.

⁵⁵ Neocosmos.

⁵⁶ Plekhanov, *Essays in Historical Materialism*, 47.

⁵⁷ Radhika Desai, *Geopolitical Economy: After US Hegemony, Globalization and Empire* (Pluto Press, 2013). What is in question in this essay is not whether ‘multipolarity,’ understood as the dispersion of power on a global scale as the result of objective, political economic processes is a real phenomenon, but rather a questioning of there being any necessary connection between the emergence or viability of emancipatory politics and such processes. Which is to say, such processes have no politics, nor do they give rise to politics in the sense of invention at a distance from the state.

⁵⁸ Ronald J. Pestritto, “Woodrow Wilson, the Organic State, and American Republicanism,” in *History of American Political Thought*, ed. Bryan-Paul Frost and Jeffrey Sikkenga (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 584–85.

⁵⁹ Russo, *Cultural Revolution and Revolutionary Culture*, 96.

⁶⁰ Russo, *Cultural Revolution and Revolutionary Culture*.

⁶¹ Russo, *Cultural Revolution and Revolutionary Culture*.

⁶² Russo, 657.

⁶³ Russo, 91–98.

The way in which the CCP achieved a new governmental order demonstrated to the world a means of bringing the worker politicization of the 1960s to a close. Despite the preservation of elements of a “class” discourse, it soon became clear that the very concept a “working class” had become a mere fiction in China. That this had occurred in a socialist country, notably one where there had been prolonged attempts to revitalize the political figure of the worker, could not but have profound consequences for all other contemporary governmental circumstances.

In other words, the thought of politics which centers on the proletariat, party, and State, has been closed off. These thoughts are no longer antagonistic to capital, but have been adopted by it: they circulate through governmental discourses and prevent a thought of politics at a distance from the State, and they are exhausted in terms of egalitarian invention.⁶⁴

Finally, in his study of the French Revolution, Lazarus takes aim at “classist historiography.” Historicism views revolutions as the transition between a State 1 and State 2 of a society – they are given their meaning according to what comes before and after, rather than the content of what actually occurs, and any knowledge of it is completely retrospective.⁶⁵ This conception of revolution identifies politics with the State, with the completion of the politics in communism being more of the completion of a process of the State.⁶⁶

... be it with regard to revolution or with regard to the dictatorship of the proletariat, the transition takes on meaning only in relations to its ultimate and initial boundary marks, and can only have an internal characterization and an internal completion in a problematic of the State. Whether we are dealing with Marxism or historicism, a thought in terms of transition is inoperative for a thought of politics.

He then discusses conflictuality, the expressiveness of politics, referring to the dictatorship of the proletariat as a utopian category, and a historic category. He continues⁶⁷:

The utopia is a well-argued approximation, but for the simple reason that it is an approximation it is unrealizable and hence unrealistic. The essence of the approximation is the attribution of processes of politics to State conflictuality and to the antagonism in relation to the State; it is therefore an approximation concerning the politics brought about through the relation to the State and through the intermediary of conflictuality.

From this, it seems that far from a guarantee, the dialectic of history *obscures* what occurs following the seizure of State power — it assumes that political processes continue operating because the objective processes it identifies them with continue on, while also justifying governmental discourses which prevent the further egalitarian invention that is needed for politics. The Marxist view of history prevents it from being able to grasp the tasks which it sets for itself by virtue of the mechanisms it employs in

⁶⁴ Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, 53.

⁶⁵ Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*; Alain Badiou, “Philosophy and Politics,” in *Conditions*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London; New York: Continuum, 2008), 145–76.

⁶⁶ Schmitt, 63.

⁶⁷ Sylvain Lazarus, *Anthropology of the Name*, trans. Gila Walker, *The French List* (Seagull Books, 2015), 52–53. Lazarus writes, “There are intellectualities. To identify one is to identify its *mode*. The mode will be the operative category of the singularity of each intellectuality and we will call ‘multiplicity of intellectualities’, the configuration of different modes. I posit the singularity and multiplicity of intellectualities.” A footnote on the same page clarifies “The mode is either a historical mode of politics, in which case it qualifies politics and is the relation of a politics to its thought; or it is a mode of intellectuality, that is to say, a particular configuration of the process *there is thought*.” Here, the term ‘intellectuality’ can be taken to mean a thought of politics that is based on a political sequence that has taken place. Names for these intellectualities include Trotskyism, Leninism, Maoism, and so on. What is important is that these names themselves are contested and do not have set meanings, they are *polysemic*. Fidelity to an event, in some ways, can be considered an aspect of developing an intellectuality — one sets about thinking politics based on the Cultural Revolution, or the Bolshevik seizure of power, or more nationally specific events such as Wounded Knee.

its thought, i.e., it cannot actually *think* the withering of the State. This is the exact same mechanism which Fukuyama uses to announce the end of history, and it is the same mechanism by which Leo Strauss explains the subjectivity of the “German nihilists,” who understood it and set about destroying the world to avoid its conclusion.⁶⁸ There is a significant issue with this guarantee.

As Althusser writes: “A truly materialist conception of history implies that we abandon the idea that history is ruled and dominated by laws which it is enough to know and respect in order to triumph over anti-history.”⁶⁹ The experiences of the 20th century have shown that the seizure of state power, *does not*, in fact, generate laws of motion according to which the state will wither away, given the right objective conditions and leadership.⁷⁰ The dialectical materialist philosophy has only served as the guarantee of the “truth” that the state, and whatever measures it takes, is necessary, and therefore it, and the Party must be the sole referents of subjectivity. It seems that rather than fetishize method as granting access to truth, we need to grasp the function of philosophy as a theoretical battlefield, in which positions are taken over and transformed along with the conjuncture, rather than positing eternal truths. The way dialectics structure our thought of history eviscerates any possibility of thinking politics, and serves as nothing but a breeding ground for millenarian sectarianism — depoliticized and ineffectual posturing for the eventual seizure of power.

Truly, Althusser initiated a break with the so-called “Official” Marxisms of his day, which represent intellectualities still present today. His project was to put Marxism on a proper philosophical foundation that, rather than produce state ideologies, and affective investment in “actually existing socialism” (real or imagined), understood its role in class struggle, and was defined by its practice rather than a system of positions. This work has been advanced by Lazarus, which gives up any hope of science being conducive to politics, dedicating itself instead to the study of subjective singularities — of politics as thought. The contribution of *Anthropology of the Name* is not as a guide to practice, it is not a science nor a philosophy. However, it is exactly what is needed today, as, if anything, it serves as something of an exorcist. There are too many sad ghosts at the end of history.

The End of History

“The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living,”
— Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

There is the end of history and the end of history. That is, the culmination of the unfolding of the Idea (or Good, or class struggle) on the one hand, and the closure of a political intellectuality which takes history as its primary referent and guarantor on the other. What I propose is the latter. This essay started from the end of history to jump back to its beginning with Hegel, and proceeded forward through Marxism to the point we are at now. The essential points are: Marxism, by virtue of its Hegelian heritage, is characterized by an underlying thought of history, which grants it the guarantee of its triumph, but at the same time, prevents it from grasping politics, which is due to the nature of the dialectic. We are thus unable to think politics according to itself, and even our understanding of revolution as a transition always redirects thoughts of politics towards the State, or the social, which immediately re-centers itself on the State. It is time to give up this guarantee, which is no longer the subjective necessity that Plekhanov says it can be. In place of guarantees, of a thought of history in which the subjective and objective are only thought together, in which it is presumed that politics is always present because social antagonism exists, we need to re-orient ourselves to thought in terms of political

⁶⁸ V.I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution,” in *Collected Works*, trans. Stepan Apresyan and Jim Riordan, vol. 25 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 461.

⁶⁹ Wilson, 209.

⁷⁰ Woodrow Wilson, “The Study of Administration,” *Political Science Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (87 1886): 209.

sequences, which begin and end, and which find their completion as the result of internal developments, rather than external factors such as the productive forces or imperialism.⁷¹ The question right now is not reform or revolution, it is depoliticization or invention. We need to recognize the situation for what it is, and adapt our methods of thought if we are to break with it.

The end of history does not need to be a sad time. It can be a time of invention. Of thinking politics at a distance from the State, of no longer getting caught up in disagreements on which revolutionary should have taken charge at what time, of whose policies would have pushed their society towards communism. Instead of exposing ourselves to the disaster of making universal concepts of categories specific to those conjunctures, we must approach the categories *as they existed* within their own political sequences. We must invent new egalitarian forms of organization, without subordination to a bureaucracy which exists only to someday become the State. Beyond the end of history, politics stands on its own.

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⁷¹ Alain Badiou, *Can Politics Be Thought?* (Duke University Press, 2018), 43; Louis Althusser, "The Crisis of Marxism (1977)," *Viewpoint Magazine*, December 15, 2017, <https://viewpointmag.com/2017/12/15/crisis-marxism-1977/>.

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**37. From Urumqi to Shanghai:
Demands from Chinese and Hong
Kong Socialists**

Deleted reason: DELETED not anarchist

Subtitle: A letter on strategy and solidarity with Uyghur struggle

Author: Chinese and Hong Kong socialists

Authors: Chinese and Hong Kong socialists

Topics: China, social movements, solidarity, internationalism, strategy, indigenous solidarity, social control, settler colonialism

Date: November 28th, 2022

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Source: Retrieved on November 28th, 2022 from <https://lausancollective.com/2022/from-urumqi-shanghai/>.

Notes: This is an expanded version of a letter written by Chinese and Hong Kong socialists on the mainland and overseas on the night of 26 November 2022, when protests first erupted. The abridged Chinese version first appeared in Borderless Movement (<https://borderless-hk.com/>) on 27 November. This version has been revised through the weekend as events developed. Republished with permission.

On Thursday, 24 November, 2022, a fire broke out in a residential building in Urumqi, the capital of China's "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region."⁷² The fire killed mostly Uyghur victims and injured many more. These numbers are said to be under-reported, and the tragedy was a result of China's failed pandemic policy which has severely restricted the movements of everyday citizens and denied their access to basic necessities for prolonged periods of time. While these policies have affected millions of Chinese citizens, Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang region have long suffered from heightened repression, up to and including mass internment and extreme surveillance by the Chinese government. Xinjiang has also seen the most stringent lockdown policies implemented, with many unable to leave their homes for more than a hundred days.

In response, Urumqi residents launched an unprecedented city-wide protest on Saturday 26 November, braving the police to surround government buildings and demand an end to the current lockdown policies. These flawed lockdown policies resulted in the compound gates being bolted shut by authorities, such that residents were unable to escape. Protests of different kinds spread across major cities throughout the night. Some took the form of collective and independent mass action, like the student-led vigil in the Communication University of China in Nanjing and the public statement written by medical students from Huazhong University of Science and Technology in Wuhan. Citizens of Shanghai took to the streets to escalate their action further, chanting slogans like "Down with the CCP! Down with Xi Jinping!"

Regimes across the world have failed their people throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and China's authoritarian brand of capitalism has led to further restriction of the rights of its everyday citizens. Working conditions have become even more precarious. In late October, it was revealed that Foxconn workers in Zhengzhou were trapped in a 'closed-loop system' that restricted their movements and access to basic necessities in conditions of forced labor. Many workers tried to flee the factories by scaling fences.

⁷² The CCP's tactics of mass detention and surveillance affect many communities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR, also known as "Xinjiang," "Northwest China," "East Turkestan," "Uighuria," "Ghulja," "Tarbagai," "Altay," "Dzungarstan and Altishahr," and/or "Dzungaria and the Tarim Basin Region," and which will henceforth be referred to as "Xinjiang"), most visibly Uyghurs but no less significantly other indigenous and minority ethnic groups.

A highly contested term, the proper name Xinjiang (新疆) was first used by the 18th century emperor Qianlong, and conferred on the XUAR upon Zuo Zongtang's reoccupation of the region in the late 19th century. In Mandarin Chinese, it means "new territory," "new border," or "new frontier."

As outsiders, we appreciate being in conversation with comrades on how best to advocate for the liberation of those suffering settler colonial repression in the region. Using accurate terminology to the best of our knowledge and recognizing how the CCP's campaign of mass detention and cultural genocide impacts numerous communities differently across the XUAR region are important elements of this work. Please contact us if you have further questions and comments.

Instead of calling for accountability from its private enterprises and revising its lockdown policies in the region, the local government responded by sending its cadres to Foxconn's production line to ensure profitability. Last week, newly-hired Foxconn workers staged a small revolt protesting their conditions, and the local government sent hundreds of hazmat-suited police to aid Foxconn in repressing the workers.

Citizens and workers across China are taking to the streets to demand accountability for a "Zero Covid" policy that has seen their rights taken away and their safety placed in danger. Once again, the people of Xinjiang have had to bear the brunt of China's repressive policies in the horrific Urumqi fire. But now the region with some of the country's most marginalized has become the spark for what is possibly the largest scale mobilization in Chinese society in years. More urgently than ever, Han Chinese residents of Xinjiang and in other regions of China must continue to center the struggle of Uyghurs and oppressed minorities and fight alongside them.

We demand accountability for the victims of the Urumqi fire, and call for radical systemic change:

Demands:

1. Abolish the current lockdowns that forcibly detain people in their homes, denying them of access to basic needs.
2. Abolish forced PCR testing for COVID-19.
3. Allow those who are infected to isolate at home, while those with severe symptoms have the right to treatment in the hospital; cancel forcible transfer and isolation of infected and non-infected individuals in mobile cabin "hospitals".
4. Provide options for multiple vaccines, allowing individuals the right to choose their own healthcare.
5. Release Sitong Bridge protestor Peng Zaizhou and other political prisoners who are being detained from the protests.
6. Call for nation-wide mourning of the deaths of those caused by irresponsible lockdown measures.
7. Ensure the resignation of bureaucrats responsible for pandemic mismanagement.
8. Pandemic control measures must be informed by medical experts and conducted democratically amongst the people.
9. Safeguard the rights of people to the freedom of speech, assembly, organization, and protest.
10. Support independent workers' power in and beyond these protests; abolish anti-worker practices like the 996 work schedule and strengthen labor law protections, including protecting workers' right to strike and self-organization, so they can participate more extensively in political life.

Strategies:

1. If anyone is threatened by the police, others should stand up to support them.
2. We should not stop others from chanting more radical slogans, but try to prioritize positive and concrete demands for systemic change.
3. Changes in the political authorities within the system would not be useful unless we thoroughly democratize the system itself.
4. Avoid the risky tactic of long-term occupation of streets and town squares—adopt "Be Water"-style mobilization to prevent authorities from too easily clamping down on protesters.

5. Beyond protesting, strengthen mutual aid and self-organization among communities and workplaces.

People in China today are beginning to mobilize around Sitong Bridge protestor Peng Zaizhou's call for mass action across to demand "democracy, not more forced PCR testing." We do not know how this movement will develop, but we continue encouraging independent mass organization by students, workers, and other marginalized groups in the mainland and abroad, including Hongkongers, Taiwanese, Uyghurs and Tibetans to continue building a long-term strategic program for democratic struggle in China.

We stand in solidarity with this developing movement and call on the Chinese government to respect the livelihood and basic civil liberties of its citizens.

Footnotes:

38. Burning Bridges

Deleted reason: not anarchist

Subtitle: Disconnecting From White Culture and Fighting for Liberation

Author: Curtis Fields and Brooke Harter

Authors: Curtis Fields, Brooke Harter

Topics: anti-racism, anti-capitalism, direct action, whiteness, community organizing

Date: October 18, 2021

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the brave comrades who have helped us recognize our roles in the revolution and given us the support to enact that role. Special thank you to *Los Brown Berets* and *NWI Collective* for providing sources and oversight for portions of the book regarding Native American subjugation. This book would not be possible without the various organizations who have supported us and stood with us in the struggle for freedom.

NWI Collective

Just Transition NWI

Rise NWI

New Afrikan Black Panther Party

Los Brown Berets

White Panther Party

United Panther Movement

We thank you for standing with us and letting us join the struggle for freedom, without you none of this would be possible.

Dare to struggle, dare to win! All power to the people!

Our Purpose

Despite the wishes and best intentions of the masses, the revolution will not be a clean affair. It will be dirty, grimy, and its outcome written in the blood of the revolutionary. Families, friends, and strangers will pick arbitrary sides and fight amongst each other, all loyalties irrelevant amidst the smoke and chaos. Speaking specifically of the United States, the revolution will not be a clean-cut affair, it will not resemble the revolutions of the past idolized by both the patriot and the comrade. There will be no glorious battles, no clear right or wrong, no bastions of power fighting each other for control of the land like the red and white armies of the Russian revolution. No, in the modern revolution amid the myriad splinter groups and guerilla bands, the loyalties held will rely solely on the material conditions and individual ideological beliefs.

When speculating on the future of the revolution and the chaotic nature of it, an insidious idea is present amongst the predominantly white population of the US, the idea that race or skin color will play a role in loyalties. The belief that the color of one's skin will determine the "side" one has to take in the chaos is held by, if not a majority, a very vocal minority of the white population. The idea of "race war" and related ideas has flourished among the white culture in the US since before the civil rights movement of the 60's, purposefully spread and egged on by radical right-wing and neo-nazi groups to create a sense of loyalty to one's own race and distrust towards any other.

This idea is nonsense, and for obvious reasons. In the chaos of revolution, the color of your skin does little more to ensure your safety than the color of your shoes. Chaos is just that, chaotic, there are simply too many factors to determine if the group you wish to join will either allow you into their ranks or place you into a pit, and barring the most extremist of neo-nazi or black separatist groups, your skin color will be nowhere near the most important factor in their decision.

In the times we live in today, the pre-revolution age of wage slavery and corporate conglomerates, your race does play a role in loyalties. This is not advocating for the idea, as communist we are vehemently against the idea of racism whether structural or personal, it is simply fact. In modern day America, the color of one's skin determines many factors in one's life. Your vulnerability to police brutality, your potential wage outlook, your potential to acquire a specific job, your probable living conditions, in the United States race plays a strong and abhorrent role in all of these and more. Being born with a lighter or darker shade of skin can; and has been, the difference between life and death throughout the history of this nation. The grounds of America are soaked in blood spilled for the most arbitrary of reasons. It is also important to note that while an individual's ethnicity and racial background does play a large factor in their oppression, it also comes down to the features that they possess. If someone of African descent just happens to possess European features, they are awarded more in their lives than their counterparts who possess non-European features.

The newest generation, having lived through the myriad failings of capitalism and exposed to the truth of the system they live under, seek to break this power dynamic. As evident in the 2020 George Floyd protests, many young, radicalized white people answered the call and took to the streets alongside their black and brown comrades. Despite the debates and numerous arguments on just how effective said protests were, it cannot be ignored that the new generation has at least partially answered the call and committed themselves to abolishing the ideals of white supremacy.

This is good news, one cannot criticize the fact that more bodies in the streets is a sign of acceptance of our ideas and coming change. However, the white activist and future white activist have a struggle which they cannot express or seek help for from their black and brown comrades. It is a fact that every white activist must contend with before they commit themselves to furthering the revolution and truly

aligning themselves with the cause. It is simply a fact that white activists benefit from the system they are fighting against, and that their rebellion is actively making their lives harder.

The intent of this book is not to convince the white activist from removing themselves from the fight, on the contrary it is intended to teach them to accept this fact as a necessary consequence of their actions and to come to terms with it. For the white activist to truly assist the proletariat revolution, they must accept the ideas that they benefit from the system, that fighting against it will certainly make their lives harder, and understand that this is all necessary and acceptable in the face of the alternative, complacency with a system that benefits them at the expense of others.

This can be especially difficult, when statistically white people are uncomfortable discussing race, with the topic of racism being considered even more taboo. Many white children are taught to be 'color-blind' by their parents and proceed through life viewing themselves as 'woke' white people who no longer need to do any work on their efforts towards being anti-racist. According to Shannon Sullivan in *Good White People: The Problem with Middle-Class White Anti-Racism* states that "for many white people, race tends to be something that concerns everyone but them" which leads to many white children becoming white adults who believe that by simply not worrying about racism, allows them to wash their hands of racism.

The purpose of this book is to break that stigma, to speak openly about the role of race and racial conflict in the revolution, to explain the origins of the white culture which rules over the society and outline how the white revolutionary can assist in destroying it. This book will cover topics which may offend any white readers, and this is our intention.

To be offended is to be confronted with the uncomfortable, to face the truth of the white culture in full transparency and to be forced to contemplate the inherent biases held by any white person reading. This is not a topic which can be explained without garnering hatred and criticism. Therefore, instead of trying to avoid controversy, we accept its inevitability and hope that any initial criticism or revulsion the white reader holds will lead to further contemplation and research into their exact role in the white culture and, hopefully, to consideration towards the necessity of breaking from it and devoting themselves to the revolution.

Recognition of White Culture, What It Is, and How It Works

Section One — Definitions of Whiteness and White Culture

To first define white culture, we must form a definition of what it means to be “white”. Without a definition, a deeper understanding of the white culture is impossible and the future revolutionary will never be able to break away from it. While at a glance this seems like a simple idea, it is actually rather difficult to categorize and must be meticulously analyzed in order to come up with a conclusive answer.

Asking the average US citizen the definition of whiteness will lead to a simple answer, to be white is to have white skin. As simple and solid an answer this seems, it is by all accounts wrong. It does not take much research or observation for this description to fall apart. As an example, take a light-skinned Asian person and ask the citizens the same question. They have white skin, so under this definition they should be considered white, however asking the average US citizen will lead to a different conclusion, that the person in question is not white, and that they are Asian.

As another example, take a fair skinned person from Puerto Rico. Ask the citizens if they are white and you will get a similar answer, that the individual is not white, and that they are Puerto Rican. These answers do not make sense under this definition, white skin should classify someone as white regardless of their national or ethnic origin, but we can clearly see that this is not the case.

Let us then expand the definition, a common answer one might hear is that being white means that you have white skin and are of European descent. Curiously, the definition has expanded from physical appearance alone to the inclusion of national origin. If we go by this definition, it seems to paint a more defined and rational explanation for the idea of whiteness.

Once again with slight scrutiny this definition also falls apart. Take for example a common fair-skinned Italian person. While it is true that many Italians are known for a more olive-toned skin color, many Italians have skin just as white as would be expected of a British or Swedish person. Curiously, the answer now changes depending on who you ask. If you ask around the United States, you may hear that this Italian person is white. Asking somebody who was raised in Europe, however, is likely to get you an answer similar to those received above, that the person in question is not white and that they are Italian. The same can be seen if we instead use a fair-skinned Spanish person, in some parts of the world they are considered white, and in others they are only seen as Spanish.

Under these definitions, we can see that the idea of whiteness appears to be a subjective term, its definition changing and morphing depending on the origin of the subject and the observer. For our purposes this cannot work, we require a rigid definition in order to identify the white culture and fight against it. Let us stop messing around then and pick the most rigid definition we can think of. Let us define whiteness as being of caucasian descent. While this is a now obsolete classification from a scientific perspective, it is the classification most perpetuated by far-right groups and leaders, and should at a minimum serve as a definition for what they believe whiteness is.

Once again this definition falls apart upon observation. Simply asking if somebody from Turkey, which under this definition is classified as being of caucasian descent, gives you the same answers as we’ve seen before. Within every theoretical situation, over and over we see that any definition we give to whiteness falls apart under the slightest scrutiny, so what exactly is going on here?

While we have failed to give whiteness a rigid definition, some patterns worth discussion were observed during our search. For one, it appears that the national origin of the subject plays a role in whether somebody defines them as white. Moreover, it appears that the national origin of the observer also plays a role in whether the subject is defined as white or not. This implies that whiteness is not truly related to the appearance of the subject, rather it is up to the interpretation of the observer. This leads us to the only conclusion that truly makes sense, whiteness is a social construct.

This is the currently accepted definition of whiteness, one which can be reinforced with historical evidence. In the United States in the wake of the Irish potato famine, thousands of Irish immigrants were subjected to structural racist policies and forced to endure racist vitriol throughout their lives. In these times, Irish immigrants were not included in the definition of whiteness, they were excluded from this and were instead classified into their own category, viewed as lesser humans compared to the white man who held power in every institution throughout the US.

An interesting observation occurs when looking at the Irish in the United States. As the Irish became entrenched in society, as they persevered and gained more financial and political power, and as their relations with the African American citizens grew, they were suddenly included into the definition of whiteness. This trend also followed for the Polish, the Russians, and the Germans, all of which were seen as, if not subhuman, somehow lesser to the “native” white American. In the modern day, we can see this beginning to happen with certain hispanic populations (although with the more light-skinned and conservative-leaning members). Once again, we are seeing a few interesting trends with these populations.

For one, the more power a group holds in the United States, the more likely they are to be recognized as white. Another interesting trend can be observed by looking into the relations between said groups and African Americans. The closer they became with African Americans, the stronger their ties were and the more likely they were to cooperate and cohabitate with African Americans, the more likely they were to suddenly be considered white. The more likely a group was to become accepting and understanding of the struggle of the African American, the more likely they were to tolerate them and work alongside them, and the more likely they were to combine their strength with the African American and rebel against the system, the more likely they were to be elevated to a level of whiteness.

This brings up an interesting question, why have these groups been elevated to the level of “whiteness” and not the African American? For one, the African American is a well entrenched member of United States society. Although a minority, they make up one of the largest non-white segments of the population. Secondly, African Americans have (to a lesser extent) acquired social and political sway in the United States. African American politicians, police officers, managers, and business owners are fairly common sights in the modern day, at one point even having a mixed race president ruling over the country for two consecutive terms. We have already concluded that the true color of one’s skin is no real indicator of whether that person will be accepted as white or not. No matter the physical appearance of the African American, under every observation we’ve made there is no reason why they should be excluded from the category of whiteness.

Despite this, we actually see the opposite applied to them. Instead of being included as part of the white race, having a child with an African American instead excludes that child from claiming to be white. This is seen to an extent with other races, but none so much as the African American. This exclusion was even supported by law throughout the 19th and 20th century United States, the infamous “One-drop” rules legally classifying anybody with even one Sub-Saharan African (and in some cases, any non-white) ancestor as “black”, “mulatto(a)” or “negro” as it was commonly written in those times.

Thus, one can conclude that the definition of whiteness is so. Whiteness in the United States is a social construct that includes and excludes certain groups of people depending on their power and acceptance in society, while at all times excluding members of the African American segment of the population. Whiteness is malleable and changing constantly, but at all times relies on the idea of excluding those of African descent specifically. Whiteness is a tool first and foremost designed to repress those of African descent by designating them as a separate and thus non-equal member of society. We

can conclude that whiteness is not itself a description of race, rather it is a signifier of acceptance into society and a description of the *lack* of so-called “lesser races” in one’s heritage.

As we now have a true definitive definition of what whiteness is, it is easy to define white culture. White culture is the system and beliefs that protects and perpetuates the idea of whiteness. White culture is both the systematic elevation of those deemed white in society, and the systematic repression of those deemed non-white in a society. This can take the form of job repression, red-lining, disparity in wages, increased policing in predominately non-white communities, and countless other forms of oppression. White culture is not a true culture, the white “race” is a diverse mix of conflicting cultures, national origins, and beliefs. Rather, white culture is a set of repressive policies and beliefs used to secure the power of the white individual in society. White culture is the repression of the minority, the exploitation of the most vulnerable in society to benefit and profit the white individual, and by extension the opposition to equality in society.

Section Two — Recognizing and Accepting

Now that we have defined whiteness and white culture, the future white revolutionary must learn to accept these definitions and recognize the implications of said definitions. The white revolutionary must come to terms with the idea that they have most certainly benefited from the existence of this white culture, and that this benefit comes at the expense of the lives and freedom of those who are excluded from it.

It is not possible to live as a white American without benefitting from white culture in some way. While being white does not in any way guarantee your success in society, it must be recognized that by being born white, you have been given an advantage that no other in society has received. By being born white, you have been excluded from the most vicious racial suppression policies and beliefs that permeate American society. By being born white, you have white privilege.

A common misconception (especially among the right-wing white populace) is that white privilege is a set of active benefits from society. This is not the case, white privilege is not exclusively when the government actively elevates someone to a higher position in society solely because they are white. A facet of white privilege that many among the right cannot comprehend is that it is also the distinct lack of social barriers for white citizens. One who is born with white skin does not need to worry about whether they will receive a harsher than normal legal sentence due to any prejudiced beliefs held by a judge. One who is born white does not need to live in fear of the most vicious hate groups that exist throughout America, waiting for the chance to purge society of the so-called “subhuman”. One who is born white does not have to worry about being excluded from a high paying job simply because of their skin color. This distinct lack of barriers which all who are excluded from the category of whiteness face is also white privilege.

To list the ways that being born white benefits someone would fill its own separate book. The United States since its conception has held a legal and social system specifically designed to benefit the wealthy white man and suppress all others. Despite the numerous revisions to the legal code, the endless fights and the millions of marchers on the street, it has been impossible to rid the core belief of white supremacy that stains every facet of this nation. In truth, this is an impossible task and its impossibility must be recognized and accepted by any white person who wishes to join the fight.

The system is not broken in any way, this is how it was designed from the start. It cannot be fixed because there is nothing to fix. It cannot be reformed because the very foundation the system was built on is white supremacy. The system is beyond reform, beyond fixing, beyond redemption. The system must be destroyed in order for true liberation to take hold, burnt to the ground and a new system built on its ashes. Any attempt to rationalize and argue against this conclusion is futile, it is only prolonging the suffering and exploitation of those it was designed to exploit. The white activist must accept that

they benefit from this system, and that the only way to join the fight is to commit to the complete and total eradication of the system and culture they themselves have benefitted from.

Section Three — Assimilation and Integration

To understand how white activists may break away from white culture, we must first look into and understand how different groups have historically become included in the definition of whiteness. As discussed earlier, multiple ethnic groups such as the Irish, Polish, and Germans have gone from second-class citizenry to full acceptance in society in relatively short periods of time. In order to understand how this has happened, we must look into the process of assimilation, its origins, and its use as a tool to reinforce white supremacy.

Assimilation in the context of white supremacy is the process of conformity to the dominant culture of the United States, that being the white culture. Assimilation is the process of a minority group coming to resemble the values and beliefs of the majority group. This is distinct from cultural integration, in which a minority group develops its own social niche in society while retaining its heritage and traditional beliefs.

Cultural integration is a widespread phenomenon throughout the United States, almost every major city and large suburb will have distinct neighborhoods defined by the ethnic majority in said neighborhoods. An example of cultural integration can be seen by looking at the various Asian communities in large cities such as Chicago and New York. Here, these neighborhoods are defined by their predominantly Asian residents. These neighborhoods will often have businesses stylized in the form of traditional Asian marketplaces, have advertisements and signs written in various Asian languages, and schools which may hold lessons in the predominant Asian language spoken by those in the neighborhood. Another example can be seen in the various Hispanic communities included in cities around the United States. The signage and advertisements will often be written in Spanish, the people in the neighborhood will often speak Spanish, and the businesses and homes in the neighborhood may be built in a traditional South/Central American or Caribbean style.

In these neighborhoods, we see the dynamic of cultural integration at play. These neighborhoods are distinct entities in the city they reside in, its culture and style of operation completely foreign to the rest of the city and how it works. The neighborhood does not see itself as a distinct entity in most instances though, asking residents where they live will often get you the answer of what city the neighborhood resides in, and not the neighborhood itself. The residents of these neighborhoods see themselves as a part of the city, and the city sees these neighborhoods as a part of itself. The culture is distinct, it is separated from the wider city in a physical sense, yet it is not separated from the city in an ideological or social sense. In these examples, the culture has integrated itself into the society, becoming a recognized part of the culture while still retaining its own unique values and way of operation.

This pattern of operation is distinct from the idea of cultural assimilation. When cultural assimilation occurs, the minority culture is not able or allowed to carve its own niche in society, it is not able to retain its own traditions or way of operation. In cultural assimilation, the minority culture is destroyed and dissolved, either being fragmented and absorbed into wider society as a whole or forced to conform with the beliefs and values of the dominant culture. In this we can see the differences between the two ideas, if cultural integration is seen as the acceptance of a minority culture, cultural assimilation can be seen as the unacceptance of the minority culture. Cultural integration can be viewed as a willing or unwilling segregation and distinction from the dominant society, while cultural assimilation can be seen as the forced absorption into society.

Cultural assimilation works through multiple different methods, each distinct yet usually concurrent in their implementation. Cultural assimilation is not a willing process by the minority culture in the sense that it is a choice made with no extraneous pressure placed upon the decision. Assimilation into the white culture is forced upon the minority either systematically or, in cases where no systematic oppression is

directed towards the minority, is forced by social pressure and the desire to avoid future discrimination. Cultural assimilation is in itself a system of obedience and repression, cultural assimilation only occurs when the minority culture is rendered obedient to the will of the white culture and has all extraneous aspects repressed or obliterated. The minority culture experiencing assimilation is unable to express itself or its traditions without consequence and backlash, the system of assimilation is by definition authoritarian and totalitarian in its implementation.

Cultural assimilation works by dissolving the minority culture and forcing the culture to comply with the white culture's values and ideas. Assimilation can be done either systematically or through social pressure, though both methods result in the same end result. When done systematically, this can take the form of forced education from a white-centric view, forced conversion into the dominant religion held by the white culture, repression and discipline for practicing non-white traditions, and selective segregation for members of the minority who do not comply with the white culture.

The most noteworthy and brutal example of forced cultural assimilation is the forced assimilation of the Native American. Cultural assimilation was used as a tool by the white culture in the genocide of the Native American, and to this day is still being practiced in less direct routes. Let us look at the methods the white man used on the Native American to highlight the dangers and brutality of cultural assimilation.

Section Four — The Assimilation of the Native Americans and Why African Americans Were Never Subjected to the Same Assimilation

In the case of the Native American, their forced assimilation into white society was debated since the earliest days of the American empire. George Washington and Henry Knox were the first to propose assimilation under the guise of “civilizing” the natives. Future policies would be based around the idea that if the indigenous peoples were to learn the customs and values of the United States, that they would one day be able to peacefully integrate into society as a whole. Note that there's a distinct lack of the idea of cultural integration, all discussions towards the Native American center around the idea of assimilation. Segregation and allowance of the indigenous to practice their own culture separate from society are never discussed or entertained, all talk is centered around the eradication of the Native American cultures and integration into white society.

Although discussed as early as 1790, the Native American assimilation did not begin in earnest for some time. This was not a pragmatic view or hesitancy by the white culture, assimilation was always the end goal. Rather, this lack of action was strategic as the newly formed United States still had to contend with the colonial powers of Europe for the lands of North America. For a time, the United States would use various Native American tribes as allies against these colonial powers, most evident during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812.

As relations with European powers stabilized, the assimilation of the Native American would start to take effect. George Washington had formulated a six-point plan for “civilizing” the natives, including impartial justice towards Native Americans, regulated buying of Native American Lands, and the “promotion of experiments to civilize or improve Native American society.” The end goal was to get the Native Americans to accept the practice of private property, embrace Christianity, and to teach them how to live as white people lived.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced the removal of Native Americans from white settled land and relocation into reservations west of the Mississippi River. Although it did not directly authorize the forced removal of Native Americans, it gave the president the authority to “negotiate” land exchange treaties with the various indigenous tribes. The Choctaws were the first to be “voluntarily” removed under this act on September 27th, 1830. The Indian Removal act was often abused by local government

authorities, while in theory it was to make the removal of Native Americans voluntary, in practice it was anything but. The Treaty of New Echota is one of the most famous examples of abuse of the Indian Removal Act. Signed on December 29th, 1835 by a small non-leading faction of the Cherokee tribe, it was used as justification to remove the Cherokee from Georgia in 1838 despite protest by the tribal leadership and continued revision of the treaty. An estimated 4,000 Cherokee died during the forced relocation, the removal and route they were forced to take becoming known as the Trail of Tears.

In 1865, the US government began making contracts with various missionaries to set up schools in and around reservations. These schools would teach citizenship, English, and various forms of agriculture. At the same time, these schools would serve as centers of conversion, operated by missionaries in an attempt to force the Native American students to accept Christianity and white culture. In these schools, Native Americans were forced to dress in the styles popular to white society, forced to learn and speak English, forbidden from practicing their own religion, and were eventually “civilized” into the image of the white man.

On December 4th, 1871, Ulysses Grant stated in his State of the Union Address that “*The policy pursued toward the Indians has resulted favorably ... many tribes of Indians have been induced to settle upon reservations, to cultivate the soil, to perform productive labor of various kinds, and to partially accept civilization. They are being cared for in such a way, it is hoped, as to induce those still pursuing their old habits of life to embrace the only opportunity which is left them to avoid extermination.*” Here we can see that the US government at the time was not concerned with the perception of its acts, and was in fact quite open about the intentions of the policies it passed. These policies and actions were openly recognized as attempts to force the Native Americans to either conform to white society or be eradicated. It was either assimilate or exterminate, the United States government held no qualms about openly praising its intentional genocide of both the Native Americans and their various cultures.

The United States used its open genocide of the Native Americans as further justification for control over their affairs and further cultural assimilation. The ruling of *United States V. Kagama* in 1886 gave the government practically unlimited authority to force the assimilation of the indigenous tribes into American society. In this ruling, the court stated “*The power of the general government over these remnants of a race once powerful, now weak and diminished in numbers, is necessary to their protection, as well as to the safety of those among whom they dwell. It must exist in that government, because it never has existed anywhere else; because the theater of its exercise is within the geographical limits of the United States; because it has never been denied; and because it alone can enforce its laws on all the tribes.*” Here we can see that the US Government had systematically destroyed Native American tribes, forced them off their traditional lands, categorized them as second-class citizens, then used the weakened state of the Native American as justification for “protection”. Make no mistake, this was a systematic extermination attempt.

We can conclude that the goals of the assimilation of the Native Americans were to induct the Native Americans into the white race. The United States was adamant that the Native American could never cohabitate on the same land as the white man without learning the ways of the white man, and took every step to forcefully coerce the Native Americans to conform to the traditions and beliefs of the white man. At the same time; the US government was destroying the traditions of the Native Americans, segregating them into desolate backwater reservations and subjecting them to totalitarian oversight the likes of which would make Orwell blush. Again though, we are left with a question and curious oversight. If the United States went through such great lengths to subjugate the Native Americans and force them to conform with the white culture, why hasn’t this same determination been seen with the African Americans?

The answer is complex. Attempts had been made to subjugate the African American population, what differentiated these efforts from the assimilation and subjugation of the Native Americans was the end goal of such subjugation. In the case of the Native Americans, the end goal of the subjugation was the eradication of the indigenous identity, the eradication of the culture and traditions which surrounded this identity, and the forced elevation into whiteness for members of the Native American population.

The goal was to eliminate the perceived threat of Native American tribal sovereignty, and to force the indigenous tribes of North America into accepting the white claim of ownership over the continent. By forcefully elevating the Native American into whiteness through genocide and race mixing, the very idea of Native American rights over the land would have been exterminated, thrown to the history books as the claims of a race which no longer existed, ensuring the white man's rule over the new nation with no legitimate resistance.

In the case of African Americans, no true threat to the sovereignty of the United States existed. African Americans had no legitimate claims over the ownership of the land or heritage in the North American continent, African Americans were the descendants of Africans who were kidnapped and stolen from their own native lands and forced into a foreign land for the purpose of slave labor.

As a result, while subjugation efforts were made against the African Americans, none of them had the end goal of elevating them to a level of whiteness. In truth, the United States had no need to elevate the African American to whiteness, as it had no benefits for elevating them to whiteness. In fact, elevation to whiteness would have been detrimental to the white culture.

African Americans were brought over to the United States by force for the purpose of slave labor. Their niche in the US was of a servant class, they were to serve their masters day and night without complaint or pay under threat of whipping or execution. This was the role imposed on them by white society, and as far as the United States was concerned this was the only role they would occupy in society. As such, subjugation efforts by the white culture did not focus on elevating the African American to the level of whiteness as it did with the Native American. All efforts made by the white culture were not to bring African Americans to the same level as white citizens, they were instead intended to force compliance upon the African American population.

The methods used by the US government were fairly similar to those used against the Native Americans. It first started with the degradation of character and dehumanizing of the African American slave. From the first days on the plantation, the slaves were stripped of their names, denied their heritage and forced to leave behind their traditional beliefs. From this point, the slaves were taught the religion of the white man, taught the ideals and beliefs of Christianity and forcefully converted to the religion.

Of course, the image of Christ they were taught was of a white man, spoken of as master over all and treated as a not-so-subtle stand-in for the white man in general. The slaves would be taught the verses of the bible that focused on complacency and obedience, taught to never question the rulings of the master and damning their souls if they so much as spoke up against the master. They would also be taught of the reason why they were converted, portraying the eradication of their cultural beliefs as salvation from eternal hellfire.

At the same time, the master would deny the slave any independent thought or self-reliance. The slave was forbidden to read or write, education on such or any practice of being punishable by hard labor and ruthless beating. The slave would be denied anything that could motivate them to seek freedom or place their loyalties away from the master, any spouses or children the slave had would also be subject to the same treatment as them and could be sold away at the slightest transgression.

The slave was taught that their place in society was not only unchangeable, but divinely appointed. They were taught that the bible had allotted the white man authority over the black slave and that any attempt to acquire their own freedom was unholy and unnatural. Slaves who attempted escape were at times even considered psychologically troubled. In 1851, Samuel A. Cartwright proposed Drapetomania as an explanation for why slaves kept trying to escape their status and gain their freedom. Drapetomania was a mental disorder stemming from masters making themselves "...too familiar with [slaves], treating them as equals" in his eyes, with one of its remedies being "*whipping the devil out of them*"

At the same time, any religious traditions the slaves had come up with would be ruthlessly stamped out and repressed. Slaves often practiced syncretism, mixing Christian beliefs with the beliefs they originally held before their bondage and forced servitude to the white man. Slave owners would often refuse to baptize their slaves for fear that baptism would make the slaves liable for emancipation, stemming mostly from vague laws concerning the legality of keeping Christian slaves during British

colonial rule. Even after colonial rule ended, this practice of refusing to baptize slaves held through the end of chattel slavery. Nevertheless, when it was known by the master, slaves who practiced their own unique version of Christianity would be ruthlessly punished. The slaves would worship Jesus, but only on the white man's terms.

These actions were economical, based in the system of capitalism that rules over our country. The United States had come to rely upon slave labor for agricultural production and could ill afford losing their entire unpaid workforce. These brutal treatments were in effect actions to not only protect the strength of the white culture in the United States, but were also to protect profit. When slavery was abolished, the white culture had to keep the African American subjugated.

By elevating the African American to the same level as the white man, the white man would be forced to contend with its past treatment of the African American and would be forced to admit that it had acted immorally against them. At the same time, elevation to an equal status as the white man would also force the United States to treat African Americans as equals, equal pay and equal rights would have to be allotted and the white man would have to compete for power with a class that remembered how ruthlessly it had been treated. Elevation to whiteness would have disrupted the power balance of the United States, it would have forced the white culture to accept its own wrongdoings and would have forced it to face the consequences of its own actions. For this reason, the African American would never be elevated to the same level as the white man, and all future actions regarding them would be attempts to re-subjugate or, at a minimum, slow their progress towards acceptance in society.

It is in these specific examples that we can see the foundation of white supremacy this nation was built on. While these are the two most egregious examples of how the white culture in the United States functions to secure its power, these are not the only examples available for us to analyze. In truth, to look over and analyze every act of subjugation the white culture has committed on the non-white populations would and has filled entire libraries and bookstores.

The white culture has worked with ruthless efficiency to ensure its power over the greater population, it has subjugated and exploited countless millions and directly benefited from the suffering it has dolled out to those unfortunate enough to not be included within its ranks. The white culture at its very foundation is authoritarian and brutal, it cannot and could not have survived as long as it has without the purposeful infliction of brutality towards anyone and everyone who does not meet its criteria for inclusion.

It is for these reasons that the white revolutionary cannot stand idly and fight against the issues of society while ignoring it. Every issue that the white activist could take a stand against, from environmental to political, from police brutality to gentrification, from rent increase to wage exploitation, in some way has roots in this system. Ignorance and purposeful apathy towards the roots of white culture and white supremacy is setting the movement up for failure, it is limiting the scope of the movement to deal only with the symptoms and to not fix the root cause of the issues the white revolutionary holds interest against. The white revolutionary must take a stand against the white culture, they must work towards its abolishment and destruction if they ever want their actions to be more than performative.

The System and Disconnecting From It

Once the white revolutionary has come to understand the system, they must then learn how to remove themselves from it. This is not an easy process, on the contrary removing oneself from the system is one of the most difficult barriers to cross before becoming a true freedom fighter. To remove oneself from the system is the first and most consequential revolutionary act a white revolutionary can commit.

Section One — The System

To remove oneself from the system, we must first recognize what it is and how it works. If white culture is the system and beliefs that protects the idea of whiteness and white supremacy, the system is the policies of said beliefs put into action. This may seem redundant, as the definition of white culture itself covers the idea of the systems used to perpetuate the idea, but the distinction is needed in order to effectively separate oneself from the culture.

The system can be thought of as exclusively the praxis of white culture, it is the physical methods and policies implemented to enforce the idea of white supremacy and white culture as a whole. The system can also be interchangeable with the state apparatus and seen as an offshoot of bourgeois oppression of the working class as a whole. In this manner, it is the physical manifestation of bourgeoisie attempts to splinter the working class from itself along racial fault lines. The system as referred to in this work is not *the system* as recognized by typical anarchist thought. Although it is a part of *the system*, the system as referred to in this work is focused specifically on the racial aspects of said system.

The system works through three distinct methods, these methods are known as legal oppression, financial oppression, and information manipulation. These three methods have some overlap in their practice, yet are distinct enough in their actions and the situations they are implemented in that their distinction deserves recognition. It is also worth noting that the system does not need to be systematic, the system is not required to be written into law. The system can exist merely through the actions, legal or illegal, of those in power as long as it serves to protect the idea of the white culture. The actions need not also be purposeful, although as we will see in many cases they are.

Legal oppression is the most direct and easiest method to both identify and fight against. Legal oppression is the protection of white culture and white supremacy through the use of the legal code. The most famous and overt examples of this method in the United States was chattel slavery and the implementation of Jim Crow and segregation after slavery was abolished. This can also be seen outside of the United States, the most famous of which would be the Apartheid system in South Africa. While overt examples of legal oppression like this are well recognized and universally condemned in the modern age, legal oppression does not need to be so overt to be effective.

Legal oppression does not need to be openly codified to be effective. Legal oppression can take subtler forms and become entrenched to the point where identification as purposeful oppression is hard to determine. Legal oppression can take the form of increased law enforcement patrols in neighborhoods that are predominantly non-white. Legal oppression can also take the form of longer sentences being given to African American criminals than white criminals.

The most widespread form of legal oppression seen in modern times is through the penalties given to felons, stripping them of their rights to vote, own a firearm, and condemning them to a life of low-wage labor and poor housing. These penalties; combined with more frequent law enforcement patrols in

minority neighborhoods and longer sentences given to non-white criminals, coalesces into a system which systematically strips non-white citizens of their rights, forcing them into a life where crime becomes a necessity to survive and forcing them into a cycle of release and reincarceration. Combined with a for-profit prison system, the justice system forces criminals into a cycle of release and rearrest, and by extension ensures a constant supply of cheap labor for the workshops of these for-profit prisons. By systematically stripping away the rights of non-white citizens, the prison system is rewarded with profit and government contracts, keeping the system alive in perpetuity.

Financial oppression is a subtler method used by the system to repress the minority populous. Financial oppression is the restriction of financial strength in the non-white community, preventing them from gaining financial strength and forcing them into a perpetual cycle of poverty and debt. Under the capitalist system, financial strength is the most important factor in the well-being of an individual and their family. By restricting the access of financial strength to the white citizens, the white race ensures that it alone holds majority power, no matter if it is the majority or minority in the United States.

Financial oppression can be accomplished in multiple ways and, to a degree, has been limited by the legal system. We must not mistake it as a method used solely in the past though, its use has not been completely eliminated. In the past, red-lining and wage gaps were the most common and effective methods used to ensure that non-white citizens remained in a state of poverty. While financial oppression can be carried out directly by the state, often it is shifted onto societal consciousness over time, removing the need for direct intervention by the state entirely.

Red-lining was the systematic segregation of African Americans from predominantly white neighborhoods. This was done by refusing loans to African Americans, lowering property values if a neighborhood contained African American residents, and refusing to insure homes owned by African Americans. By refusing the initial loans, this prevented poorer African Americans from moving into white neighborhoods. As an effect from lowering property values if an African American did manage to move into the neighborhood, this put pressure on the homeowners in said neighborhoods to harass and force out African American residents, removing the need for action by the state completely and ingraining the idea of African Americans lowering property values even to the modern day.

Financial oppression can also be accomplished through wage gap. Wage gap in the context of the system is the overall trend of non-white workers being paid less than white workers. In the past, this was accomplished through directly paying non-white workers a lower wage than their white coworkers. While officially this is illegal in the United States, to an extent this can still be accomplished by refusing to give raises to deserving non-white workers at the same rate as their white coworkers. Wage gap can also be implemented by refusing to hire non-white applicants for high-pay jobs, instead forcing them to stay in lower-paying sectors of the workforce.

While most would argue that this method is now illegal and therefore cannot be counted as a form of financial oppression anymore, looking into the law reveals loopholes that can still be exploited to this effect. As long as the employer does not directly state that the worker was fired or denied a position due to their race, the employer cannot be charged for discrimination. Thus, under the current system it is ignorant to believe that employers to this day do not exploit these loopholes in order to perpetuate their prejudiced views.

In the case of financial oppression, we see a trend of the state directly endorsing the oppressive policies, receiving pushback for said oppression, and recalling the oppressive policies while leaving loopholes so the oppression can continue. In this way, by officially making the methods illegal while still leaving room for it to take place, the state absolves itself of any criticism while at the same time ensuring that the oppressive actions continue. The state pushes the responsibility of oppression onto the individual white person, confident that they will continue the oppression while the state steps back and claims ignorance.

When the oppression is discovered, the blame falls on the individual and the state condemns them, while at the same time doing nothing to fix the loopholes which made the oppression possible. In this way,

the state has decentralized financial oppression, ensuring its survival while at the same time gaining the support of the performative or ignorant who will champion the system's actions against its scapegoats, never questioning why the state doesn't instead prevent the oppression from being possible in the first place.

The third method used by the system is information manipulation, the use of the education system and media to solidify the idea of white supremacy. From the earliest days of childhood, the education system teaches us a diluted, simplified version of history that paints the white race as pure and noble. They teach that the pilgrims and Native Americans got along and cooperated, that Christopher Columbus was an adventurer and that Natives graciously gave up their land to enable the colonizers to survive and thrive in their new settlements. They teach us about racism in an offhand manner, painting it as a fringe belief that the majority was against. They teach us about the civil rights movement, about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his peaceful movement, portraying him as a martyr for equality.

They do not teach us about Christopher Columbus's child sex slave industry. They do not teach us about Abraham Lincoln's desire to send all former African American slaves to Africa, nor do they teach about the promise and sudden revoking of reparations for former slaves. They do not teach us about Malcolm X, the riots after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, nor the simple fact that he was not a martyr, but a murder victim. The education system teaches the child a simplified history of the United States, either "conveniently" skipping the atrocities committed by the state or waving it off as fringe tragedies and not as the organized atrocities they were. The system is insidious, it does not restrict this information, rather it teaches the youth in such a way that unless pushed to research on their own, they will accept what they are told as fact and hold no desire to look further.

While the education system plays a crucial role in information manipulation, it is not the only method used to accomplish this goal. Beyond the halls of state mandated propaganda factories, the youth transitions into an adult and becomes exposed to the corporate media. Here, the white culture pushes skewed statistics, echo chamber debates, and constructed narratives to continually push the ideas of white supremacy. From the vocabulary chosen to describe the white criminal versus non-white criminal, to the constant brutal criticisms given to any non-white activist who appears on the news, the media is used as a weapon to defend the white individual and attack the non-white individual. Through the use of these methods, the system performs its role in protecting the idea of white supremacy with ruthless efficiency.

Section Two — Disconnecting

Now that the definition of the system and its methods of operation have been outlined, we may now discuss how to proceed with disconnecting with it. Disconnection from the system is neither easy nor instantaneous, the system has been at work instilling the beliefs of white culture and enforcing its rule since the day the white individual is born and unlearning everything it has taught will take time. There is no definitive way to guarantee removal from the system, deprogramming is a deeply personal process and varies from person to person. The only way to ensure removal from the system is personal persistence and the willpower to endure the process and its consequences.

The first step to removing yourself from the system is recognizing why removal is necessary. You must recognize the injustices of the system and see that you, a white person, are directly benefiting from it. You must see that your life has seen reduced suffering at the expense of the increased suffering of others. You must recognize that this system, fueled by the greed of capitalist overlords and perpetuated on purpose for said overlords' profit and stability, is beyond reform or redemption. It must be destroyed, burned and cast away to the annals of history, never to be rebuilt again in the age of the commonwealth of toil.

The white culture is built on the suffering of uncountable millions, bathed in the blood of the innocent and built on the backs of the wretched masses toiling endlessly for scraps from the banquets

of the elite. Removing yourself from this system is necessary, recognizing the suffering it causes while remaining silent and reaping the benefits of it makes you complicit in the suffering it causes. The only way to remain true to your values of destroying an unjust system is to first remove yourself from the system and quit reaping the rewards yourself.

The next step to removing yourself from the system is to actively fight against it. Removing yourself from the system while taking no action against it does nothing for the masses who suffer under it. Removing yourself does not lessen its injustices, simply removing yourself from the benefits does not make the system smaller or weaker. Only by actively fighting against it, taking a stand, refusing to allow it to grow and declaring your intent to eradicate it can you stay true to the idea of fighting for freedom for all. Silence is compliance, only by speaking up and taking action can you truthfully call yourself a revolutionary.

This is not a fight you have to fight alone, you should look to join a revolutionary group which recognizes these ideals and assist them in any way possible. Canvass, protest, riot, it does not matter what you do. What matters is that you are doing something and remembering why you are doing it. Let every action be against the vile capitalist system, let every tossed stone be aimed at the racist institutions that perpetuate this suffering and let every molotov burn with revolutionary fervor. Remember why you stand with your BIPoC comrades, remember what they have had to endure, and remember how you have benefitted from their suffering. Remember, and declare that you will do everything in your power to ensure that it burns to ashes.

The final step to disconnecting from white society is continuous, it is the recognition of your own prejudices and the active subversion of said prejudices. In truth, no white person is free of prejudice, the ideas of white supremacy and white culture are ingrained in the minds of every white person since the first days of education, this is an unavoidable consequence of living in the United States. Prejudice is instilled from the very first days of youth, reinforced by every action of the system and every action within the system. For a white person to claim that they are without prejudice is for a white person to lie, every single white person including the authors of this very book holds at least some prejudice that they must recognize and reconcile. No matter how subtle or overt, prejudice is prejudice and must be recognized and its existence accepted.

Removing decades of instilled prejudice is not a process that can be done overnight. It is a continuous process and in truth may never be fully completed. Breaking away from white culture however is not the complete removal of these prejudices, if that were the case then the number of white people who could call themselves revolutionaries would be inconsequential. Breaking away from white culture is accepting that your prejudices exist and working towards removing them instead of accepting them as an inherent part of your identity. The act of accepting that you do, in fact, hold prejudice is in itself a revolutionary act. It is the process of working towards the removal of these prejudices that is a break from white culture, not its success. Of course, successful removal of these prejudices is the goal of the process and should never be discounted as impossible or unobtainable. By accepting your prejudices and truly working against them, you have broken away from the complacency instilled by white culture and can now truly join the fight against it.

In truth, there is no one defined way to break away from the white culture. Breaking away from the white culture by its very nature is a deeply personal endeavor, and no one defined set of actions will guarantee success in removing oneself from it. While the ideas laid out show what must be done to consider oneself broken away, the actions and methods taken to reach these goals are wholly dependent on the individual. There are simply too many factors in determining how and when someone will be able to remove themselves from the white culture. Income level, family bonds, relations outside of their family, the local culture they grew up in and exposure to other cultures, it is all too complicated to lay out a system that would guarantee success for everyone. Removal from the white culture is wholly dependent on the individual and their support network; if they have one, it relies on the individual educating themselves in any way they can and becoming determined to fight against the system. One

cannot be forced or coerced to join the fight for revolution in earnest terms, it is up to the revolutionary to realize why the fight is necessary and why they must join it.

Backlash

Now that the white revolutionary has taken the steps to removing themselves from the mentality and benefits of white culture, they will have to contend with the repercussions of their actions. Upon declaring their intent to fight against it and taking action against the white culture, the white revolutionary will have transformed themselves from a compliant participant of the culture to an enemy of the culture. By choosing the side of revolution, the white revolutionary has willingly announced their resignation from the bourgeois system, and as a result have aligned themselves with the repressed class.

This alliance is interpreted by the white culture as inclusion with the repressed class. From the day of resignation, the white culture will from that point no longer see the white revolutionary as a white person. While the white revolutionary can and will still receive some of the benefits of having white skin (less suspicion and harassment by the police for example), this only holds true as long as the intentions and beliefs of the revolutionary are unknown.

When an agent of the oppressing class is aware of the beliefs held by the revolutionary, they will receive no benefits or mercy from the oppressor. They will be subjected to a similar level of brutality and hostility as any member of the repressed non-white citizenry. This is to be expected and accepted by the revolutionary, the sacrifice of one's privileged life is a necessary price in order to join the revolution. While this hostility cannot be avoided, it can be mitigated and resisted with proper determination and caution. We can also determine the most likely sources and types of hostility the white revolutionary will experience.

Section One — Friends and Family

After joining the cause for liberation, often the first source of backlash the white revolutionary will experience is from those closest to them. This first source may be from a close friend, a parent, a sibling, or anyone they hold a close and intimate bond with such as a relationship partner. As we are speaking of a white person moving on from a life of capitalist comfort to a life of ruthless advocacy and fighting for socialist revolution, it is likely that somebody close to them holds conservative or far-right views.

Not all white people will experience resistance from such an extreme opposite viewpoint, it is very likely that the white revolutionary will have held at least liberal ideals before taking the pledge for revolution. As most initial political viewpoints are first acquired from observation and discussion with family members, it is likely that those closest to the revolutionary also hold these views to an extent.

This however does not isolate the white revolutionary from criticism and hatred. Liberals are inherently capitalist, at the most believing a set of reformatory beliefs. Aligning yourself to an anti-capitalist and revolutionary ideology will still strike a nerve with even the most reformation worshipping liberal.

Thanks to decades of red-scare propaganda and information manipulation regarding theories centered around communist and anarchist societies, criticism and reaction can and should be expected from anyone who does not specifically align to these beliefs. It is no secret that the American populace is ignorant to the beliefs held by thinkers such as Marx and Kropotkin, this is by design from the system and fear, ignorance, and revulsion towards these ideologies is ingrained into the minds of the youth along with the ideas of white supremacy.

Depending on the age of the white revolutionary, they may experience discipline and consequences for merely expressing interest in anti-capitalist or anti-racist ideologies. If the revolutionary is a minor, they may be forced to destroy or delete any literature or videos deemed "too radical" for them to

handle. Depending on the household, the consequences could be far more severe. It is not unheard of for minors expressing interest in revolutionary politics to experience verbal abuse, physical abuse, or removal from the household. In the most extreme cases, minors have experienced threats and attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, against their lives, although thankfully this is a comparatively rare occurrence. Nevertheless, this is a possibility that must be accounted for before making your views known to the world, especially the more radical views held.

Section Two — The Workplace

One of the most damaging settings in which the white revolutionary can receive backlash is in the workplace. While the revolutionary is somewhat safe from physical harm compared to dealing with other situations due to the likely older age of the revolutionary and the consequences an aggressor will experience upon initiation of assault, the revolutionary is faced with a different form of potential harm. The revolutionary's source of income and stability is threatened when word of their beliefs makes its way around the workplace, risking the potential of poverty and harassment once their beliefs are learned.

Often, the harassment will come from coworkers on the same level as them. While this is somewhat safer than harassment from someone higher up the echelon of workplace authority, this is not inconsequential to the safety of the revolutionary. While their job may not be directly at risk, the coworker may resort to petty harassment and verbal assault. This may make the workplace unbearable, already the revolutionary may work a job in which they resent as is the case for many who first look towards leftist ideologies, and the harassing coworker can most definitely shift the dynamic from uncomfortable to unbearable.

The coworker will do everything in their power to make the day to day grind of wage slavery even more uncomfortable and uneasy, using whatever petty authority and responsibilities they hold to make the revolutionary's job harder or more annoying. The risk to the revolutionary's job also cannot be completely discounted, the coworker may become determined to remove the revolutionary from the workplace. False accusations, constant reports to HR or the workplace equivalent, and terrible reviews on anonymous worker surveys are to be expected.

More dangerous to the revolutionary is harassment from a manager or higher position in the workplace. While harassment from a coworker can be annoying and divisive, it can at most times be ignored or disregarded as the coworker holds no true authority over the revolutionary. The same cannot be said for harassment by a manager or an executive. As these positions hold true direct authority over the revolutionary, harassment by these members of the workplace are by their very nature unignorable. The revolutionary will be forced to deal with the harassment under threat of discipline, demotion, or even termination from their workplace.

Managers can harass the revolutionary in a much more effective way than an equal level coworker can. The manager may assign the revolutionary to repetitive, tedious, or exhausting work as retaliation for holding beliefs they do not agree to. The manager may also change the schedule of the revolutionary if it is in their authority.

Through this method, they may decide to remove the revolutionary from the schedule altogether or reduce their hours to a point where the job no longer meets the financial requirements of the revolutionary. Conversely, the manager may also decide to increase the hours and workload of the revolutionary, making them work exhausting shifts or switching them between graveyard and morning shifts, depriving them of sleep, stability, and sanity.

In more extreme cases, the revolutionary may be outright fired for their beliefs. While this is not as common an occurrence as one may believe, this is still a possibility that the revolutionary may experience. In the United States, political beliefs are not a protected category regarding employment, and as such a company may fire the worker with no repercussions. It is more likely that the manager

will instead make the workplace intolerable to the point of the revolutionary voluntarily quitting their job.

Through the methods above, the manager will drive the revolutionary to their breaking point, making them willingly quit due to the conditions they endure. This serves the ego of the manager in two ways. One, by quitting the job, the revolutionary often gives up any benefits or unemployment assistance they may have been entitled to receive should they have been terminated. Two, the torment and harassment of the revolutionary serves as a sort of warped justice or stress relief to the manager, eager to exert their will and authority over an object of their hatred. In the world of the revolutionary, unless the workplace is explicitly revolutionary such as a co-op or an actively anarchist/communist supporting entity, no job is safe or stable.

Section Three — The Public

Arguably, the most physically dangerous setting for the white revolutionary is the public space. While the workforce is beholden to anti-harassment regulations and the family is somewhat likely to hold a positive bond with the revolutionary, in the public setting these factors are absent. While the rule of law is present just as with every other setting discussed, this does little if anything to deter those determined to harass or harm the revolutionary.

The threats present at a protest or demonstration are well known and do not need to be reiterated. Police harassment, counter-protesters, undercover initiators, these threats are common knowledge among even the most casually active participants at these events. Less well known is the threats displayed outside of these events, many of which may be spurred by participation at said events.

Harassment by law enforcement is a constant threat to the white revolutionary. Participation against or openly spoken advocacy against the police is an invitation to future harassment and brutality. Constantly being pulled over, physical assault, and false criminal accusations are common occurrences against revolutionaries both non-white and white. Harassment of this form is incredibly dangerous to the revolutionary, the police hold the power of life and death with little regulation and oversight, and every day we see that they are ecstatic to execute their authority for the slightest transgression.

Harassment by members of the right is also a constant occurrence towards the white revolutionary, the most dangerous of these being from members of far-right or neo-nazi organizations. While law enforcement hold direct authority over life and death, members of far-right organizations do not concern themselves with justification of murder. These organizations preach for violence against leftists of all types, openly calling for the torture and murder of those who are non-white and non-conforming to their fascist ideology. The white revolutionary is at nearly the same risk of harm from these organization as any non-white members of society. In the eyes of the far-right, white anti-capitalist revolutionaries are seen as race traitors, scum to be dealt with swiftly and painfully. The risk from these groups cannot be underestimated, no matter how unlikely an attack from the far-right may seem, it is always a possibility and caution should be taken at all times whenever a member of one of these organizations is encountered.

Section Four — Operational Security

Now that the most common and dangerous sources of backlash have been identified, it is of utmost importance that the white revolutionary practice caution and attempt to mitigate or avoid backlash at all costs. Once backlash has begun, it is extremely detrimental to the physical safety and mental stability of the revolutionary. Backlash can impede or outright prevent the revolutionary from participating in the fight for revolution, mitigation of it is required to ensure both the safety of the revolutionary and the progress of the revolution.

The most effective way to prevent backlash for the beliefs we hold is by preventing your beliefs from being learned outside of the intended audience. This can be accomplished through proper operational security. Operational security, which from this point on shall be referred to as OpSec, is an umbrella term for the actions and practices one can take to prevent information from garnering the attention of those it was not intended for. Proper OpSec is accomplished through the establishment of practices and caution when communicating information which could expose you to backlash from sources which oppose the revolution.

Proper OpSec cannot be taught or completely ensured, it is built through real world experience and trial and error. OpSec strategies are dependent on the medium through which communication is accomplished, and as such strategies effective for one form of communication may not be effective for other forms. Opsec methods are ever changing and too numerous to document in this section alone, however some basic ideas and practices can be applied to everyday life and expanded upon with personal research.

The key idea of practicing OpSec is the use of caution whenever communicating organizational or ideological ideals. Whatever method is used to communicate; whether electronic, in-person dialogue, or written letters, it is important to be sure that your method is both secure and arriving to its intended recipient. Be sure that whatever communication method being used is not traceable, oftentimes saved messages and video recordings are dug up and used against leftists when least expected. It is also important to ensure that your communications are not being observed by an outside party. This can take a wide variety of forms, from simple eavesdropping by bystanders to outright hacking and tapping of electronic communications. No matter the form of communication, the essential idea of OpSec is to be sure that the message is secure and that the intended recipient is the only one receiving it.

OpSec does not only apply to the transmission of information, proper OpSec also involves avoiding drawing unnecessary attention to yourself or organizations you're affiliated with. Social media is an especially present source of unnecessary attention, however this also applies to public presentation. Be sure you are aware of your surroundings and potential audience when deciding whether to openly espouse your beliefs. Make sure that the clothing you wear does not give out personal information or express your beliefs when these do not need to be expressed. Be aware of any recording devices in your local surroundings when planning or participating in actions. Most importantly, be aware of when it is appropriate and safe to publish your views to the world. While we would love nothing more than to march down the streets waving the red and black flag while singing songs of revolution, we have to be aware of when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

OpSec is not without its issues, no matter how useful a tool it is for organizational practices. OpSec by its very nature limits the public perception of an individual or an organization's beliefs and ideals. While this is done in the interest of ensuring the safety and stability of the revolutionary, it serves as a barrier between the ideals of the revolutionary and the wider public, limiting the amount of support and participants the revolution can acquire in a span of time.

The balance between OpSec and public perception is entirely up to the revolutionary individual or organization. Some organizations practice minimal OpSec, exposing themselves to potential risks in exchange for widespread public perception and support. Other more isolationist organizations may practice extensive OpSec, shying away from public support and exposure in the interest of protecting the members of the organization, especially if the organization is planning or practicing illegal methods of operation. No proper balance of OpSec and public support can be declared as the balance between OpSec and public support can only be determined by the material conditions the revolutionary or organization is facing and their overall goals.

Section Five — Mitigating the Risk of Violent Backlash

No matter how strictly OpSec is processed, it is likely that at some point the white revolutionary will face retaliation for their beliefs. As the methods to mitigate backlash from friends, family, and the workplace are heavily reliant on the specific circumstances and context of the backlash, we will instead focus on mitigating the risk from backlash taking place in the public. Specifically, we will focus on mitigating the risk of violent confrontations from those most vehemently opposed to the beliefs and ideals of the white revolutionary.

The white revolutionary faces two potential types of violence from the public, exempting violence from law enforcement. When discussing violent public backlash, the revolutionary may be faced with either individual or organized violence. These two must be distinguished as the methods for mitigating the risks posed by each form differ.

Before advancing to the different types of violence the white revolutionary may experience and techniques to mitigate each, it must be understood that the safest option for any revolutionary facing a violent confrontation is to escape the confrontation. Every revolutionary, whether they are attending an action or are simply out in the public should have an escape route in mind. No matter what causes the confrontation or what risk mitigation is possible, an option to escape should always be in mind. It is never wise to participate in a confrontation if it can be avoided, the safest option is always to leave the confrontation. Going on, the types of violent confrontations and the mitigation techniques for each shall assume that escaping the confrontation is impossible.

Individual violence is the threat posed by an individual or multiple unaffiliated individuals towards the white revolutionary. While the individuals facing the revolutionary may be unorganized or unaffiliated with each other outside the confrontation, this does not make their cooperation any less dangerous. In the case of individual violence, the confrontation may be initiated by one person, with others joining in as the confrontation becomes increasingly heated or physical. Individual violence is often committed in reaction to an action or public expression of the beliefs held by the white revolutionary.

As individual violence is often committed in reaction to a perceived “wrongdoing” by the revolutionary, the most effective way to mitigate the risk is to conceal one’s beliefs via proper OpSec. During an action directed towards the white culture or a social issue vehemently opposed by socialists, this is obviously not practical nor possible. In cases where the white revolutionary is unable or unwilling to conceal their beliefs, a few steps may be taken to mitigate the risk of individual violence.

De-escalation is often possible in the case of individual violence. As individual violence is often done in reaction to a specific action by the revolutionary, the assaulter is only attempting to commit violence as an emotional response to the action. In these cases, calming the assaulter or assaulters is the safest option for the white revolutionary barring escape, as this has the potential to stop the initial confrontation from escalating to a physical confrontation.

If de-escalation is not possible, the next step to take is intimidation. If available, garner the attention of nearby revolutionaries and get them in close proximity to you. A physical confrontation is less likely to occur if the assaulter or assaulters are outnumbered. Often, the assaulter is trying to commit violence because they believe in their ability to win the fight. When faced with multiple potential opponents, the assaulter or assaulters are less likely to get physical due to the potential of harm on their end.

Another way to intimidate the assaulter is by acquiring a weapon of some sort. The type of weapon is not particularly important for the intimidation, although weapons such as firearms do hold considerably more intimidation factor than improvised weaponry such as bricks or chains. What matters is that the weapon is visible and the assaulter believes that you are willing to use it against them if the confrontation becomes physical. Note that this should only be used as a last resort, as by acquiring a weapon you are elevating the threat level of the confrontation, making a physical confrontation more likely to occur and more violent in nature if the assaulter is not intimidated. Additionally, by openly carrying and threatening to use a weapon, there’s a possibility of garnering the attention and interference of others nearby, along with inviting the assaulter to use weapons if they have any in their possession.

Organized violence is the threat posed by one or multiple organized counter-revolutionaries towards the white revolutionary. Organized violence is differentiated from individual violence by the affiliation of the assaulter. While the violence may be committed by one individual, the assaulter's affiliation with a counter-revolutionary organization makes the assault more dangerous in the long-term when compared with individual violence. In addition to this, organized violence is more likely to involve multiple assaulters due to their inclusion in a counter-revolutionary organization.

Organized violence is more dangerous than individual violence for multiple reasons. For one, the assaulter's alliance with a counter-revolutionary organization makes the interference of others in the confrontation more likely, as well as making the initial confrontation more likely to start off with multiple assaulters. Additionally, organized violence may be planned in advance unlike individual violence, making avoiding the physical confrontation exponentially more difficult if not impossible to avoid. Lastly, the assaulter's affiliation with a counter-revolutionary group has the potential to make future confrontations more likely, as depending on the outcome of the conflict the organization may either view the participants of the action as "easy targets" or want revenge in the face of defeat.

When facing an organized assaulter or assaulters, de-escalation may still be attempted though its effectiveness is reduced due to both the zealous disapproval of the revolutionary's beliefs and possible advanced planning of the assault. In these cases, intimidation is the only method likely to avoid a physical confrontation barring escape. When dealing with organized violence, it should be assumed that physical violence is inevitable if escape is not an option. The confrontation is likely to have been planned in advance, and in some cases no amount of intimidation may dissuade the assaulter or assaulters from starting a physical confrontation. Whether this is due to the confidence of the assaulter or assaulters, perceived weakness of the revolutionary, or simple zealous devotion to the mission of assaulting the revolutionary is not important.

In cases where physical violence is unavoidable, it is important to use overwhelming and unbalanced force against the assaulter or assaulters. Every assault should be considered a threat against one's life, especially when the assault is initiated by a member of a counter-revolutionary organization. The motives, willingness for violence, and extent the assaulter is willing to take the violence is not known ahead of time, therefore the revolutionary should use any and every resource available to them to protect themselves and others from the assault.

Legal repercussions aside, the revolutionary must strike with the intent of ending the confrontation as quickly as possible. This means that once the confrontation is physical, the revolutionary should not limit their options in any way. Every physical confrontation is a fight for life or death, and the response of force should be equivalent to the force the revolutionary would use if their life was threatened. Every available weapon should be considered, any additional help the revolutionary can acquire against the assaulter or assaulters should be called for immediately. The goal is to preserve the life of the revolutionary and end the confrontation as quickly as possible, if this means that the assaulter must be crippled or killed then so be it.

The United States is not ready for revolution, as sad as it is to say this is the reality of today. Our revolutionary duty is to make it ready, to unite the working class against the bourgeoisie elite and the white supremacist system they have built.. The revolution does not need martyrs, it does not need revolutionaries willing to throw away their lives at the earliest convenience. The revolution needs leaders, it needs soldiers willing to stand the line and shoulder the arms. It needs organizers, planners, speechwriters, logistics planners, and activists to do the footwork necessary for it to come to fruition, none of which can be accomplished from a coffin.

Retaliation

Now that the white revolutionary has removed themselves from the white culture, it is now time to take action against it. As discussed before, taking action against the bourgeoisie driven white culture is necessary in the fight against capitalism and white supremacy. Disconnection from white culture without active retaliation against it is no more helpful to the oppressed population than the performative actions of the liberal elite.

The oppressed do not need songs of freedom, the oppressed do not need facebook likes and debates over theory. The oppressed need direct, swift, and relentless action against the system which tramples on their rights and dignity. As a white revolutionary who has succeeded in removing yourself from the white culture, it is now their personal responsibility to advocate and retaliate against the oligarchical system which trades our freedom and dignity for profit.

Section One — White Saviorship

It is important to note that while it is the responsibility of the white revolutionary to fight against the system of white supremacy, it is not their duty or right to take charge and lead the revolution. The white revolutionary is meant to support the fight against white supremacy, not lead it. The complex of white saviorship is an all too common idea taken up by white revolutionaries that poisons and fractures leftist movements every day. White saviors have purposefully taken the mantle of responsibility over BIPoC organizations time and time again, always alienating the members and destroying the movement they helped build or encourage.

To avoid falling into the white saviorship complex, we must understand what white saviorship is. White saviorship is the belief among certain white activists and revolutionaries that as white people, it is their duty to fight for the rights of non-white members of society. While this sounds fairly innocent and similar to what has been discussed so far, white saviorship differs in its inherently racist connotations. White saviorship takes this responsibility and twists it into the idea that as white people, they *must* be the voice of the non-white masses, that they *have* to speak up and fight for them because of the belief that they are incapable of speaking and fighting for themselves.

White saviorship relies on the idea that the white person must represent the non-white masses because they are unable to represent themselves. It relies on the idea that without the white savior, these repressed people will never be able to secure their own freedom and that the voice of the white person is necessary. This idea is false, based on misinterpretations of the necessities for revolution and inherently biased thinking.

The idea of the white savior in its modern form has its roots in Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny was a belief in the 19th century that the white population of the United States, which at the time was limited to the eastern half of the continent, had the right and obligation to expand and settle the entire continent. With this belief came the idea that the United States had an obligation to reshape and “civilize” the west into a reflection of the east. This ideology was often used as justification for the genocide of the Native Americans, seeing the wholesale slaughter, conquest, and forced conversion of Native American population into christianity as required processes for this “civilizing” to occur.

This expansionist ideology was not satisfied with the full conquest of the continental United States, after this conquest was completed it began to look outward to the various islands in the Atlantic and

Pacific. This culminated with the conquest of Hawai'i and the Spanish-American War of 1898, where the United States forced Spain out of the Caribbean and the Philippines.

In 1899, Rudyard Kipling wrote the poem *The White Man's Burden* in response to the Philippine-American War, advocating for the United States to assume colonial control over the Philippines and set to work on "civilizing" the native Filipino population. While its message was opposed and satirized by writers of the time for its overt racist depiction of the Filipino people, it shows the general mindset of those who fully embraced the idea of Manifest Destiny. It was the belief of the white culture that the white population of the United States had a moral obligation to "civilize" and christianize so-called "lesser races" and remake their civilization into the image of the white culture. From this, the depiction of the white man as the savior of the lesser races was born and cemented into the public consciousness.

The belief that the voice of the white population is required to secure the freedom of the non-white masses is based on a few misinterpretations and subconscious prejudices. For one, the belief can be semi-justified as the need for the majority to support the revolutionary party in question in order to secure their demands. While this is true, the white savior interprets this as the *white majority* needing to support the demands of the revolutionary party.

This is false, although it is based on trends seen throughout US history. Historically, most if not all social revolutions in the United States were won around the same time a majority of the white population began supporting the cause. While this seems like solid evidence for the interpretation, this is nothing more than a case of "*correlation does not equal causation*". While it is true that social movements have been won when the majority of the white population has come to support it, this is overlooking the simple fact that in the United States, it is the white man who holds the most political and economic power in society.

Thus in truth, social revolutions are not won when the white majority supports it, they are won when the majority of the *elite* support it. In the United States, this has historically been the white man, so it makes sense that when a majority of white men come around to supporting a movement, the majority of the elite also happen to support the movement as they are the same demographic. Where white saviors get it wrong is that they believe this condition must be met regardless of the demographic of the elite, that without the voice of the white population, no social progress is possible.

In truth, the revolution does not need the white population for success. This does not mean that the white population is wholly unwanted outside of the most radical of groups. In any revolutionary movement, the acquisition of willing participants and active members is always at the forefront of organizational needs. This however cannot be confused with the belief that the revolutionary organization in question needs *white* participants and active *white* members.

The revolution by its chaotic and opportunistic nature will carry on whenever it is possible, it will not wait for permission or participation from white revolutionaries. The revolution is a train, it is speeding down the tracks destined to collide with the wall at the end of them. The question is not whether the train will collide with the wall, the question is how many people are on the train, will it break through when it collides, and how many passengers will survive? The question is whether the white revolutionary will step onto the train and add to the mass, or whether they will sit on the sidelines and hope to avoid the shrapnel and debris when it collides?

This idea also comes from the subconscious belief that non-white races are inferior to white people. They try to justify this belief by speaking about the oppression non-white members of society experience. They believe that they are unable to stand up for themselves, hiding their belief that they view non-white people incapable of fighting for their own liberation due to arbitrary racist arguments behind statistics and rants about oppression. The white savior views themselves as a martyr, a hero destined to fight for what they perceive as weaker, less intelligent races because they are just "good people". They use the struggle of the masses as an opportunity to validate their own beliefs and reinforce their ego, confirming to themselves that they are good people by graciously fighting for those too "stupid" and "fragile" to fight for themselves.

White saviorship is nothing more than ego boosting. It is using the struggle of oppressed and exploited people to reinforce their public identity as generous and courageous people, all the while looking down at the populations which they have sworn to protect regardless of whether the population asked for their help in the first place. It is profiting off of the pain of the destitute and enslaved, using them to gain social capital and advance their own position in society. In truth, these white saviors do not want to fight for freedom. If they were to win the fight, they would have nobody to “fight” for and thus nobody to make them look better.

We can see white saviorship in many forms of altruism. It is most present and visible in the missionary who goes to an impoverished country for volunteer work. The missionary goes on a plane to a well known impoverished country along with their church, taking photos of the flight and posting on social media about how grateful they are to be so blessed with the opportunity to help those in need.

When they arrive, they spend two weeks drinking, enjoying pleasures inaccessible by the citizens of the country, and buying souvenirs for their families back home. Somewhere in between these vacation activities, they will decide to actually go do the work that originally inspired the trip. They go to a village or slum, cook a meal, maybe dig a well if they feel like doing physical labor, and promptly leave them in no better state than they were in before. Before they leave, you can rest assured that they will have taken a thousand photos of the starving kids and elderly present in the community, always sure to be in the photo handing them a plate of food or holding an infant, all the while thinking about how many like said photos will garner on social media.

Once they leave, they will gloat about how holy they are for helping the poor citizens of whatever country they have gone to, all too happy to explain how dire their situation was and how they and they alone were able to fend off the threat of poverty and starvation. While they are busy ranting about their hardships while overseas and basking in the limelight of their social circles praising their heroics, the community they have done their performative action in has returned to the state it was in before, the meal long digested and the well long dried. In truth, the white saviors have done nothing more than provide a meal, yet they will frame their low-effort meal as long-term help destined to save the community from their state of being.

This is the reality of white saviorhood. It is not an ambitious drive to help the needy, it is a contest among peers to see who can become known as the most generous amongst themselves. White saviorship helps nobody in the long run, it is the shortest of short-term solutions and leads to no true progress or relief from poverty and oppression.

Section Two — Individual Action and Participation in Revolutionary Organizations (Short-Term and Long-Term Aid)

“When the Union’s inspiration through the worker’s blood shall run, there can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun. Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one? For the union makes us strong!” ~Lyrics of Solidarity Forever

The words of Solidarity Forever ring true to the modern day, the success of the revolution depends on the cooperation of the people. One revolutionary, no matter how zealous and dedicated, stands no chance at dismantling the system of capitalist exploitation that rules over our country. To succeed in the fight, the white revolutionary must cooperate and organize with other like-minded revolutionaries. Fighting alone is a pointless fight, to achieve the widespread changes demanded by the revolution, collective action and unified efforts by organized groups is required. This however does not mean that individual efforts are completely useless, paradoxically individual actions are just as important to revolutionary change as collective actions. Without organization and cooperation though, the effectiveness of these individual efforts will be limited and confined to the local area in which they take place.

Individual actions are important to the revolution for the fact that they establish habits and beliefs beneficial to the revolution. Individual direct action by their nature will have to focus on short-term aid. This is due to both the limits of the individual to give consistent aid and the availability of resources the individual revolutionary has access to.

While some on the left balk at the effectiveness of short-term aid, it is of the opinion of the authors of this book that short-term aid is more useful to those in need than no aid at all. If a person is starving right now, telling them that next year a soup kitchen will be built in their neighborhood does no more to help them than simply ignoring them.

Going further with this metaphor, many of the most common forms of charity networks are by their nature short-term aid oriented. Soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and bill assistance are all short-term aid programs when looking into their effects on society. A soup kitchen does not guarantee food security for those it serves, it only provides them a meal. If the soup kitchen shuts down, the people it serves are once again subject to the threat of starvation. If a homeless shelter shuts down, those who used the facility once again have to look for a place to sleep. If the bill assistance program shuts down, those it was helping once again have to worry about their financial security.

Even though these are all short-term aid programs and do not directly lead to long-term change, can we really discount them as useless for revolutionary change? Can we really declare soup kitchens useless and unnecessary when it is still providing a meal for those in need? Can we declare homeless shelters to be ineffective when those using it have a bed to sleep in rather than sleeping on the streets? It is for these reasons that personally the authors of this book believe that short-term aid is nothing to discount in its entirety. Of course long-term change is preferred, this is the goal of the revolution after all, however short-term aid is just as important for the wellbeing of those in need as long-term aid.

Unless you are planning on building your own revolutionary organization from the ground-up, most white revolutionaries are going to end up working with an already established organization. For those who are entirely new to the left and may still hold some less “extremist” views, the most likely place the revolutionary will start their active participation in the fight will be at an aid organization like those listed before. It is uncommon for a newly converted leftist to join up with a group labeled as extremist or revolutionary at first, most likely they will volunteer with a well established and well known organization. Along with the organizations referenced earlier, a common starting point for new white leftists is volunteer work with light leftist political parties such as the Democratic Socialists of America.

While these activities are important, it is also important to reiterate that long-term change is the goal of revolutionary change. Short-term help is important, however it cannot be the end goal of the revolutionary, short-term help does not build the systems required to sustain a reasonable and dignified way of living. Another point to reiterate is that reformatory politics are not feasible nor helpful to the revolution. As stated earlier, reformation of the system is impossible, as reform cannot change the foundations the system is built upon. To fix a system that is not broken is impossible, no amount of reformatory policies or voter initiatives will lead to the implementation of socialism.

The bourgeoisie will never allow a peaceful transition from capitalism, they will never willingly give up power and power cannot be seized under the system which has been built specifically to keep them from losing authority over the population. The revolution will be violent out of necessity, despite the intentions and wishes of the masses the revolution will never be a peaceful transition, as no route to peaceful transition exists under bourgeois systems of power.

To bring about long-term change, the new white revolutionary should seek out and join an organization that holds the values of the revolution close. True anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and anti-fascist organizations are not as popular as the well known organizations which appeal to a wider audience, however they are more willing to commit to doing actions which said well known organizations would hesitate on. Preferably, the white revolutionary should seek out a well organized group with an established education course or established initiatives. While there is nothing wrong with joining newly

established or small groups, if these larger groups follow the ideals of revolutionary change, the white activist will be better off joining them and helping them expand their actions and power.

If well established groups are not available in the area, the white revolutionary should lend their aid to smaller local organizations and assist them, building them up to a point where they can establish a base of power in their local area. Often when dealing with revolutionary ideas you will find that organizations which hold these beliefs will be on the smaller side. These smaller organizations should never be discounted in the fight for revolution, every revolutionary party and organization starts as a fringe group with few activists and resources. The white revolutionary has an opportunity to directly contribute to the revolution by helping build these organizations into local power centers, participating in small-scale mutual aid initiatives and holding protests and actions against the system.

The white revolutionary will find, just like any other leftist revolutionary, that we are currently fighting an uphill battle. The system is stacked against us, our beliefs are repressed and cracked down upon the moment we begin gaining even the slightest amount of power over the established systems and authorities. It is the duty of the white revolutionary as with all leftist revolutionaries to fight against the odds and continue building power and community networks outside of the jurisdiction of the state.

While the fight is stacked right now, every new individual contributing to the revolution is one less individual fighting against it. Make no mistake, the day will come when the majority decides to stand up against their repression and exploitation. When this time comes, the success of the revolution will depend on the power structures and aid networks built and maintained by leftist organizations built beforehand. It is in this area where the white revolutionary can contribute the most to the revolution.

By joining the fight and helping to build these power structures, the white revolutionary is helping to ensure the success of the revolution. The white revolutionary will stand hand in hand with their comrades, helping to realize the dream of overthrowing the bourgeoisie oppressors who rule over us. The white revolutionary can assist in breaking the chains, throwing down the shackles and ensuring a world where nobody will have to live under tyrannical capitalist exploitation.

Section Three — Planning and Organizing Actions

One of the hardest parts of learning about the injustices the system commits and joining the fight against it is containing the rage and desire for justice within you. Especially for newly awakened revolutionaries, the prospect of putting on a mask and breaking every window at city hall is a strong temptation that even us authors can relate to.

It is human nature, when we see something that we know is inherently unjust and we recognize our ability to intervene, the desire to lash out against the oppressor and let loose our emotions is an incredibly seductive idea. It both justifies our presence in the revolution by taking tangible action against the system and serves as a sort of emotional release by airing our frustrations against the system in the most direct way.

Lashing out against the system, no matter how relieving, does not help those who are oppressed if the energy is not directed or focused in any way. Random bouts of violence, no matter how much it soothes our need for justice and our desire to finally retaliate against the system, will not help the people who are most oppressed by the system. This should not be mistaken for a condemnation of violence, like every public action violence does have its roles and situations where its use is justified or necessary. However, no matter what action is taken, violent or non-violent, if the action does not have a clear and concise goal or direction, it will not be successful.

It doesn't take much thought to see why this is the case. If an action has no clear goal, no specific section of the system that it's targeted against or no clear demands to be appeased, how can the action be successful? If the action has no tangible way to measure its progress towards achieving its goal, or if it is lacking a publicized goal at all, it cannot achieve success as there's nothing for the action to achieve. On that note, without a set goal or direction for the action, the action cannot fail as there's nothing to

measure its failure against. Without an end goal, any action performed will amount to little more than screaming for the sake of screaming or violence for the sake of violence.

An *action* in this context is any program or event that an individual revolutionary or revolutionary organization forms and executes in opposition to a legal or social issue. An action is defined by its short-term nature, its reliance on physical participation in order to accomplish its goals, and its focus on a specific issue. This separates actions from other programs such as political education or long-term projects such as running homeless shelters or community gardens.

In order for an action to be successful, it must have a few established organizational points before the action is taken. These criteria must be met regardless of the methods that the action will employ, as without them the action will be directionless and unorganized. Before the action is taken, we must answer these questions.

1. Why is the action being planned?
2. What is the goal of this action?
3. What are the methods that will be employed during this action?
4. Is the action stand-alone, or is it contributing to a larger movement?
5. What resistance will the action face?
6. Will there be a follow up action, or is this action meant to achieve the goal alone?

Why is the action being planned?

Before planning any action against the system, it must first be recognized why the action is being planned in the first place. Is it a response to a recent tragedy or policy, or is it in response to a continued set of practices used by the system? What is the nature of the event the action is planning to fight?

No matter the nature, whether environmental, legal, social, or any other category the event falls in, this must be recognized in order to develop a clear methodology the event will follow. To properly plan an action, the reason the action is taking place must be recognized and evaluated by all those involved in planning the action. While this sounds obvious and not worth mentioning, it is not hard to find examples of actions being performed where the participants or even the organizers are not sure of the exact reason the action is taking place.

What is the goal of this action?

Actions should be planned with the end goal in mind before the rest of the action is planned. By establishing an end goal, the rest of the action can be planned with the idea of realizing said end goal and the process of planning will be streamlined.

With the end goal in mind, the power available at the action can be focused on it and conflicts of interest can be mitigated by having an already established goal. Additionally with the goal in mind, the progress of the action has a benchmark to be measured against, allowing the organizers and participants to measure the effectiveness of the actions being taken and allowing changes to be made with a lesser chance for collapsing the action.

When the progress can be measured, this also serves as a morale boost for the participants of the action. Seeing the progress of the action in real-time allows participants to focus their energy on achieving the next milestone in the action and provides feedback to them, boosting morale and allowing the participants to feel a sense of pride with every milestone reached.

What are the methods that will be employed during this action?

Establishing the methods to be used during the action is of utmost importance before the action begins. During the George Floyd protests of 2020, it was common to see actions being taken where no methods were planned in advance. When showing up to the action, the crowds would be a mix of agitators and pacifists. Sections of the crowd would be ready to agitate, to fight against the police with

any physical methods available and would be ready to implement these methods at a moment's notice. On the other side, the crowds would have pacifists who vehemently opposed any form of violence against the police, whether in self-defense or as an aggression tactic. This mix of crowds and no established methods the action would employ led to conflicts and arguments amid the crowds, diverting their attention away from the police and lowering the effectiveness of the action.

When planning an action, the methods to be used at the action must be established ahead of time and known among those planning to participate. If the methods are known ahead of time, the crowd the action will draw will be more prepared to carry out those methods and less likely to start conflicts with other participants in the action. It is important to decide if the action is going to be violent or non-violent ahead of time, as this decision is required in order to plan the specific methods to be used.

Once the broad decision on violence or lack of violence is made, further planning must be made in order for the action to run smoothly. If the action is going to be violent, the participants must be informed what items to bring to the event. Should they wear body armor? Are handguns allowed or is it strictly non-ballistic weaponry? If the action is non-violent, participants still need to be informed of certain protocols before arriving. What are the de-escalation techniques to be performed in the case of aggressors? Is self-defense allowed, or is it strictly pacifist? Will security be provided? What are the main targets of the violence? All these questions and more must be answered ahead of time or the action risks becoming disorganized and separated during its course.

Is the action stand-alone, or is it contributing to a larger movement?

When the action is being planned, it must be recognized whether the action is stand-alone or if it is contributing to a larger movement. Depending on which it is, this will help in determining the amount of support the action will receive and assist in planning for further actions or goals.

If the action is stand-alone, meaning that it has no wider support from other concurrent movements or is focused on an issue only this particular action is advocating against, the action will face difficulties in attracting a wide audience of supporters. This however should not deter the action from taking place, almost every widespread movement in the history of the United States started out as small, local actions supported initially by few people in the area. Stand-alone actions face difficulty getting their message heard, but when they do they stand out for being the only voice against the issue. Stand-alone actions have the potential to kickstart wider movements based around the issue, and can serve as fertile recruitment grounds for smaller organizations with anticipations to grow to a higher level of influence in the community.

If the action is contributing to a wider movement, the ability to attract more participants to the action is much higher. Planning actions against current, well known issues has the potential to attract far more participants than would be normally expected for the organization in question to draw in calmer circumstances. In addition, planning actions concurrent to larger movements helps bolster the message these larger movements are trying to convey, leading to a higher chance of success for the movement as a whole.

While supporting larger movements is important, an organization should be careful to diversify its actions and not strictly focus on more public movements, lest they be accused of only reactionary protest and attempting to co-opt the movement as a whole.

What resistance will the action face?

When planning an action against an issue of the system, resistance to the action is to be expected and accounted for. This is unavoidable, when fighting against the system, the system will use its authority to fight back against any voice of resistance to its policies and methods. Additionally, due to the highly politicized climate we live in today, it can be expected for counter-protesters to be present at all but the most publicly supported actions. With resistance comes risk, whether it be social or physical, and these risks must be both publicly aware to the participants and have plans implemented to mitigate them as much as possible.

No action is without risk, the very nature of revolutionary actions come with risks to both the organizers and the participants. No amount of planning or preventative measures taken before the

action is implemented will completely eliminate these risks, however risks can be mitigated to ensure a relative level of safety for all participants. The level of planning and cooperation required however serves as a barrier most are unwilling to cross to ensure safety for all participants. Planning for and mitigating risks against participants of an action increases the time needed to plan the action, increases the complexity of the action, and as a consequence makes the action harder to execute. Therefore, a line must be drawn between what risks are acceptable and what risks cannot be tolerated.

When planning for risks at an action, one must first be aware of where these risks may come from. Evaluate and earnestly discuss which opposition groups are most likely to make an appearance at the action. If the main aggressors are known and expected, it is easier to plan for their presence at the action and take steps against their aggression.

No matter what the action is for, it is likely that law enforcement will be present in some capacity. This should never be seen as a sign of safety; as we have seen with leftist actions throughout history, the police are just as likely to be the main aggressor or support the opposition as they are to prevent them from interfering with your action. The presence of law enforcement should always be seen as a potential for opposition to the action, and should be accounted for as such.

If the action is expecting counter-protesters, determine what groups or organizations are most likely to make an appearance at the action. Determine the level of hostility these groups are likely to bring against the action. Will they be armed? Will they be physically violent, or will they just jeer from across the street? The threats posed to the action must be understood as deeply as possible to ensure the safety of the participants.

Those organizing an action should also take into account what potential threats are allowable at the action for the sake of ensuring the action takes place in the manner it was planned. While threats against the lives of participants should never be accepted except for the most extreme and violent of actions, the threat of physical violence may have to be accepted in areas where opposition by violent parties is inevitable.

While the threat may be acceptable, threat mitigation techniques should always be implemented for both the safety of the participants and to ensure the action is able to run its course unimpeded. Depending on the threats present, organizers should determine whether security forces should be used, whether participants should bring weapons, plan out escape routes in case the violence reaches an uncontrollable level, and plan ahead for dealing with participants being arrested or hospitalized. No matter what threats are present, protocol should be established beforehand to deal with them should they be present at the action.

Will there be a follow up action, or is this action meant to achieve the goal alone?

Lastly, organizers should determine whether the action is meant to achieve the goal it set out for, or whether it is meant to lay the groundwork for future actions against the issue. Not every action will be able to achieve the goals it sets out for, in fact most actions are unable to do so without unprecedented public support and intimidation factor. It is therefore important to determine ahead of time which route the action will follow. If the action is meant to achieve the goal, organizers should outline how exactly the goal will be achieved during the action. If the action is meant to be followed up by future actions, this should be clearly displayed at the action and planning for the next one should start either before or immediately following the action.

Section Four — Awareness, Disruption, Destruction, Altruism, and the Uniqueness of Street Protests

No matter the cause being fought for, the methods being used in the execution of the action, or the overall goal of the action, the action can be categorized into one of four distinct categories. The action is capable of being either awareness, disruptive, destructive, or altruistic in nature. This categorization

is important in the planning phases of an action, determining which category the action falls into will help narrow down which methods will be effective in accomplishing the goals of the action.

As describing and categorizing these actions is rather difficult due to real-world complexities and depending on the specific issue being acted against, we shall craft a fictional issue and come up with hypothetical actions to demonstrate the different types of actions possible.

Let's say that a city is building a luxury apartment in the middle of a neglected area of the city. This section of the city is predominately African American, and due to years of gentrification and white flight the neighborhood suffers from a higher overall rate of poverty and homelessness when compared with the rest of the city. These luxury apartments are priced well outside the median income of residents of the neighborhood, have been approved instead of counter-proposed low-income housing, and are a clear-cut gentrification effort in order to raise property values and price-out lower income residents. Let us look at the potential responses and categorize each.

Awareness actions are actions where the main intent is to either bring awareness to an issue or to draw attention to the action itself. The main goal is not to solve the issue, rather it is to bring awareness of the issue to the general public or to larger organizations in the hopes of acquiring wider support against the issue. This also includes actions where the goal is to recruit more members into the organization or make the existence of the organizations known to the general public. In this scenario, an awareness action could include actions such as hosting community speaking events or handing out pamphlets detailing the construction and why the community should be against it.

Disruptive actions are actions where the main intent is to disrupt a specific facet of society or, if the issue is actively occurring such as construction of an undesirable building, disrupting the process causing the issue. The main goal is to hamper the progression of the issue by making it harder to actively work on the issue. In this scenario, disruptive actions could manifest as activists blocking workers from entering the construction site or filing lawsuits in an attempt to delay construction.

Destructive actions are actions where the main intent is to physically stop the issue through the use of force or destructive means. The main intent is to make it physically impossible to work on the issue or to "scare off" the company working on the issue by making it physically or financially unsafe to continue work. In this scenario, actions which fall into this category include the sabotage of equipment, breaking or stealing construction material, vandalizing finished parts of the construction, or even physically assaulting the workers. A common real world example of destructive actions would be the various *Black Bloc* actions throughout history, where participants dress in concealed clothing and focus on causing property damage as the method for the action.

Altruistic actions are actions where the main intent is not to solve the issue, rather to alleviate the direct consequences of the issue and provide help to those affected by said issue. In this scenario, altruistic actions could range from providing financial assistance to those in the community, providing supplies to the homeless, or running food drives to help those who have to deal with higher bills due to the property value increase.

Note that even in this scenario, all of these actions seem to have some level of overlap when describing their goals and methods. This is the reality of planning actions, in the real world no issue or action is clear cut and limited to just one form of operation. While the real world complicates the categorization of actions, every action leans heavily towards one of these four categories, so categorization is still possible for general planning purposes.

This is not necessarily a negative trait, actions which overlap with other categories of actions have the potential to "multitask" and achieve multiple goals at one. Using the altruistic action as an example, it is not hard to imagine that included with the food handouts is a pamphlet detailing why the property values have risen and urging the community to take action. While the action is altruistic in nature, it also serves the role of an awareness action, possibly even eliminating the need to host a separate awareness action altogether. This in turn allows the revolutionary individual or organization to focus more of their efforts on disruptive or destructive actions.

Street protests are a unique action altogether when compared to the four previous action categories. Street protests are arguably one of the easiest, and paradoxically one of the hardest actions to plan and implement. This is because street protests hold a quality the other forms of actions do not, they are dynamic and rapidly changing. Street protests have the potential to include all four categories of action during their execution, and as a consequence are one of the most versatile forms of action an individual or organization can plan.

Street protests are easy to plan in the sense that depending on the issue or political climate, acquiring participants may require little effort on the organizer's end. As an example, during the 2020 George Floyd Protests, it was common to see protests consisting of hundreds of participants due to nothing more than a post on social media telling people to arrive at a specific place at a specific time. This level of mobilization and community participation is something that would normally require weeks or months of preparation on the organizer's end, however due to the outrage felt by the common citizenry due to the murder of George Floyd, large protests were able to be rapidly planned and executed with little more than a tweet or a facebook post.

Consequently for the same reason listed above, street protests are one of the hardest actions to plan because they are so dynamic. A street protest is incredibly difficult to control, once the protest begins its course is determined by the group mentality, and not the organizer's wills and wishes. Street protests, especially large ones in response to highly divisive issues, are beyond the control of the organizer once they are actively occurring. A plan can be outlined, a goal can be established, a specific method can be disseminated to the participants, but once the protest begins it is out of any one individual's control. Street protests can rapidly switch from disruptive to destructive or vice versa depending on internal and external factors.

The most effective way to alleviate the issues commonly seen in street protests is to limit the participants to members of the planning organization or collaborating organizations, however this greatly limits the size and impact of the protest. Ideally, one should try to strike a balance between dedicated revolutionary participants and community participants, however in the real world this is an extremely difficult endeavor without strict requirements to enter the protest, said strict requirements possibly preventing the community from joining altogether. Street protests by their nature are in reaction to divisive issues, and as such when planning one a certain amount of risk needs to be accepted. The street protest is the voice of the people, it is the most direct form of political representation the proletariat can participate in and as such are subject to the emotions and will of the proletariat.

Section Five — Types of Violence

When it comes to planning actions against the white culture, the state, or any number of social issues the revolutionary is opposed to, one of the first objections to the action is to abandon its execution if any form of violence is present. These objections increase exponentially in magnitude if the action itself is going to be the initiator of violence. There's a common, yet misguided belief among the leftist organizing community that actions must be non-violent in nature to spread their message effectively.

In order to argue for or against violence in actions, we must first define the different types of violence possible at actions. Often, "violence" in the context used by the objecting parties is a blanket term covering all forms of physical confrontation and destruction, no distinctions are made between the various types of violence and any actions beyond yelling on street corners are condemned as "too aggressive".

Violence can be segmented into four distinct forms. These four forms of violence are violence against property (vandalism), violence against the state, violence against the person, and self-defense. These forms are distinct in both their targets and the methods used to implement the violence.

Note that similarly to the four distinct forms of actions, the four main categories of violence will have a measure of overlap due to the complex nature of real world organizing. Just as it was with the

forms of actions, these categories of violence are useful for planning purposes, however they cannot be completely isolated in the real world and the presence of multiple forms of violence should be expected, no matter the amount of planning or restrictions present at the action.

Violence against property, also known as *Vandalism*, is the physical destruction or sabotage of infrastructure, housing, and other forms of private property owned and used by the target of the action. Vandalism is unique from the other forms of violence in that the intent is not to cause harm to individuals, rather only the material property of the party the action is directed against. Any injuries or deaths caused by said destruction or sabotage is accidental. Often, vandalism as used in an action is specifically directed in order to cause as little injury to persons within the vicinity of the action as possible.

Violence against property is the most likely form of violence to be seen at an action, especially in larger actions formed in retaliation to a divisive issue. Participants of an action are more likely to air their frustrations on the infrastructure of the state rather than the agents of the state or random individuals, and this is for good reason. For one, violence against property carries less legal repercussions than physical assault on an officer or a counter-protester. Secondly, violence against property is substantially easier to morally justify in the minds of leftists when compared with general assault, the act of destroying property considered justified or victimless when compared with doing harm towards an individual, no matter their role against the action or their stance on the issue the action is targeted against.

Violence against the state is the physical confrontation of the agents of the state. These agents can range from law enforcement, military personnel, politicians, correctional officers, or any other individual imbued with authority over the proletariat. Often this form of violence is used in the context of self-defense, an example of which would be protesters fighting against advancing riot police. However, as seen in guerilla campaigns and revolutions of the past such as the Cuban Revolution or Revolution-era Catalonia, preemptive assaults against the state may be carried out in the same manner as any other military operation.

Violence against the state is differentiated from other forms of violence in that the targets of the violence are limited only to the agents and infrastructure of the state apparatus. Those not directly working for or aiding the state are exempt from the targeting of the violence, and as discussed is generally in reaction to perceived state-sponsored violence against participants of the action or organization which planned said action. It is important to remember that violence against the state is not distinguished from the other categories of violence in its methods, its implementation can take the form of either property damage, self defense, or violence against individuals who work for the state but are not directly affecting the action in any way. Rather, it is the targeting of the methods alone that differentiates it from all other categories of violence.

Violence against the person is random violence against anybody within the vicinity of the action who is not directly participating in the action. Examples of this can be seen in the LA Riots of 1992 in the wake of the beating of Rodney King and subsequent acquittal of four officers who implemented the abuse. During the LA Riots, cases of random assaults against innocent bystanders were highly publicized and used to demonize the message of the riots.

One could argue that terrorism falls under this definition, although terrorist actions are generally differentiated due to the advanced planning and specific targets of the terrorist attack compared to the often sporadic and unplanned nature of violence against the person.

Violence against the person is generally executed in the face of overwhelming rage or anger over an issue. It is generally not planned in advance among left-wing actions, however it is an increasingly common tactic amidst far-right extremist groups. In the context of far-right actions, the random acts of violence against people not involved with or opposing the action are meant to instill a sense of intimidation in those who may attempt to oppose the action. In this sense, although its methods are offensive in nature, violence against the person is an ultimately defensive tactic.

Generally, violence against the person is an ineffective tactic in achieving the long-term goals of an action. In the short-term, violence against the person can be used as a shock tactic to keep others

from further interfering with the action. The drawback to this is that use of this tactic is likely to draw intervention by local law enforcement if they are present at the action, which can quickly lead to a collapse of the action as a whole. In the long-term, randomized violence on those the wider society deems “innocent” leads to animosity towards the action, its goals, and the organization which made use of the tactic. Comparing short-term protection of the action with long-term loss of public support, it is generally in the best interest of any organization planning an action to avoid use of violence against the person and to restrain or expel any participants of the action trying to make use of the tactic.

Self-defense is any physical confrontation in reaction to violence occurring against participants in the action. It is differentiated from all other forms of violence in its reactionary nature. Unlike all other forms of violence discussed, self-defense by definition is not initiated by the participants of an action, it only occurs in response to physical violence directed against the participants.

Self-defense can be further distinguished into two sub-categories, personal self-defense and collective self-defense. *Personal self-defense* is the act of self-defense committed by an individual in response to violence directed at the individual, such as physically fighting back against a counter-protester trying to harm a participant. *Collective self-defense* is the physical response of one or more individuals against violence directed at another individual in the interest of defending the victim. An example of collective self-defense would be a counter-protester attacking a participant of an action and multiple other participants coming to the aid of the victim.

Self-defense is also differentiated from all other forms of violence in that its execution may be legally permissible. While the laws vary between each state and municipality, generally self-defense is legally permitted under the condition that the level of violence used during self defense is “proportional” to the assault being committed, what is considered proportional again varies between state and municipality.

We can see that when discussing whether or not violence should be permitted or prohibited at an action, those voicing their opinion should make an effort to clarify which form or forms of violence they are speaking of. While some may argue that this is nothing more than a pretentious redefining for the sake of redefining, the clarification of the different forms of violence is important in the context of organizing an action. Determining what, if any, level and form of violence is permissible at an action must be taken into consideration when discussing the goals of the action.

Let us use the example we crafted of the luxury apartments being built in a gentrified neighborhood to clarify why this distinction is important. Let’s assume that an organization is trying to form a nonviolent disruptive action against the company building the apartments. A disruptive action, as defined earlier, is an action meant to hamper or impede the progress of building the apartments by making work on the apartments harder, more time consuming, or undesirable by the company building them.

Comparing the different types of violence with the different types of actions, this is not as simple to organize as one would originally think. If the intent is to hinder the construction of the apartments, one could easily justify the sabotage of construction equipment as a form of disruption, it would make construction of the apartment more difficult and time-consuming for the company. However, as we’ve clarified, the sabotage and destruction of property is inherently a form of violence, it is violence against property. The question now is, is violence against property permissible in this “nonviolent” action? Moreover, although the organizers are wishing for this action to be a disruptive movement, the sabotage of construction equipment falls under the category of destructive actions. Are the organizers okay with using destructive methods in their attempt to hinder construction on the apartment, or are they unwilling to accept the public opinion that sabotaging equipment may bring at the expense of reducing the effectiveness of disrupting the construction?

This is why the different forms of violence and by extent the different forms of actions must be categorized, defined, and discussed between organizers and participants. When organizing an action, it must be known exactly which methods are permitted, what types and what levels of violence are allowable, and any counter-arguments reconciled before the action occurs. If this does not happen, if no discussion takes place and no clarifications are given on what is and isn’t acceptable, the action runs the

risk of collapsing due to general confusion amid the participants. Some participants may hold different opinions on what is considered violent and what is considered nonviolent if it is not clarified before the action is implemented, and during the course of the action some participants may go off and commit forms of violence which the organizers did not wish to happen.

When organizing an action, every permitted and prohibited method must be known by the participants. The organizers must be specific, detailed, and clear with their explanations, or they run the risk of the action straying from the methods the organizers intended to be used. While the actual course of the action is unpredictable once the action begins, prior planning and explanation of the type of action, types of permissible violence, and specifically prohibited types of violence greatly assists in ensuring the action remains true to its planned intent.

Section Six — Legally Resisting, a Useless Endeavor

The largest mistake a revolutionary can make when trying to fight against the system is doing so through the legal system. This seems redundant to state, but it is a point worth stating, the revolution will not be legal. This sounds almost silly to state, of course the revolution will not be legal. The revolution will be violent, bloody, and chaotic, of course it will not be legal. However, some socialist schools of thought do not believe this to be the case.

In the mind of the Democratic Socialist, the revolution is envisioned as a slow crawl towards the implementation of socialism and eventually communism, not the rapid chaotic revolution agreed by a majority of anarchist and communist ideologies. The DemSoc envisions a future where the revolution is won not by bullets and bombs, but through lawsuits and legislation. The DemSoc envisions a world where the bourgeoisie lose their power through legislative action, willingly stepping aside and allowing the proletariat to take the mantle of authority over society.

This is utopian thinking at its finest, the bourgeoisie will not willingly give up power, and the proletariat will not peacefully acquire authority over their own destiny. This seems pessimistic and dismissive, and to a point it is. However, we are not writing off the efforts of Democrat Socialist beliefs entirely. As we shall see, Democratic Socialist methods and beliefs do have their uses and merits, it is merely their end goal and their path to achieve it that is skewed.

Democratic Socialists are not alone in this belief, many of the larger socialist groups in the United States such as the Party for Socialism and Liberation and the Communist Party of the United States of America believe, at least in part, that pursuing electoral power is integral in the progression of socialism and communism. These are not without precedent, throughout the history of nations throughout the world proletariat revolutions were preceded by at least a minority socialist representation in the governing body.

Electoral power is not without merits, wielding power in the system has its uses. When a socialist gains power in the government, they have the possibility to propose or pass progressive policies, shift the general thinking in a legislative body further left, and expose the public to light socialist ideas. This helps to spread the influence of socialist thought in a society which leans far right if implemented carefully and framed in a digestible context.

Where parties such as the DSA, PSL, and CPUSA falter is their belief that the use of legislation and electoral representation is enough to spur the shift to a socialist society without bloodshed. Specifically focusing on the DSA, the DSA believes that with an overwhelming socialist majority in electoral systems, the shift to socialism can be accomplished through policy proposals and votes.

This is where the DSA falters, as it assumes that the bourgeoisie will respect the rule of law in the face of losing their power and ownership of the means of production. The bourgeoisie will not ever voluntarily cede its power over the proletariat, and by extension their right to profit off of the labor of the proletariat. In no nation where socialism was officially adopted as the governing principle has this occurred without at least mild social upheaval and unrest. Socialism, Communism, and Anarchism

are all implemented through violence, this is an unacceptable fact that must be accepted by the white revolutionary.

The bourgeoisie are the ones who have crafted the system by which the DSA works to implement socialism, they have authority over its rules and participants and at any time are able to prevent threatening policies and rhetoric from gaining traction. The bourgeoisie is above the law, this is clearly visible when looking at the daily actions and scandals of various politicians and wealthy capitalists in the United States, they are held to a different legal standard than the rest of the common citizenry, and as such are capable of evading consequences the common proletariat would experience for their actions.

Government as a whole is a social construct in the sense that it only functions when the citizenry believe in its legitimacy and those in power willingly respect the rules they have implemented. Government and, by extension, laws are only functioning when the organization implementing them has the means to enforce them. A law is not a physical object, it is not an insurmountable barrier for social conduct and its existence relies entirely on the ability for the organization which implemented it to enforce it. The truth about government and law is that it is nothing more than words written on paper. Without willing accountability for betraying the word of law, without an independent agency to enforce it, and without enforceable repercussions severe enough to prevent future elites from breaking the law, the bourgeoisie elite are able to sidestep it with no consequence whenever it benefits them.

As a direct consequence of this, achieving socialism through purely peaceful and legal means is impossible. The bourgeoisie have the ability to create, enforce, and selectively obey or disobey laws that they themselves have created. In the process of working within the legal system, the socialist will experience unfair and heavy handed enforcement of laws or policies specifically designed to prevent their rise to power. In the case where the socialist somehow manages to take power anyways, the bourgeoisie will simply ignore their rule of law, declaring their authority illegitimate. If the socialist has not acquired the monopoly on violence that the bourgeoisie holds and the willing cooperation of the organizations which enact said violence, the bourgeoisie will face no repercussions for their disobedience and will render the socialist's rule illegitimate.

Trying to overthrow a system by working within the system is impossible. When working under bourgeois frameworks, you are subject to their rules; you are playing a game that they have crafted and have already determined that they are the only possible winners of said game. Overthrow of the system requires working outside the boundaries of the system the bourgeoisie has developed. The proletariat must craft its own system separate from bourgeois influence and focus on the destruction of the systems the bourgeoisie have designed.

Remember, the system that enforces white supremacy and white culture is irreformable because reform implies that faults which need correction are present in it. The system is not broken, it has no faults for the revolutionary to focus on repairing or correcting. The system is working exactly as intended, a machine that is not broken cannot be fixed. The only way to "fix" the system and end the widespread oppression of the non-white comrade is to destroy the system and replace it entirely. Any attempt at legal reformation is at best delaying the inevitable revolution, and at worst achieving nothing beyond performative victories.

The revolutionary, whether they are white or not, must accept that they are entering into an illegal and inherently violent fight for the future of the working class and humanity as a whole. The revolutionary cannot deceive themselves with promises of peaceful cooperation with the elitist powers and eventual nonviolent social change. The revolutionary must accept that by joining the fight for freedom, they are cosigning themselves to the violence and chaos that is to come, and that their participation and efforts to destroy the system will eventually directly lead to said violence and chaos. The revolutionary must accept the burden that their actions will destabilize society and must be willing to accept the consequences of their actions if it comes down to it, this is the only way the revolutionary can move forward and fully dedicate themselves to the fight.

This is a fight for life and death, for freedom and equality for all the working class no matter their color, sexuality, gender identity, or any other traits which the white culture has forcefully repressed.

The revolution is just, it is right, but that does not mitigate the chaos and suffering it will bring before its conclusion and the restructuring of society can begin. The revolutionary must accept this, and they must realize that it is an acceptable consequence in the fight for true freedom and prosperity for the working class.

Hard Truths

It is the dream of every revolutionary that when the time for revolution comes, we will all stand together as comrades against the thugs of the state. That we will all take up arms and fight for the rights of every worker against the bourgeoisie elites. That we will all put aside our ideological disputes and arguments in the wider interest of the working class.

This is not true, it is fantasy and utopian belief, completely disconnected from the reality that we as leftists face in the world today. Even now in the pre-revolution era we cannot all put aside our differences to fight against a common enemy, it's part of the reason the revolution hasn't begun in the first place. Even now, ideological differences and disputes separate us for the most petty of reasons, preventing cooperation and focusing our efforts against each other instead of at the bourgeoisie who only benefit from our discourse.

In the world of the white revolutionary, this is but one of the hard truths they will have to deal with. When the white revolutionary wishes to join the struggle against the exploitive powers, they will have to deal with many hard truths. These will hurt the white revolutionary at first, maybe even stop and doubt whether they want to continue on with the fight. It is important for the white revolutionary to contend and accept these truths if they want to be an effective and helpful participant in the fight for freedom.

Section One — Not Everybody Will Want You In the Fight

It is a simple fact that not every revolutionary group or individual will want you to join the fight. While this is counter-productive to the idea that more people involved in the fight means a more likely successful outcome, it is a criticism that the white revolutionary will have to hear and accept to prevent dissolution and doubt from settling in.

Some organizations may base this belief on past experience with white revolutionaries. Many BIPoC groups will tell you stories of the white saviors they've dealt with throughout their actions and organizational existence. Most BIPoC groups will of course not go to the extent of actively disapproving of white revolutionary involvement, most groups are quick to realize that white saviors are individuals and as such should be dealt with as individuals. However, there are some where the white savior has done so much damage or dissuaded members to the point where they would rather not risk incorporating one into their ranks again.

There are also groups which by design do not allow white people into the ranks. This isn't necessarily based on prejudice or a specific issue with white people, rather it may be for ideological reasons. Many communalism-oriented organizations such as the various panther groups in the 60's had their participants split into specific ethnic caucuses. This was not due to prejudice, rather it was due to the beliefs that the panther groups followed. White people were not excluded from the fight in any way, in fact they were encouraged to join up and help the Black Panthers in any way they could, they just had to join up with their specific organization (in this example, the White Panther Party). This was also not limited to white people or the panthers, many organizations follow this belief where every ethnic group has their own specific party to work in and represent their ethnic group in the fight (Los Brown Berets, Red Berets, etc...).

However, there are some leftist organizations which are inherently distrustful of white people being involved with the fight for freedom. Whether this is due to prejudice, ideological teachings, or past

experiences with white revolutionaries is irrelevant. The hard truth to be learned is that you must accept their belief and work with those who *are* accepting of white people in their ranks.

It is not the role of the white revolutionary to convince these groups to allow white people into their ranks. Whether their reason for excluding or actively speaking against white revolutionaries is agreeable or not, it is not your duty to try to convince them otherwise. This has as much to do with practicality as it does with respecting their beliefs.

No revolutionary should make deprogramming their main praxis. It is extremely difficult, fairly ineffective unless you have a close relationship with the person you are attempting to program, and in general is usually a waste of time. The last thing a BIPoC revolutionary needs is a white person preaching to them about what is right and what is wrong. It is also not the responsibility of the white revolutionary to dictate what a BIPoC revolutionary should act or what beliefs they should hold. Their group is theirs to run however they feel, it is not under the jurisdiction of white revolutionaries and white revolutionaries should not try to impose their beliefs on these groups.

If a group does not wish to work with you because you are white, you should move along and seek out a group that does wish to work with white revolutionaries. Organizations that exclude white people entirely are uncommon compared to organizations which will gladly accept help from you. If the organization has excluded you for reasons inherently against the revolutionary mindset such as outright prejudice beliefs, do not attempt to change their beliefs or mindsets. Simply move on, join a group which does want your help, and make sure that other groups know this is a belief they hold. Every second you spend debating with these groups is a second you're distracted and not contributing to the revolution. Simply move on and help organizations that want your help, organizations that run on a policy of prejudice will eventually plateau due to community isolation and other organizations not wanting to collaborate due to said beliefs.

Section Two — Your Life Will Be Worse

When it comes to organizing and fighting against the system, many white revolutionaries will be caught up in the beautified ideals of revolutionary culture. They will see themselves as the protagonist of a story of struggle and defiance against a system that wants to subjugate them. They will dream of the world to come and see themselves as brave revolutionaries who dared to cast off the chains of the system and take up arms with their comrades, storming the Bastille and ushering in a new age of freedom and prosperity for all.

The reality of the revolution is much less romantic than is commonly portrayed. The revolution as it stands is a fight against the system which has total control over society and the individuals within it. The ideals painted in the minds of revolutionaries are of revolutions where the public has thrown its full support towards the revolution, this is not the case today. Today, the revolution is a fringe group, it is a disconnected patchwork of organizations loosely cooperating towards a similar goal while under the authority of a system which wants them eradicated. The white revolutionary will feel the effects of the system trying to destroy them.

Revolutions are performed when the lives of the masses become intolerable. Humanity is resilient and is able to withstand hardships and oppression much worse than we have seen today. While the system we live in is brutal and oppressive for the poverty stricken non-whites who live under it, for the majority of the population it is either beneficial or at worst slightly uncomfortable. A majority of society is willing to live in slight discomfort or under the risk of starvation and poverty if it means they will be able to enjoy the daily manufactured comforts they can afford.

Make no mistake, the revolutionary is not wrong in the slightest for seeking to destroy this system, living under the system while being aware of the oppression and brutality it enacts on those who do not conform to it is unbearable for most and it is natural that they would wish to destroy it in order to free those oppressed. For most white Americans though, perhaps due to our individualist nature and

the ingrained ideal of greed which is celebrated under capitalism, they are perfectly fine living under a system which does not target them directly.

The white revolutionary will have to deal with this widespread apathy, that alone is enough to make even the most hardened and dedicated revolutionaries doubt their intentions and the effectiveness of trying to bring about the revolution. The revolutionary will also have to deal with the system directing its attention towards them. As discussed earlier, being white and dedicating yourself to the revolution places you on a similar level as the non-white masses in the eyes of the system. The system will turn its tools of retribution and violence against you the same way it does against those under its oppressive rule. When aware of your stance against it, the system will work tirelessly to subvert your actions and remove you from the fight with ferocious efficiency. The white revolutionary will not go through its fight without resistance.

The reality is that by joining the fight for freedom, the life of the white revolutionary will get worse. They will have to deal with struggles they would have never had to deal with if they had stood by and ignored the workings of the system. They would never have to deal with the violence the system enacts on them if they would have stayed silent once they were aware of how the system operates. The life of the white revolutionary will become harder as they dedicate themselves to the fight, they must accept this inevitability or risk getting blindsided by the realization and doubting their role in the revolution.

Section Three — You Are Not Oppressed

When the white revolutionary joins the fight for revolution, they will experience the full strength of the system trying to subvert and remove them from the fight. They will experience the methods and systematic repression the system wields in its full strength, they will deal with a level of harassment and subjugation almost equal to the amount felt by their non-white comrades. However, the key word is *almost* the same level of harassment and subjugation. It is important for the white revolutionary to remember that no matter how much the system weighs on them, what they are experiencing is not equal to what their non-white comrades deal with.

The repression the white revolutionary experiences is voluntary in the sense that it can be avoided by the white revolutionary if they wish. The system only targets the white revolutionary when they are either public with their beliefs or if their beliefs are uncovered by those who side with the system. If the white revolutionary were to be silent about their beliefs, if they were to work towards revolution in secrecy and practice careful OPSEC, the white revolutionary would never feel the wrath of the system. This is not the case for the non-white comrades the white revolutionary will be working with.

White revolutionaries have an inherent advantage over their non-white comrades when it comes to working towards the destruction of white culture. This advantage is the status of the white revolutionary as white. The white revolutionary can at any time hide behind the veil of whiteness and conformity with the system to avoid the wrath of the system. Simply by hiding their true beliefs and intentions, the white revolutionary is able to blend in with the conforming masses in the white culture, free from the violence and subjugation that the system would otherwise subject them to.

The non-white revolutionaries do not have this advantage. No matter how the non-white comrade acts, no matter how much they conform with the system or repress their personal beliefs, they will always be subject to the oppressive system and have to live under the thumb of white supremacy. Non-white comrades are not free to avoid the efforts of the system at their own discretion, they are not able to opt-out of the violence and subjugation at their own will. The non-white revolutionary's oppression is involuntary, they must live under it in every moment of their existence and must deal with the consequences of life under an authoritarian regime despite their personal wishes. The non-white revolutionary is born into the fight whether they wish to fight or not, their only options are to either accept the system for how it is and try to survive in a system that sees them as unworthy of life, or actively fight against it and experience the full focus of the system bent on their destruction.

The white revolutionary, no matter how aware of the methods of the system or devoted to its destruction, always has a third option. The white revolutionary is at all times able to simply walk away and ignore the struggle of the masses. The white revolutionary is free to leave the fight at any point and go back to reaping the rewards of the white culture, all it takes is their indifference to the unethical practices of the system and unwillingness to rejoin the fight. The fact that the white revolutionary has the ability to leave the struggle and free themselves from the immoral tactics of the system alone lowers their level of oppression relative to their non-white comrades.

Not only does the white revolutionary have the ability to leave the fight, even when facing the full force of the system, the penalties the system enacts on them are less strict than would be given to their non-white comrades. As discussed before, non-white people are often given longer sentences for crimes committed than white people. This trend does not change when it comes to the white revolutionary facing legal repercussions for their actions against the system. Even when the white revolutionary is facing consequences for their actions, they still benefit from the white culture they were born into. The white revolutionary is never able to fully separate themselves from the benefits of the system, no matter how hard they try.

Granted, this can be used to the advantage of the revolution. During the 2020 George Floyd protests, it was a common tactic for white protesters to be on the front-lines when facing law enforcement as they were less likely to be abused and would often be the first arrested. When the white protesters were arrested, they would often face shorter sentences than the non-white protesters. Using this tactic, they were able to overload the arresting capacity of some jurisdictions while at the same time ensuring those arrested would be released quickly, refilling the ranks of the protesters and allowing the fight to go on longer than if the non-white protesters were arrested instead.

Regardless of this, the point still stands that even when fighting against the system, the white revolutionary is still less oppressed than their non-white comrades. It is not an uncommon thought for white revolutionaries to view themselves as part of the oppressed class because they had to experience a small portion of what their non-white comrades have had to experience since birth. While the white revolutionary will experience oppression and subjugation, this is only the case when their beliefs are known. The white revolutionary has the ability to walk away, this must be remembered in order to prevent the belief of white saviorship from rising.

Section Four — The Revolution Will Not be Won in a Day

Revolutionaries, especially ones who have recently dedicated themselves to the fight for revolution, are often deluded by the idea that the issues they are fighting against are simple and quick to solve. This is not a sign of ignorance or stupidity, rather it is a belief almost every revolutionary can relate to when looking back on their introduction to the fight. Even the most experienced activists and fighters can relate to the early days of their fight, full of optimism and revolutionary fervor.

It is a necessary quality to become involved with the fight for revolution, the revolutionary is differentiated from the complacent population in this initial optimism regarding change. The revolutionary becomes involved by recognizing the issues within society and believing they are capable of solving them. Without this original self-confidence and willingness to dive into the fight, the revolutionary would never become involved, they would see the fight as futile or the issues too complex for their activism to affect them in any way. In truth, ignorance to the complexities of the issues the revolutionary is fighting against and the difficulties they will face in fighting them is a required trait in becoming a revolutionary fighter.

As the revolutionary becomes entrenched in the fight, this initial optimism will quickly fade away. They will be exposed to the true complexities and interconnected issues strengthening the initial issue that drove them into fighting in the first place, and as a result burnout will begin to occur. This is especially true for the white revolutionary, as the prospect of burnout is reinforced by their ability to

leave the fight at any moment. The prospect of leaving behind the stress and pessimism the fight for revolution brings combined with the always present escape leads to an especially high rate of burnout in white revolutionaries when compared to their non-white comrades.

Burnout is an insidious and unavoidable force, it is a force which kills revolutions before they can begin and disillusion the most dedicated and resourceful revolutionaries. Burnout is a consequence of experiencing the realities of the fight, witnessing the uphill battle that the revolutionary has thrown themselves into. The snail pace of change, the bureaucracy and red-tape making even the most trivial actions a headache to plan and execute, the constant and brutal resistance from the system, it all combines into a depressing outlook on the future of the revolution and the creeping sense that the fight is futile. No revolutionary is immune to this force, it can be repressed, it can be resisted, but eventually the reality of the situation will affect even the most dedicated in our ranks.

This does not have to be the end of the fight however. Burnout is not a permanent affliction, it is the buildup of stress and self-doubt within the revolutionary. Like any source of stress, the stress experienced by witnessing the difficulties of the fight can be alleviated. The difficulty with this is that the stresses of the fight for freedom are unavoidable, the process of spurring on the revolution requires direct confrontation with these difficulties and forces of opposition.

The most crucial idea to remember when it comes to dealing with the stresses of revolution is that this is part of the process. The difficulties the revolutionary will face are the forces of the system the revolutionary has dedicated themselves to fighting. The revolutionary should use these challenges to reinforce their anger and determination against the system. Recognize that the force of bureaucracy and slow pace of change being witnessed are the forces of the system resisting the change, and use that realization to strengthen your resolve against the system and your determination to destroy the system opposing your efforts.

The slow pace of change is one of, if not the most common source of burnout experienced by revolutionary fighters. Witnessing the resistance to any and every action the revolutionary plans and the ignorance towards the demands of the revolutionary often leads to a sense of hopelessness. It leads to a feeling that the system is insurmountable, that every action the revolutionary is committing is useless in the long run, that the revolutionary is wasting energy and should spend their time focusing on surviving the eventual retaliation of the system towards them and their beliefs.

This is not the case, these thoughts are what the system is trying to instill into revolutionaries in an attempt to dissuade them from continuing the fight. Make no mistake, the system is powerful, it encompasses every facet of the American way of life, and it is endowed with resources and support unimaginable by the modern left. The system, however, is not unstoppable. The system is not an all-powerful institution, it is a construct made by man, and as such can be destroyed by man.

The system, with all of its strengths and resilience, is still vulnerable to the efforts of the revolutionary. The system has the advantage of overwhelming strength, but the revolutionary has the advantage of time. This fight is not a new phenomenon, the revolutionary is joining a fight that has been going on for generations.

The revolutionary walks in the footsteps of countless fighters before them. The trail has been cleared, it is up to the modern revolutionary to walk it. The efforts of uncountable activists and fighters from centuries before have led us to this moment, though it has been said time and time again throughout history, we truly stand at the cusp of revolution in the United States. The people are more aware, more active, and more willing for change than ever in the entirety of human history. We are living at the pinnacle of social consciousness, every injustice occurring in real-time for the entirety of the masses of humanity to see if they so choose.

The contradictions of capitalism and the hypocrisy of the ruling class is visible to all, no longer can they hide behind the forces of state controlled propaganda. The people have answered the calling for revolution, it is now up to the people to go forth and finish the fight that generations before have fought. Make no mistake, we are at the crux of revolution, it is only a matter of time before the revolutionaries of the world can begin their march towards true freedom and equality for all the oppressed.

“When the mariner, sailing over tropic seas, looks for relief from his weary watch, he turns his eyes toward the southern cross, burning luridly above the tempest-vexed ocean. As the midnight approaches, the southern cross begins to bend, the whirling worlds change their places, and with starry finger-points the Almighty marks the passage of time upon the dial of the universe, and though no bell may beat the glad tidings, the lookout knows that the midnight is passing and that relief and rest are close at hand. Let the people everywhere take heart of hope, for the cross is bending, the midnight is passing, and joy cometh with the morning.” ~Eugene V. Debs

**39. A history of true civilisation is
not one of monuments**

Deleted reason: not anarchist

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Civilisation is back. But it is no longer the preserve of ‘Renaissance man’ or of ‘the West’, or even of literate societies. Civilisation is a way of talking about human history on the largest scale. From the cave paintings of Lascaux to the latest MoMA exhibition, it binds human history together.

But in at least one essential aspect, the concept of civilisation remains fundamentally exclusionary. It is still the stuff of galleries, museums and UNESCO World Heritage sites; of prized images, objects and structures, rather than of living humanity. The prehistoric stone structures of Göbekli Tepe – where a heritage park has now opened, near the border between Turkey and Syria – are being mooted as everything from the Garden of Eden to the cradle of civilisation and the world’s first temple. We still want a civilisation raised up high above the everyday realities of its human makers and keepers. In troubled regions, such as the Syrian-Turkish border, monuments like these quickly become altars of sacrifice for real human lives.

Importantly, there have always been other ways of understanding ‘civilisation’. The 20th-century French anthropologist Marcel Mauss thought that civilisation should not be reduced to a list of technical or aesthetic achievements. Nor should it represent a particular stage of cultural development (‘civilisation’ versus ‘barbarism’, and so on). Civilisation could be found in material things, but above all it referred to a potential in human societies. In Mauss’s view, civilisation is what happens when discrete societies share morally and materially across boundaries, forming durable relationships that transcend differences. It might seem an abstract debate, but it’s not. Let me try to explain.

Roughly four years have now passed since the military ascendance of Daesh or ISIS in the Middle East. ISIS routinely destroyed or sold antiquities, culminating in their 2015 assault on the ancient caravan city of Palmyra, in Syria, a World Heritage Site. Under ISIS occupation, Palmyra’s Roman theatre had become a stage for gruesome atrocities, including the public beheading of Khaled al-Asaad, a native of modern Palmyra, and until then its director of antiquities. In the spring of 2016, after a Russian-backed (and, as it turned out, temporary) liberation, Palmyra was hosting the Mariinsky Symphony Orchestra. At their performance, an audience of Russian soldiers sat to hear Bach, Prokofiev and Shchedrin. The event was designed to present a particular, and I think misguided, idea of civilisation. It was, in the words of Russia’s president Vladimir Putin via live link from Moscow, ‘part of humanity’s heritage’. Through the ages, Palmyra had opened its gates to all manner of foreign gods. ‘Everything,’ wrote the Russian ancient historian Michael Rostovtzeff in 1932, ‘is peculiar in the peculiar city of Palmyra.’ Yet nothing, perhaps, so peculiar as these events of 2015–16.

What was ‘civilised’ about playing Prokofiev in the beautiful wreckage of one ancient Syrian city, while the living population of another, Aleppo, to the north, was simultaneously under attack? The ancient temples of Palmyra were not designed as works of art, to be passively viewed or admired, any more than the caves of Lascaux or Font-de-Gaume were intended as art galleries, or Göbekli Tepe as a prehistoric version of the Sistine Chapel. In antiquity, their cult statues demanded live offerings and sacrifices, and now it seemed that they were demanding them again. Sacrifice of this kind seems somehow bound up with our modern understandings of ‘heritage’, ‘art’ and ‘civilisation’, in ways that are rarely thought about or articulated. Surely what this tells us is that these are, to all intents and purposes, our own modern gods – the gods of the global north.

When people use the term ‘early civilisation’, they are mostly referring to Pharaonic Egypt, Inca Peru, Aztec Mexico, Han China, Imperial Rome, Ancient Greece or other ancient societies of a certain scale and monumentality. All of these were deeply stratified societies, held together mostly by authoritarian government, violence and the radical subordination of women. Sacrifice is the shadow lurking behind this concept of civilisation; the sacrifice of freedoms, of life itself, for the sake of something always out of reach – an idea of world order, the mandate of heaven, blessings from those insatiable gods.

There is something wrong here. The word ‘civilisation’ stems from a very different source and ideal. In ancient times, *civilis* meant those qualities of political wisdom and mutual aid that permit societies to organise themselves through voluntary coalition. The modern Middle East provides many inspiring examples. In the summer of 2014, a coalition of Kurdish units broke the siege of Mount Sinjar in Iraq to provide safe passage, food and shelter for thousands of displaced Yazidis. Even as I write, the population of Mosul is raising to life a new city from the war-torn rubble of the old, street by street, with minimal government support.

Mutual aid, social cooperation, civic activism, hospitality or simply caring for others: these are the kind of things that actually go to make civilisations. In which case, the true history of civilisation is only just starting to be written. It might begin with what archaeologists call ‘culture areas’ or ‘interaction spheres’, vast zones of cultural exchange and innovation that deserve a more prominent place in our account of civilisation. In the Middle East, they have deep roots that become visible towards the end of the last Ice Age, around 10,000 BCE. Thousands of years before the rise of cities (around 4000 BCE), village communities already shared basic notions of social order across the region known as the ‘fertile crescent’. Physical evidence left behind by common forms of domestic life, ritual and hospitality shows us this deep history of civilisation. It’s in some ways much more inspiring than monuments. The most important findings of modern archaeology might in fact be these vibrant and far-flung networks, where others expected to find only backward and isolated ‘tribes’.

These small prehistoric communities formed civilisations in the true sense of extended moral communities. Without permanent kings, bureaucrats or standing armies, they fostered the growth of mathematical and calendrical knowledge; advanced metallurgy, the cultivation of olives, vines and date palms, the invention of leavened bread and wheat beer. They developed the major textile technologies applied to fabrics and basketry, the potter’s wheel, stone industries and bead-work, the sail and maritime navigation. Through ties of kinship and commerce, they distributed these invaluable and cherished qualities of true civilisation. With ever-increasing accuracy, archaeological evidence allows us to follow the founding threads of this emerging fabric of civilisation, as it crosses the plains of lowland Iraq, weaves back and forth between the shores of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, through the foothills of the Taurus and Zagros mountains, and down to the marshy head of the Persian Gulf. Civilisation, in this new sense, forms a cultural tapestry of startling complexity and grandeur, centre-less and open-ended, woven from a million tiny social bonds.

A moment’s reflection shows that women, their work, their concerns and innovations are at the core of this more accurate understanding of civilisation. Tracing the place of women in societies without writing often means using clues left, quite literally, in the fabric of material culture, such as painted ceramics that mimic both textile designs and female bodies in their forms and elaborate decorative structures. To take just one example, it’s hard to believe that the kind of complex mathematical knowledge displayed in early cuneiform documents, or in the layout of urban temples, sprang fully formed from the mind of a male scribe, like Athena from the head of Zeus. Far more likely, these represent knowledge accumulated in preliterate times, through concrete practices such as the applied calculus and solid geometry of weaving and beadwork. What until now has passed for ‘civilisation’ might in fact be nothing more than a gendered appropriation – by men, etching their claims in stone – of some earlier system of knowledge that had women at its centre.

From such a starting point, we can see the true history of living civilisation. It reaches back far beyond the earliest monarchies or empires, resisting even the most brutal incursions of the modern

state. It's a civilisation we really can recognise when we see it, taste it, touch it, even in these darkest hours. There can be no justification for the wanton destruction of ancient monuments. But let's not confuse that with the living pulse of civilisation, which often resides in what at first glance seems small, domestic or mundane. There we will find it, beating patiently, waiting for the light.

40. Rethinking cities, from the ground up

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Topics: anthropology, archaeology, gatherer-hunters, cities, prehistory, ancient history

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New work in anthropology, archaeology and psychology shows just how similar we are to ancient hunter-gatherers, and what this means for a more radical understanding of 21st century cities.

Cities begin in the mind — or so thought Elias Canetti.¹ Ancient hunter-gatherers must have pondered the existence of collectives much larger than the ones they actually lived in. Proof, he felt, was on the walls of caves, where they faithfully depicted species that moved together in uncountable masses. No doubt they also considered the unbounded society of the dead, outnumbering the living by orders of magnitude. Canetti speculated that cities began in the mind as ‘invisible crowds,’ when people could only picture their own societies escalating to rival those other collectives. Current advances in anthropology, archaeology, and the study of human cognition allow us to see that the Bulgarian-Austrian-British author was onto something.

From studies of modern hunter-gatherers, we get the idea that our capacity for social cohesion evolved in the context of small mobile foraging bands, comprising between 25 and 50 close kin. When foragers came together in larger groups — to share food, knowledge, or labour, or to inter-marry — these small bands were supposedly the building blocks. If we evolved to interact in such tightly bounded groups, then living in really big societies — cities, nations, and so on — goes against the evolutionary grain, and must require all sorts of ‘scaffolding’ to make it work: the invention of bureaucracy, central government, specialised agencies of enforcement, and so on.² This standard model of ‘traditional human society’ is actually a little more complicated. We also know now that it is wrong, and it is important to see why, because this begins to show what might be truly universal about cohesion in human societies.

The evolutionary story conventionally starts with discrete forager groups, ‘nested’ within a hierarchy. What does this actually mean? The basic idea is that elementary social units replicate at a variety of scales, like fractals in nature or mathematics; but unlike mathematical fractals, which have no upper limit, the growth of social fractals is supposedly constrained by a range of inherent factors, or at least this has been traditional scholarly wisdom for a long time. The most basic unit of ‘ancient’ human society was supposed to be the pair-bonded family, with shared investment in offspring. To provide for themselves and dependents, nuclear families were obliged to form larger ‘residential groups’ of roughly 100 or 150 persons. Biological relatedness was still the optimal criterion for inclusion, so in their composition these residential groups were supposed to resemble nuclear families, or slight extensions. As these larger groups formed, or so the theory goes, the social bonds linking them weakened, and conflicts arose. The larger the group, the less stable it was. Recent hunter-gatherers are supposed to exemplify this kind of primordial social system; but here comes the ‘worm in the bud.’

New work on the demography of living hunter-gatherers — drawing statistical comparisons from a global sample of cases, such as the Hadza of Tanzania and Australian Martu — shows that ‘nested’ social structures are not actually present.³ The key problem lies with the composition of ‘residential

¹ Canetti, Elias. 1962. *Crowds and Power*. London: Gollancz.

² e.g. Dunbar, Robin I. M. 2010. *How Many Friends Does One Person Need? Dunbar’s Number and Other Evolutionary Quirks*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

³ Bird, Douglas W. et al. 2019. “Variability in the organization and size of hunter-gatherer groups: foragers do not live in small-scale societies.” *Journal of Human Evolution* 131: 96–108; see also Hill, Kim et al. 2011. “Co-residence patterns in

groups.’ It turns out that, on close inspection, primary biological kin actually make up less than 10% of their total membership. Most participants are drawn from a much wider pool of individuals who do not share close genetic relationships, are scattered over very large territories, and may not even speak the same first languages. Potentially, they include all those who recognise each other as Hadza, or as Martu, BaYaka, !Kung San, and so on.

All this may seem counter-intuitive. It is as though modern forager societies exist simultaneously at two radically different scales: one tight-bound, and the other virtually unbounded, with little in between. But from a cognitive angle, this is precisely the point. The neurological capacity to shift between scales is what makes human social cognition most obviously distinct from that of other primates.⁴ Modern foragers are no different in this way from modern city-dwellers or ancient hunter-gatherers. We all have the capacity to feel bound to myriad others who we may never meet: to take part in a macro-society, which exists most of the time as ‘virtual reality’ — a world of possible relationships with its own rules, roles, and structures that are held in the mind, and recalled through the cognitive work of image-making and ritual. Foragers may sometimes exist in small groups, but they do not — and probably have not ever — lived in small-scale *societies*.

None of which is to say absolute population sizes do not matter for social evolution. What it means is they do not matter in the kind of ways we tend to assume. In at least one sense, Canetti was right. Mass society exists in the mind before it becomes physical reality; and crucially, it also exists in the mind *after* it becomes a physical reality. Cities are a case in point. They are tangible things, but they are never stable. People constantly move in and out of view, sometimes on a daily basis, or seasonally for holidays and festivals, to visit faraway relatives, conduct business meetings, and so on. Yet cities have a life that transcends it all. This is not because of their absolute numbers. It is because we often think and act as people who *belong* to the city — as parts of a citizen body, as Londoners or New Yorkers. As the distinguished urban sociologist Claude Fischer put it:

Most city dwellers lead sensible, circumscribed lives, rarely go downtown, hardly know areas of the city they neither live nor work in, and see (in any sociologically meaningful way) only a tiny fraction of the city’s population. Certainly, they may on occasion — during rush hours, football games, etc. — be in the presence of thousands of strangers, but that does not necessarily have any direct effect on their personal lives. ... urbanites live in small social worlds that touch but do not interpenetrate.⁵

All this applies in equal measure to ancient cities (as Aristotle said of Babylon, ‘... its capture was, two days later, still unknown to a part of the city.’). These observations were made long ago, and might seem obvious, but placing them in the light of evolutionary debates is important, because they cast doubt on some deeply held convictions about how cities originated, and what they may yet become.

Was living in cities a difficult feat for our species to accomplish, causing all kinds of new social tensions; obliging us to conjure up solutions to unprecedented problems? For some this is where ‘social complexity’ really begins, with the forging of institutions and technologies to make organised life possible on an urban scale. For others, it means the point where we had to surrender basic freedoms to avert chaos, delegating our futures to new classes of administrators, priests, kings, and warrior-politicians to make decisions for us and maintain order. As we have seen, evolutionary studies now point in the opposite direction: living in cities may not have been difficult or counter-intuitive at all, because cities

hunter-gatherer societies show unique human social structure.” *Science* 331: 1286–1289; David Wengrow and David Graeber. 2015. “Farewell to the childhood of man: ritual, seasonality, and the origins of inequality.” (The Henry Myers Lecture). *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21 (3): 597–619.

⁴ Bloch, Maurice. 2013. *In and Out of Each Other’s Bodies: Theory of Mind, Evolution, Truth, and the Nature of the Social*. Boulder, Co.: Paradigm.

⁵ Fischer, Claude S. 1977. “Comment on Mayhew and Levinger’s ‘Size and the density of interaction in human aggregates.’” *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (2): 452–455.

are a certain type of unbounded group, and — from the standpoint of human cognition — living in unbounded groups is effectively what we had been doing all along.

But what about the actual evidence of early cities? Since at least the days of Gordon Childe, the celebrated archaeologist working in the first half of the 20th century, scholars have tried to identify universal features of social evolution, associated with the novel scale of urban populations. Settlements inhabited by tens of thousands of people make their first appearance in human history around 6,000 years ago. In the earliest examples on each continent, we find the seedbed of our modern cities; but as those examples multiply, and our understanding grows, the possibility of fitting them all into some neat evolutionary scheme diminishes. It is not just that some early cities lack the expected features of class divisions, wealth monopolies, and hierarchies of administration. The emerging picture suggests not just variability, but conscious experimentation in urban form, from the very point of inception. Intriguingly, much of this evidence runs counter to the idea that cities marked a ‘great divide’ between rich and poor, shaped by the interests of governing elites.

In fact, surprisingly few early cities show signs of authoritarian rule. There is no evidence for the existence of monarchy in the first urban centres of the Middle East or South Asia, which date back to the fourth and early third millennia BCE; and even after the inception of kingship in Mesopotamia, written sources tell us that power in cities remained in the hands of self-governing councils and popular assemblies. In other parts of Eurasia we find persuasive evidence for collective strategies, which promoted egalitarian relations in key aspects of urban life, right from the beginning. At Mohenjo-daro, a city of perhaps 40,000 residents, founded on the banks of the Indus around 2600 BCE, material wealth was decoupled from religious and political authority, and much of the population lived in high quality housing. In Ukraine, a thousand years earlier, prehistoric settlements already existed on a similar scale, but with no associated evidence of monumental buildings, central administration, or marked differences of wealth. Instead we find circular arrangements of houses, each with its attached garden, forming neighbourhoods around assembly halls; an urban pattern of life, built and maintained from the bottom-up, which lasted in this form for over eight centuries.⁶

A similar picture of experimentation is emerging from the archaeology of the Americas. In the Valley of Mexico, despite decades of active searching, no evidence for monarchy has been found among the remains of Teotihuacan, which had its magnificent heyday around 400 CE. After an early phase of monumental construction, which raised up the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon, most of the city’s resources were channelled into a prodigious programme of public housing, providing multi-family apartments for its residents. Laid out on a uniform grid, these stone-built villas — with their finely plastered floors and walls, integral drainage facilities, and central courtyards — were available to citizens regardless of wealth, status, or ethnicity. Archaeologists at first considered them to be palaces, until they realised virtually the entire population of the city (all 100,000 of them) were living in such ‘palatial’ conditions.⁷

A millennium later, when Europeans first came to Mesoamerica, they found an urban civilisation of striking diversity. Kingship was ubiquitous in cities, but moderated by the power of urban wards known as *calpolli*, which took turns to fulfil the obligations of municipal government, distributing the highest offices among a broad sector of the *altepetl* (or city-state). Some cities veered towards absolutism, but others experimented with collective governance. Tlaxcalan, in the Valley of Puebla, went impressively far in the latter direction. On arrival, Cortés described a commercial arcadia, where the ‘order of

⁶ Mieroop, Marc Van De. 2013. “Democracy and the rule of law, the assembly, and the first law code,” in H. Crawford (ed.), *The Sumerian World*. Abingdon; New York: Routledge, pp. 277–289; Possehl, Gregory L. 2002. *The Indus Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective*. Walnut Creek: Altamira; Wengrow, David. 2015. *Cities before the State in Early Eurasia*. (The Jack Goody Lecture). Halle: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology; Chapman, John, Bissierka Gaydarska and Duncan Hale. 2016. “Nebelivka: assembly houses, ditches, and social structure.” In J. Müller et al. (eds.), *Trypillia Mega-Sites and European Prehistory, 4100–3400 BCE*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 117–132.

⁷ Froese, Tom, Carlos Gershenson and Linda R. Manzanilla. 2014. “Can government be self-organized? A mathematical model of the collective social organization of ancient Teotihuacan, Central Mexico.” *PLOS One* 9 (10): e109966; Robb, Matthew H. 2017. *Teotihuacan: City of Water, City of Fire*. San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and University of California Press.

government so far observed among the people resembles very much the republics of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa for there is no supreme overlord.’ Archaeology confirms the existence here of an indigenous republic, where the most imposing structures were not palaces or pyramid-temples, but the residences of ordinary citizens, constructed around district plazas to uniformly high standards, and raised up on grand earthen terraces.⁸

Contemporary archaeology shows that the ecology of early cities was also far more diverse, and less centralised than once believed. Small-scale gardening and animal keeping were often central to their economies, as were the resources of rivers and seas, and indeed the ongoing hunting and collecting of wild seasonal foods in forests or in marshes, depending on where in the world we happen to be.⁹ What we are gradually learning about history’s first city-dwellers is that they did not always leave a harsh footprint on the environment, or on each other; and there is a contemporary message here too. When today’s urbanites take to the streets, calling for the establishment of citizens’ assemblies to tackle issues of climate change, they are not going against the grain of history or social evolution, but with its flow. They are asking us to reclaim something of the spark of political creativity that first gave life to cities, in the hope of discerning a sustainable future for the planet we all share.

⁸ Fargher, Lane, Richard E. Blanton, and Verence Y Heredia Espinoza. 2010. “Egalitarian ideology and political power in prehispanic Central Mexico: the case of Tlaxcalan.” *Latin American Antiquity* 21 (3): 227–251; Fargher, Lane et al. 2011. “Tlaxcallan: the archaeology of an ancient republic in the New World.” *Antiquity* 85: 172–186.

⁹ e.g. Pournelle, Jennifer. 2003. *Marshland of Cities: Deltaic Landscapes and the Evolution of Mesopotamian Civilization*. University of California: San Diego.

**41. Community Control, Workers'
Control, and the Cooperative
Commonwealth**

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The principles of the Left Green Network¹⁰ refer to the democratic, socially owned, cooperative, and ecological economy we envision as a ‘Cooperative Commonwealth’. It goes without saying that Left Greens believe that the people should control the day-to-day operations of their workplaces. But what about the broader social decisions concerning the economy – the structure of demand; the coordination of distribution networks; the disposition of surplus between investment, public goods, and private consumption; the choice of technology; the scale of production units and distribution networks; the harmonization of the economy with the environment? Should these be decisions made by workers or by all citizens? In short, in our vision of a cooperative commonwealth, what should be the relation between workers’ control and community control?

Two leftist models that claim to be democratic, socially owned, cooperative and ecological can be dismissed in short order. One, market socialism, based on producer and consumer cooperatives, reproduces the evils of markets: the predatory ethics of competition and greed; the dearth of public goods; the surfeit of ecological and social ‘externalities’; the expansive market logic of limitless growth that is devouring the biosphere. The other, democratic socialism, based on central planning by elected state agencies, entrenches a new class of technocrats in privileged positions and does not overcome the irrationalities that command planning creates, whether the planning class is elected or self-appointed.

This is not to preclude cooperatives or the democratization of public enterprise and planning (e.g., direct election of the board of a public electric utility that is currently appointed) from playing a role as transitional forms and demands. But I want to focus here on the leftist traditions whose maximum program is an economy coordinated from below without the market or the state.

The libertarian left has offered two basic models for this kind of postrevolutionary economy: the worker-oriented models of anarcho-syndicalism¹¹, council communism¹², guild socialism¹³, ne-

¹⁰ The Left Green Network was formed by North American Greens and other independent leftists to advance an anti-capitalist, anti-statist program and revolutionary strategy within the Green movement and the broader independent left.

¹¹ Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1989; orig. 1938).

¹² Anton Pannekoek, “Workers’ Councils,” in Root and Branch, eds., *Root and Branch: The Rise of the Workers’ Movements* (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1975; orig. 1942). The most extensive attempt to work out the economics of council communism is in Cornelius Castoriadis, *Workers’ Councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society* (Philadelphia: Wooden Shoe, 1984; orig. 1958).

¹³ G.D.H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Restated* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1980; orig. 1920).

gotiated coordination¹⁴, and participatory planning¹⁵, and the community-oriented models of anarcho-communism¹⁶.

Anarcho-syndicalism and council communism propose to organize the economy around workplace assemblies that are coordinated through mandated and recallable delegates to workers' councils which are federated by industries and by geographical areas. The geographical workers' federations would determine demand in their areas and coordinate supply, while the industry federations would determine how to produce to supply the demand. The area and industry federations would negotiate on a plan to balance supply and demand.

Guild socialism, negotiated coordination, and participatory planning build on this model, adding consumer councils to determine demand. The industry federations determine how to produce what is needed, and the area federations coordinate the distribution. In this case, negotiation between the federations of workers' councils and consumers' councils would determine the plan.¹⁷

Anarcho-communism proposes to organize the economy around federations of community assemblies as the policy-making bodies, initially with federations of workplace assemblies, by area and by industry, as administrative bodies. In this case, workers' control is accountable to a larger framework of community control in determining the plan of coordination.

In the longer run, anarcho-communism seeks to progressively dissolve into the community the separate enterprises based on a social and geographical distribution of labor. By physically decentralizing production to create rounded communities that reintegrate production and consumption, agriculture and manufacture, natural beauty and urban amenities, mental and manual labor, means of livelihood and ways of life, the question of workers' control as distinct from community control is eventually rendered moot.

In the nineteenth century, however, with the rising factory system, the question of workers' control was anything but moot for anarchists. Anarchists thought they agreed on a vision of society as a dual federation: economic, a federation of self-managing workers' associations, and territorial, a federation of free communes (i.e., municipalities). But how workers' control should relate to community control was never clearly posed until the 1880s, when it led to a split rather than a resolution.

¹⁴ "Negotiated coordination" is the term used by Pat Devine, *Democracy and Economic Planning: The Political Economy of a Self-governing Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), one of the most detailed attempts to work out a non-market, non-statist socialist economic model.

¹⁵ "Participatory planning" is the term used by Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel in their detailed model of a non-market, non-statist socialist economy. See Albert and Hahnel, *Socialism Today and Tomorrow* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); "Participatory Planning" in Steve Shalom, ed., *Socialist Visions* (Boston: South End Press, 1983); *Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century* (Boston: South End Press, 1991); and *The Political Economy of Participatory Economics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁶ Peter Kropotkin is the classic anarcho-communist. Two representative statements are his *The Conquest of Bread* (London: Elephant, 1985; orig. 1892) and *Act for Yourselves* (London: Freedom Press, 1988; orig. 1886–1907). A good historical overview is provided by Alain Pengam, "Anarcho-communism," in Maximilien Rubel and John Crump, eds., *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987). Murray Bookchin stated the contemporary case for anarcho-communism in his *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986; orig. 1970). Other important statements for the ultimate accountability of workers' control to community control are Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958; orig. 1949) and Gar Alperovitz, "Notes Toward a Pluralist Commonwealth", in Gar Alperovitz and Staughton Lynd, *Strategy and Program: Two Essays Toward a New American Socialism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). Two other statements along these lines that also have an ecological orientation are Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1934), Chapter 8; and Paul and Percival Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960; orig. 1948), Chapter 6.

¹⁷ Cole, Devine, and Albert and Hahnel do give the community through its political institutions the final say on economic planning when there are disputes among the workers' and consumers' federations. In each case, these political institutions are participatory, based on assembly forms and mandated and recallable representation. Cole calls these institutions communal as opposed to statist; Albert and Hahnel sometimes do and sometimes do not make it clear that these forms are distinct from statist forms, while Devine simply regards them as more democratic forms of the state. But what still distinguishes these models from community-oriented models is that the economy is still institutionalized as a separate set of institutions. The community, through its political institutions, is merely a court of last resort for economic disputes.

In 1880, Swiss anarchists in the Jura Federation, unable to make up their minds, simply left the question open in one of their documents: “Is it to be a general assembly of all inhabitants, or delegates from the trades ... which will draw up the constitution of the commune?”¹⁸

By the end of the decade, however, the two possible answers to that question had split the anarchists into rival tendencies: the syndicalists who looked to the workers to expropriate the capitalists and reorganize the economy under trade union control and the communists who looked to the risen people to expropriate the capitalists and reorganize the economy under municipal control. The class-conscious syndicalists ridiculed the communists for seeking popular alliances with the middle and lumpen classes, while the anti-reformist communists ridiculed the syndicalists for their trade union struggles for ameliorative reforms within capitalism like better wages and the eight-hour day.

Another crucial difference from our viewpoint as social ecologists was that the anarcho-syndicalists were generally enamored of industrial technology and wanted to adapt anarchist principles to it, while the anarcho-communists wanted to adapt machine technology to integrated communities that combined industry and agriculture and dissolved the social division of labor.¹⁹ Although anarcho-syndicalism became the dominant tendency by the turn of the twentieth century, the anarcho-communists’ territorial orientation naturally dovetailed with ecological concerns for the immediate land and environment of free communes (i.e., municipalities). The anarcho-communists’ interest in adapting technology to decentralized communities led to a revival of anarcho-communism in the 1960s as the New Left turned its attention to issues of participatory democracy, urbanism, bureaucracy, community, technology, and ecology. Sixties activists read Paul Goodman’s writings on these subjects and rediscovered Kropotkin’s thinking on them. Murray Bookchin found a growing audience for his explicitly ecologically grounded anarcho-communism. These perspectives then found their way into the left-wing of the anti-nuclear alliances of the 1970s and the Green movement that emerged in the 1980s.

Yet the question of workers’ control remains a vexing one for eco-anarchists. Between the economic structure we inherit today and the eco-communities and bioregions of tomorrow lies a process of movement building and then fundamental change in power relations.

In the meantime, many of us will spend eight hours a day at a workplace year after year. The day after a revolution, we will still have the centralized structure of physical production and distribution to coordinate even as we begin to decentralize it. So the answer, it seems to me, lies in not choosing between workers’ control and community control, but in finding the proper relationship between the two for today and for how the relationship should evolve as the physical production structure is remade to correspond to a libertarian community structure.

I will argue that the anarcho-communist tradition – and particularly the libertarian municipalist approach advanced by Murray Bookchin²⁰ – offers the best framework for integrating workers’ control and community control in a process of social change that ultimately yields a marketless, moneyless, stateless cooperative commonwealth. My basic position is:

The building blocks, power base, and policy-making bodies of a democratic political economy should be local community assemblies, inclusive of all people, that coordinate with each other through confederal administrative councils of mandated, recallable, and rotating delegates. While self-management of the day-to-day operations by the workers of each workplace should be affirmed, the basic economic

¹⁸ Daniel Guerin, *Anarchism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), pp. 58–59.

¹⁹ Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974; orig. 1888–1890); Alexander Berkman, *What Is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover, 1972; orig. 1929), pp. 283–88.

²⁰ Murray Bookchin’s writings on libertarian municipalism include “The Forms of Freedom” in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*; “The American Crisis,” *Comment*, Vol. 1, Nos. 4, 5 (February, August 1980); “Anarchism: Past and Present,” *Comment*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (May 1980); “The Concept of Libertarian Municipalism,” *Comment*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (November 1980); “Municipalization: Community Ownership of the Economy,” *Green Perspectives*, Vol. 2 (February 1986); “Theses on Libertarian Municipalism” in *The Limits of the City* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986); “The New Municipal Agenda” in *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1987); “Radical Politics in an Era of Advanced Capitalism,” *Green Perspectives*, Vol. 18 (November 1989); “The Meaning of Confederalism,” *Green Perspectives*, Vol. 20 (November 1990); “Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview” (Burlington: Social Ecology Project, April 1991).

policies concerning needs, distribution, allocation of surplus, technology, scale, and ecology should be determined by all citizens. In short, workers' control should be placed within the broader context of, and ultimately accountable to, community control.

Over time, the community should reorganize work so that people are not tied to any particular workplace, but rotate among a variety of workplaces and types of work (mental/manual, conceptual/rote, agriculture/manufacture, etc.). At the same time, the physical structure of the economy should be progressively decentralized until production and consumption, workers and community, are largely reunited in eco-communities and bioregions, and the question of workers' control is rendered moot.

In the meantime, the final word on all social policy, including economic policy, should rest with all the people in their community assemblies. Fighting to create and empower these assemblies, to bring more and more political and economic power under their control, in opposition to the state and capital, is the best means we have for creating this sort of cooperative commonwealth. Workplace organizing should be an organic extension of the community-based movement.

The reasons for this position will become clear by discussing the arguments between the worker-oriented and community-oriented theories. These arguments bear not only on what the economy should ultimately look like, but also on how we organize and struggle to get there. The arguments have revolved around four basic questions:

1. Democracy – What institutional framework best enables people to take direct control of society, uproot all forms of hierarchy, and discover their common interests?
2. The Revolutionary Subject – What social sectors are likely to become radicalized and take militant action?
3. Power – What social sectors and forms of organization and action have the potential power to overthrow capital and the state?
4. Transitional Strategy – What forms of organization and action best prefigure and build toward the new society?

Democracy

A fundamental problem with the worker-oriented positions from the viewpoint of democracy is that not everyone is a worker. Many are too young or old, sick, disabled, unemployed, rearing children, working for themselves outside the formal economy, and so forth. At any one time, those with 'official' jobs are only around 40 percent of the population and 60 percent of adults.

Anarcho-syndicalism and council communism thus exclude or underrepresent in economic decision making many social groupings affected by those decisions, such as women, minorities, and the elderly who are not involved in production because they are rearing children and housekeeping, discriminated against, or retired. This is true for both the revolutionary unions or workers' councils before the revolution and the worker-planned economy after the revolution.

Guild socialism, negotiated coordination, and participatory planning give every citizen a voice through the consumer federations. But the problem here is that by granting equal power in the planning negotiations between the federations of workers' councils and consumers' councils, workers basically get two votes in the planning process, one on the production side and one on the consumption side. Non-workers only get one vote on the consumption side. This privileges workers in the decision-making process.

A community assembly, on the other hand, is open to all citizens. It is thus potentially a nonhierarchical public sphere where all interests and concerns get a hearing and everyone has an equal standing – one person, one vote.

The workplace, by contrast, is not a rounded public sphere. It is one-sided, concerned with production. There is a built-in contradiction in the workerist models between the workers' functional interests in their workplaces as against the interests of the community as a whole. In the planning process, the

workers either decide everything (anarcho-syndicalism, council communism) or get an additional vote in the planning process (guild socialism, negotiated coordination, participatory planning). Either way, the workers hold a veto over society. Either way – even without the profit motive to fuel competition – each workers’ assembly, council, and federation has an interest in easing its own burdens and shifting them on to other functional groups or on to society and nature as ‘externalities’. Why should the workers of a workplace or a whole industry produce more to meet demand? Why should they shut down ‘their’ plant for environmental or productivity reasons and relocate to another modernized plant or another branch of production? Why should they take affirmative action to diversify their workforce racially and sexually?

No internal dynamic exists in the workerist models to reconcile the particular interests of workplaces and industries with the general interest of the broader community. To the contrary, the inherent structural tendency – despite, let me reemphasize, the absence of a competitive struggle for profits – is for self-aggrandizement by each functional group. In the historical example of the Spanish revolution of 1936–37, the dual federation structure of the anarcho-syndicalists came into conflict with itself, with the industrial federations finally asserting themselves over the area federations. In the workerist models, each functional group has a particular interest – as against other functional groups as well as the community as a whole.

In order to overcome the divisions which pose one group against another along the lines of race, gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, class, and so forth, we need a basic social unit which is inclusive of all people. The territorial defined local community, institutionalized as a directly democratic community assembly, meets this need.

In the community assembly, different social groups (genders, ethnic groups, ages, classes) and functional groups (occupations, both formal jobs and informal work) must coexist. Direct communication is possible. Conflicting interests can be dealt with directly by the people who have to live the decisions.

Community assemblies do not automatically transcend race, class, gender, and other divisions (a problem I will return to below with respect to how a municipalist approach can deal with the historically intransigent racism of the U.S.). But all interests are brought together on an equal footing in a deliberative democratic process that can lead to the discovery of common interests. Sectional interests, be they workers, women, or ethnic minorities, can still caucus and organize to press their concerns. They can still take direct action to force a community that is failing to deal with their concerns to do so.

The difference between workplace and community assemblies is that the internal dynamic of direct democracy in communities gives a hearing to solutions that bring out the common ground and, where there is not consensus, an equal vote to every member of the community.

Democracy is no guarantee that common ground will be adopted, but it is a necessary condition. The only guarantee is that when one section of society has institutionalized privileges, it will use those privileges to advance their particular interest at the expense of the general interest.

Given the present-day uneven geographical distribution of industry, classes, and ethnic groups, not all local communities will bring all the social interests and functions together. But at the municipal level of confederated community assemblies, and still more at the regional level of confederated municipalities, these interests and conflicts will be incorporated into the deliberations of the confederal grassroots democracy. Indeed, the sharing of resources and productive facilities among communities regionally and among confederated regions will serve to solidarize communities on the basis of common material needs as well as ideological commitments.

Building on the foundation of a socially decentralized coordination of the economy, an additional policy of progressive physical decentralization of the industrial structure to create more self-sufficing (but not autarkic) communities would reinforce and enhance democracy. The historic breach between anonymous producers and consumers that was created by the expansion of capitalism into a global market nexus could be progressively dissolved. To the extent that production and consumption were reunited on a human scale, society would be rendered more comprehensible and social self-management more feasible. Economic ‘externalities’ would be ‘internalized’ as a natural and normal community concern. The

community oriented toward its ecological bioregion, not the workplace oriented toward international divisions of labor and networks of exchange, is the framework around which we can construct relatively self-sufficing, rounded communities.

With the rotation of community members among a variety of workplaces, neither factory, farm, shop, or office would function as separate interests in the community. The temporary functional divisions of labor as people rotate among tasks would not correspond to a permanent social division of labor and the permanent sectional interests we have today that divide humanity against itself. Workplaces would essentially become administrative agencies implementing policy made by the whole community. People with special expertise in branches of production would be elected to advisory boards to propose policies that the community could adopt, amend, or reject. The economy would become truly politicized as one aspect of the public affairs addressed by the community assemblies and their confederal councils.

Work rotation could also be organized by the area federations in the workerist models, but this would still institutionalize the workers as a distinct class with a unique and privileged relation to the means of production and particular interest in the decision-making structure. If a classless society is the goal, then people who work should not have any privileges over those who do not work. In the case of work rotation policies and schedules, it is more democratic for the community as a whole to determine work assignments because they not only affect those who do the work, but also their friends, families, and neighbors.

The community provides us with a framework for integrating these concerns and ultimately dissolving enterprises into a community's ecology and way of life. Separate enterprises, after all, are an essential condition of capitalism, the cells of the capitalist mode of production, the form which property takes under capitalism. Where control over the means of production is divided among enterprises, the links between them can only be commercial contracts to buy each others' output. Models of economic democracy based on workers' control of the workplace only reinforce this condition of capitalism.²¹

In sum, the most democratic structure for a cooperative commonwealth would be (1) workers' control of the everyday operations of workplaces with workers rotating among workplaces (until physical decentralization largely reunites production and consumption, workers and community, in eco-communities and bioregions that render workers' control as distinct from community control no longer a question), and (2) community control of the basic economic decisions concerning the structure of consumption, the allocation of production responsibilities, the disposition of surplus, the choice of technology, the scale of production and distribution, and harmonization with the environment.

The Revolutionary Subject

Workerist positions more from a belief that the working class was the revolutionary class than from abstract speculation about the structure of an ideal society in the future. Until the revolutions of 1848, radicals cast their views in populist terms – a broad coalition of 'The People' vs. the small elites with ill-begotten privileges. Marx and Engels, of course, changed that view by providing the emerging workers' movement with a theory about their role as the class that would rise to power and, in doing so, abolish all classes. Class struggle, not popular struggle, became the watchword of radicals. As Marx and Engels

²¹ It is precisely because the guild socialism of Cole and the democratic planning models of Devine and Albert and Hahnel do not envision the eventual dissolution of the enterprise with its separate workplaces into the life of communities that they retain a form of money and exchange-value based on labor time in order to link workplaces by exchange that is national and international in scale. As long as ownership remains social, workplaces remains internally democratic, and prices remain socially planned by a democratic process of negotiation, exploitation, imbalances, and private accumulation are theoretically precluded. Yet as long as workplaces confront each other and consumption units as functionally differentiated interests, there is the real possibility that these units will seek advantage over each other, reintroducing competition, and leading eventually to regression back to capitalism with competitive markets and private accumulation.

declared in the 1848 Communist Manifesto, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle.”²²

The Marxist theory of the working class as the revolutionary subject (a view which anarcho-syndicalism and council communism share) can be summed up in four key propositions:

1. The basic dynamic in capitalist society is the class struggle between the working class and the capitalist class. *The Communist Manifesto*:

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses this distinctive feature: It has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other – bourgeoisie and proletariat.²³

2. The working class is an ‘immense majority’. *The Communist Manifesto*:

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority.²⁴

3. Because of its exploited and dehumanized position in relation to the means of production, the working class is compelled to become a revolutionary class. Marx and Engels:

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class.²⁵

When socialist writers ascribe this world-historic role to the proletariat, it is not at all ... because they regard the proletarians as gods. Rather the contrary ... It cannot emancipate itself without abolishing all the inhuman conditions of life of society today which are summed up in its own situation. Not in vain does it go through the stern school of labor. It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment regards as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do.²⁶

4. The industrial proletariat is the core of the revolutionary working class because the factory system is training it in science, technology, cooperation, and unity. First Engels, then Marx:

Finally, it may be observed that it is the factory workers ... who form the solid core of the working-class movement. ... As one branch of handicraft industry after another is transformed by the factory system, so more and more workers flock into the various working-class movements.²⁷

Hand in hand with this centralization, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever-extending scale, the cooperative form of the labor-process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labor into instruments of labor usable only in common, the economizing of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialized labor, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and with this, the international character of the capitalistic regime. Along with the constantly diminishing magnates

²² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968; orig. 1848), p. 2.

²³ *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 20.

²⁴ *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 22.

²⁵ *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 3.

²⁶ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Holy Family* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975; orig. 1844), p. 47.

²⁷ Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968; orig. 1845), p. 273.

of capital ... grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself.²⁸

History has not developed the way Marx and syndicalists thought it would.

First of all, capitalism has not simplified the social question into a two-class struggle. Second, the industrial working class is not the immense majority, but a minority and decreasing in social weight. On the one side is the growing 'underclass' of the permanently unemployed, surviving off the dole and often petty criminal pursuits, as well as the growing 'servant class' of highly casualized workers in personal services and subcontractor sweatshops. On the other side is a smaller but growing, highly educated, securely employed, and well-paid strata of technical and professional but still waged workers. All may be exploited in Marxian terms, but they view each other as quite different status groups, not class comrades.

Moreover, as capitalist development has proceeded, stratification has congealed around a wide array of nonclass identities, creating a myriad of racial, sexual, occupational, educational, bureaucratic, regional, and international hierarchies. To theoretically impose from the outside of this reality an objective class commonality based on a relation to productive forces does not mean subjective class consciousness will automatically follow. To the contrary, for the last 40 years, it has been the transclass issues that have mobilized people – the so-called 'new social movements' around peace, the environment, feminism, gay liberation, racial equality, ethnic autonomy, community control, and a whole array of cultural movements that reject the alienated structure of needs and the compensatory consumption that have grown with the commodification of social relations. Popular struggles against spiritual impoverishment, much more than class struggle around material exploitation, have been the radical movements since the New Left mobilized initially around civil rights, anti-colonialism, anti-bureaucratism, and banning the bomb in the 1950s. The 'immense majority' today are the many alienated and oppressed sectors of society, not a single class defined by its relationship to the means of production. Economistic 'class struggle' is too one-sided and parochial to express the universalization of the struggle against multiple forms of hierarchy and irrationality. The democratic struggles of 'The People' better express this generalization of the struggle against myriad forms of domination than the two-class struggle of wage labor and capital. The community is the potential public sphere where this broad array of oppositional forces can generalize their particular struggles around a common program of radical democratization. Struggles at the point of production are limited to that sphere and are easily isolated there. Even a general strike can pit workers not only against capitalists, but against many segments of the popular strata that are inconvenienced by the strike and perceive it as the action of a 'special interest', not on behalf of the general interest.

Third, the class struggle no doubt continues under capitalism. But it has become a struggle over how to best manage it and distribute its product, not over its right to exist. To continue to impute unique revolutionary dynamics to it after witnessing the last 75 years is to be blind to the evolution of revolutionary syndicalism into collective bargaining and revolutionary socialism into ameliorative social democracy – in short, into the day-to-day administration of capitalism.

Fourth, far from being a school for revolutionary socialism, the factory has been a school for docility. If one examines the history of workers' uprisings, one usually finds a 'working class' that was new to the factory system, in transition from the farm or artisanship. Whether one examines the European uprisings of 1848, the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the workers' council movements throughout Europe after World War I, the Spanish Revolution of 1936–37, or Polish Solidarity in the 1980s, one finds that the activists came from a much wider array of life situations than industrial workers and that the industrial workers were generally in recent transition to those

²⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1967; orig. 1867), p. 763.

occupations. Moreover, the children of the radical industrial workers were socialized into and tended to adapt to the factory system with its military-like chain of command and obedience. The hereditary working class came to regard the hierarchical discipline of the factory more as the inevitable nature of things, not a burden to be resisted; it is a hierarchy of occupational grades more as a career and status ladder to climb than a prop to knock out from under the bosses. The factory 'disciplined, organized, united' workers into capitalism, not into opposition to it.

Marx hoped that workers struggling for their own interests would raise a general interest that would ultimately dissolve class and national divisions into a classless society. Looking back today, it is fair to conclude that when workers have struggled around their own economic interests, they have usually sought merely a better deal from capitalism, not a classless society.

In any case, the industrial structure that Marx saw emerging and analyzed with often remarkable prescience is passing. With automation, the fate of the industrial worker is that of the farmer. Factories, like farms, will remain, but automated machinery and robots will replace most of the human labor. Indeed, we are in the midst of a technological revolution based on microelectronics and biotechnology that will be as profound in its social implications as the agricultural and industrial revolutions. It will be 'postindustrial' in terms of what most ordinary people do for a living, but super-industrialized in terms of the degree of mechanized production.

Along with this technological revolution is a restructuring of the social paths through which wealth and income circulate. In fact, just as the factory system was introduced by capitalists to mobilize and discipline labor before most of the technology of smokestack industries was developed, so, too, capitalist restructuring today is driving the technological revolution. Heightened international competition is undermining the 'social contract' between labor and capital that yielded the 'middle class' blue collar worker with union protection, secure employment, and relatively decent benefits between the 1950s and the 1970s in the U.S. In order to compete, global corporations are employing new technologies of instant global communication and automation to pit U.S. workers against cheap labor abroad and against robots at home. The 'Fordist' circuit of accumulation, based on mass production for mass consumption, is giving way before a new regime of accumulation based on luxurious 'overconsumption' by privileged upper strata with subsistence or less for an underclass which, when employed, works as low-wage temps producing goods and servicing the well-to-do. The barrel-shaped income distribution, with the securely employed blue collar worker in the solid middle income brackets, is giving way to the hourglass-shaped structure of income stratification. On the one side is a shrinking strata of securely employed, highly skilled, often unionized skilled workers and technicians. On the other side is a growing mass of underemployed, poorly paid, rarely unionized, and generally marginalized workers in the services and in the 'global factory' of dispersed networks of interchangeable, highly automated, modular industrial units. These production units usually require only a limited workforce, often hired on a part-time, short-term basis, much like migrant farm workers.

In short, we are witnessing the decomposition of class structure of industrial society. Millions of people are in transition, with no stable position in the system of social stratification. Millions are becoming expendable, their labor no longer needed, with growing criminality and social unrest from below and brutality and repression from above. An increasingly repressive, militarized, state-guided capitalism is emerging to keep 'order'.

A popular struggle for grassroots democracy, not a class struggle around material interests, is the weak link of this emerging structure of militarized state capitalism. The victims of this restructuring are becoming as deaf traditional worker-oriented class appeals of the old left as they would be to the old agrarian appeals of the nineteenth century populist movement of farmers and sharecroppers. But 'The People', the revolutionary subject of the classical democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century, could return if populist alliances in post-Fordist cities can be developed between the middle strata concerned with the quality of life and the marginalized concerned with simple access to the means to life. Economically and technologically displaced persons are receptive to the material issues raised by this restructuring – economic insecurity, the scapegoating of minorities, poisoning by toxics, the 'poverty

draft' of the poor for foreign wars. But the more economically secure middle strata are just as receptive to the cultural and moral sides of these same issues – meaningless work, the absence of community, the general degradation of the natural and urban environments, the mean spirit of militarism. Democracy is the programmatic link between these two populations, which combined make up the 'immense majority'.

Libertarian municipalism as a program of popular empowerment thus potentially broadens the social base of a revolutionary movement. It calls for community assemblies as the social form through which 'The People' can find their voice and power. Community assemblies provide a forum in which all the issues can be addressed and integrated into a common program that addresses alienation as well as exploitation and poverty; the desire for community as well as oppression and hierarchy based on race, gender, age, and occupation; humanly scaled ecological technologies as well as cleaning up toxics; peace and international cooperation as well as the poverty draft.

Through neighborhood assemblies, neighborhood mandation of municipal council representatives, and neighborhood power to revoke council decisions and recall their representatives, both the material concerns of the marginalized and the quality of life concerns of the middle strata could begin to be addressed. Divided, the capitalists run the cities by playing the middle and the marginalized off against each other. United, the middle and the marginalized could use municipal institutions to begin to remake their cities to meet the concerns of both groups. By linking up with other cities, municipal confederations could resist the centralized power of national states and global corporations and ultimately replace them with new forms of grassroots political and economic democracy.

What gives grassroots democracy its radical thrust is that real democracy is the last thing modern state capitalism wants. It short-circuits the military, state, and corporate managers' need for centralized control and repression to maintain stability and 'order'. Quantitative economic demands can be granted for a time to demobilize and pacify those who demand them. They can be used to play each sectional interest off against the others (as witness the Republicans, from Nixon's 'Southern Strategy' to Bush's constant quota baiting). But the qualitative, structural demands around democratic self-government in order to restore environmental quality and create meaningful work and community are 'wedge issues', to borrow from the Republicans' strategic lexicon, with the difference being, however, that these 'wedge issues' isolate the elites from the people, instead of driving a wedge between different popular sectors. Capitalism's dynamic of limitless growth stands directly at odds with the goal of an ecological society in balance with nature. Democratic control of economic development directly challenges capital's prerogatives and profit-oriented dynamic. The desire for meaning in work and everyday life brings the irrationality and atomization created by market society into question. These are issues better suited to broad popular struggles organized in communities than to narrow economic struggles organized on the job.

Race and the Revolutionary Subject

The persistence of racism, anti-Semitism, nationalism, fascism, religious fundamentalism, and other 'socialisms of fools' among workers is decisive evidence that capitalism is not 'progressive' in the sense of breaking down all irrational divisions of society against itself before its own rationality based on the logic of profit. Indeed, today, as advanced capitalism enjoys a legitimacy worldwide unparalleled in its history, we are witnessing an explosion of nationalism, racism, and religious fundamentalism around the world. Far from having "stripped [workers] of every trace of national character," far from teaching them to regard religion as mere "bourgeois prejudices," as Marx and Engels had it in *The Communist Manifesto*,²⁹ the development of capitalism has strengthened nationalism and religious escapism. The history of capitalism shows that workers will frequently act against they consciously understand to be their rational economic interests in order to participate in irrational myths like nationalism and religious fundamentalism. Ideology and psychologically rooted subconscious motivations are at least as

²⁹ *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 21.

powerful as economic interest in shaping behavior. The turn of much of the German working class to fascism in clear contradiction of their conscious understanding of their class interests provoked Wilhelm Reich's *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, a reevaluation of the Left's political approach, particularly its failure to deal with the psychological internationalization of oppression, and the blind obedience to, and identification with, oppressive authority.³⁰ It seems clear a transformative political practice has to do more than appeal to economic interest.

The participatory nature of direct action – and particularly direct democracy in community assemblies as the highest form of direct action – can have a transformative effect on participants, enabling them to discover their powers to think and act for themselves without the sanction of faraway, mystified authority figures, be they statist, religious, or commercial media celebrities selling lifestyle images to display (including apoliticism) rather than products to use. Libertarian municipalism seeks to create this kind of participatory politics that is transformative for its participants.

But that still leaves the question of majority oppression of minorities on the basis of race. How do we uproot racism? In the U.S., the question of racism is particularly crucial given the 500 years of capitalist development in which the class system of exploitation has been based upon the systematic racial domination of people of color. Majority rule has meant white racist rule. Democracy provides no simple solution if the majority continues to dominate ethnic minorities. Moreover, technological changes today are rendering labor less needed, threatening particularly the unskilled labor of racially dominated groups but also the labor of millions of whites. With downwardly mobile whites looking for scapegoats, a mass fascist movement that could threaten the very survival of people of color in the U.S. is not out of the question. Workplace organizing is less and less relevant to the particular situation of ethnic minorities rendered unemployed and expandable by technological development.

A municipalist approach, on the other hand, starting from the existing geographical segregation of people of color by white racism, can advance a program of confederations of self-governing African-American, Latino, and Native American communities. These self-governing confederations could develop a measure of mutual aid and self-reliance that could insulate them somewhat from an intransigent white racist majority. Hopefully, by demonstrating an inspiring example of confederal grassroots democracy and economic cooperation, radicalized communities of people of color could radicalize white communities by showing a better way to live and interrelate as human beings. At the least, by entering into the larger society with an independent power base, radicalized communities of color would confront white communities with a choice between continuing racism or developing a new relationship of mutual respect and equality – between continuing to ally on racist grounds with the white capitalist and statist elites that exploit and dominate them, or developing a new alliance on democratic grounds with communities of color in order to win their own freedom from exploitation and domination by the ruling elites. The basic program for uprooting racism, then, is a program of empowerment and self-government by the racially oppressed.

The movement for black political power in the 1960s was unfortunately taken over by black liberals who have simply demanded that blacks be put in positions to do what whites used to do without changing the system. But there was also a radical black power perspective advanced that sought black control of the black community in order to create fundamental anti-capitalist social change in America as a whole. Starting from the facts that blacks were concentrated in the cities and being displaced from the workforce by automation, James and Grace Lee Boggs (who are today active in the Detroit Greens) called in 1965 for:

³⁰ Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970; orig. 1932). This problem for the Left of irrational political behavior in contradiction of one's own interests is also explored in Wilhelm Reich, *Sex-Pol: Essays, 1929–1934* (New York: Vintage, 1972); Maurice Brinton, *The Irrational in Politics* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1974); and Bertell Ollman, *Social and Sexual Revolution: Essays on Marx and Reich* (Boston: South End Press, 1979).

... self-government of the major cities by the black majority, mobilized behind leaders and organizations of its own creation and prepared to reorganize the structure of city government and city life from top to bottom. ...

The city is the base which we must organize as the factories were organized in the 1930's. We must struggle to control, to govern the cities, as workers struggled to control and govern the factories in the 1930's.

... Black Political Power would institute a crash program to utilize the most advanced technology to free people from all forms of manual labor. It would also take immediate steps to transform the concept of welfare to one of human dignity or of well-faring and well-being. The idea of people faring well off the fruits of technology and the labors of past generations without the necessity to work for a living must become as normal as the idea of organized labor has become. There should be no illusion that this can be accomplished without expropriating those now owning and controlling the economy. It could not therefore be accomplished simply on a city-wide basis, i.e., without defeating the national power structure. However, by establishing beachheads in one or more cities, black revolutionary governments would be in the most strategic position to contend with and eventually defeat this national power structure.³¹

This radical black power perspective found echoes in other sectors of the radical movements of people of color over the next decade, in the demands for community control of the schools, police, and businesses in inner cities across the country and in the 'intercommunalism' of the Black Panthers and American Indian Movement which called for community control of all communities and cooperative relations between communities. These were radical municipalist and confederalist approaches whose relevance has only increased as the trends in technological unemployment, impoverishment, imprisonment, and repression have accelerated for communities of color.

Power

For Marx and Engels, the schooling in scientific technology, social cooperation, and class consciousness that the factory system provided for industrial workers was to be used in an independent workers' party aiming for state power. Whether by election or insurrection, it was only a matter of time before the numerically increasing working class would come to power. But, as we have noted above, occupational hierarchies among waged working people have mitigated against coalescing around a common class program.

Where strong labor parties have been consolidated and taken state power (Sweden, France, Germany, the U.K., among others), they have streamlined and administered capitalism, not replaced it. Party elites may have been elected into office, not into real power. They have been no match for the extra-electoral powers at the disposal of the ruling elites – capital mobility, entrenched bureaucracy, corporate media, military repression. Recognizing that the parliamentary road is self-defeating and that only a majoritarian movement based on direct action to carry through the program of social reconstruction has the power to overthrow the ruling elites, worker-oriented revolutionaries have focused on direct action at the point of production, building toward the revolutionary general strike.

With the turn of the century wave of general strikes, especially the formation of workers' councils (soviets) in the 1905 Russian uprising, the mass strike became a key strategic perspective for more radical Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg and later the council communists. Even earlier, anarcho-syndicalists had put the general strike at the heart of their strategy. Not only was the capitalist system making industrial

³¹ James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages From a Black Worker's Notebook* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), pp. 40, 45–46.

workers radical, they believed, it was also positioning them in the key positions in the economic structure to resist and eventually overthrow capitalism. As Rudolf Rocker explained:

... in Spain the widespread strike movement among the workers and peasants after the Fascist revolt in July, 1936, developed in a “social general strike” (*huelga general*) and led to armed resistance, and with this to the abolishment of the capitalist economic order and the reorganization of the economic life by the workers themselves.

The great importance of the general strike lies in this: At one blow it brings the whole economic system to a standstill and shakes it to its foundations. Moreover, such an action is in no wise dependent on the practical preparedness of all the workers, as all the citizens of a country have never participated in a political overturn. That the organized workers in the most important industries quit work is enough to cripple the entire economic mechanism, which cannot function without the daily provision of coal, electric power, and raw materials of every sort. ...

For the workers the general strike takes the places of the barricades of the political uprising. It is for them a logical outcome of the industrial system whose victims they are today, and at the same time it offers them their strongest weapon in their struggle for liberation...³²

Historical experience has provided us with a number of instances in which workers had the point of production in their hands, but not the social power that people like Rocker thought it would bring. The Russian factory committees and soviets of 1917 were not able to avoid being outmaneuvered by the Bolsheviks and the centralization of power in a party-state. The Spanish Revolution of 1936–37 was not able to beat back the fascists even though they had the means of production under their control in Catalonia, Aragon, and other areas. The Hungarian workers’ councils of 1956 were simply crushed by Soviet armed might. Polish Solidarity was not able to overthrow the Polish government despite its incredibly vast network of workers’ councils and broad popular support.

Taking over the point of production is necessary, but not sufficient. We need a strategy that deals with all the dimensions of social power. Another crucial necessary condition is to win over the rank and file of the armed forces. A list of recent revolutions shows how crucial it is: the Armed Forces Movement that overthrew the Portuguese fascists in 1974, the overthrow of Marcos in the Philippines by the ‘People’s Power’ movement, the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, and the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989. A sectoral workers’ movement is less likely to find sympathy with rank and file soldiers than a popular movement based in communities where soldiers’ families, friends, and neighborhoods are.

In any case, the industrial structure that once made the general strike appeal so potentially powerful is being restructured. A traditional problem for radical labor organizing has always been the fact that the higher strata of the working class – the more skilled, better paid, and more securely employed – have been easier to organize. This problem is only exacerbated today with the new industrial structure that has emerged with capitalist restructuring over the last 20 years. Industrial unions, or federations of workers’ councils organized by industry, made some sense in the old ‘Fordist’ industrial structure based on a locally integrated factory with a large and stable work force. But the heightened mobility of capital in the new industrial structure has weakened workers’ power at the point of production. It is very easy for capital to instantly switch production to another plant halfway around the world in order to undermine militant workers.

On the other hand, relative to the national state, local government finds itself with heightened responsibility, and hence leverage, for the conditions of production that attract investment. Not only tax breaks and pollution abatements, but schools, public services, and the general quality of the local environment are increasingly the factors corporations weigh when locating new plants and offices. This

³² Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, pp. 121–23.

gives community-based movements some leverage over the direction of economic development, and potentially more leverage when a network of community movements emerges that can counter capital's attempt to play one community off another.³³

After 150 years in which worker-oriented theories have dominated the Left, it is easy to forget that most of the high points of revolutionary upheaval in the last millennium have been communal peasant movements and urban municipal movements. From the free cities and the leagues or confederations they formed for periods from the tenth century on, through the many peasant uprisings seeking communal autonomy from oppressive landlords, the American and French Revolutions with their town meetings and neighborhood assemblies, and even such high points of 'proletarian socialism' as the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Spanish Revolution of 1936–37, it has been multi-class, popular movements aimed at local self-government in opposition to the centralized state that have shaken the foundations of hierarchical society, both feudal and capitalist.³⁴ Indeed, in the larger historical perspective, it is the workers' movement that is the 'new social movement' – and probably a transitory one corresponding to the rise and fall of the factory system. The transclass democratic movements are the older and more abiding forms of popular struggle.³⁵ It is not the working class incubating as capitalism develops, but the municipality still surviving despite the massive growth of the state that is the potential time bomb that could explode and shake state capitalism beyond recuperation.

With its potential for direct democracy and confederal forms of coordination that stand in stark opposition to statist forms, the municipality and municipal confederations create a local framework through which millions of people can act directly to replace market society and the bureaucratic state with free, egalitarian, and cooperative social forms. By broadening the social forces that can be mobilized, a libertarian municipalist approach can sustain and institutionalize much more popular power against the state and capital that can a workers' control approach limited to the workplace.

Transitional Strategy

A transitional strategy seeks to raise demands and develop forms of action and organization which progressively build the conditions in which popular revolutionary action becomes possible.

First, it should raise demands that mobilize people around their immediate concerns, but in such a way that in the course of struggling for them, people are educated as to the nature of the system and the need for fundamental change. The demands and the struggle for them should serve as a bridge between present consciousness and revolutionary consciousness.

Second, the demands, if won, should not improve capitalism, but impinge upon its logic by creating new centers of democratic counter-power which prefigure the society we want to create. As the Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World put it, we need forms of organization and action which begin to create "the structure of the new society within of the old."

Third, the demands and forms of action and organization should aim at shaking the system, provoking a crisis, and opening the door to fundamental social transformation.

Anarcho-syndicalism and council communism viewed the struggle between wage labor and capital at the point of production as meeting these requirements for a transitional strategy. Rudolf Rocker:

By direct action the Anarcho-Syndicalists mean every method of immediate warfare by the workers against their economic and political oppressors...

³³ Margit Mayer, "Politics in the Post-Fordist City," *Socialist Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (January/March 1991), pp. 105–24.

³⁴ On the history of municipalist movements in opposition to capitalism and the national state, see Murray Bookchin, *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1987); and Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

³⁵ On the hidden history of transclass social movements, see Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes, "Ten Theses on Social Movements," *IFDA Dossier 63* (January 1987) and "Civil Democracy: Social Movements in Recent World History," in Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World-System* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990).

In its simplest form it is for the workers an indispensable means of raising their standard of living or defending their attained advantages against the concerted measures of the employers. But the strike is for the workers not only a means for the defense of immediate economic interests, it is also a continuous schooling for their powers of resistance, showing them every day that every last right as to be won by unceasing struggle against the existing system.

Just as are the economic fighting organizations of the workers, so also are the daily wage-struggles a results of the capitalist economic order, and consequently, a vital necessity for the workers. Without these they would be submerged in the abyss of poverty. Certainly the social problem cannot be solved by wage-struggles alone, but they are the best educative instrument for making the workers acquainted with the real essence of the social problem, training them for the struggle for liberation from economic and social slavery ...

Here we come to the general cultural significance of the labor struggle. The economic alliance of the producers not only affords them a weapon for the enforcement of better living conditions, it becomes for them a practical school, a university of experience, from which they draw instruction and enlightenment in richest measure. The practical experiences and occurrences of the everyday struggles of the workers find an intellectual precipitate in their organizations, deepen their understanding, and broaden their intellectual outlook.³⁶

From what has been said so far, it should be clear that strategies focused on struggles at the point of production have isolated workers from the rest of the community. Hierarchy in the workplace has been much like the military, an experience of socialization into obedience, not a school for rebellion. Contrary to the expectations of Rocker and other worker-oriented radicals, the labor movement has not been a self-developing struggle, building upon itself in an escalating series of demands, winning more workers' counterpower that serves as a platform for still further demands until the workers can take on the system itself. Instead, labor has become a competing interest group in capitalist society, bargaining for a better position within the system, not fighting for an alternative to it.

Recognizing these facts is not to say that workplace struggles should be ignored or disregarded. Workplace hierarchy, wages, benefits, hours, health and safety – all are important issues. But they need to be linked organically to community struggles. Workplace groups should be part of broader community organizations that take workplace issues out of their particularistic context and generalize them. In this context, workplace struggles can develop way beyond a narrow struggle for labor to get its 'fair share' within capitalism and raise basic questions about the system: Why work when contemporary technology is so productive? Do we need bosses, or can we do it ourselves democratically? How can we restructure tasks and choose technology so that working develops us as creative and responsible human beings, rather than uses us as cogs in the megamachine? How can we produce more of what we want locally for local use?

So rather than an economic struggle separated organizationally from a political struggle, the economic struggle should be an arm of a community-based struggle for participatory democracy. The community-based struggle would bring the different social sectors and struggles together around their common interests and seek to institutionalize the continual process of discovering the common good by creating community assemblies of all citizens and confederal forms of coordination that link the base assemblies through mandated and recallable delegates to municipal, regional, and higher level councils.

With the new industrial structure we face today, a convergence of community and labor organizing makes more sense, with the community rather than an industry being the basic unit of labor organizing. Community-based unions make more sense when most of the workforce is moving from job to job in small workplaces around the community. The old Wobbly idea of One Big Union where workers transferring from one job to another were automatically enrolled in the IWW branch at the new workplace should be revived, but adapted so that the communities, rather than the industries, are the units of confederation.³⁷

³⁶ Rudolph Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, pp. 116–17.

³⁷ Jeremy Brecher, "Crisis Economy: Born-Again Labor Movement?" *Monthly Review*, Vol. 35, No. 10 (March 1984).

Community-based unions as components of broader community movement organizations create the right kind of network for raising ‘transitional demands’ relating to work – open the books and other enterprise information, ‘green bans’ where workers refuse to work on environmentally destructive projects as has been done by Australian construction workers, health and safety demands on the job linked to anti-toxics demands in the community, workplace democracy, rotation among workplaces and types of work, and so forth. They provide a natural community-based context for solidarizing and harmonizing workers’ particular interests with the broader community concerns and struggles.

As community struggles grow, as a combination of direct action and local electoral campaigns leads to a restructuring of municipal government around community assemblies, it becomes possible to begin developing a municipalized economic sector through public financing and eminent domain that can prefigure the cooperative commonwealth and begin to act as a countervailing power to the corporate and state sectors.

Building the struggle this way creates an immediate context in which everyday people from all walks of life – not only party elites, not only workers – can act directly to democratize the economy and society generally. As liberated areas under community control link up confederally and begin to develop a parallel power structure that can challenge the supremacy of the state and capital, this grassroots counterpower would face efforts by the national state and global corporations to crush the new powers exercised by the grassroots democracy.

At this crisis point, tax strikes against the state, expropriation without compensation, and an overall appeal to the people to withdraw every form of support from the old centralized structures and throw it to the new grassroots-democratic structures would be the order of the day. Much would depend on whether the rank and file of the armed forces sided with the people or their chain of command, a condition which a community-oriented strategy can address much better than a worker-oriented strategy. But there would also be a role for workers’ councils forming in the workplaces at this crisis point. They would be indispensable for expropriating corporate and state property and bringing it under the administration of the grassroots democracy.³⁸ Despite their declining relative numbers, there are still today in the U.S. some 30 million industrial workers (19 million in manufacturing, six million in construction and mining, five million in transport, communication, and utilities), down only slightly in absolute numbers from the 1979 peak. This is roughly 25–30 percent of the workforce and 10–15 percent of the population. Workers’ control is thus not irrelevant, but neither is it the leading edge of a revolutionary strategy. Rather, it is an aspect of the broader strategy of community control, an aspect that grows out of the community struggle and is not likely to emerge until the community movement is well developed.

To build to that point – to progressively create the conditions in which popular revolutionary action can finally overthrow state capitalism – the core of the mounting struggle has to be oriented toward the community, toward building the new political counterinstitutions based on community assemblies and confederal networks among them that can eventually appropriate the economy and establish the cooperative commonwealth.

³⁸ For discussions of this kind of scenario in modern industrial countries, see Murray Bookchin, “The Forms of Freedom” and “The May-June Events in France – 2” in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*.

42. And The War Drags On

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15 months have passed since Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine and still the war drags on. Hundreds of thousands are killed or maimed, is that enough? No, it is not enough. Not for the capitalists of both sides in the conflict, locked in their power plays, callously sending the children of the working class to the killing fields while checking their overseas bank accounts.

There is no end in sight to this war. Both sides prepare a spring offensive. It seems the slaughter can only end when one or both warring parties run out of cannon fodder. That is becoming a problem for them. Hundreds of thousands have fled both countries to avoid being forcibly enlisted. In Ukraine there are special apps circulating which send warnings on where the recruiters are on the prowl. Russia still has hundreds of thousands of soldiers in reserve but the Kremlin doesn't trust them. Why else is it not sending them to the battle? Or is it to maintain the illusion that this is not a war, just a "special military operation"? Instead of using these trained battalions, the prisons are skimmed and all those willing to join the mercenaries and the young recruits (most from distant provinces) at the front, get a 'get out of jail free card'. Prison or the front? What would you pick? It's a new way to play Russian roulette. Given the conditions in the Russian prisons, there are many who take the chance.

The enthusiasm for the war on the part of the population has cooled considerably. It was already low in Russia but now in Ukraine as well there are increasing signs of disaffection. But that is not enough to stop this madness. The fact that the working class in both countries still accepts that so many of its sons and daughters are being sacrificed on the altar of national pride for the determination of the borders between the hunting grounds of their rulers, is hardly reassuring.

Desertion is mounting, despite the risks. Both Russia's and Ukraine's parliaments have democratically approved harsh punishments for deserters, up to 12 years in Ukraine and life in prison in Russia. And then there are the extra-legal punishments, because, "*a la guerre comme a la guerre*", war has its own rules. A deserter of the Wagner brigade was executed with sledgehammers. Still many keep fleeing. But the desertion and the resistance against the recruiters are not yet massive collective acts which is why they are so vulnerable to the ferocious state repression and not preventing the continuation of the war. Both in Russia and in Ukraine the working class keeps working, churning out weapons and whatever else their bosses can sell at a profit. Unemployment is high, inflation rises fast while wages stagnate and fear rules.

Despite all the death and destruction, this is not yet total war. Russia is still trying to wage it in a way that limits its impact on the majority of its population. The US and its Nato allies have stepped up their weapons deliveries to Ukraine, making its army arguably the most potent terrestrial army in Europe, but they have not given them weapons such as long range missiles and fighter jets which could expand the war into Russian territory. While in Europe the prospect of an endless war on its eastern flank is starting to raise some doubts in the ruling class, for US capitalism, this is just what the doctor ordered. The US secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin openly stated that the US's goal in the war is to weaken Russia as a military power and the longer the war lasts, the more that succeeds.

They are thinking already about the next war. In Washington, Democrats and Republicans, bickering about everything, are solidly united in jacking up the hostility level against China, the main foe (with rising hate crimes against Asian-Americans as a side-effect). The US military budget is expected to pass the cape of one trillion dollars this year, dwarfing the expenditures of all other countries, with

the possibility of war with China in mind. China too is accelerating its military spending (although still less than a quarter of that of the US). “Ukraine has offered us a new understanding of a future possible world war”, general Meng Xiangqing , the deputy director of the army’s Strategic Research Institute wrote in the Guangming daily newspaper. He noted that Russia’s nuclear arsenal had restrained the US’s intervention in the war and called for a faster buildup of China’s nuclear capacity, as well as for more satellites for intelligence gathering and scores of other expenditures. Which is what is happening. In Europe too, and around the world: everywhere the ruling class is increasing military spending, preparing for more war. And everywhere it wants the working class to pay for it. Austerity is the watchword. Working longer, for wages eroded by inflation and less benefits is what your country needs. Hunger, deteriorating health care, insecurity, war and climate disasters is what capitalism has in store for you and me.

But the working class, the vast majority of the population whose interests clash with those of capital, are not flocks of sheep kept easily in line by barking dogs. The current wave of struggles in the UK and France testifies to that. The latter especially shows a radicalization³⁹, a growing understanding that the enemy is not just Macron or the boss but the capitalist social order itself.

Notes:

³⁹ An interesting report on the struggle in France can be found here. Some quotes: “ The alternative—to face up and fight back—seems unavoidable to many. A situation of conflict between social forces, against the capitalist class, is coming into being, even among those who for a long time have preferred the easier path of reform. his particular situation has brought to the fore a sensibility that was formerly underground, shining a new light on the absurdity of the condition of wage labor, now seen in the perspective of the ravaged condition of the world and the difficulties of life. Work has become for many synonymous with precarity, a violent life, impoverishment, the destruction of beings. So to work “two more years” to guarantee an end to this life without human meaning—No! It’s enough to report the innumerable individual placards and slogans of the French demonstrations, with their wealth of imagination, to grasp the general sentiment of rejection of this state of affairs. These are no longer only union demonstrations demanding negotiations in the framework of a reform, they are also demonstrations against the way the economy works and the intentions of the world’s masters, against a vision of the world.(...) It is significant that the mood in the continuous demonstrations expresses the idea that we may lose this battle but we have created a force and there will be another future. (...) t is a mobilization whose principal motor is a qualitative desire to change the order of things, to call into question the deadly logic of capitalism. “Capitalism should retire,” read a placard carried on February 7.

43. Basic Politics of Movement Security

Author: J. Sakai, Mandy Hiscocks

Topics: g20, operational security, opsec, security, security culture, informant, surveillance

Date: 2013

Deleted reason: deleted not anarchist

Source: Retrieved on May 2, 2021 from archive.org

Cover:

Editor's note: sections between two horizontal rules and with the heading "Sidebar" followed by a number were additional notes added by the author after the talk but prior to publication.

Foreword

This is months after the talk, and sitting down with the transcript from a recording made me smile. Often it reads so rough, as though sentences were jumbled in a torrent through the mixer. Originally, the plan was to use the talk as a kind of skeleton and warmup exercise, and build up to a proper paper or article. But, finally, i decided against that, and instead opted to leave much of the talk transcript in for print as a record of a live event on this subject. Also, this better frames the group discussion, which was too sharp to leave out. Comrades were unusually thoughtful. Many people had clearly been really thinking about security and wanted a chance to discuss it in some focused setting with other comrades. So hopefully some of that's been saved.

A poet once noted, "Art being bartender is never drunk." Just so there was an agenda in giving this talk, as every political act has agency, tactics, and so forth. Many warnings on security that i've heard have been pretty formalistic. You know, lists of things not to do, mostly. My goal was to short-circuit that for now, and talk about the real life struggle and politics behind security as an area of struggle. As part of that, i didn't tell people at the meeting but i had steered wide to avoid technical discussion. When security comes up, one problem is a tendency of some guys fascinated with technique and especially technology, to run away with the discussion. This has a good side, for sure, but to me what the movement needs first is to work out our political understanding of security.

In the Q&A, there was one comrade who asked a serious question about how we deal with all the compromises and trade-offs involved in doing security. Such as the benefit of computer encryption for our emails and messages versus the daily added work of using it. i refused to answer, in part because such questions could only be discussed with practical examples which would involve laborious back and forth, too much for a short public meeting. And i was personally simply too tired physically at that point to deal with it seriously as it deserved. His question was left in, though, so that readers could think over his point. Even here, though, politics shines the farthest light. When a comrade once was offering me the favor of installing an "unbreakable" encryption program on my dusty old Apple, without his ever thinking about it a number of political decisions were involved. Was this so that i could have "sensitive" messaging and say dangerous things to other comrades without fear of the state? If so, that means i should be willing to risk prison for using that "security" measure. Prison or death for my comrades as well as myself. Betting that this particular technology is "unbreakable" or can never be defeated.

Of course, our encryption does not have to be cracked to be overcome. The weakest link is the end-user. Any encryption does no good if your laptop itself has had remote control covertly installed on it, or if it is physically bugged. Journalists whose life's work depends on repelling state computer surveillance—such as those who worked with NSA leaker Edward Snowden—never let their laptops leave their sight. They always had the machines physically with them. It's a strict regimen, for sure. If in five or ten years NSA or a band of brilliant hackers in Uruguay does succeed in cracking that code, NSA won't be nice enough to warn us. They'll want us to go right on blathering away telling them everything. Plus NSA has by their own admission saved every single email message ever sent globally since the birth of the internet, so if they ever crack that supposedly eternally invincible code someone's ass would be grass. Hmm, that's a lot to risk just for the privilege of talking indiscreetly. Nothing wrong with having computer encryption or using word substitution code in telephone calls or whatever, but am for always being discreet and careful too.

And on a deeper level, have to question the whole idea of trade-offs and compromises as a "problem". Know what people mean by this, and have thought it myself many times. But it's there all the time in life, ordinary life, not just in this rarified slice called politics. Using condoms, isn't that an annoying

trade-off or compromise ? Or having faster food instead of an hour's work of home cooked meal because we're kinda beat after work? Or... you can fill in the blanks. If we look at it in a zen political way, though, there is no such thing. No compromises, no trade-offs. That is only an illusion our mind creates in its confusion. If you really understand a situation, fully comprehend it, then you know precisely what you have to do. You don't resent it or question it or wish you could only do half of it, because it's the right action then whatever it is.

Called this an "informal talk" because it isn't based on a book and wasn't built on any research. Just talked about this subject off the cuff, as we might do any evening with comrades. So this version went through some steps in addition to the usual editorial cleanup. A number of comments or explanations were added afterwards, and these are usually marked by being in a grey box. And in a few places examples were moved around or replaced by others which much better showed the point I was hoping to make.

i was afraid to do this talk, because traditionally it is never done (except in closed members only group educationals, which i've sometimes heard complaints about but never been in one myself). Never even seen a pamphlet or book on this subject. Obviously, there are good reasons not to publicly disclose your security work. Not sure what this is supposed to look like, so please just take this as a sharing. There are several things which should be clear in reading this, however.

This talk and its discussion that night only scratched the surface of how security should be understood and worked on. Many important things were not even mentioned. So don't worry, we haven't done all the work already, there's lots for you to do. And then there's the consumer product safety warning on the label—there isn't any. That is, the goal of security isn't to protect you personally, though it may help do that. The goal of security is to protect the movement itself, to let the larger struggle against capitalism move forward.

Finally, at the anarchist book fair last May in Montreal, someone handed me a copy of Upping The Anti and asked if i'd seen the latest issue. Really, hadn't even known it was coming out. The day after the security talk, finally got a chance to kick back and open the magazine and start checking it out. Almost swallowed my chewing tobacco. Near the end was an interview with Mandy Hiscocks on the state's repression of the G20 Toronto mass protests in 2010, done before she went into prison. If i had known about it before my talk, would have brought it up to discuss. This is some serious thinking over of what the state did and what the movement did in an intense political crunch in the imperial metropolis. Security in a "right now" type situation. While some comrades have seen her interview in UTA already, many comrades in the u.s. probably have missed it as i did. So Mandy Hiscocks is letting us reprint it here to further share her experience, spread her radical insights.

j.s.

The Politics of Security

i'm going to speak for a little while generally. Then i'm going to go more into security, and how state infiltration against the movement has worked. This is in the u.s., mostly, what i'm familiar with. And what its results were, and both the movement's successes and failures in terms of combating the security agencies. Kind of some of what really happened. And then we can have Q&A. Okay?

A lot of times when we think about security we're still kind of uneasy about it. It's kind of like this little box way off on the side. It's not part of how we think of our regular politics or struggles we're involved in. Maybe, to us it's kind of a little dirty, and something confusing. Not certain how we can relate to it as a question. And if we do try to relate to it and deal with it, then we suddenly discover that, "Darn, there's no Security for Dummies". You go to the bookshelf and there isn't a book. Because the tradition is, at least in the u.s. where i come from, that this is a question where knowledge is handed down and transmitted by word-of-mouth, kind of personally. So sometimes when there's a generational discontinuity, big gap in passing on of this. So that's one of the reasons i'm talking about it here.

i'm not an expert on security from some security commission, i'm not a professor, i have nothing against them, but that's not what i am. i'm not a professor who studied this for their lifetime and who writes books on it. i'm just a movement activist. And so i've been taught basic things that i'd like to pass some of it on. i've witnessed security successes against the state and security failures, i'd like to pass that on.

Security is an area that's essentially divided into two parts. The first is our attempt to understand, keep track of and spotlight police activity. Eventually at some points even penetrate the armor of state domestic security agencies. What traditionally has been called the "political police".

The second part, of course, is dealing with their attempts to infiltrate our movements and activities, gain information against us, jam things up, harm people—and don't make any mistake about it they're definitely into harming people. This is not the nice guys' club, no matter what they always say.

The key thing is, to start with—and it's the most basic understanding—security is not about being macho vigilantes or being super suspicious or having techniques of this or that. It's not some spy game. **Security is about good politics.** That's why it's so difficult. And it requires good politics from the movement as a whole. Not from some special body or leadership or commission—from the movement as a whole. This is demanded of us. It's part of the requirement to be a revolutionary, that you try to work on this

Sidebar 1

Forgot to say during the talk, that the security lit that has been available is usually about the more dramatic illegal or or underground work. Such as Victor Serge's often-reprinted classic on clandestine tactics to evade the Russian Czarist police. Or the 1980s Black Liberation Army pamphlet that's taking off from Serge's lessons, "Fooling" by Seldom Seen. They're good but not our greatest need, it isn't on that level that's the biggest problem. It's for security understanding about public mass movements, for ordinary groups, that operate more-or-less on a legal level. Since this is the origin, the entry point for almost all people and issues into rebellion. And if we can't make it work on this level, we sure can't do a more difficult level.

When we say “good politics”, well, what is that? Everybody will say they have good politics. So really this cannot be assumed. It absolutely has to be broken down. Or, as the congregation always shouts back at the Baptist preachers, “Make it plain”. So we’re going to try and make it plain, as much as we can here.

First of all, good politics is not the ideology you may or may not have learned from reading a book of Marx or Proudhon or something like that. That’s good, it’s part of education, part of politics. But that’s not sufficient. In terms of security, that and 2 bucks will get you a cup of coffee. That’s about it.

Security demands a higher level of politics. A level of practice and experience, in all three of its aspects. It demands individual experience, collective experience, and historical experience, melded into one knowledge. And that may be a lot for us, but it’s just part of life, it’s what’s demanded of us, to do this work.

You know, after all, if you think about it, it’s like revolutionary zebras, a collective of them on the high savanna in Africa. They’re always being stalked by predators. Well, how do they deal with that? They deal with it usually pretty handily. Because that’s their terrain. They can read their terrain. The ripples on the grasses, all the information brought by the wind. They read that, they understand it.

The same with us when we struggle with capitalism. When we attack capitalist society—that area that we’re on, that we’re engaging them on, this is for that time our terrain. Part of the terrain is still theirs because this is still capitalism. A part of it is now ours because we made it so. And we have to be able to read that terrain, the constant ripples, changes in it, and understand what they mean, you know, in real life.

it’s just like, when i came into the movement—had been around the movement from my early teen years, just cause i hung out with the small pack of nerds and leftovers in secondary school, and many were from movement families. But when I was 18, i joined a social-democratic organization which was pretty moderate and pretty worthless, really, but it was there and i was so glad to find other people to join with and do something political.

Within a year i met 4 people in the group or who came to its public meetings, who were agents. And this is not some case of rumors that they were said to be agents, they all sooner or later confessed to being agents. Okay? In each of the four cases i would not have thought they were agents, i was 18 years old, why would i have thought someone was a police agent? i wasn’t thinking of that stuff. Someone quietly came up to me and said, You know so and so is probably an agent, and this is why. You should listen to him, check it out. This is why we think he’s an agent.

So, one guy, for example, clearly he’d gone to see a Hollywood movie or two about leftists or anarchists or something, and that’s what his act was based on. He was a young college dropout, finding excitement by working for the FBI. So he had a dramatic pose, wore a beret and a black turtleneck sweater, and he smoked Gauloises, the French cigarette, like what he thought the Left Bank of Paris was like. The other thing is he always made these really angry sounding speeches which were incomprehensible because he actually didn’t have any politics, you know. He didn’t have any good political points or bad political points, he didn’t have any political points at all just about. He was peppering his speech with all kinds of words that he heard others use. The dialectic this, the oppressor that. It was just peppered in.

After awhile, i wasn’t listening to him. i was just tuning him out. But when i was listening to him and he just didn’t have any politics at all, that i could ascertain—so what the hell is he doing here? Then it dawned: Oh, that’s why you think he might be a police agent! And the more experienced comrades didn’t try to beat him up or anything, just made fun of him—and created a kind of bubble around him. Anything important wasn’t discussed near him.

When we look at domestic security agencies, the political police (and it may be somewhat different in the u.s. than in Canada, my experience is all in the u.s. so i may be saying things that are really obvious as A-B-C to people in Canada and you know this all already and that’s good, so i’m sorry if this is just old stuff), what we see is the regular police force always justifies political policing and domestic

security persecutions as the normal outgrowth of their claimed attempts to be preventing mugging or having traffic accidents or whatever.

Sidebar 2

I've never forgotten about that real unimportant police spy, in part because of a completely unrelated incident. Many years later, was sitting in on a small meeting as a gofer, just in case anyone wanted coffee or we had to go photocopy something. It was a big-shot Hollywood agent and her client, an actress named Angelina Jolie, trying to convince some prisoner support workers who had been in the news lately, to sign over the rights to their life stories without any payment. Usual capitalistic rip-off biz. But what i was thinking about all the while was: "Don't i know her from somewhere? She's real familiar somehow." Which bothered me, since obviously i didn't know her. Then it hit me, damn, she's just like that police agent actor character was years ago. The mind is a funny thing, connects up things in unexpected ways. She also had a beret and a black turtleneck sweater on under her worn denim jacket, just like he did. His face had been rough, with like acne scars, and hers—now that I really looked at it—was all professionally made up to look off, a bit disfigured like she'd been in a factory accident or something. What crap, for a political meeting with the movement! And she was actually even crying at one point, weeping, saying impassioned but illogical things, trying to get over with her ripoff of our movement. Good try, rookie, but like him she was detected as phoney and politely repelled from our terrain.

This is totally untrue of course. Instinctively we know it's untrue, but factually it's just completely untrue in several ways. First, obviously, because the everyday police are there primarily to protect capitalist property and maintain that order in general. While the political police are a part of that, but more narrowly are a counter-insurgency police targeted against political enemies of the state, and in particular dissident groups of the colonized peoples and classes. That is, we could see them as an intelligence police for the oppressors in our permanent internal class war.

Let me use an example which may not seem to connect up for awhile. So bear with me:

Once i was on federal government probation for a couple of years for a protest they didn't like, and by "coincidence" my probation officer happened to be the commanding officer of the 113th US Army Military Intelligence Detachment, which is a reserve unit. And his supervising my probation consisted of every few weeks he would appear unannounced at my job, in front of everybody haul me out of work, march me out actually in front of everybody. Put me in the lobby or the hallway and subject me to his, what he obviously thought was his very slick psychological intimidation and brain washing. And it's kind of gross, and i'm going to mention it only for two reasons: one to show what they really are like and secondly because the u.s. military are still using these exact same tactics that they were trying to use on me, which were really simple and ugly.

He would say, basically, "You know, I'm your friend and here you are, you know you're a young guy in trouble and you know you just aren't having fun in life and here's why," and then he would start with all the stories of all the Asian women he'd used and how in Korea the lowliest G.I. in his unit had 2 women that sexually serviced him full-time and he of course had many more being the big officer and you know the life you could have if you came over to his side, you know, and became a real man, which i wasn't. Be a real man and you could go around the world raping women, forcing women into brothels and so forth.

So this is kind of wacky. Why would he be saying this dumb crap? And then i realized: well, firstly he's trying to obviously mess with my mind. You know, week after week, we would have this little conversation. First of all if he could get me to break, like, "Okay, i can't take this anymore, and i'm going to punch you out." Well, then, hold it, then I'm in jail for another couple years. Well, he wouldn't mind that. Or, he keeps emphasizing the thing that, see, he's a real man. i'm not a real man, of course, because i don't have these things, i'm not doing these things that real imperialist men do. So he kept saying to me that i could either hate myself because i'm not a real man, and this may sound funny but this works sometimes on young guys. Or, i could somehow find his spiel attractive because he always said, you know you could have all this. You don't have to have your miserable life, you could have this glamorous military life; you could be in in some Asian country with all the local women you want or if you like another country to have women in, you can do this too.

This sounds unbelievably stupid and crude, and it was. Well, do you know, they're still doing that to this very day. The u.s. army has things that they use. It's unofficial of course. They will disavow it. But they always use it. For example, specially against Asian guys. So you have an 18-year-old Asian volunteer in the army who was stupid enough to join anyway knowing he was going to go to Afghanistan to kill civilians or get his ass blown off. Anyhow, so he's there and the typical thing is, the training sergeant will walk by him and he's in the barracks looking at home pictures. You're lonesome and you're homesick and you're looking at home photos. And the Sgt. will come lean over your shoulder and will say "Oh, that's a nice looking girl, Is that your sister?" and you'll say "Oh, yeah." The Sgt. says, "Yeah, I thought so, I fucked her when I was on leave" and then he walks away and says, "Next time I'm going to fuck your mother." So, of course maybe you can... once again, you can punch him out—well, a year or whatever in jail for you—or you can start hating yourself because you have to take this crap, or think you're not a man like he is.

The thing is what does this have to do with policing? With security? It turns out the 113th Military Intelligence detachment was part of the shadow government behind the Chicago Police Red Squad that was investigating and infiltrating the 1960s-70s antiwar movement. They and by implication larger military agencies, were selecting targets and guiding our local police. And in fact they got into a lot of trouble, this military intelligence detachment, because they weren't content with that and they started sending their own guys out to observe the movement, maybe sabotage it or whatever. Except they got caught doing it and that was kind of embarrassing, because the u.s. army wasn't supposed to be doing that in the city of Chicago. The cops are supposed to be doing it. The division of labor for bourgeois legality purposes. **But when we say that political police are not just an outgrowth, an innocent extension of local policing, right, this can't be emphasized too much.**

Like New York City, in the late '60s the New York City Police Department decided it had to get rid of its Red Squad, because traditionally the subversive squad in the New York City police department was geared on investigating trade unions and all that old stuff that was really hot in 1920. Or was after the Communist Party or something Cold War that was dead as a door nail by then, and they weren't really keeping up with the times. So it became clear that the Red Squad had to be totally rebuilt . So u.s. intelligence not city hall in New York u.s.intelligence said, you know, New York is the major capital in reality, it 's critical to us. When we see that the police department has a problem which is that they re a white settler police department representing a white settler government, ruling a city with a large colonial population of color that 's increasingly getting rebellious. And they don't know what to do about it because they have these old-fashioned anti-subversive ideas.

Sidebar 3

After the meeting i got questions about whether we could better define the difference between police in general and the political police? Since many of us can see that all the police patrolling the occupied neo-colonial peoples in New York City or Los Angeles, for example, are pretty damn “political”. You know, in middle-class “white” suburbs and expensive urban neighborhoods, most police work is about individual crimes with little of it lethal or even violent—you know, a car gets vandalized or something is stolen out of a garage or someone is drunk and disorderly. Completely different in the neo-colonial zones, where the cops are visibly uninterested in stopping the wholesale epidemic of burglary or muggings or rapes or killings, but only work to pressure youth away from of civilian life and into the drug trade and gunfights and prison.

In the talk i bent over backwards to emphasize the division between regular capitalist policing and the political police, because too many comrades assume that the political police are just some of their own familiar police but turned around to focus on them. Not true strategically. The political police may be similar people and similar uniforms but have of necessity a very different mindset and plans.

Having said that, we have to also recognize that the repressive arms of the state are steadily coming closer and closer to each other, becoming more like each other, as global capitalism develops and also homogenizes divided societies and cultures. Beat cops in neo-colonized communities who have always been an alien occupation force, now have to function as an adjunct to organized intelligence units. Just as police SWAT teams in the 1970s were only the initial cutting edge in the militarization of local police forces. Right after images of the killing of Osama bin Laden by the elite u.s. special ops commandos went worldwide, i also saw a newspaper photo of Brazilian police tactical officers leaving—a favela of the poor they had invaded—and from the dark coveralls to the bulky loaded combat vests and military ballistic helmets and full-auto assault rifles on long slings, the two groups of u.s. elite commandos and Latin American police completely looked alike.

So who has more expertise in a situation like theirs? Oh, those settler South Africans in Johannesburg!

So u.s. intelligence arranged for a team of counter-insurgency detectives from what was then named the South African Bureau of State Security (obviously called by the acronym “BOSS”) in Johannesburg, i.e. the settler Afrikaner political police, to fly over to New York and to help be the big brothers, reorganizing, retraining, getting the New York City political police up to speed. To honor their Apartheid mentors, the N Y.P.D. also officially named its own political police squad after them, also “B.O.S.S.” It was their settler guys’ little imperialist In-group joke, since their whole relationship was secret back then (the squad’s name has been changed several times since then, naturally). Today the New York City political police, which Is commanded by a former top CIA official, has branches all over the United States and in eleven foreign cities, including Toronto. It’s a little far from New York City, but they clearly have their reasons to maintain that major investment in terms of what they’re doing.

The difference between regular policing, capitalist crap as it is, and the political police is going to become apparent as we talk because there is an important difference. One of the things that’s true about the political police throughout the capitalist world is that they’re all different but also all “family” in the sense that they’re descended, unbelievably as it is, from the Okhrana, the department for the protection of the public order of the Czarist government in late 19th-century Russia. Which was the first modern political police force under capitalism and was actually quite innovative. Its genetic makeup persists literally to this day inside political police almost everywhere.

So the Okhrana did the usual things you would think. They followed people, infiltrated groups, arrested people, blah blah, blah. But they actually also had a whole different strategic vision, which was really controversial inside that primitive Russian state. It’s controversial actually today in most capitalist

states, because there's a division in security between the people who in effect want to do accelerated or militarized policing—"Well, why can't we just arrest them all, just beat them up and shoot them, and put them in prison as much as we can, right, at every opportunity"—versus the people who actually usually end up running things, because to be honest they're smarter. They have an interesting view. They have our class understanding actually. They're just on the other side.

i was in a classified library once—a law enforcement library, with publications that would fill this room, and mostly none of us has ever seen these things because they're classified—reading a classified FBI political journal. The FBI had political journals. One of the agents stationed in their bureau in Latin America—because in American security the world is split between the CIA which handles international stuff and the FBI which handles domestic stuff but that including all of South and Central America, since South and Central America in the u.s. ruling class mindset is a lesser part of the u.s.a. "It's ours, by imperial birthright", kind of thing. So the FBI is there and they have agents throughout all of the capitals and so forth (as the CIA does, too, obviously). So this FBI agent is writing a theoretical article about how to stop revolution. He's saying something like: "Some people wanted to just stamp it out, get rid of all the revolutionaries. That's impossible because the overwhelming majority of people in the world hate us. They hate American corporations, they hate Wall Street and they're always going to hate us. There's no way to change this."

i'm reading this and i'm, "Hey, you know, they finally got clued in."

He said, so the "We'll just stamp them out like they're insects or something" strategy isn't going to work. Well, actually, you could never get rid of insects. You could tell that in the real world so, he writes, that's not really practical. It's not a good way strategically to proceed. What we have to do is let everybody hate us. We can't stop that. Let them have anticapitalist, anti-american opinion, fine. But when they organize into groups, when they have dangerous movements, then we don't worry about average people who hate us. That's like confusing the issue. Then we go specifically into those movements, those organizations and we destroy them, as much as possible. There's no talk anywhere in this article of rights, civil liberties, human rights and laws. They don't care about these things. We think they don't care about them and they really don't care about them. Believe me.

A friend was teaching a class of policemen, of cops. The class was report writing, because you think cops are illiterate and everything else and can't sign their names barely, and that was true more than they liked. And so the commanders get those reports back of some major incident and it's completely indecipherable. So you have to give them the usual how-to-wnte lectures, i guess. Anyway, the thing is, my friend was telling them: gotta learn to write honestly, concisely, clearly, really tell people what happens, when you write that report. So one of the cops jumps to his feet and says, "If I told what I did I'd be in prison!" Everybody applauds, all the other cops applaud. "Right, no more of this accurate report writing shit."

So, this has nothing to do with laws, they don't care about laws. We don't care about them, they don't care about them. Wo think most people in the world should hate capitalism. They agree, absolutely. You know, that's why they're always trying Io mess us up. Otherwise they'd just be laissez faire—"Oh, the revolutionaries, let them do whatever they want, you know, let the protesters run around, you know, give them whatever, It doesn't matter 'cause you know the people will reject them." They don't think that. Believe me, they do not think that.

They think, "We have to really be on top of these people, and sooner is better."

So the Czarist Okhrana had both factions; the "stomp them out" cop faction and the more strategic "we have to manage this" faction. So, they ended up doing things like sponsoring trade unions. Originally, trade unions were illegal, workers want to organize and "Hold it! just a minute! you can't be doing that, damn subversives!" And the Okhrana said to the other cops, "You hold it, you can't stop the workers from doing unions. They are miserable and pissed off and they're absolutely going to do something. Why don't we start our own loyal trade unions that are like, you know, hate the boss, demand more money, but love the government. The government is on your side."

So literally the whole legal trade union movement in Russia was started by the political police. If they arrested a band of underground illegal revolutionaries they always would leave one or two people unarrested. They were called breeders. And the reason is really simple. Their worst fear was that rebel movements would start and they wouldn't know anything about it. They wouldn't know anybody in it. That was a really terrible idea to them.

So they'd always leave some people not arrested so when new people came into revolutionary anger and awareness they'd seek out the people who were known as revolutionaries, and since those were under surveillance they would actually just be leading people to be in the files of the secret police. The Okhrana would even sponsor what is now called encapsulated gangs, where there's even like illegal armed terrorist or robbery or guerrilla organizations at the center of which are genuine revolutionaries. But unknown to them mixed in with the new recruits are police agents and they're letting the group proceed because as long as they know everything it's doing, has everything under surveillance, and it has prestige and new people get drawn in, they're just getting an enormous influx of information. The primary thing for political police. And then when they're ready they wipe this group out and set the stage for a next doomed group.

In other words, they want to control dissent, rebellion, manage it. They don't want to try and eliminate it because they don't think that's possible. They want to control it. By controlling the movement as much as they can. There are limits obviously of what anybody can do on this.

To give an example, they were really alarmed about anarchism. Anarchism wasn't strong enough in Russia in the 19th century to overthrow the government, nevertheless it was destabilizing society and more so all the time as most people know. So they said, well we have to have an antidote. Let's get people to have a different kind of dissenting ideology than this anarchism. So they picked out a variant of socialism, that was popular at the time called Marxism, and they said, well, we'll make this legal. So if you're a dissident and you want to study all these exotic ideas, learn this Marxism. The great Russian encyclopedia said, "We'll even have an entry on Socialism who could we ask?" The secret police said: "Well, there's a guy named Lenin. You've never heard of him, but he would be a good guy to have write this." So they even wrote to Lenin. like would you please do the entry on socialism for the kind of official Russian encyclopedia?

Clearly they made a few small mistakes in doing it this way, mid m fact there's lots of criticism of them in capitalist police theorist circles, like: "The Czar's secret police really messed it up They were really too arrogant. They thought they could maneuver around everything. Well, see what a mess they made out of it. Blah blah blah."

So, to the security agencies, **the most important thing is not immediate arrests, it's information.** That's the lifeblood of their work. And they're going to infiltrate us to get it. As well as all the other surveillance stuff, okay?

So, when we talk about information, to be honest, we are not primarily talking about what a room of 50 radical people do or don't do because they're actually operating on a much bigger scale. Because don't forget, it's probably true that every single person in this room not only has a file in the computers of the Canadian police, but you certainly have a file in the computers of the u.s. political police. That's like virtually guaranteed.

But its effects run much bigger than that because to them any organization of the oppressed, even "gangs" that they are at the moment de facto sponsoring and manipulating, are potentially really dangerous. They could get out of control, get politically aware. So that in Chicago, the city where i'm from, for example, there are roughly, there are known to be over 100,000 youth in street organizations, i.e. the "gangs", maybe even close to 150,000 something like that. There were as of last year about publicly known street organizations ranging from the Latin Kings to the El Rukns to the Gangster Disciples and so on, the groups of young men who are currently shooting each other like in my neighborhood. The largest of these para-military street organizations have many thousands of members.

Many of these 100,000 plus kids, cause it's a lot, there's a file on. But this isn't necessarily a usual individual police file, or an arrest record. No, often it's a security file. A normal police file might have

your name, address, phone number and your arrest and cop contact record. While a security file has all your family, your relations, school and medical record, the places you like to go to drink or recreate, the economic activities you are known to be into, the corners where you hang out, your enemies, the crew in the street organization that you work with, your homies, you know, your fellow soldiers and friends. They have a complete dossier of your activities, on who you are. Of course, being cops, they are also clumsy on the job and get many names and facts wrong as cops do.

It's amazing. They just put enormous resources into that. They brag for example, that like if i were in such a "gang" and i got shot, you know one day, the next day they could go around and prevent the conflict from spreading by simply picking up all the guys in my crew. Because they know who they are. Well, hold it, they're not the ones who shot me, right? So, see, the thing is that the guys in my crew were the guys most likely to be shooting back at the other organization that shot me and so the police would be doing "preventive" arresting, you know to stop the revenge back and forth if they wanted to.

So they're pretty open that they have the intelligence to do this, not that they bother. Which raises a few questions, like so you know each person's crew, their basically criminal work associates, you know, the guys they fight alongside, the fall-backs and where they hang out. And you can just arrest them because somebody in their crew got shot even though they didn't do anything yet? You couldn't even begin to do that unless the state security had updated computer files on the personal lives of masses of oppressed people. Okay. The thing about security agencies and the political police is that they're not playing cops and robbers. One of the big political things, and you're not going to find this in Lenin or something bourgeois society conditions us to think of rebellion as a cops and robbers game, like their story is it's crime and punishment. There's two sides. The state and whatever. They want us to obey the law and we're saying "no", rebelling, we're the criminals breaking the law and that's what rebellion is.

Sidebar 4

In 2013 the Chicago cops did a big public relations stunt funded by the National Institutes of Justice that they said would cut down the murder rate. Using a sociological computer analysis, they allegedly identified by name the 400 young people most likely (to either shoot someone or themselves be shot. A group that as a whole supposedly were 500 times more likely to be involved with violence than mythological average "Chicagoans." Then area police commanders supposedly visited the homes of persons on the list to warn them to change their lifestyles and associates. I how helpful that was (being sarcastic there). The list avoids the predominantly settler North Side, of course, and is only about residents of the heavily New Afrikan and Latino South Side and West Side. What is revealing is the amount of intelligence the cops are regularly collecting on the oppressed now.

Well, that's true in some way and in a deeper way not true. Almost all rebellion begins in law-breaking, under capitalism. The problem is that that framework leaves your thinking still within the capitalist system and their values as your reference point. So that i wish i had a dollar for every time some young guy has told me in a movement meeting or a demonstration, "I'm not afraid to talk to the police because I've done nothing wrong." Well, first of all you're an ass for thinking that. But secondly, it's not about doing something wrong, breaking a law or something, right? Because what's really happening is, it's class war—there's a war between those of us in the oppressed, fighting with the oppressed against capitalism, and those who are defending the system. So this isn't about cops and

robbers. But people tend to think of it this way—precisely because that’s how bourgeois culture always tries to get us to think of rebellion.

By the way, the “I’m not afraid to talk to the cops because I’ve done nothing wrong” stuff even on the immediate practical level is not too bright. What the political police want is to update their map. They’re mapping the terrain of the rebellions. So if you prove to them, plausibly, that you and your six friends didn’t do anything illegal last week—and know nothing about it—that helps them narrow the search for the revs who did. You are just helping complete the map to guide their drone strikes, as it were.

So that, for example, i’ve talked to guys who are experienced revolutionaries, who’ve in the past been through armed urban guerrilla groups, who’ve been in prison, and sometimes they’ll say something like, “There’s no way the cops could’ve known anything about us until we got arrested, cause if they’d known a week before, a month before, a year before, well, they would’ve arrested us then.” You see, because this is what my comrade Yaki calls the colonial criminal mentality: that the security cops are about arresting you for violating the law. That’s what they care about. That isn’t true. They actually don’t care about any of that shit. You can’t have bigger criminals and law-breakers than the cops.

But people, if you think this way you get completely misled as to what security agencies are doing, **because they will absolutely let you do things to get the deeper information or reposition agents they need to advance their own plans.** We have plans, they have plans. Don’t think they’re just individual cops enforcing the law, not true and far from it.

The CIA through an agent inside the Brazilian movement learned for example of an airline hijacking in the 1960s about to take place down there. Now you would think that they would stop that right away. No, because to stop that might have exposed their agent. They let the airline hijacking go right on, all kinds of people were terrorized and some killed, and the airline was hijacked but their agent—he’d proven himself as a rev, right? i mean, you can trust him because of actions like the airline hijacking, the whole thing. Anyway, 2 months later he finally found out about the CIA’s No.1 target there, a guy named Carlos Marighella, who was one of the main revolutionary guerrilla leaders in Brazil at that time, who wrote the famous “Mini Manual of the Urban Guerrilla”, who they absolutely wanted dead. And they finally killed him. So what do they care about airline hijacking or a bank job or two or ten if they can get somebody that they really want, if they get the information they need to put away a whole group or blunt a whole offensive. They absolutely will do these calculated things in cold blood every time.

So this is just practical experience, part of our practical knowledge as revolutionaries. We have to understand these details.

Let me tell you about an FBI penetration of the movement that had mixed results. Of course, the thing about it is that it’s completely over and completely documented publicly so we fully know the results and we are not endangering anybody by talking

At the end of the ‘60s, i was recruited...i was living on the south side of Chicago and was recruited by a small group of working class women to join a community, a revolutionary community group far on the other side of the city. And i got talked into it, so moved to join this organization. It was a working-class, mostly white revolutionary group.

So, this group had an interesting history. When Students for a Democratic Society (or SDS), the nationwide white university radical whatever mass anti-war people of that time went on the offensive, one of the things they wanted to do was to break out of their class world. They started student-run organizing projects in poor working class neighborhoods, often using the name “Jobs Or Income Now” or JOIN. Newark, Baltimore, Chicago, a few other places. So in Chicago these student radicals “colonized” one particular poor neighborhood, temporarily moved activists in there to live, and started organizing. One result was a small street organization of Southern white youth that was political. First organized to do a protest march on the local cop station, against police harassment of poor white youth. And the middle-class university radicals were overjoyed. The working class Southern whites who were supposed to be racist and patriotic redneck and against the movement, well, they had convinced some of them

in this neighborhood to join the movement. To be anti-war and for the Black revolutionaries and even ally with them and so on.

To some degree, though, those middle-class radicals were way inexperienced and didn't quite know what they were doing. When I got into that scene, it was surprising politically. The street organization, which had a hard core of a couple of dozen members mostly from teenagers to guys in their mid-twenties, and maybe a supporters layer of that many, had a small group of about five or six guys who were central, who were leaders in a somewhat informal way. Everyone looked to them to start things, but two of these guys were clearly like fascists. You have to keep in mind whenever you go down, all the way down into the oppressed and very poor, there isn't one class there but always two. The lower working class and the lumpen do not just coexist, they share the same streets and homes and families, they're people mixed in with each other fighting to survive on the same shared terrain together.

One guy in particular seemed an obvious fascist and an obvious danger, because he really did want to lead things his way. Tom had grown up in the neighborhood, where his mom was still a "working woman" in the same slum residence hotel they had lived in since he was a kid. He had grown up with many of the other guys, and they all knew him as one of the smartest guys around. Actually, he had even gone to Stanford on a scholarship (few of the other poor white guys had even gone to secondary school). But Tom had dropped out, had kicked around at a different job, and finally come back home to join the movement. And he was pushing definite strong politics, which to me tripped all the alarm bells.

Say what you want about him, Tom did have game. In 1969 the Panthers had called for their United Front Against Fascism, a national conference to unite the left against fascism in America under their leadership. Whether that's a good or bad idea, not germane to us here. The main Maoist group in America at that time, called the Progressive Labor Party, said, like, "This is outrageous, this is a fraud. The Panthers, who are they? They don't follow Chairman Mao, they have the little red book, but the only true Maoist leadership here is us. So therefore we're going to go to the conference, but we're going to stay a block away. We'll form a line in the street around the conference." What we had heard from the movement grapevine, was that they were threatening to physically stop anybody that came to support the Panthers. Sounded like they'd lost it mentally, going to just beat the shit out of anyone and basically prevent them from going to the conference. Don't know.

But that was a mental moment made in heaven for manipulators like Tom. It isn't true that someone else's bad politics like that early Maoist group trying to play little Stalin, only affects them and doesn't hurt us. So he quickly organized a group of our guys from the neighborhood, this was while he was still in the group. They flew out there and they just literally marched tight at the Progressive Labor guys who were led by—they eventually had their martial arts class there with an instructor with a black belt—went right at the PL karate instructor and punched the shit right out of him. Frankly, because Tom had been seriously fighting people and hurting people his whole life, so you might have got yourself a black belt in a dojo but this isn't the same deal as getting mixed up in a chaotic street brawl.

So that Summer we heard him saying, pretty smoothly, "Hey, all these black people, they're talking about black power. I'm all for that, That's wonderful. I love them so much we should adopt the same slogan for us—White Power! That should be our slogan, White Power." So some of the guys were influenced, like, "Oh, that sounds pretty cool, white power, I like that." What Tom wasn't telling them was that "White Power" was right then an official slogan of the neo-Nazi movement in the U.S. And had the added treacherous appeal of seeming to be only "equal" with Black Power, while denying that in "race" terms settlers didn't need to demand power since they already had it all.

We were saying, "Hold it, just a minute, we might want to think about that, you know, whoa, whoa, whoa." And so Tom went around everybody else, convinced a couple guys to go with him and they went to the button shop and they got a thousand buttons printed up saying, "White people gotta get it on." What exactly does that mean anyway, right? But there's kind of a common theme in the work he was doing, you know. It's all about white people being angry and doing things by themselves and for themselves and that's the main thing. There's kind of a pattern about what he was doing.

Anyway so the women—mostly it was a small group of women—you see all the propaganda about this group done in the left talked about guys. How they were like a street gang of pro-movement white guys. Teens and men who had come over to the revolution, wonderful, but it was odd that it was almost like there were no women there. But it turns out that there really were women there, and they thought this was really a bad scene. Their guys are really getting turned around.

So first of all they went and recruited some of us to come in, though we didn't know what the hell was going on. And—the other thing was by the way this neighborhood was not all settler. For example it was overwhelmingly poor but it was not all white. It was the major neighborhood center for Native people in the Chicago area, for example. In a similar way, it was a center for some of the Asian peoples. There were 15,000 indigenous people in the neighborhood (and over 6,000 Asians), which wasn't really mentioned in the left propaganda or anything because of the importance of the whiteness to the left of the young guys they were organizing...

So the women with the group started recruiting a few people of color and women with civil rights movement experience, basically just to make certain there wasn't a racist outbreak going on there. And then they convinced some guys, they talked to some of the guys and said "look, we have to deal with this, what's going on". Two of the women in particular i remember—one was an older woman, they were both older from my point of view, could have been in their 40s or 50s. One of the women was Native, and disabled and had 2 kids and was on welfare, and the other woman who was truly leading this was a white southern woman from Appalachia who had no education at all except that she had been through union organizing battles as a poor woman working in a factory, and had the klan try to shoot at them and had been communist baited in her town and whatnot for being against racism and so she actually had experienced politics.

So i came to this meeting and the women said you don't know what's happening, just vote with us, don't worry, i said "okay" and they called out one of these guys, the guy who was Tom, the white power dude who was causing all the trouble.

The thing was...Tom was, the guys knew he was a troublemaker, they said that's just how he is 'cause they grew up with him in the neighborhood. He grew up on the streets with them. They all knew each other for years. So to say, Tom is no good and to just kick him out, the guys couldn't do this.

But the women they were serious, they just said, "Tom we have to talk about you. The fact is you're always causing trouble, and second, you're a damn racist. No matter what you say, you're a racist. And third, when we add that up, we think you're an agent. Why else would you be doing this shit, right? Except that you gotta be an agent. So, we're taking a vote. Our motion is: your ass gets kicked out. Oh, by the way, you and all the university students. Part of our motion is that you have to be a worker, a working class person, to be in the group, like it's a union now. All the university students who are being famous at our expense, we thank you for all you've done for us, we love you, and you can now leave because we're now voting to kick you out, too." There were some surprised people in that room.

And bingo! Tom was doing his usual excuses, "oh, it's politics that it's so hard for me to learn, 'cause I had no education". Though he had no trouble getting into Stanford. He was hanging his head and whining, "I wanna learn, I'm sorry, give me another chance." But the women weren't going to stand for that shit. The women said, "No, Tom. We've known you your whole life and you're a racist and now you're a damn agent, get out of the room." So they kicked him out.

So Tom went and we thought, oh, that's the end of that. The guy's been kicked out of his own community group by people who've known him his whole damn life. Hey, he's gone permanently, we don't have to worry about him, good or bad, whatever he is. Yeah, we were wrong about that!

Well, Tom went to the university student movement leader and they were nationally important people on the left at that point and they'd been kicked out of the neighborhood and were pissed. Tom played them, using his men's solidarity angle, ii must have been something like, "Yeah, those bitches, they kicked us out, well I'm with you bro" and ka-ching! The next movement radical conference, there's Tom being vouched for by these middle-class student leaders. Damn, we know he's an agent, but suddenly he's back in the movement again!

He goes back to California, to Stanford, not to school but to hang out, he makes his living doing armed robberies and boasting about it. He's knocking over a liquor store, a grocery store, whatever, he's doing armed robberies, selling drugs, stealing drugs at gunpoint to sell, never gets arrested, gee, wonder why. And beating people up. He's picking fights in the movement. You know, he'll come to a meeting and, "I don't like what you're saying", suddenly he will lunge himself across the room. He was actually really good at fighting. And he'll start pounding the crap outta some guy.

So, half the people in the movement said, "Wow, what a revolutionary! Poor, working class, so angry he can't contain himself, he's gotta be a revolutionary." The other half of the people in the room in the movement said, "You know, he's a stone mental case, he's so crazy that the FBI would never have somebody like that. He's totally undisciplined and untrustworthy. So, he may be bad news, but he's not an agent." So both sides, for different reasons agreed that he wasn't an agent. Only problem: Tom was an agent. Tom was crazy like a fox. Tom was just a fascist, that's all. So, eventually through the movement he got introduced to the Black Panther Party in Northern Cal and Tom reminded them of a very—to him—important moment in history and this is again where we see the relationship between bad politics and bad security in a practical sense.

Back at that conference, remember, Tom and the guys completely mopped the streets with the Progress Labor activists and sent the Maoists leaving, running for their lives. So Tom could later remind the Panther leadership, "Remember that? I was the guy who did that and I know all this stuff—martial arts, bomb making, I can teach marksmanship, I was in the marines, I was in intelligence in the marines. I was really good at, you know, interrogating people, wink wink (i.e torturing people). You got agents, bro', in your group, I can help you with this."

So the Panthers say, wow! They're impressed: a settler guy who had fought on the streets to defend us and he's got all these skills and now he's gonna help us find the agents. So Tom launched on a spree of bad jacketing honest ordinary people in the Panthers, "Yeah that guy, he looks like an agent, I'll beat the crap out of him until he talks, throw him out", torturing people, the whole thing.

It culminated, he had gotten a ranch up in the mountains he called "Guevara Ranch" where he had bomb making classes. So one night they lured a leading Black Panther revolutionary activist Fred Bennett to "Guevara Ranch". Fred Bennett was leading the defense around getting support for George Jackson and the other Soledad brothers in prison, the black revolutionaries who were leading the struggle in prisons in California at that time. He was the chairman of that committee. Anyway he was killed. He was tortured and shot to death and his body was set on fire, burned and buried, etc. So nobody knew what happened. All of a sudden a couple weeks later the FBI in and the police descend, they dig up the body, they started raiding Panther offices and they get a witness saying so-and-so and so-and-so was involved.

Tom suddenly appears in suit and tie before the u.s. senate subcommittee on intelligence to explain how, "Yes, it's terrible the Panthers, they're killing their own people, they're so demented and violent that they're torturing and killing other Panthers. Terrible." Actually of course Tom instigated the whole thing and he was proud as shit of it. For a settler fascist, to have manipulated the vaunted Black Panther Party into killing one of its own best people—and have done it with the stupid help of those "rich university leftists" that he hated so much—he really loved that.

Okay, when you reel that back what do you see?

What you see is a young undeveloped left in which a small group of working-class women figured out who an agent was, dangerous he was. Because more than just being smart, Tom was a very aggressive and manipulative guy. And they thought they had gotten rid of him, just banished him out of the movement. But some middle-class guys who had gone to NYUs and Berkeleys, those young white guys said in effect, "Who cares what those women think!" They were sure they him better.

Tom the "revolutionary", they passed him onto the Panthers who absolutely should have known better, except of course they were caught up in their own patriarchal thinking—revolutionary attitude that's male attitude, aggression, being more violent, forcing your will on people, being the tough important guy...Tom looked great to them!

Well, a lot of people actually ended up getting hurt out of it. They only surfaced one killing because the feds couldn't admit that they had their agent do a torturing and killing spree through the movement. Tom was like, "I was nowhere near anything and I never knew what happened. I just heard about it later when I couldn't do anything except tell the FBI, blah, blah, blah." Complete lies, the grapevine said.

So here's this mini tragedy. Certainly a successful disrupting of movement activity, that should have been stopped at any number of points, but **bad politics covered for agents. So we don't need good politics because that makes us into super people because it doesn't. It's that bad politics—like opportunism, patriarchy, sexism, class privilege—rips up the fabric of our terrain, the area of our radical culture and it weaves instead into that terrain all their old oppressor politics, their values.** At which point we're confused, it's all backwards. We're alicia-in-wonderland now on their side, their ground, so to speak, even though we don't have their views.

So i'm just going to stop here.

Questions and Answers

Moderator: So if anyone has any questions?

Q: When you said that the American police had a security file on everyone in everyone in this room, I was wondering what you were basing that on. I was wondering if it would apply to people just in this room or if it would apply to people outside on the street.

J: Well, i don't know how many people on the street they have investigative files on, but i'm pretty certain that if you're a Canadian revolutionary or a radical in any real way, other than reading a magazine once a year, they're definitely going to be interested in you. They're absolutely into accumulating as much personal information as they can. It makes their job easier. That's just the long and short of it, and they're paid for it, so it's a major activity of theirs. Remember, to Washington some young activists in Canada equals "international terrorists", a non-u.s. citizen category in which anything goes, there are no rules or limitations on what they can do.

And these are questions that never get asked enough, among ourselves, about what it means. **And the reason we need to push the whole underlying question of politics is because a lot of people particularly guys try to present security as an area essentially where it's about cool techniques or it's technology. That's completely not what it's about.** And in terms of bad politics of every kind on this, there's a lot of it around.

For example...i actually brought with me...this is a curiosity piece from the past that i plucked from my bookshelf. This is the Communist Party Manual on Organization printed here first in the 1930s by the u.s. communist party which by that time had 200,000 members or something, controlled entire industrial unions, had strong arm squads to deal with people who bothered them and in fact, although it's not publicly admitted, sometimes had assassination units to deal with special comrades who they considered traitors. So this was like a real deal, this was not six guys alone in a room. But although it comes from 1930s, it got reprinted and distributed all over again in 1975 to help guide that new generation of Marxist-Leninists rebuild in the u.s. It keeps getting recycled all over again.

So they had a whole chapter on how they should safeguard the party against informers and spies. And it says:

"Agent provocateurs are planted in the party either by the police department, Department of Justice, patriotic organizations or counterrevolutionary Trotskyites disrupting the work of the party. The methods they use are: A) Creating sentiment against the leadership of the party B) Systematic disruptive criticism against the line of the party."

This goes on and on. This is like clearly total bullshit, right? On all these different levels. Clearly, this has nothing to do with security. They want to browbeat everybody into following their orders from the central committee or whoever. And if you're not following their orders then maybe you're a spy or agent, and that kind of arm-twisting bullshit.

So you think, hopefully you think, well this is kind of stupid. You think this was way back in the 1930s. It's gone forever in our modern age. Well it isn't. **Sometimes people still use "security" as a club against people they disagree with or don't like in the movement.** An ultra bad idea. To be specific, an ultra bad *opportunist* idea. Many activists think opportunism is only about someone selling out for a good job or some cash courtesy of the ruling class, and we do see that. But more I commonly we get hit with another kind of opportunism, that's people—sometimes even with what they believe are good motives—putting factional interests, the little interest of their group or tendency or their own political interests ahead of the needs and health of the struggle as a whole.

Like about a year ago or something, somebody pointed out to me that there was a letter in "Anarchy" magazine which said that a certain anarchist, whom we know as a real pain in the ass personally, was not born in the u.s. The guy was an Immigrant and therefore under the actual letter of the u.s. laws, being a publicly identified anarchist, the FBI could deport him. So the letter-writer went on, given that he is really well known, doesn't the fact that they're not deporting him mean that he should be considered an agent by us?

i read this letter and i thought, "This is completely full of it". So we're supposed to let the FBI decide by their actions who we label as an agent or not? You know, by what the other side does? If they don't arrest you or something then that somehow "proves" you're an agent?! This is like crack addict thinking, frankly. Why did they even print that malicious letter?

Anybody who's done any security work knows that if you said to someone who really is an agent, "We are going to kick you out of the movement unless you agree to follow the line of whoever, you know follow the line of Noam Chomsky or Joseph Stalin or whatever". This guy's an agent, most of the time he doesn't care about left ideas! He's going to say, "Oh yeah, i agree with whatever leadership 150%. i'll agree to any dumb idea you have since i don't care about your movement anyway!"

What does he care? He'll agree to any idea you have. There's no amount of brown nosing or yessing an agent will do to get inside, if that's what his job is. As opposed, say, to causing fights and personal disputes and throwing sand in the wheels. So the Communist Party that printed that bullshit, 20 years later was being completely crushed by McCarthyism during the 1950s Cold War. Historians now estimate that 1 out of every 3 of their members was a police agent by that time. Well, good job on security, you guys!

You know, it turns out that following the leadership blindly, agreeing to everything, no matter what, it's not a good idea from anybody's point of view. The more critical, the more open, the more many-sided our dialogue and our thinking is and our examination of politics is, the more agents tend to stand out because they're not of us in that sense.

Q: You were mentioning how Czarist police had this division and more political policing has this division between "line them up and shoot them all" and something much more nuanced. I don't know if you have heard of Frank Kitson? The Brigadier General, the British General, he wrote the manual on counterinsurgency based on Malaysia and Northern Ireland. I've taken it based on what i've read as the default basis that anglo-american policing is based on.

He talks about three stages, which combines both. So the first stage is when movements just exist, and what they should do is just find out everything about them, which reinforces what you were saying about how they want to have all the information.

The second stage is when those movements become more disruptive and the third is when they become revolutionary. The point is: When they become revolutionary you have all the names, you know who to kill. But in the meantime you should be more subtle about it.

In Quebec for example, the second stage was during the October Crisis, when they had all these names of people to arrest, or who they thought they should arrest. The 3rd stage was seen in Chile in the Pinochet Coup or after the Suharto Coup when they literally killed hundreds and thousands and millions of people, so I'm wondering whether we should posit these things as opposites or whether they can actually coexist, knowingly coexist as political policing.

Sidebar 5

Reading this 3 months later, i mostly remember how exhausted i was by that point in the discussion, and how it was hard for me to even keep in mind what the point was never mind being coherent. Our comrade was insightful bringing Gen. Frank Kitson and his counter-insurgency work up, because people speculate that he represents the most sophisticated repressive strategy in use.

Certainly he's a real "name" in the field. Several other comrades at the meeting also informally asked us to discuss Kitson, which I completely didn't do. So here's finishing this up better.

To start, there's several questions wrapped around each other here. One is whether the classic tension has been overcome between the "let's just round 'em up, shoot them & imprison them" school of policing versus the more strategic police approach of manipulating and trying to permanently manage dissent? Have the two been blended by innovations like Kitson's counter-insurgency plan into one smoothly integrated club?

The quick answer is no. One big reason that the old-school tendency of simply attacking dissent with raw often illegal state violence never dies is simple: that's what many police and military innately want to do, what they love doing! Same with the ruling class. This is their subculture, their default setting, which they revert to at every opportunity. These opposing state security tendencies may appear in public relations as a harmonious strategy, but in reality are always in inner conflict pushing to dominate one over the other.

This is the real world not the theory world. Like, in my neighborhood last holidays, between xmas and New Years, the police did a coordinated series of over 20 drug raids to remind all the Mexican immigrants and poor New Afrikan families that santa claus was a white man with a club ruling them. "Happy New Year!" First we heard the rapid footsteps of big guys racing upstairs. Then the ritual shout of "Police! Open up!" followed a second later by a big smash as they broke into the next door apartment. It was the "B team". Not the SWAT dudes with all black combat garb, military helmets and assault rifles. But the "tactical intervention" squad, a half-dozen tall, young white boys in dark blue "tac" police coveralls and shotguns and pistols. Then we heard the "thud" after "thud" as they charged inside and knocked down to the floor and cuffed everyone in the apartment. This all took only seconds. All i could think of that moment, was to admire how disciplined their little daughter was, how she didn't cry or scream even though she must have been terrified.

Then an hour of capitalist fun overturning and smashing open all the furniture and cabinets searching for something illegal. Finally, after not finding anything except the big illegal thing—poverty—the euro-settler "tac" team uncuffed the undocumented Mexican family and just left like Batman, running down stairs for their squad cars laughing and shouting at each other happily, still on an adrenaline high. Give this everyday violence up, you got to be kidding? They live for this shit.

During the 1980s, some left writers in the u.s. began pointing to Kitson as a source of important warnings. This was mostly because small groups there & then such as the Revolutionary Armed Task

Force and the black liberation army-coordinating committee were pursuing urban guerrilla activity in a still undeveloped way. Comrades needed to see what world-class capitalist anti-guerrilla strategy and tactics looked like. In particular, Kitson's heavy reliance on the tactic of pseudo-gangs or counter-gangs rang warning bells in our minds back then. To best check out that earlier discussion, you can read the paper "Pseudo-Gangs" in the June 1985 issue of the anonymous left journal "Si" on the kersplebedeb website.

But, no, Gen. Kitson's writings don't represent the latest shape of modern political policing. He rose up through the commissioned ranks through three British imperial counter-insurgency campaigns of the 1950-60s in Kenya, Malaya and Northern Ireland. His campaigns are important as part of capitalist warfare in the era of the old Western colonial empires. But they have been superseded by newer strategy in this neo-colonial world.

It is true that he helped draw the tactic of pseudo-gangs or counter-gangs out of the bloody closet of Britain's Special Branch cops, who had used it way way back in the Palestine Colony days against both Arab and Jewish underground organizations (not that it did them much good). That is, Kitson was relying on a specific political police tool that went back all the way to the founding fathers, i.e. the Czarist Okhrana who had used it. But like today's CIA drone warfare this was and is only a tactic used in specific situations not an overall strategy.

A pseudo-gang or counter-gang, incidentally, is when the political police form an imitation underground revolutionary cell or band; usually using some former guerrillas or rebels they have captured and convinced to "flip" and work for them. In order to infiltrate and often not simply to do arrests but to misdirect the whole insurgency. This goes beyond getting a few more comrades arrested. This type of tactic particularly extended into public mass movements, can have strategic impact. Even stalling and then derailing struggles. For instance, when particularly counter-productive left cults get artificially energized with hard-working agents and a tank full of government cash. They can appear to be a very successful "vanguard" that absorbs more and more new activists into a political crash and burn.

Gen. Kitson neither developed nor led the counter-gangs that he became so famous for after "Mau Mau" in the 1950s; that was all done quietly by the British empire's police Special Branch. But Kitson saw the opportunity to grab all the public credit and get famous for work the army didn't even do. Incidentally, the Special Branch officer who developed and personally commanded the counter-gangs in Kenya was expelled in the 1960s after Kenyan Independence, of course; he ended up spending 20 profitable years running the feared secret police for the royal family of Bahrain.

Also, remember what the most basic thing is we learned about capitalism's "experts" on repression? That they are always lying to us. Like, just a few years ago, the public was told how u.s. Gen. Petraeus had supposedly brilliantly led the American occupation to victory in Iraq over the "terrorists", right? Mostly b.s. in reality. Kitson is just the previous NATO generation's "Petraeus". What Kitson did is nothing like what he claimed in print.

Gen. Kitson's work was part of the warfare of the previous colonial era of the 1930s-1950s, and is not directly transferable to today's more complex neo-colonial period (what capitalism calls "Globalization" and academics call "neo-liberalism"). His writings are part of modern total warfare in and against the colonial periphery, not so much policing inside the imperialist metropolis. Although Kitson himself didn't agree, of course. In his once-classified paper for the Imperial General Staff, "Low-Intensity Operations." Kitson rashly outlined how their army units should be spread out to be a secret part of all British local governing down to the village level, using pseudo-gangs to crush things like trade union strikes, ethnic minority protest campaigns and other social "problems". He even rashly revealed that pseudo-gangs were then being used in the u.s. empire against New Afrikan militants. That was all supposed to be secret. The resulting leaks and liberal scandal and public outrage put the ever-ambitious Gen. Kitson back in his cushy place.

That was what in today's CIA terminology were "population regroupment" and "enhanced interrogation" programs. Out of the 1.5 million Kikuyus alive in Kenya then, fully 1 million were uprooted from their traditional villages at riflepoint and forced to move into new locations chosen for them, into

improvised guarded settlements. Where their movements were restricted and their access to food kept at starvation levels so that no supplying of the rural guerrillas could take place. Massive interrogation activities went on constantly, particularly of the over 77,000 Kikuyu arrested or captured as “Mau Mau” and held separately in prison camps at their height. These British interrogations were based on mass executions as coercion and mass torturing and mutilations such as castration. Rape was such an ordinary activity that it wasn’t even thought of as part of torture, but rather as a “perk” that the “civilized” British had granted their Afrikan mercenary troops and themselves to do at will.

Robbing families of their scant money and possessions, extortion, torturing to death, killing to settle personal scores and spontaneous killing for the enjoyment of it, were common British military activities against the unarmed civilian population. It reached scandalous proportions even by European colonial standards (which is a statement by itself), and Kenya’s British police commissioner Arthur Young resigned rather than be further implicated. In 2013, after a long grassroots campaign that went mostly unreported here, some 1500 Kikuyu torture interrogation survivors received official letters of apology from the Crown, as well as promises of small cash reparations. But most of the many thousands of torture victims were long dead. Officially the British Empire claimed 11,000 “Mau Mau” deaths by their forces in the 1952–1956 “Emergency”, but actually the daily killing was so widespread and constant that no real body count was kept. Figures in the many tens of thousands are heard.

Now, can you imagine the capitalist state being able to get away with or even desiring such a disruptive bloodbath in Manhattan’s Upper West Side or at Montreal’s Concordia University? If what happens here was proportionate to what Kitson & Co. did in the Kikuyu uprising, we would be talking about forcibly moving millions of euro-settlers to tent cities in barren areas, behind barbed wire and under armed guards, torturing hundreds of thousands of young white women and men in an uncontrollable bloodbath. Even done on a much lesser scale it would be a big systemic shock. That’s what Kitson’s actual strategy would mean if applied to the privileged metropolitan population of empire and its often spirited but frustrated left.

To say that this would be hugely counterproductive as a way of coping with the actually existing left here is a big understatement. Which is why the more experienced and practical levels of state power gently spanked Gen. Kitson and reminded him to follow orders and confine his insane homicidal schemes to indigenous and neo-colonial societies, to the Bantustan, to the ghetto and the rez and the barrio. Not to dream of putting settler anti-nuke committees into concentration camps or gleefully maiming white trade union dissenters. Unnecessary overkill and rocking their whole boat were out, to say the least.

Q. Continued: And the other one was about bad politics. So bad politics is sexist, macho behavior, but it strikes me that in 2013, the political police know that and practice feminist anti-oppressive kinds of behavior. In a really superficial way that movie “Zero Dark Thirty” which is highlighting female CIA agents who were essentially responsible for finding out where Bin Laden was, using techniques that were more using the mind rather than macho torture or what have you. There are examples of infiltration where it is not the Brandon Darby type macho person but rather a more subtle, listening and nurturing type person who gets a lot of information by being a good stereotypical feminist or what have you. So I’m wondering whether we have to modify our idea of what bad politics is because political police knows that well enough and knows that that macho person will be more targeted.

My 3rd point is: I find that the fear of the police knowing everything debilitates people from being active and the statement that you made that every revolutionary has a file on them—is there more of a nuance to that? In terms of if you’re politically active, if you’re publicly active, if you’ve done certain things maybe? It strikes me as sometimes the fear of what the state can do debilitates people from being active rather than what they’re actually doing and certainly there’s plenty examples of infiltration and stories we can share of their overwhelming power, but there are also examples of people being able to overcome that despite their resources.

Those are 3 really big things I wanted to get it all out and have you respond to.

J: Well, the thing about security, i agree about a lot of things you say. In terms of them learning to be more nuanced, absolutely. Though, you know, a lot of times they use a range of agents, approach wise, as well as short-term and long-term infiltration with different characteristics, always have. But this is a funny world about fear...

This isn't a defensive battle is the main thing. When we conceive of security as an area of struggle, that doesn't mean what security is, police are trying to harass us, arrest us, whatever infiltrate our organizations and we have to defend ourselves. This is not what it's about. We're struggling against capitalism in this area. **We're on the offense as much as we can, not defense.** Yes, they're going to have files on lots of people, they'll photograph us, etc. But we're fighting, and that's even in the small sense. Pick your battles but people are fighting. They always have.

For example, it used to be a custom that a lot of people in the movement didn't get their picture taken. Family photo? include me out! You go to their house, no pictures of them, no photos of them at all. They were laughed at, "Oh man, you're just out of it! The cops have ten thousand pictures of you at demonstrations so why do you have to worry about that?" That's true, but the thing is, **they like us have lots of room to mess up in daily life, in the daily details of work. We want to give them every opportunity on every practical detail to do it wrong,** and we want to work it that way. So for example when Assata Shakur popped in New Jersey—so suddenly she's not buried in prison but a fugitive, suddenly she's gone, wanted posters go up all over the country put up by the FBI. One problem: the photo they used of Assata was a surveillance photo from what i could tell, and you actually would never recognize Assata meeting her on the street from that photograph. Funny thing happened: a group was putting out one of those support Assata posters, with a accurate picture of her face on it. And rads had to go tell them, "Hey, good work but you should blur her picture up some, make her less recognizable." It never occurred to the comrades that the FBI had missed the ball completely and we didn't want to accidentally do some of their job for them.

Sidebar 6

a few years ago a comrade was telling me about an "outrage" that happened to him at a protest march. He had taken his young child, carrying the kid finally at the head of the march, and suddenly some black bloc or someone behind them he couldn't see started throwing stones and bottles at the cops. The cops charged them with clubs, of course, and he was really scared that his kid would get hurt. And really pissed at the "anarchists", not that he knew who had started shit irresponsibly he thought—he angrily called them "agents provocateurs" even. My own take: what's that old left saying, "A revolution is not a tea party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined..."? Many children have been hurt in the struggle. Times i took my kids when they were little on a demo, and was worried for them. Don't take your kid to a demo if you want them to be completely safe. And if you want the movement to do completely guaranteed safe actions, sign up in a different world not this real one.

So why did they do it? Why did they use a non-functional wanted picture? Who knows. But i want to give them every chance to do it. That's not a stray thought, but a basic principle of our work. You better believe i'm not mailing photos to the FBI, because they can mess it up too.

Marilyn Buck, the settler anti-imperialist urban guerrilla, exact same thing with her. She became a fugitive, escaped from prison, etc. They put out a government wanted poster. Photograph from what i could tell came from an old college newspaper, kind of like a junky social news article or something. Absolutely would not recognize her after many years in prison and the struggle from that photograph.

Their use of these things this is part of their political work. They're not doing it just to arrest us, they're doing it to criminalize us, to create fear, to picture us as the evil people, to get the people to be afraid, shouldn't be near them, etc. And we fight them on this.

There was a young artist who took part in a militant demonstration against the previous settler colonial government of South Africa (before it went neo-colonial) which sent its Springboks sports team, famous team, to tour America and build support for their regime, their colonialist racial dictatorship. There was a very militant and small demonstration when they were at the JFK airport in New York against them in the course of which one of cops protecting them was injured. They arrested a young woman artist and said she did it. i don't know whether she did, i wasn't there, i don't know what happened. But she didn't like her chances, 'cause they were talking like about 20 years. She didn't like her chances going to court, so she got bailed out, she disappeared, and hasn't been seen since in public here, never was caught.

So they issued a special wanted poster. It wasn't your normal wanted poster. It went up in the subways. It was a long strip of 5 wanted felons' mug shots. There's her, the young woman artist in the middle, and there's 2 guys on each side of the strip: on each side there's one rapist and one murderer. A rapist and a murderer and then her. That's who she is supposed to be like. They don't think they're going to catch her that way. No, it's their whole part of criminalizing us, right? Like, they're saying "This wasn't a political struggle, it's these vicious, criminal, violent people."

So there's this wave of spontaneous anger from the women's community in New York (she was a lesbian), from anti-war people who supported the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. People just saying, "I have a couple of hours this evening I'm going to the subway". People just walking the trains car to car ripping down these damn wanted posters. Within a week there weren't any, basically, people couldn't find any. And the pigs figured out that, "Oh, we better not put them up because when we put them up, they'll just rip them down."

So they try to maneuver, this has nothing to do with crime stuff, it's a political thing. They try to maneuver against us and we answered them spontaneously and basically wiped their gambit out. Well, that's part of security, it's part of how we should think about things.

Once we were in a struggle where security and guarding ourselves against FBI attack kept merging into the larger struggle against the system, in a way we couldn't forget. We were based in a New Afrikan poor community, a "black" neighborhood and the FBI was concerned about it and they didn't like the struggle which was revolutionary and against the system, against the government and stuff. And so they started a political campaign which had 2 stages. They figured out the 1st thing to do was to criminalize the activity politically so they picked out this one young white woman—and this shows that they know things—and she was important because there were two main elements in the struggle. There were the young street guys and women who were teenagers or young 20s who were the tactical force, and there were the older women who were the strategic leadership mostly like mothers and grandmothers. And that one woman activist was one of the various links between the two elements, because she was running with both groupings. However it came about, that's just how it worked. Their intelligence figured that out.

So one day we wake up and her photo is on the front page of every daily newspaper in the city. "Communist Agent Trained in Cuba in Infiltration Techniques Found in Negro Community Misleading those Poor Innocent People Into Rebelling" type shit, it was that crude. As if this young woman could ever create a mass rebellion in a New Afrikan neighborhood, right?

Then their next step was they were going to raid the block that she was staying in, squatting in that neighborhood, they were going to have a big raid. They could've just sent two guys in, made an appointment and arrested her, but that's not what they wanted. They wanted to make a big show of

force, right, that “we’re in charge”, that they have the power and they were going to arrest her in front of everybody; they literally brought in like dozens of agents and cops, to search the whole block and seize people and do all this shit.

Now the night before this guy who was like “Silky”—he would dress like a pimp but he was actually a full-time police informant, he was actually a major “black” informer on the South Side of Chicago at the time and everybody knew that and he didn’t hide it. And so he’s also armed and a really dangerous guy, he wouldn’t have been alive otherwise. He came up to some of us in a bar and he said, “They’re going to do this raid tomorrow morning at 8 o’clock, they’re going to come get so and so, so you should tell her, just spread the word” and he left.

So that night we talked to the mothers and grandmothers who were the leaders and said, “You’re going to get raided by the cops tomorrow, that’s what so and so said.” One of the women got angry and said, “There’s nothing that the white cops can find that we don’t want them to find”. So our young woman was going to leave the block, so she’d get arrested at some other point somewhere else, not in their neighborhood, but the women said, “No, you stay right here honey.”

And the cops and the FBI descended on the whole block and are banging on doors and there’s a crowd of young kids suddenly who were entranced by them. So they’d go in and there would 4 or 5 cops and there would be kids, little kids in the way, who were yelling and laughing and throwing balls and saying play with me. What are they gonna do? They can’t shoot this little kid. On the other hand they can’t be doing anything because they’re dragging this little kid. And everyone is in the way. Meanwhile this woman was being moved...where the cops weren’t, right? ... At one point this young woman was hidden for a long time all the way up on a building roof, guided by a young New Afrikan lesbian (our girl later said that it was nice, with a furious FBI raid going on below them as the two were enjoying the great view of the neighborhood and comparing notes on Chicago’s main lesbian bar, which they both had tried out).

After about 6 hours the state finally gave up. The whole damn block united against them and they couldn’t do a bloody thing.

So they had attempted to make it their terrain, the security police, it was going to be their terrain. They were going to terrorize everybody. They were going to show that nobody could defy them, that they ruled it. But it became the oppressed peoples’ terrain, particularly the women and children’s terrain, because they turned out to be the winners.

So when i’m talking about security i’m not talking about simply defending ourselves. It’s not that. It’s the constant struggle with their security agencies—just another area—with capitalism.

Q: I was wondering, you pointed out before, there’s no “Security for Dummies” book where you can learn various techniques and various strategies but that seems like that’s something that’s widely deficient within our movement and people are getting infiltrated quite easily by police surveillance. As you were pointing out, it’s the tradition that that information get handed down orally, but if we don’t have that information how would you recommend that we cultivate a stronger sense of security within our movements?

J: i can’t say that i know the answers, i don’t. Like for example the NATO 5 in Chicago, who were set up to be guilty of trying to throw Molotov cocktails at Mayor Emmanuel’s house. Popular idea, of course. But you shouldn’t let the police agent set you up to do it, right? In every mobilization, in every organization, people have to quietly organize themselves to take responsibility for teaching and training.

So, you start to learn things and when there are problems like with radical environmental actions or the NATO 5, well...the problem wasn’t with these guys who were perhaps injudicious in how they related to this cop, it’s the fact that if we don’t assume responsibility for politics this is the result. People come, who are not educated, they’re let’s say naive, they’re vulnerable to being worked up by the cops, let’s say. This is one problem. It’s not the biggest problem, necessarily. There’s nobody looking out after them. There’s nobody saying, “If you want to be doing controversial stuff, don’t be doing it

with people you didn't know before yesterday. And you have no idea who this guy is. You know, that's not how you do things. **Do serious politics with your homies, people who you really know**, if you want to do whatever, i'm just saying you should be careful about how you do politics because it changes your life one way or another. This is like a little lesson about how to do it or not do it." Well you see, nobody said this to these guys necessarily.

But who takes responsibility for these things? A movement really has to set up mechanisms. Just like there's a book fair here and people take responsibility for all the manifold functions, glorious and unglorious of the book fair. And if you have a movement people have to take responsibility for all its functions. Hey, security is one of these functions and it's not just being a marshal, and it's not just having a few official roles, right. It's a communal political activity.

Q: This question is because I have been thinking about the challenge of making good security compromises. For instance if you make use of a secure encrypted form of email, because you don't want to be monitored, that inconveniences you somewhat. And because there is a great deal of uncertainty about how closely we're being monitored and what the most secure ways of doing things are, we might be sort of shooting ourselves in the foot rather than just getting stuff done. You said earlier that the security stuff is part of a bigger picture of what we're trying to do, right. So if we make bad security compromises, we're actually going backwards a little bit. We go backwards sometimes we go forwards sometimes, not every decision we make has to be perfect. I read about security in general (inaudible)...what do you think about, how do you make good security compromises?

J: Sorry, but i won't answer this question [*stir and comments in audience*]. It's too big. It's a huge subject of trade-offs and compromises, which can only be discussed in practical details. So you and i would be going back and forth between ourselves on this forever, i'm sorry, but it's too big for here.

Q: Can you say what you mean in more detail by security itself, like in a general sense. Because we keep saying it, and the examples tend to help, but i thought it was about the art of attack and defense, and we're always talking about defending ourselves. Could you tell us what you mean by security?

J: i'm not certain i quite understand, but the thing is this: **security is not just stopping infiltration**. That's a big thing. Because we're actually fighting in an area of the overall struggle, fighting capitalism and its state. Not as an idea or something far away that we protest, but in this area quite intimately.

When you go to school, there's a branch of capitalism that's interested in selling you a tuition. And there's a branch of capitalism that's interested in selling you shoes. And there's a branch of capitalism that's interested in nullifying everything we do as rebels and if necessary killing us, right?

Security is fighting that branch of capitalism. That's what it's about. It's not basically defensive in nature. It's about the same political struggle we do in our mass demonstrations, you know, in actions or teaching, in whatever, when we go into this and security blends into the edges of the larger struggle. That's why when we start talking about these examples, they blend into organizing and they blend into it because it's part of one political whole.

Q: in your presentation you talked a lot about infiltration, I was just wondering especially today how important you think that technique is versus acquiring information through surveillance of social media or photo video surveillance?

J: Well in reality today, they're both important, i mean the thing is maybe we think they don't need to infiltrate a group because they got it wiretapped and videotaped and everything only, that isn't how they think really. They really want their people there. It isn't just information in an abstract sense. The

biggest problem they have politically is that they have information that they don't understand. And that's their biggest problem actually, when we fight. They need people to stir the mix, cook the dish.

This is a war, which means that we're never going to not have agents or infiltrators. That's like saying you'll have a war but you'll never have casualties, that's silly. Of course there'll be infiltrators. Just like they'll never stop us from reaching and influencing and winning over people on their side. Which we do.

i have a friend who convinced a cop to leave their side, to not be a cop. Had him as a student in Ethnic Studies, an Asian cop, and he got convinced—because it's pretty convincing—that cops are the complete enemies of people of color and oppressed people. Just practically speaking, unless you really like shooting people who look like you, you know, who are poor and struggling, you shouldn't be a cop. And the last day of the course he came to my friend after the others had left, he thanked him for what he'd done, he unbelted his holster with his 9mm and gave it to my friend and said: "If you ever need it for the movement, use it," and walked away. Serious. So it isn't true—and look at Private Manning and all that—it isn't true that we're just on the defensive. We're fighting politically with them. We'll never stop them from doing some messing with us and causing us casualties and they won't stop us from winning people over.

Sidebar 7

So it's just like, when i came into the movement at 18 and didn't know anything but was glad to find others and do something political. And within a year i met people in or around the group who were agents. So earlier i've mentioned this one college dropout guy acting like a Hollywood version of a revolutionary who turned out to be working for the FBI. There was another settler guy, his close "comrade" and friend in the group, who turned out to be a part-time informer for a county sheriff's office.

You know what i said about terrain, about knowing what the changes and moves in our terrain mean? Well, this second guy stood out like a dead spot to everyone because...he really hated us! i mean, hated us all personally, as people. He was a student at a conservative bible college, and he truly hated and feared all of us lefties so much that he couldn't even hide it. That stood out. He was acting like the pope trying to be undercover at a convention of Judas fans. Which made comrades think: why is a fundamentalist bible college student who seems to really hate almost everyone in the group even around us at all? There was nothing natural about it. Definitely, this second guy was a candidate for world's worst agent award.

It was so pathetic that comrades mostly laughed it off. And anyway, our social-democratic group wasn't exactly shaking capitalism from its foundations, we would have rejoiced and broken out the champagne bottles if we'd ever had any actual secrets to protect (yes, it was also true that any remotely sensitive discussions these clowns were kept away from).

So that "Dynamic Duo" was a good example of complete political police ineptitude, or a badly failed attempt at intelligence-gathering which we had deftly foiled? No, unfortunately, in the slippery long range of things it worked out in a way that shouldn't have surprised me but did.

James Yaki Sayles always told his New Afrikan comrades, over and over, "We have to take ourselves more seriously." This is a lesson which was really borne home to me, for instance, in this case. And, by the way, this relates to whether agent infiltration is so important to them anymore in an age of total electronic surveillance? This is a question that is raised all the time now not just by that comrade but whenever the issue of movement security comes up. The interesting fact is, our enemy has a "spare no expense" agenda when it comes to fighting the movement, weak though we are. They want it all, every

tool, every weapon, and definitely **always see a priority need for human informers and agents.** We can make it plain.

While everyone in our little group back then laughed off these two obnoxious and obvious white guy agents, what we weren't thinking of was any larger picture. Like, to start with, if they were so isolated then how did they stay in contact with things at all? The answer was that they were part of a small dissident tendency led by one very smart comrade who wasn't considered an agent. Who was politically well educated from the IWW to Leninism, much more so than myself or most other young comrades. Let's call him "A". So what did that relationship mean? "A" turned out to have a bad weakness which we saw but didn't see. His critical faculties got suspended whenever someone was willing to be his follower, to praise him and politically support his personal agendas. So "A" wasn't bothered by everyone's disbelief in the two agents in his clique.

While we dismissed them and laughed it off, the two fumbling agents had tripped over a very useful piece of information: "A" who was an experienced player in the left could be a security "aircraft carrier" for their whole team, a controversial though respected activist but one who could be manipulated to give political cover to more police infiltrators. How valuable that one piece of information could be.

"A" himself got deeper into the struggle over the years, being smart and curious and important. Wanting to be closer to "real" hard-core struggles such as Black nationalism and working class organizing and even supporting urban guerrilla politics in other countries. Inevitably, we now understand, as he got deeper into the struggle in at least one important situation he was used to run cover for and validate a police agent who outwardly was his "comrade". How often this happened we aren't completely sure, but the magic number isn't likely to be zero.

This is something those of us back in early days never understood or foresaw, because his major league egotism was just so "natural", so common for many of us in the movement back then that it didn't stand out. It was accepted as normal static on our political radios. Sometimes the most cutting secrets are the ones hidden in plain sight, hidden it turns out by our own hands from ourselves. **So human agents aren't just walking "ears" for the police. They are themselves catalysts as all people are, changing things and transforming things that might have not been otherwise.** The problem in the end turned out to be not with the two clumsy agents but with the smart and "political" comrade who wasn't thought to be dangerous like an agent would be—and we totally didn't see it coming.

What we do and don't do in our small spheres of political work, often has larger effects in the struggle far beyond us. Taking responsibility for that is hard.

Q: I wonder if you want to speak to...good politics is obviously a defense against infiltration and you gave a lot of examples that you can identify this person as an infiltrator because of their bad politics or because of our bad politics this person got a long way. But it also seems like branding people infiltrators, this is obviously really dangerous. I wonder if you could speak to some of the other preventative values of good politics or ways it may protect us that don't involve us identifying people as traitors, which is probably not even our biggest security problem.

J: It isn't. **Security is like all politics, all living. It's art and craft in as much as you need to know how to practically do it. You need experience at it.** You can't go around saying, "oh, you have bad politics, you're an agent", that's like harmful and silly, frankly, i don't want to get into too much tactical stuff because tactical stuff depends on the actual situation, it isn't a big principle that you're going to run out and apply like a cure-all lotion kind of thing. And when i talk about egotism or patriarchy, in part that's because if i overemphasize it... in the sense that they seem to need cooler people as agents now, you know, who can fit in better. But of course in the '60s and '70s over and over

and over again, we saw the same pattern. Only we couldn't stop ourselves. It was beyond our ability, because our politics weren't good enough. And not in any abstract way.

Like, you ask people how was Malcolm killed? If you say it was a conspiracy, then it must have been an operation and so how did it work, practically speaking? Malcolm had security and he had trained them, too. This is a guy who basically almost created the Fruit of Islam, the Nation of Islam's security people that cast a long shadow we all respected. So how did he get killed so easily in the Audubon Ballroom?

Answer: Eugene Roberts, police agent, who presented himself as war veteran, top martial artist...like, "I like roughing up bad guys. Anybody who causes trouble with you, Malcolm, well don't worry. I won't let anyone ... blah, blah, blah"...

Malcolm liked that. Sounded really tough, man-competent, you know? He made him head of security. So, did Eugene Roberts have good security? Absolutely—for his mission. He had painstaking security. Everybody who walked into the Audubon Ballroom meetings was shaken down, patted down, their bags were emptied, you know, questioned, scrutinized, pushed around. Nobody was going to get past Eugene Roberts and his guys. After awhile, of course, many people stopped coming to Malcolm's speeches because they didn't feel like getting messed up and patted down on the way in, and people were complaining to Malcolm about it. So Malcolm said, "Well, this is counterproductive, this security thing!" So he said, "Okay, no more security, no more searching people at the door, no more patting everybody down, no more looking in their bags, just open the doors. It doesn't matter."

Bingo! Eugene Roberts struck the jackpot, got what he was aiming at with this murderous cop scheme. The minute he did that and then you got 3 dangerous other guys known to police coming into the weekly public meeting with shotgun and pistols. They came in and did the assassination in front of 200 people and 2 of the 3 got away. (One was grabbed by the crowd). Even though all of them were known to the state, the 2 who escaped were never caught or publicly named. Although the police did arrest innocent people afterwards, of course, as they usually do. Malcolm's security didn't do anything to protect him, because it wasn't his security anymore. New York police who were normally all over revolutionary meetings, disappeared for that night, totally not in sight. What a coincidence, they decided to take the night off. So it all worked out really well for the oppressors. Not so well for our side.

This happened to us over and over and over again in one way or another, coast to coast. It didn't happen just once, it happened 50, 100, 200, 300 times and you know something, we hardly learned a damn thing from it. So if people are beyond that and they know that, that's excellent—sorry it's just ABC's, but it cost us a lot to tell you this, i mean the knowledge, people died and only then did we get the knowledge in effect that we're dealing with. It's not nothing.

Q: I don't necessarily know if this is a positive example or not. I've had experience of groups I've been a part of having been infiltrated and I feel that one of the things that people have talked about a lot is about how much do you trust your gut? Like how do you go about trusting your gut if you think people are infiltrators without calling people out for being infiltrators when you could be wrong?

I would just caution people to not have just such a black-and-white...you have suspicions about people so they're an informant and you treat them like a spy, but at the same time you don't react against that because of guilt and still include them in everything that you might not want to include them in. I think that people could take a more balanced approach to it and be straightforward about it and try not to alienate everyone they have suspicions of. I don't know what you think about that. It's something that we tried recently.

J: It's true, a lot of security questions when it comes to infiltration are gray, they're not black and white. Like most of them are gray. So you have to figure out how to deal with it. It depends on how much work you put into it. This may sound funny to you, but **we used to simply investigate people. It's not a big deal to me.**

Once the main anti-war group in Chicago was in a crisis because the guy who had the mailing list, they couldn't reach him by phone and they had to do an emergency mailing. So people went out to his house and they knocked on the door and he wasn't home. "Where the hell is this guy? he's a retired bookkeeper he told us, so where the heck is he? Oh, he's probably at the neighborhood tavern."

And so they went to the neighborhood tavern and said "Hey, you know so-and-so? Did you see him lately? You know, has he been here today?" And they said. "Oh, you mean so-and-so the cop?" And the anti-war people could only say, "What!?!". It turns out the guy was a full-time on duty Chicago police detective, right? He had the only copy of the movement mailing list for this citywide group...

They threatened him with a lawsuit to get the only copy of the mailing list back, but it sure changed things. Among other stuff, the comrades involved felt like fools. So they formed a small informal but no nonsense work group to not have it happen again. That wasn't a secret at all, but they didn't share all the details of the work with everyone, which was understood as just common sense. One of the techniques they used was they dug up a sympathizer who owned a small business, and had access to doing credit checks and bank info. Anyone they had questions about, they ran a credit check to see if their identity and work record matched with what they said about themselves. They also did other similar things, sometimes with unanticipated results. As well as checking with movement sources more. As an old Chinese philosopher once said, "no investigation, no right to speak."

Sidebar 8

This new idea that the movement has to be completely transparent to everyone as a principle, especially to people whom we don't trust, to me **this is an unconscious influence from the liberal culture or something**. That no one should be held back from knowing everything that any part of the movement is up to? This is really new but not too fresh. To be blunt, this is an idea that has come about from the current distortion of the left as part of the cultural zone of "play nice" middle class reformism. As though bourgeois civil liberties mindsets developed in part by interaction with cops and courts should define how we in the struggle relate and work with each other. As though we aren't outlaws and rebels. This didn't exist in earlier eras when the movement was primarily made up of oppressed working people fighting to survive, guarded in their trust, and for good reasons. "Necessity knows no laws."

And oh, here's another thing that came in our movement experience a lot: there were people, there wasn't anything on the surface wrong with them, they were nondescript, they sometimes didn't say anything at meetings. They'd say something fawning like: "Listen, I don't know too much about all these politics. I just wanna help and do your mailings, help do that kind of stuff." And some groups in the old days, hopefully not now, there was a hierarchy of roles: the important people didn't do any work, physical work, they gave orders and talked, whatever. And all the way down the hierarchy, the kind of new, "unimportant" people that nobody knew, they were left to do a lot of the practical whatnot.

It always sounded a little backwards to me, but anyways...so time and again, we just learned that this was like unbelievably backward on our parts..

When Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz left Boston's Cell 16, the first radical feminist group in the United States, to start a branch that they called the Southern Feminist Revolutionary Union or Women's Union or something like that in New Orleans, along the way they picked up this young woman who was a

graduate student and who said as usual something like, “I love this feminism, I’m all for you, I don’t talk much, I don’t know much about it, but, you know, I just want to help. Like I’ll do all the paperwork. I’ll keep minutes of every meeting. I’ll do all the correspondence. You creative leadership people, I want to free you to just go out and I’ll just take care of little things.”

So, of course, one day they came back to the office and discovered copies of letters that she had inadvertently left.

It turns out of course, she really was a grad student and her professor apparently had been contacted by the FBI. So his line was, “Well, in order to get your thesis approved we want things like a psychological assessment of every person in this radical group. We want all their correspondence. We want to know their personal friends, etc, etc. We want to know this and we want to know that. This is all part of your thesis work. Just do this academic work and if you don’t give us this we’re throwing you out.” She was a rich kid at a fancy university. So, of course she said “I have to do this”. She was like a complete spy inside the group, but instead of being on the police payroll she was actually paying them lots of tuition money to get university credit for being a spy? You do know that capitalist culture is really weird, right?

This whole thing of hierarchy of roles thing, you know, really a bad idea, and not at all the same thing as practical division of labor. Working in the gray areas because we had to, we just looked up people, we thought about who they had worked with before. This wasn’t a big witch-hunt or anything. Just because we checked out peoples’ stories and looked at people’s background a lot because we had to, because we had bad experiences otherwise. This idea that we must automatically assume that everyone is good and trustworthy is just as crack as the idea that we must assume that everyone must be under suspicion and thought to be untrustworthy. Neither is realistic. We play the hand that we are dealt. And you do have to trust your gut and sometimes while you’re working it out you put people in a bubble. They’re in theory at the meeting, but actually you’re working around them, you’re protecting everyone from them but you’re just not saying anything, i don’t know, it sounds Machiavellian or whatever, but it’s a war here. We’re doing what we can, and if there are better ways then hopefully people will find them.

Q: I was just wondering, do we really need to figure out if someone is an agent or not, in order to figure out that they shouldn’t be in one of our groups? One of those things that used to drive me nuts. Nobody wants to be the bad guy. That person is being sexist all the time, they shouldn’t be in the group, right? A person who is disruptive so that we can’t do our business during meetings shouldn’t be in the group. I don’t know, maybe it’s different here, but a lot of people think it’s the worst thing to be like, No you shouldn’t be in this group. It’s just really tough for some groups—maybe not every group—to say that somebody needs to take a time out.

J: Yes, you’re right. Can’t say any more than that.

Moderator: It’s time, the meeting is over.

G20 Repression and Infiltration in Toronto: an Interview with Mandy Hiscocks

Amanda “Mandy” Hiscocks is a long time activist from a Guelph, Ontario. She was centrally involved in organizing against the G20 summit held in Toronto in June 2010. Tom Keefer interviewed Hiscocks a week before she was sentenced in January 2012. She served her sentence in the Vanier Center for Women in Milton, Ontario from where she maintained the blog <http://boredbutnotbroken. tao. ca>

When and how did the police monitor organizers and infiltrate the movement against the G20?

They sent undercover agents in way before the G20 activism began. The two agents that I’m most familiar with—Brenda Dougherty (Brenda Carey) and Khalid Mohammed (Bindo Showan), in Guelph and Waterloo respectively—came in around the time of the planning against Vancouver Olympics. Their focus only morphed into G8/G20 surveillance later. But even before that, in 2008, I was placed under surveillance by the OPP because they claimed that I was involved in “extremist” left groups such as the Central Student Association (CSA) at the University of Guelph and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). I’m not a part of PETA and in any case, neither it nor the CSA are extremist groups.

What was perhaps more important for them was that they also said I was involved in “Aboriginal support” and that I was operating as a “bridge” between Guelph, Toronto, and Ottawa. It’s been a recurring theme in the Crown’s synopsis of events to talk a lot about Indigenous solidarity work. I think the cops had people who were keeping tabs on activists in Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo for their involvement in supporting Indigenous struggles and that they moved to a focus on the Olympics and the G20 when the Integrated Security Unit came into being.

What kind of Indigenous movements were you involved with that they were concerned about?

At the time, back in 2008, I would say nothing particularly structured. I had gone to some demonstrations and there was an Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement chapter in Guelph, but it wasn’t particularly effective. I was going to a lot of events and helping to run events through the Ontario Public Research Interest Group (OPIRG). There was some Six Nations solidarity work going on at that time, and folks were also doing Tyendinaga support work. I would consider myself pretty peripheral to that work at that time, but as a whole the radical community in Guelph was very much into that kind of politics. I’m not really sure that I was actually a bridge between Toronto, Guelph, and Ottawa, but I did know a lot of people in those cities who were doing that kind of work. The main thing that the police were worried about was settler communities working with radical Indigenous people and they were also really worried about the more general networking that was happening in Southern Ontario. They didn’t like that Kitchener, Guelph, and Hamilton were working really closely together and that there was a lot of anarchist organizing going on.

What kind of tactics and strategies did the state use to try to infiltrate the movement?

In my opinion, they did everything right. Khalid, the agent I'm most familiar with, came into Guelph and started working with the people opposing the Hanlon Creek Business Park development in Guelph. An above ground group called LIMITS, which held public meetings, organized petitions, spoke with city council, and hosted debates, had a big sign-up sheet, and wanted a really diverse group of people to join. Khalid started going to meetings and doing a lot of work, and then he met people in that group who were more connected to radical politics. There was crossover between that group and people who ended up doing an occupation at that site. He ended up at the occupation.

The occupation wasn't underground, but it was illegal. It was easy for him to slide into the other side of things. But at the same time, if we were to do it again, I'm not quite sure how we could prevent that. You do want lots of people joining your email lists and helping out, and if they seem solid, it's hard to justify keeping them out.

Were there things about his behaviour and activity that had people questioning whether or not he could be trusted or if he was a cop?

Yes, there were. I wasn't that involved in the Hanlon Creek occupation because I was on bail at the time and had a surety with money on the line, so I couldn't go to "unlawful" demonstrations, but I heard that there were people who didn't trust him. I'd hear people say, "Ugh, we can't be like this about people, just because he's brown and older, people need to calm down and not be so suspicious." So that debate was happening in Guelph, but eventually he did get kicked out of the occupation. I'm not sure about the circumstances, but I do know that it happened.

Then there was a backlash because he allied himself with an Indigenous man and a couple of other people at the occupation to identify the Guelph kids who kicked him out as racist. Either way, he did get kicked out and found his way to Kitchener and got involved in activism there. According to his notes in our disclosure, in Kitchener he established trust with a well known activist by doing things like buying illegal cigarettes from a nearby reserve and doing illegal drugs with other activists. He used the trust with that particular person to get into an organizing group in Kitchener.

What strategy did the police agent known as Brenda Dougherty use to get into the activist movement?

She came into Guelph in late 2008 or early 2009. She had instructions from her handlers at the OPP to go and just sit at the Cornerstone cafe because a lot of lefties hang around there; they thought that she should be seen in a cool, progressive coffee shop (she was getting paid to eat her lunch!). She read books like *Animal Rights and Human Wrongs* by Peter Singer and *One Dead Indian* by Peter Edwards. She watched the film *Trans America* and other really mainstream stuff to get a sense of the politics of the movement.

She had a list of people—targets—and she went to events, starting on campus, looking for people. She had photographs and was looking for "face time with targets," which is her own quote from the disclosure. She went to an International Women's Day event, did some other stuff, and eventually wound up at a Guelph Union of Tenants and Supporters (GUTS) meeting when they were trying to branch out and recruit on campus. Hardly anyone showed up to that meeting, so she was one of maybe four new members of the group. She started working with GUTS, which was doing very legal things like tenant advocacy and serving meals on the street. She got in by cooking and doing grunt work in a totally non-sketchy way. The cooking was done at people's houses and people became friendly and comfortable talking while she was in the room, and it transitioned into people talking about the G8/G20.

It wasn't even that activists were saying sketchy stuff, more just that she thought, "Okay, these are the people. I've hit the jackpot with this network, and I'm going to get to know these people a lot better and follow them." I don't know how she got to that first anti-G20 meeting in Guelph. I was protesting at the Olympics in Vancouver at the time, so I don't know if it was an open meeting or if she had been invited because she was around for long enough that people trusted her. But she ended up at the first

meeting of what would become the Southern Ontario Anarchist Resistance (SOAR) before there was a vouch system in place. And then she breezed through all the rest.

I don't think anyone ever down and asked, "Who here is officially vouching for Brenda?" But when there was an official vouch system, I vouched for her at a meeting months later—to my eternal shame. I think she got in because she had done so much work and had been there from the start.

One of the conditions of your bail prevented any of the co-accused from contacting one another. In retrospect, do you think it made sense for you to have accepted the nonassociation conditions that were required to get out of custody after you were first arrested?

Well, I can say that I'm never doing that again. I will not take nonassociation conditions again, and I will not go into an arrestable action without understanding that I could be in jail for months and months. I can't speak for other people, but I think that what set the tone for the conditions we got, more than anything, was the fact that we had lawyers. The lawyers wanted to get us out at any cost and were willing to agree to pretty much anything. If we had refused lawyers, they wouldn't have been able to put non-association restrictions on us, because we would have had to communicate for the trial.

Ideally, we should have said, "We all get out (or not) but we have to have a way to meet." If we had stayed in jail, all the women would have been able to meet together and all the men would have been able to meet together. We were all on the same ranges. We would have had a little bit more time to have conversations. The way it turned out, we never had time to talk. We weren't a group of 17 people with a plan, so we didn't have time to properly discuss things like, "How do you feel about non-association?" since we'd never done that kind of pre-arrest stuff that you do if you're doing a cohesive action with a group of people. If we had not signed the non-association agreement and if we had stayed in jail, we could have done that.

I remember arguing with my lawyer about this, and he was adamant: "No, no, this is okay. They're just playing it up because of the media, everything will die down, just keep your heads down and in a few months we'll sort it out." And I should not have believed him! It's been my experience that it's really hard to change bail conditions later. Most people in jail wanted to get out quickly. We didn't have a real discussion in jail that I can remember about whether we should stay there and work as a group to get better conditions later. People hadn't prepared for that. People had stuff at home that was hanging over them, people had work, people hadn't thought this stuff through.

What about the publication ban?

Once our lawyers got the publication ban in place it was really hard for people to know what they could do on our behalf, and it also meant there were a lot of complications with organizing any kind of protest. One problem was that people didn't know what they could say, or even if they could say anything. Another was that there is this weird kind of loophole in the conspiracy law that seemed to mean that if you were alleged to have been part of the conspiracy, and if at a later date in court you were deemed to have actually been a part of that conspiracy, then anything that you said, even after your arrest, is assumed to have been said by anyone in the group. So, everyone was scared to speak without the consent of the group, which we couldn't get because we had non-association conditions. There was also this idea of the "unindicted co-conspirator," someone who hasn't been arrested but is considered by the Crown to be part of the conspiracy. That loophole would also apply to them, so no one who thought they might be an unindicted co-conspirator wanted to speak either. It was surreal and confusing. We didn't understand it and we couldn't get a straight legal answer. Someone needs to study this stuff and see what the law actually says and what the restrictions are, so that we know it better for next time.

What do you think the level of fallout has been on the activists involved in G20 organizing? Have people been scared off or has this process strengthened people's understanding of what's at stake and what's required?

I really don't know. I know what I'd like to think: I'd like to think that people are having better conversations about what they're willing to do, about what they're willing to give up. One of the goals of the TCMN (Toronto Community Mobilization Network) was to use the G20 to get people excited and to join groups that were organizing in the city. To some extent I think that happened.

I also think that if you were one of the people who got attacked at Queen's Park on June 26, you have a pretty different understanding of riot police now. That can be a powerful moment, when you see the state for what it really is. Hopefully people who were there have a better understanding of the state and the police, where they fit, and what the right to protest really means. Hopefully it made people angrier and not more fearful of state repression. But I don't have a good way of knowing if that's the case. In terms of prison solidarity, it's done wonders. The number of people, even just people connected to me on Facebook, who are involved in letter writing, posting information about Bill C-101¹ and programs in prisons, and disseminating information that they wouldn't normally, has grown exponentially. I don't know if that's taking away from other work, but it seems that there is more of a focus on prisoners as a political issue.

How would you respond to the critique that a proponent of non-violent direct action might make, where everything should be organized transparently and people should only engage in civil disobedience so that no one can be portrayed as a terrorist or as being violent? Has that made you reconsider your position on questions around violence or fighting the cops?

No, not at all. I would have liked everything to unfold as a cross between an autonomous black bloc and the way that affinity groups were organized in the anti-globalization movement days. Like the pie chart in Seattle, divide the city: "Is there an affinity group that can shut down this part of the city? Hands up, awesome, there's ten of you, great. Do you need more people, no? Okay, go to it, go do your autonomous thing." The idea behind SOAR was that it would allow for a little more cooperation between affinity groups so that there weren't just a random bunch of affinity groups doing whatever. If one affinity group was doing a particular thing, maybe another affinity group could assist, through a complementary action, or use their own action as a decoy and so on. That's not the way it panned out, but that was the idea that I had and that was the idea behind the spokescouncils of affinity groups that made up SOAR.

In the end, all of the "ring-leaders" in SOAR were in jail and completely different people took the lead on the day of the march and put up a flare and a bunch of people followed them. It was just a standard black bloc: people wearing black, people who knew and trusted one another, and they went and engaged in some "criminal activity." The militant action ended up being less organized but it happened and I think it accomplished what it was meant to. And all of that organization that went into SOAR, all of the time and the energy, maybe it was unnecessary. I don't mean that the idea of more coordinated affinity group actions should be abandoned, or that it's a bad model, just that it didn't work this time and we need to think it through more.

If the state of the movement right now was such that another Seattle could happen, or that there were affinity groups out there who acted with no bandanas, who did things like hard blockades, who knew how to do those things, who had the equipment, and were willing to do them, I think we would have had a really different situation. The assessment that I and that most people have, however, is that

¹ Omnibus Crime Bill C-10, also called the "Safer Streets, Safer Communities Act," was passed by the Canadian federal government in March 2012. The bill combines amendments from nine separate bills that had failed to pass in previous sessions of parliament and makes fundamental changes to almost every component of Canada's criminal justice system

that doesn't exist anymore. People don't do those things. It's not the Pacific Northwest, it's not the anti-logging stuff, it's not the anti-globalization days.

I walked into those meetings in Toronto and looked around and thought, where is everyone? Where are the people who have these skills, who know how to do this stuff? They weren't there. And I remember speaking with a friend of mine who is completely pacifist, and does only non-violent direct action and does it really well and coordinated and I was asked, "Are you going to be here? Can we have some yellow actions?" But there just weren't those things. I think that's a problem. Because we have really boring, not very useful, union/NGO-style marches or black bloc actions and nothing in the middle. It's important to note that it wasn't only the radical anarchists who were infiltrated. Greenpeace and the Vancouver Media Centre were infiltrated too. A lot of pretty mainstream groups who do mostly non-violent civil disobedience (if they do anything illegal at all) were infiltrated. I don't think it's true that the infiltration wouldn't have happened if there wasn't this idea of "violence."

It seems that in some ways that black bloc actions have become symbolic actions in themselves and that "it's not a good summit protest unless something is burning." The act of smashing stuff is seen as a victory in itself, even though it's really symbolic and ultimately resulted in the trouble that you and a number of other people went through—all the trials and all the jail time.

The thing is, we knew that the black bloc was going to happen, because it always happens. SOAR or no SOAR, there's going to be a black bloc. And so the question that we had—in SOAR and the TCMN—was how can we use diversity of tactics to separate the labour march from another march where people can be more "militant." The original idea was always that shit is going to happen—it always happens and organizers can't and shouldn't control what people are going to do or not going to do.

It's a fair bet that there's going to be a black bloc and there are going to be smashed windows. How do we make sure that that happens in a place and in a way that doesn't affect the green march or the low-risk march? That was the intention and it didn't work out that way, and it kind of didn't work out that way because of a lack of respect for a diversity of tactics. If there had been a friendly, cordial, "We don't agree but we recognize that some people want to do different things," message from the labour march, I think it would have turned out really well.

As for the value of having a small black bloc that runs amok in the city—I haven't decided either way on that. I think there is some value to showing any kind of resistance that is militant, that's in your face, that says, "No, you can't scare me with your tear gas. You can't scare me with your guns. Fuck you." I think that's really important in ways that can't necessarily be assessed. And I don't think the window smashing matters. I don't think the smashing cop cars matters. I think that whatever gives an aura of militancy in the street is really valuable.

I don't know that a civil disobedience "lie down and let's get dragged away" action does do that. I think it does a lot of other great things, but it doesn't inspire the same people as a more confrontational action does. When I was in jail, the general consensus on my range was, "That was fucking awesome." People who have been constantly harassed by cops, whether they have a really good class analysis or just plain experience, thought it was great. People who hate the power structure but don't really have a background or academic understanding of it were drawn to the militant actions, and that's what's positive. So I don't think the bloc should be assessed in terms of people getting arrested, or whether or not we shut it down, or if the unions are mad at us now.

I just wish that there had also been a middle ground. I wish that there were people saying, "We're going to lie down on the Gardiner Expressway," or saying, "We're not going to let the delegates through," or "We're going to put a tripod in the middle of the entrance way," or "We're going to lock down at the fence."

One thing that I learned was that you can either be part of organizing the structure—making the posters, making the timelines, getting the convergence space—or you can be part of a group that's

going to be doing an action, but you can't do both. There is no way that my affinity group could have actually planned a really solid action while we were also doing all of the structure stuff. That was the main drawback: that there were not enough people in the city that were willing to give enough of their time to allow people who were part of the TCMN to also plan actions. In hindsight, we needed the people in the TCMN to just plan a big militant action. No one else was doing it and SOAR ended up taking it on.

It's almost a reflection of the fact that the balance of forces has changed since Seattle and the G20 in Toronto.

It seems that there are fewer people participating, and that people from both sides of the “violence” debate are scornful of the middle. There are people who are only willing to march and will not do anything illegal. And then there are people who are like, “Fuck this non-violent direct action shit, I want to break some windows. I want to do something that feels strong and empowering. I'm going to dress all in black and be part of the black bloc.”

Neither side is interested in the classic mass civil disobedience actions. If there was a middle force between these extremes, maybe there would be more people and if there were more people, maybe there would be a middle.

But yeah—it's definitely different. But it's not just time; I think it's also location. I think if the G20 had happened, for example, in Montreal, where there's a different political culture, it would have been totally different. There you can be part of a militant march that will confront the police, or at least defend itself against the police. Folks there who will attack a fence or a structure and do that kind of thing on a regular basis don't dress all in black in some kind of cliquey subculture. If the G20 had met in Montreal, I don't think the weird conflict between the union and the break-off march would have happened. People would have said, “Of course we will do a militant break-off march.”

My really over-simplified analysis of the black bloc—or the kinds of things the black bloc would do—is that we've been doing it backwards. For the last decade, since Seattle, people have been trying to normalize the black bloc. Our thinking was that the more we do it the more people will get used to it and the more appealing these tactics will become.

But we should be looking at Egypt. The protests in Tahrir Square were always called peaceful protests. There was the classic “women and children” line: it was peaceful and it was meant to be peaceful and in the interviews everyone said how peaceful it was and that they just wanted a peaceful demonstration that was massive, to just make their point. But when the police and Mubarak's people attacked there was not a lot of conflict or tension when people started defending the square and the protest against the state's forces. Hundreds of people were doing things like burning down police stations as well as climbing on top of tall buildings and throwing molotovs down when the cops came!

It's almost as if black bloc activists need to bide their time, practice their tactics, but not in a public way because the only time it's going to be acceptable here is when people feel threatened. If the cops had attacked the labour march I don't know that the unions would have been so upset about a bunch of people fighting the cops; maybe then they might have thought, “Oh yeah—this is okay. My four year old is here and it's great that this person in black is preventing the cops from getting too close.” People almost do politics as a hobby, like, “Let's go out for the day and march around with the unions,” so they might not see the value of the black bloc. But they would if they faced the risk of police violence themselves. Because non-violent rallies are not a threat to the state, the state doesn't respond with violence. And in my mind, a defensive black bloc that contributes to a larger action is more useful than one that goes alone and engages in small scale property damage.

As you prepare to do 11 months in jail, is there anything that you want to tell people, or are there ways that people can support you in jail, or ways that you can work with prisoner support movements?

The one thing I would like to tell people—because I think people have a really skewed perception of what jail is—is that it’s not really going to be that terrible. I think that it’s really important for people to know that this is something we can do. People have this idea that jail is to be avoided at all costs and it’s the end of the world if you have to do time. I’m hoping that my experience, when I can share it, will demonstrate that it’s not so bad. You can still do important things on the inside and you will still have contact with the outside and it doesn’t take a particularly strong person to be able to get through it.

So you see it as part of the political process, if we’re serious about changing the world?

Exactly. It’s not like they’re going to stop arresting people. However, there are only so many times that you can do time in your life, so I think those times should be worth it. If you are going to put yourself out there knowing that you could potentially do time, then just make sure that your actions are as efficient and effective as possible.

44. Beginner's Kata

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Author: J. Sakai

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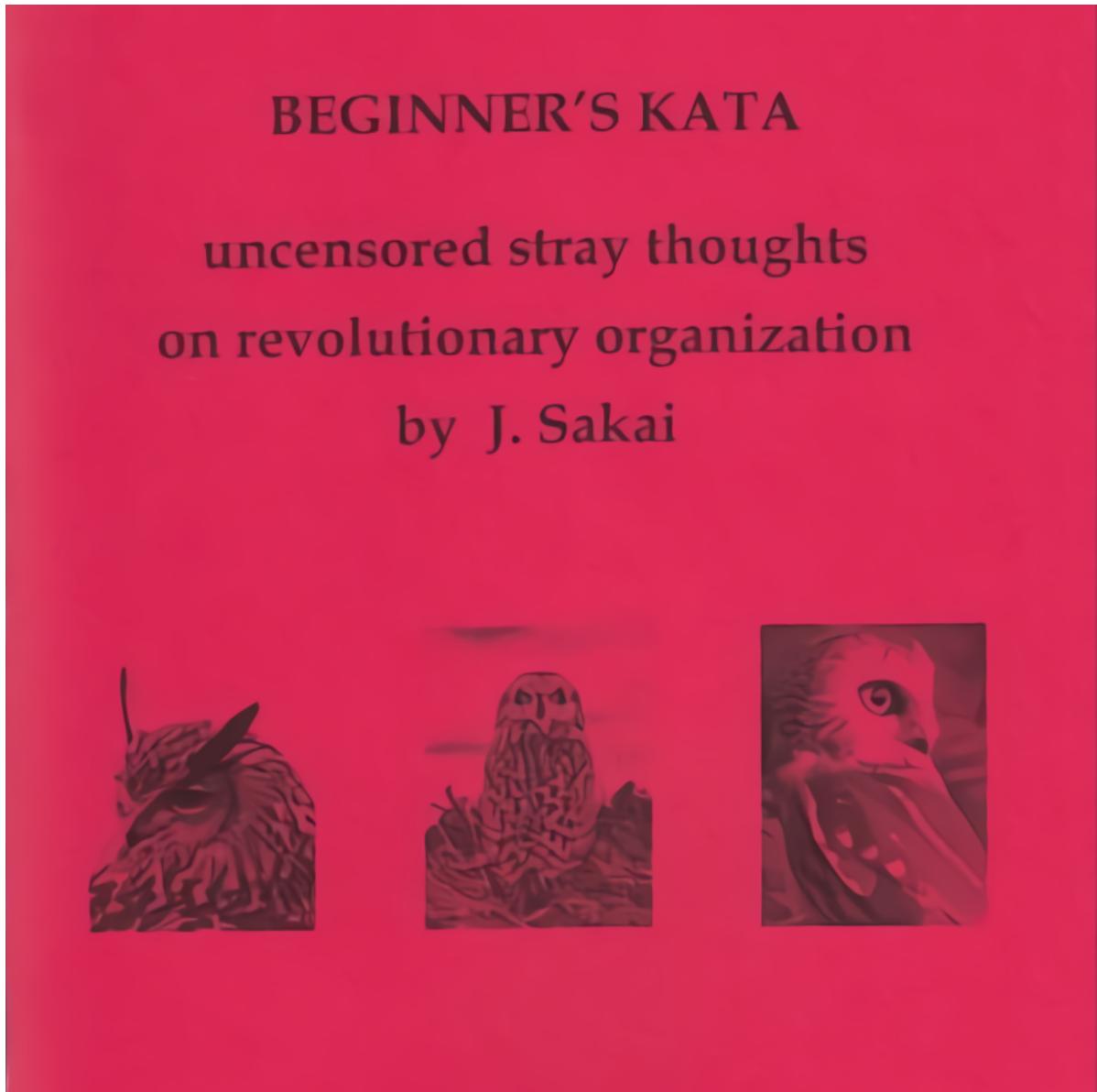
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Plain talk with J. Sakai about what we do and don't know about revolutionary organization, and, indeed, about being revolutionaries.

“Beginner’s mind” is a zen phrase. It reminds us that when we first took this path as beginners, we approached it almost with awe. Self-conscious of knowing so little—knowing nothing, really—we were open for seeing anything. Aware mostly of how unimportant our own little knowledge was. But as we became much more experienced, even became “expert,” it was different. We could separate useful from scrap, what we judge is good from bad, so automatically we hardly needed to pause over it. Our journey became a polished routine. And now we sometimes ask ourselves, is it still a journey?

i was reminded of “beginner’s mind” all over again once, in a very different context. Accidentally tuning past an ongoing discussion between a few marxists and anarchists about the pros and cons of leninism vs. “horizontal” spontaneity in revolutionary organization. It was like people at a dinner party having a familiar argument across the room from you. You can’t catch everything being said, but you know where it’s going anyway.

Seems that every culture has strange traditions. Seemingly illogical, ritual ways of approaching some things. Guess it’s just human. As in the Japanese cartoon world we know as *anime*, the artistic convention is that the characters are pictured as Caucasians, even though the artists and audience are Japanese. (Critics here guess maybe respecting their art’s origins in the fandom for imported u.s. comic books during the post-1945 Occupation?)

Our left subculture, like in that discussion on leninism & revolutionary organization, is as strange as that. Instead of centering on actual organizations we ourselves might have experimented with, learned from or fought against, by cultural convention the debate often uses the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the conflicting stalinist and anarchist experiences of the 1937 Spanish Civil War as its framework. So discussions on a key subject are familiarly conducted at a remove—using the puppetry of actors and scenarios from almost a century ago, on a different continent; none of it in our living memory or knowledge. This is still a serious political discussion, just as Paris couture fashions are still seriously-intended clothing. But both are heavily stylized and artificial, for unspoken class purposes?

Someone in that small discussion pointed out that leninism and his kind of command organization had played such a large role to this day in modern revolutionary politics, that whether it was negative or positive, good or bad in someone’s opinion, it should be better understood. Unfortunately, put me down as more than skeptical on this.

Only yesterday i had said the exact same thing. But hearing it played back again in someone else’s voice, realized that i don’t really expect it to happen. Useful idea, abstractly, but the left in this country has never been able to successfully do this one specific thing about understanding revolutionary organization, not in a hundred years. Neither anarchists nor marxists. So why would you expect it to happen now? Is it that we’re much smarter all of a sudden? Is everyone *more* interested in leninism now?

[Those words might sound like i’m either dissing Lenin or dissing revs in this country. No, not at all. But his politics have been untranslatable here, because of the complex barrier which divides our realities. Same reason so many people don’t understand his Russian predecessor, the anarchist Bakunin. If time allows, we might touch lightly on this at another turn down the road.]

This is a singular moment in the struggle, where the old left from the 1960s-70s has finally gone, and where the wind-shaken leafs of brand new radicalisms have begun to sprout up, fragile yet driven. As generations go on and off stage, and society is transformed once again by the leap in the means of economic production & distribution. This is a space in the transition between different historic epochs, in the simultaneous unnatural flowering/world collapse of capitalist civilization. Still, in a brutal

continental u.s. empire of some 325 millions, it is only ordinary that there are numbers of radical people as well as different groups with revolutionary ideas. But if only temporarily, there is no revolutionary organization yet which is strong enough to impress its ideas upon mainstream politics.

Everyone who has been around radical protest activity for awhile has heard left organizational ideas—anarchist, social-democratic, old marxist-leninist, maoist, eco-survivalist, whatever. To me the first question isn't any longer which ideas are "best"—which is how the organization question is usually framed—but how true or useful are the assumptions on which our discussions are based? Where are we really when we start to navigate our course?

What i am trying to do here is not to argue one organizational form or another, but to examine how we *think* about revolutionary organization. What the framework is around everything. To examine how our easy acceptance of so many assumptions could throw us forward or off-track. Because, at least to me, there's a big gap between the reality and our superficial talk about the shape of revolutionary organizations to come.

So how much have we learned about revolutionary organization? In practical terms, in one way personally i know a lot (certainly much more than we would ever want to spill in public), but in another way i don't know near enough. Maybe like the backyard guy you know who fixes cars, but isn't good enough to get a real mechanic's job at the dealership? So, not nearly enough. But here's a handful anyway, right or wrong, tossed into the pot, my share towards what we need for starters.

i know that marxist-leninists here are supposed to know so much about this subject, but don't.

In my political lifetime i've seen what felt like dozens of primarily middle-class, white and asian M-L collectives, organizations and so-called parties started in the metropolis, this u.s. empire, and none of them to my knowledge have been successful. That's a zero. At one point almost the entire, ex-college asian-american movement on the West Coast and New York City emptied itself into fiercely warring "Marxist-Leninist-Mao-Tse-Tung-Thought party-building" organizations and collectives of one kind or another. All long gone now. Most 1960s-70s M-L organizations quickly disappeared. A few "Trotskyist" sects unfortunately lasted it felt like forever, like those fabled cockroaches briskly going about their business immune to the glowing levels of radioactivity in a post-holocaust world (when i think of those groups, there's a reason a mental picture of radioactive cockroaches comes into my mind).

If you started early enough way back then, we even saw "pragmatic" social-democratic organizations with their yearning for the wealthy welfare state of nice civilian mice sharing the cheese, come and then go in the blink of an eye. Their coming on in the late 1950s was the little stirring before the much larger wave of radical rebellion in the 1960s. Historically a more European than a u.s. empire phenomena, but with Globalization's merciless neo-liberalism, more and more people are wanting a full frontal welfare state as their best alternative to mass middle-class flight to Canada. In the 2016 "Bernie" breakthrough, that utopian socialist-capitalist reformism became a progressive "happening." Yeah, been there, done that. Although for this particular discussion it actually lies outside our map, outside the actual combat zone of decisions about revolutionary organization.

i think that we all know scraps of things, but in practice today don't know enough to do anything successful about revolutionary organization. Which is one good reason why we aren't doing it.

One big obstacle to us learning more is our habit of covering up our ignorance. Uncle Mao used the term "invincible ignorance" to identify the self-protective reflex of too many leftists. Shying away from bluntly analyzing the political things that they needed to experience. Clinging to the polishing and re-polishing of "classic" politics in order to avoid the humbling uncertainties of the ever-changing struggle.

A typical old example to me was when famous poet Amiri Baraka & Co. formed their would-be "Maoist" party, the LRS (League of Revolutionary Struggle). One of my asian comrades was a member, and pressing me to join up. So i asked her why their would-be "party" would succeed, when Bob Avakian's RCP, and the Beijing-officially-endorsed October League, and most of the other 1970s "Maoist" pre-party groups had fallen face-first into the pavement? (Hard as it may be to believe now, many thousands of young activists had poured into these M-L party-building groups, which had then promptly evaporated

in one of the most striking radical happenings of the Sixties generation. i mean, Charles Manson left a bigger footprint).

“Because they had bad politics and we have good politics”, my asian comrade simplemindedly answered me, completely confident . That sort of left me speechless. Is mercy killing allowed in the movement, i wondered? (guess not, or i would have been cold stone buried ages ago.) Sadly, it isn’t true that there’s a special goddess to protect the clueless.

The old Marxist left here was like an aircraft manufacturer, whose elite, university-educated engineering teams with great theoretical flourish developed 60 or 70 different airplanes. All of them unfortunately crashing on takeoff. Their potential customers have long since split into two feuding camps: the Marxist-Leninists keep insisting, “Our people are so exceptionally experienced, we *must* buy their next airplane.” (Anarchists reply: “What this proves is that aviation should be banned, unless travelers going to a destination spontaneously meet and piece together some kind of a ‘plane’ out of whatever parts are left around airports.”)

i also think that “democracy” in revolutionary organizations is highly overrated. At its worst, it’s like “patriotism” and “family,” being “*the last refuge of scoundrels.*”

Democracy in society may be a necessity of community life, but democracy in revolutionary organizations is something else entirely different. Among other things, revolutionary organizations are part of society and also not part of it. In the society and also living antagonistically outside its borders. Subject to different laws of physics. Resulting in different structures.

Most discussions of revolutionary organizations right here in the garden of the imperialist metropolis, assume and insist on some variety of “democracy.” It’s definitely something sacred. What does this usually consist of? Something learned from our capitalist bosses. Usually something resembling their bourgeois “democracy.” In which the marxist or anarchist or socialist group is “democratic” because there are meetings in which all members have the theoretical right to speak, vote or consent on its politics and activities. Usually, the handful of leaders have met or communicated privately before that meeting, to decide what the members must do. Often, everything is scripted as much as possible.

There’s nothing strange about this. It’s organizational “democracy” as we know it in the world of the imperialist center, like suburban village government, state-regulated trade union locals, or the bored of trustees for whatever NGO. It’s a certain form that comfortably clothes institutions in this decaying capitalist culture. As such, this “democracy” isn’t anything that i’m up in arms about, either for or against. Why shouldn’t an anarchist organization or a trotskyist “party” operate like the local bridge club if it wants to? It’s just our cultural norm.

But the complete absence of this “democracy” isn’t necessarily a loss, either.

Sometimes doing away with “democracy” can be even more democratic in real terms. In fact, stripping away unnecessary people and organization has worked better than leftists here like to admit in many situations. One reason that so much of what has worked well are individual or small group projects, seriously committed to getting things done on a particular issue or function.

As one example, i like the old Prison News Service (PNS) newspaper project, done in the 1980-1990s by the late Jim Campbell & friends up in Canada. For many years, PNS survived as a very open political forum, primarily written by many, many different prisoners, and read by thousands of prisoners. Particularly for New Afrikan prisoners in the u.s.a., it became a rare meeting place to talk politics with each other, spread news about the ongoing skirmishes between the brothers and sisters versus the prison authorities, and generally make themselves known.

Jim Campbell mostly financed it himself out of his wages, and although he had a handful of co-conspirators on the project, from what i could tell back then Jim basically made most of the decisions. If Jim didn’t think that your letter was that important, flip it went into the dusty files (yes, that happened to me, too—have to laugh about it now). Not only was this close to one-man rule, without any “democratic” structure, but it was one-white-man rule to boot. How about that for a taboo?

Why should one white anarchist up in Canada de facto control so much of how prisoners of color in the u.s. gulag talked to each other? Because no one else wanted to or could do it. (The black liberation

army-coordinating committee, to be sure, had its own quite serious political discussion zine, but it was both closed and more specifically defined.) Truth was, neither Black nationalist organizations nor white M-L groups wanted to have that much to do with prisoners except to exploit a few famous names. Who might have been hailed in speeches but were privately considered too troublesome, too hard to control, and too needy.

During those years, the National Committee to Defend Black Political Prisoners was also a small but useful source of political linkage for some of those inside, but that was really done by one dedicated older Asian woman. Who stayed up late at night licking the stamps and sending out mailings paid for by her thin wages as a waitress in Harlem (she told me she took the job partly so that she could act as a message center, where guys who might be ducking the Enemy could pick up “kites” from comrades—and to slip hamburgers to hungry rads without cash.) So Jim wasn’t alone, but was one of a thin line of advanced explorers. An actual modest person-by-person vanguard, if you will, probing the gulags and other human garbage dumps for the future. There are vanguards in the struggle, but maybe it’s not what people usually think.

So it was lucky that Jim Campbell identified so personally with the pain and isolation of prisoners, and was so determined to break down the walls to the extent that he and a few other comrades personally could. PNS definitely had the effect of spreading liberation, enabling radical political discussion among some of the oppressed. Which wasn’t ideal, sure wasn’t everything, but was pretty democratic. The how they did it was less important. Democracy isn’t in the ritual forms, in our little rules. It’s in the politics of what we do or don’t do.

Which brings us to data-mining the past. Taking lessons from the past is inescapable, for me as well as everyone else. But check this out: We “know” a lot from all our snatch & grab at the past that isn’t what we think it is.

One immediate suggestion i do have is to take some of the emotion and value judgements out of it. As one of my old martial arts teachers used to say at our annual class evaluations, “Just take it in as information.” One by one, we had to step forward onto the floor and go through our moves, and then were critiqued on the spot by classmates and instructors. “Don’t think of what you’re being told as positive or negative,” he advised us. “It’s just information.” You’ll see what i mean by the next story. [Oh, and to prevent miscues—i’m not any martial artist. Any more than when as kids we played pickup football games in the park with much enthusiasm, that didn’t make us what everyone means by football players.]

When we look through the past as revolutionaries, there’s a natural tendency to focus on examples that verify our existing beliefs. This is a natural but really dangerous habit. For example: for many years i “knew” that Stalin and his damned commissars were responsible for losing the 1936–39 Spanish Civil War to the fascists. The stalinists’ violent repression of the anarchists and independent socialists there had stabbed the most militant center of the working class in the back, and thus fatally weakened the ground-breaking class war. i mean, not that i knew much or anything at all about Spanish history, but like so many others i had read George Orwell’s moving first-hand account of the war, *Homage to Catalonia*, and it all fit as neatly as a cherry on top of a banana split. A one-book education. i never questioned it.

By karma, back then i knew an older Maoist comrade who actually had been a young soldier with the International Brigades fighting in that Spanish Civil War. Thinking it strange that up to then we’d freely talked about our own confused 1960s movement politics, but he had never brought up his war experiences in Spain, one afternoon i asked him what he thought of Orwell’s book. My friend jumped to his feet and started cursing. He thought that Orwell was a dishonest asshole, and his self-serving version of the anti-fascist Civil War a fabric of clever novelistic half-truths and distortions. The way this older comrade described his war came from a completely different angle than any i’d thought of before then. It really took me aback.

He told me: “*In the field hospital I saw wounded die for nothing, freezing to death in the cold overnight without blankets, because someone had fucked up the supply list. Do you think Stalin had*

blankets withheld to increase his power?” My Maoist friend’s angry sarcasm had a sharp point: that the whole war was fucked. To him the two sides in Spain, fascist-clericalist versus liberal and left Republican, unfortunately were also the militarily competent versus the idealistic but not-yet competent. He said that all the revolutionaries, the socialists and communists no less than the anarchists, were stumbling around trying to learn how to build a new kind of society there for the first time with the clock running. While with the other hand also fighting a new type of total war against an advancing, experienced mercenary colonialist army, with plenty of guns, artillery and air squadrons.

To him this was a tragic loss in a far deeper way than abstractly our team versus their team. It was his experiences in Spain, my friend said, that made him an early Maoist sympathizer. Since it was a sign of real hope to him and his comrades in Spain that while their flickering progressive Republic was being inexorably crushed by the fascists, in remote regions of China that Red Army was solving the problem of survival in combat against even the largest capitalist armies. No small thing to my friend, after losing so badly, with more real life casualties he knew than he wanted to remember.

He also said that contrary to what Orwell wrote about, anarchism was a real military problem in Spain. To my surprise, he wasn’t talking about the Durruti Column or other legendary anarchist workers’ formations. He was talking about what he considered latent or basic anarchism within the International Brigades, which was stalinist, remember. Like most wars, that one was fought by the young, in many cases teenagers no older than fifteen or sixteen years old (the Canadian naturalist R.D. Lawrence had enlisted as a Spanish anti-fascist infantryman back then when he was only fourteen. He was so short that his rifle slung over the shoulder kept almost bumping the ground—but as he said, “*no one cared how old you were if you could shoot a gun.*”)

Whenever a fascist offensive somewhere would start, many of the eager young volunteers would spontaneously “desert to the Front.” Taking their rifle and hitching rides on supply trucks or trains to wherever the most intense fighting was. Abruptly leaving their own units short of soldiers. Training plans and readiness and new moves on its own front upset.

Since it is hard to successfully plan an overall war that way, “deserting to the Front” was quickly banned. Soldiers were talked to about revolutionary discipline, etc. etc. Nevertheless, just like with sex, when romanticism and adrenalin flood the heart, young dudes aren’t always thinking ahead to the larger picture. And the men who did this felt that no blame could be attached to any individual who decided to just go off more bravely by themselves into the fighting. Spontaneous soldiering just went on.

Finally, the commanders decided that a sobering line had to be drawn. The next time it happened, a pretty blameless but undisciplined young American revolutionary was selected for charges, court-martialed, and then executed by his own buddies. Their shooting was understandably bad and the condemned comrade was badly wounded, not cleanly killed. So their unit’s commissar (a young tough guy from Brooklyn, my comrade recalled) had to step up, draw his pistol and finish him. Then the commissar wrote the soldier’s parents a letter of condolence, saying that their son had died bravely fighting the fascists. But when their unit returned home, the working class stalinist commissar used his pistol once more and committed suicide. The whole thing was hushed up by the movement. Isn’t it always? (Yes, i know that there were probably a dozen better ways to handle that problem politically, not by coercive authority, but that’s the kind of thing many normally confused macho men did right then—or even now.)

Was that first-hand view all true, or just my friend stretching memories to defend the integrity of the revolutionary band of his youth? He had only one person’s experiences, but think he had an important part of the truth, anyway. i don’t know about the whole deal, but i do believe that the Moscow-directed repressing of so many of the most militant Spanish workers was textbook stalinist anti-revolutionary maneuver 101. So i’m definitely not going to want any stalinist anything around at the next revolution. But give us a break, that’s kind of like, duh. Maybe hot shit as an insight in 1929 or 1939, but pretty small change as a lesson about revolutionary organization now in the 21st century. We should have easily learned that a long time ago, and much, much more.

The question isn't whether the stalinists or the socialists or the anarchists were right or wrong or in what ways in the 1936–39 Spanish Civil War. That's one series of questions, but is that the *main* lesson we can learn from that past? In radical debates things can get pretty black and white awful fast, lots of tunnel vision, i think. But in the actual struggle with millions of real people freeing themselves, rushing around trying to do things they themselves have never seen before, there are always layers of reality. i mean, not just one true thing, but many true factors of varying meaning, shifting in time. To me what my older comrade said struck a note that went towards the practical heart of things.

Sometimes we can be technically right about something – and still miss the main point.

One very smart anarchist comrade that i told this to, about Spain, came back immediately with: “*No, it was the arms. The lack of arms. See, France and Britain wouldn't sell arms to us. And Stalin cut us off. He wouldn't give us enough arms.*” Actually, i've heard that line more than once as an explanation. Which only sounds reasonable until you start to think about it, in terms not of liberal “fairness” but of revolutionary organization. This is something my friend was obviously just repeating from someone else, not something he ever had to work out bit by bit for himself.

Let's see, the anarchists and independent socialists back then in Spain were saying that Stalin was running a bloodthirsty dictatorship which needed to be overthrown, with the stalinist sycophants and criminal bureaucrats needing to be put before workers courts and firing squads? And yet, they really expected that the *same* lumpen Joe Stalin was going to pour shiploads of weapons into *their* hands like the hip-hop Insane Santa Claus? How unreal was that as strategy? That's like some homeless dude sleeping rough under a bridge, but expecting every freezing night that Obama's limo will soon be pulling up to take him to his lush bedroom in the new mansion.

The problem in this kind of thinking goes deeper still than that. Whether the anti-capitalist forces in Spain didn't get enough arms because of Stalin or Wall Street conspiracies or because the boat was late, or whatever, the net practical effect was the same. That the progressive Republic was outgunned by the mercenary forces of General Franco and his eager German and Italian fascist mentors. Skip past the back story and get to where the rubber meets the road. Let's say that they were outgunned two to one, three to one, or even worse. So? What's the big deal? i mean, it's a nice-sounding *civilian* excuse, but it doesn't mean much in terms of revolutionary practice.

We revs are always way outgunned and outnumbered by the mercenary forces of the capitalist state, until the final stages of the struggle. In Old China way back then, the communist Red Army was outnumbered and outgunned more like five or ten to one, by both the rightist Chinese armies and the Japanese invaders, for many harsh years. True everywhere for anti-capitalist guerrillas, too, not just that particular Spain. It's not an excuse, it's just the usual violent environment of capitalist hegemony everywhere that we must to learn to survive in and grow in.

Everything we do, our tactics and strategies, our organizations and subcultures, all assume great imbalances in strength between us and the capitalist ruling class. Whether of mainstream propaganda, numbers, experience, money, guns, whatever. If it were only a contest of morality and justice, the capitalists would have been kicked out long ago. We all know all this, too. We just don't always absorb the full meaning.

The lesson that really strikes home to me from that experience back then was not only the brilliant courage of those people overturning backward oppressive society, but also our own lack of revolutionary development in the broadest sense. And tragically what it meant when we had to put it to the test in real life, in real time, with the lives of millions involved. Right now we are used to laughing at the incompetence of Big Capitalism, reeling from setback to setback, from Trump the Reality TV Government to their hopelessly lost but unbelievably lethal misadventures in the Muslim world.

But we conveniently forget how even this crumbling chunks-falling-off-of-it Big Capitalism has accumulated within its structures centuries of learning-by-experience knowledge of how to run society part by part their way. Too often, we think that criticizing them well is equal to having enough know-how to design up and successfully operate our own oppositional counter-cultures and societies. While in practice these two things are many miles apart.

Acknowledging that we anti-capitalist revolutionaries are only beginners, are in historical terms still a young culture, still just starting to learn how to build, is to me a healthy first step in better revolutionary organizations. (What we now know as industrial capitalism took 900 years, historians tell us, to evolve out into a dominant social system—oh, don't worry, my mom's a dangerously wild driver and we revs are going to take a much shorter route.)

One thing that i learned the last time around is never to expect evolution to just repeat itself. In the early 1960s, what was that era's old left and new left overlapped briefly, and the disarray was tragi-comical.

Still active veterans of the great 1930s industrial unionism battles in workplaces and factories, watched with bewilderment as 1960s kids staged small, really personal rallies in the middle of a campus, to support a fellow college student holding up and then burning his draft card. Reading aloud his own individual statement of rejecting the draft and the Vietnam War. And accepting soon going into federal prison. Meanwhile, we marched proudly out of Black communities, crossing borders now not as friends but as reluctant enemies, bitterly into the hate-filled euro-settler working class neighborhoods. The old left veterans from the 1930s were horror-stricken, since they had always believed in the revival of mass euro-settler industrial unionism as the central event in radical social change, like in their own idealistic youth way back when dinosaurs roamed the earth. We felt so sorry for them, because they didn't get it that our future would never look like them. We knew instinctively what Dylan was singing about: "*You don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?*"

But for everyone now, too, the fault lines have shifted once more. The passing of the old, euro-colonial economies and the thermal fusing of national imperialisms have been as tectonic plates, grinding deep underneath the earth. Reshaping the political surface into a surprising geography which brings the labor of massive Chinese and Mexican proletariats popping right up into every neighborhood. While the great archipelago of the New Afrikan major cities built up by accretion like coral reefs during the 20th century, is being physically pounded down and broken up, one after another. As New Afrikans of the "dangerous class" are forced to disperse, to keep moving, keep moving, once again. Many to the prison kamps of the u.s. empire's vast gulag, while others to the isolated suburban exile townships.

When we first took this path, when we joined our lives with the struggle, we were conscious of knowing so very little. One good reason we were so attracted to this revolutionary organization or that one. Not only to find rads we could run with, but to find mentors and a busy hive of experience we hoped to take cues from. *What never occurred to us is that those organizations might know next to nothing, too.*

Here's a cellphone snapshot that comes to mind: One of the liveliest cultural gate-crashers of the 1960s was the sudden popularity of Eastern philosophy and arts. Which was a lot more than the Beatles going to India to try out meditation. The most nitty-gritty among that being the craze for the Eastern martial arts. Even before Bruce Lee's great *Enter the Dragon*, young guys Black and Latino as well as Asian were haunting the cheap rerun movie theaters that showed the Hong Kong martial arts flicks. My dumpy baby sister became a changed teenager, as angular and menacing as the Praying Mantis forms she would train at day after day. All good.

This enthusiasm swept through revolutionary organizations and protest movements as well. Whether it was the desire to help protect our marches from street attacks by the white racists, or just the pull of wanting to be strong physically in the struggle, this was something everyone understood. It was a pretty pathetic new revolutionary organization which didn't have its martial arts class on the side. Or at least its favorite local dojo where its people tended to go. i knew it was really cresting when an enthusiastic white friend told me he had decided to join a rapidly growing local Marxist group, "because their karate class is so good! You should come and try it out!!"

You get the contradiction, the slightly crooked picture. On the one hand, we had so many young revolutionaries sworn to tear down the old American way of life, and most especially all the old left crap. Pushing forward with new radical organizations that were formed next to spontaneously, on the fly, shaped by the dynamite blast of the latest page in the struggle. Often more or less blessed only by a

quick papal reading of some “heavy” left text or another. It didn’t matter which one, really, since most of us hardly understood any of them.

But when it came to *serious* business, to being *personally* able to really fight, many of the same youth eagerly embraced the legendary training of Eastern martial arts. Which is more traditional and top-down in its teaching than death, with students in the dojo learning forms and sparring painstakingly developed and then tested over generations. Overseen and directed by the black-belt instructor, whose every decision was law on the class floor. Nothing spontaneous or doing whatever-new-you-felt-like there.

To me the double message was definitely signaling something. While youth were in revolt against old oppressive authority, we were hungry for authority in the other sense. For finding *empowering* knowledge that came from the doing. Learning from those who had actually done it and learned to do it well. Like, you wouldn’t want to learn plumbing from a person who read to you out of some textbook, but who themselves had never picked up a wrench or gotten shit all over themselves.

One thing was for sure. Since there were no already worked out blueprints for organizations back there and then, we had to borrow from incomplete old histories, from any dusty zombie organizations still stumbling about, and mostly from our own imaginations to improvise organizations best we could (pretending, naturally, that we knew much more than we did). To predictable good and not so good results: neat breakthroughs and equally mass running out of gas and abandoned cars scattered on the freeway.

There were hundreds of thousands of people improvising, trying on and remaking and breaking radical organizations of all kinds in the 1960s-70s New Left. From GI anti-war newspapers and off-base coffee shops to the usual mass protest coalitions owned by nationally famous ministers and charismatic male lumpen hustlers. There were countless local student radical groups running on the horizontal principle of “participatory democracy,” as well as at least one nationwide underground of thousands also trying to grow itself by spreading “participatory democracy” local groups well into armed struggle. There were study groups and informal self-defense circles everywhere, way too many to ever keep track of.

There were socialists replacing their college dormitories with a “party” form in which they rented large apartments together in inner city neighborhoods, functioning as community activists together while using their group homes as busy political theory schools. And always there were new seemingly spontaneous grassroots direct actions happening. From mass walkouts closing entire city public school systems (covertly guided in at least one major city by New Afrikan revolutionary nationalist cells quietly working with major youth “gangs”) to the “leaderless resistance” of one hundred anti-war firebombings of Bank of America branches by primarily white youth in California, to the many lumpen militant street organizations. To say nothing of the background murmur of various Old Left “parties” or their copycats trying to carry on traditional euro-agendas.

[It goes *almost* without saying that a disproportionate number of the most dramatic breakthroughs in the 1950s-70s here came from the u.s. empire’s inner colonies—called the ghetto, inner city, rez, barrios or comunidad.]

Looking back, the rich diversity of mass organizational experience was too large to easily describe. Little of which was analyzed or passed on as learning experiences. That’s how disorganized and uneducated we were, despite the university intellectuals who composed much of the movement’s leadership. Hope comrades doing lift-off now do much better at that.

Here’s a thought to share: People sometimes talk about revolutionary organizations as if they were all varieties of one thing, like different gasoline engines to drop under the hood of your same compact car. V6 or straight 4? Which they aren’t. There are broadly two very different types of what we mean when we say “revolutionary organizations.” The most familiar is like the small left collective or intellectual journal or zine. Sometimes in the outward form of a local anti-war group or whatever. Like an antifa group or like one of the “parties” keeping alive the flicker of someone’s ideas. Or it could be the local radical caucuses in the teachers union. And so on.

These are what we are used to seeing sprouting here in the garden of the imperialist metropolis. In other words, meaning “revolutionary organization” as an *organization of revolutionaries*, promoting anti-capitalist ideas and activity. To help people survive or reinforce protest movements. Usually pretty public and acting more or less legally or with official tolerance, since why not? Such organizations are by their nature transitory, and any one will probably be long gone by the time capitalism is overthrown. There is nothing wrong with this, obviously.

That’s *not* an organization that actually makes a revolution itself, though. Overthrowing the old society and its state. While there have been many Marxist “parties” here (put this in quotes because they are free to call themselves anything they like, but most here haven’t met the real definition of a party) claiming that they were going to carry on and on forever until someday they would overthrow capitalism, revs can safely assume that this stuff is largely delusional.

The other kind of revolutionary organization is simply, directly that. Engaged to actually *make* the revolution against capitalism and its state. To carry out revolutionary transfer of power. These organizations are by their fundamental nature illegal and usually clandestine instruments of warfare. Always popping up from the lower depths, always being repressed and hunted. They are widely present though with different results in the developing neo-colonial periphery, from Mexico to India, but real examples are scarce here in the imperialist metropolis, for obvious reasons, except among the oppressed neo-colonies. Don’t think i need to explain that.

One thought that keeps coming up in every generation, is to narrow the gap between these two kinds of organizations. Exploring just how much terrain, of what kinds, revolutionaries could take over and remake now in daily life in the structures of capitalist society?

Like all complex mechanisms, like a hospital emergency room or a tank brigade, *actual* revolutionary organizations are super high maintenance. If you’ve never been in one, know that they are a big pain in the ass to keep going. They are also obviously highly dangerous, more dangerous than sex work is or a contract firefighting crew is, or being a clueless u.s. army private somewhere. For sure. So they had better be worth it.

In this violent capitalist end zone of unlimited war and repression, the question of organization suddenly becomes drastically changed for us. Because there you cannot be an individual revolutionary in any meaningful sense. There a lone revolutionary is like being a lone firefighter. You can be as good as you can be, but you are outclassed in the scale of events. Then it is only complex revolutionary organization that lets our full political thoughts and intentions become sails full of reality. This is often lost right now in the garden of the imperial metropolis, where middle-class people so easily deceive themselves that agreeing with this radical idea or that one, makes you a revolutionary. No, it only makes you someone who likes ideas. (And as that lesbian philosopher once said: “Theories are like assholes, everybody has one.”)

This has just been an initial re-examination; a walking over of the uneven ground that structures might be built on. There are obviously tons of critical stuff, most things, really, on anti-capitalist organization that i never got around to here. So take this as a restart button. A beginner’s mind isn’t a bad thing to have.

END

45. The Shape of Things to Come

Author: J. Sakai

Date: August 2023

Source: “The Shape of Things to Come: Selected Writings And Interviews” by J. Sakai, published by Kersplebedeb (ISBN: 9781989701218)

Topics: Marxism, anti-imperialism, history, criticism and critique, world-systems theory

Notes: Includes Part I and II of the interview from 2020 and 2022, title is the same as the collection it was published in. Footnotes adapted from “Marginalized Notes / Monday Nov. 28, 2022” by J. Sakai

Deleted Reason: Not anarchist. If I recall correctly, we mean to exclude J. Sakai from the library.

Part 1 (An Interview with J. Sakai, conducted from mid-2020)

Kersplebedeb: We've got a lot to discuss! But maybe first some context: Your work is grounded in Marxism, you clearly have some special affection for Mao, and at the same time you have been accused of being an anarchist (amongst other things); how should younger radicals today approach these legacies of politics from the 19th and 20th centuries? What pitfalls should they be looking out for?

J. Sakai: Questions of how to handle inherited ideologies and politics are important now, as a new generation of revs comes onto the torn-up chaos landscape that is our 21st century. It's not so easy to understand as it's supposed to be. And it really is a deeper matter than if you've just joined team New Green Deal or team social democrat. As a whole, hard-won pieces of knowledge that revs put together in past tides of struggle to scrawl out a strategic map, and then hopefully a tactical guide however tentative, are valuable. Thought-provoking, with interesting hints, both positive and negative, of what was really thought about, really tried. Yet are always being erased and forgotten, because they were never written in permanent ink in the first place. No more than we ourselves can be. Were always just for right then, though women and men never thought so. Are always receding deeper into memory, as generations and the world itself turn.

Even if saved in some unchristian holy text, they can only become gradually distant from their once sensuous context of immediate life-and-death class struggle, and thus are often now too faded to be easily read. That previous scientific knowledge, that theory and practice, is so precious for us precisely because it keeps disappearing and has to be constantly repatterned and stitched together all over again.

Every new generation must learn to apply revolutionary science themselves, rediscovering fire all over again. Which is why the scraps of basic scientific theory we can hold onto against the tidal pull are so practically important. And, yas, those pitfalls ...

Knowledge isn't something academic or abstract and made only by some intellectual elite. Michael Reinhoehl died all alone at night in Lacey, Washington, not knowing how to give himself a chance to stay alive against a right-wing u.s. government assassination squad. Yet the revolutionary movement right here has had extensive, painfully learned practical knowledge in living memory on just this bitter-toswallow situation. But it was scattered and lost to him as though it never had been.

i believe that revolutionaries have to take studying and using theory very seriously, the good and the bad of it. On the deepest level, we all need theory to help give understandable order to the waves of disparate cries and mass explosions streaming across our receivers.

But if revolutionary theory can be an invaluable tool, that doesn't mean that any given practitioner using the tool knows what they are doing. That's two very different things. The best roller chest of chrome Snap-On tools is no help if the mechanic working on your car has only an uncertain idea of what the problem is. Or is just faking it, which is infuriating but happens. Left theorists aren't any more scientific than auto mechanics, you know.

Maybe it would be good to see how that "ideas side" of our struggle has worked here. Or hasn't, because failed left theory isn't rare, either. This is a hard vagabond science to capture in a bottle. It humbles you—or it had better.

An obvious example—one which i have devoted much of my own work to examining—would be the critical question of the class nature of this type of metropolitan capitalist society, our "America," and its settler colonial working class as the once-expected big agent of revolutionary change. Or not so.

Through many lifetimes, the main u.s. left here used to always take pride in the white male industrial working class. Which until very recently they had for whatever reason theoretically positioned inside their class strategy as the largest and most important component of the “united multinational working class” in the u.s.a., or some such abstract formulation.

The majority of white workers were always supposed to be busy gaining consciousness of hypothetical basic class solidarity with their Black and Brown brothers and sisters, and with solid trade union work any old racist rust on them would soon be cleansed away. Or so it was always said by the organized left with their “power of positive thinking” theories. Any day now, the working class would be finally unified under its good white male leaders, and would brush aside “prejudice” of all kinds and overthrow the most powerful capitalist empire in the world—or so their useless white left class theory confidently predicted, generation after generation, century after century. But now time has run out. Their clock itself is dead.

It was in its own way a beautiful picture, though, the soothing lullaby a loyal left made up of the privileged could become very fond of, even addicted to.

Generation after generation, the most respected white left intellectuals across the spectrum, however they differed ideologically, echoed this one “revolutionary” class theory. Whether it was the marxist-leninist Herbert Aptheker, the social democrat Michael Harrington, or the 1960s New Left socialist Howard Zinn. The only problem was that this most fundamental class theory of theirs wasn’t in the least bit true. It was a massive fiction, and a corrupt fiction at that. The “internationalism” of revolutionary anti-capitalism’s 19th-century founders was only used as a cardboard shield here to hide corrupt oppressor politics.

We know it for a scientific fact, since in 400 years the euro-settler working class has never yet reached a revolutionary thing, and now as a lesser class never will. Much less ever stopped hating New Afrikan, Indigenous, Brown, and Asian workers. Did those respected left theorists forget to tell us that this piece of “Marxist” theory would only work for us once we all died and went to Left heaven?

And now, with the inevitable spread of technology and production overseas, and advanced mechanization at home, the white male working class here is shrinking and desiccating into a distorted husk of its former self. It will never carry out that crackpot white left theory of being anyone’s main revolutionary army. Except for our enemy’s, perhaps.

It isn’t that these popular but badly askew marxist theorists were villains. There are good reasons why they were so respected. Herbert Aptheker’s early 20th-century historical work on enslaved revolts was ground-breaking. Mike Harrington foresaw a time when his kind of “democratic socialism” could be a mainstream position for new state reforms to help the very poor. Howard Zinn was a passionate participant in the early anti-Segregation Sit-In protests of the 1960s South, willing to risk his university teaching career in them.

The total misreading of the class nature of the majority of white workers here persisted in the organized left, generation after generation, A to Z, from Communists to anarchists. It can hardly be the individual fault of this single theorist or that one.

The anti-capitalist left in the u.s. empire, started by radical emigrants and left exiles in the 19th century, carried the germ of a completely mistaken idea about the nature of Project America. That new “America” could be a fresh “democratic” society, constructed on an empty stage without any nasty feudal hangovers as in Old Europe. “Democratic” and white from the ground up, they hoped. They didn’t get it that this brand-new militarized society with a continent-wide swagger larger than all the nations of Old Europe, was a settler colonial capitalism. A conquest and genocide and occupation society from day one, born to be an “infant empire” for capitalism, as one of the early right-wing white militia leaders named George Washington admitted.

Reading today’s headlines, it is hard to really grasp how much the young revolutionaries who founded the anti-capitalist Left in 19th-century still-feudal-tinged Europe saw Project America as the hopeful dawn of a democratic future. Karl Marx himself remarked as a matter of fact that “America” was “the most democratic of nations.” (He also observed presciently that its 1776 white power settler revolution

marked the “rise of the middle classes.”) The young blazing rebel against Czarist despotism and serfdom, future anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, angrily denounced the Confederate States rebellion against the Union, because “they nearly overthrew and destroyed the finest political organization that ever existed in history.” (Both Bakunin and Marx always added that the blot of New Afrikan slavery had to be abolished, which they both felt it soon would be.)

Remember that the pioneering anti-capitalist radicals like Proudhon, Marx, Engels, and Bakunin weren’t making revolution against the developed capitalism we are so accustomed to. They were part of youthful democratic uprisings against lingering feudalism and its oppressive structures— with democratic capitalist factions as the wavering allies of the new and radicalized urban working class.

Feudalism wasn’t just another word for kings and dictatorship. It was a society owned by the landed hereditary aristocracy, with their own twisted class structure and rigidly hierarchical culture. Young Bakunin had wanted to be a reforming educator but placed too low in the examinations to win a position in the Russian state civil service. As a male member of a minor elite family, he was pledged from birth to compulsory service to his ultimate lord, the Czar. So would-be teacher Bakunin soon found himself in a stiff woolen uniform training for lifelong service ... as an artillery officer, of all things. To the angry Bakunin, that was just a higher rank of serf or indentured servant.

Later in life, when he escaped Siberian penal exile, crossed the Pacific, and landed on the West Coast of “America” on his long way back to Europe, he became famous here. An escaped pro-democracy turn-coat Imperial Russian army officer was quite new and glamorous to the literate white public. Bakunin himself was thrilled to be here, where unlike in the Russian Empire any white man could rewrite his identity and status, making his way freely living and working wherever he willed across the conquered continent. Making his own destiny, as settlers just love to say.

In Boston he reunited with his old comrade Louis Agassiz, who had taken part in the German revolution with him in 1848, when Bakunin had been more or less drafted to lead the brave but hopeless military defense of the liberated city of Dresden against the might of the Prussian army. (Marx and Engels and most of young rebellious Europe praised his fight. As did the famed composer Richard Wagner, who supported the democratic revolution, and had to go with the leaders into exile for many years when the end came crashing down.) Agassiz hosted Bakunin in Boston, and helped promote his cause of opposition to Czarist autocracy. Agassiz doubtless was an influence in radical Bakunin’s even filling out an initial application for u.s. citizenship.¹

Of course, Louis Agassiz was equally famous here himself, as the founder of Harvard’s department of anthropology, and one of this u.s. empire’s foremost early pseudo-scientific “experts” on human races. After the Civil War, he helped justify white public opposition to human rights for New Afrikans. They should have recognized non-enslaved status, but without voting or political rights of any kind ever, Agassiz testified before Congress. Since they were by their basic nature as a race, he said, too “subservient” and inferior to be trusted with any weapon of power in a white man’s society. Just like women, some manly white men in the debate pointed out negatively. Even way back then abolitionists raised a storm of protest to this kind of Hate ideology.

Right now at Harvard today, Black Lives Matter wants to finally take his dead white name off their anthropology department door. It all comes ’round. To say that the original founders of left European anti-capitalism, whose contributions were great, and their exiles and political explorers over here, were also to a conscious degree eurocentric, is only to say the obvious.

¹ Mikhail Bakunin was obviously an important revolutionary figure in starting revolutionary anti-capitalism, and although much maligned and dismissed by Marx and Engels in a way that wasn’t truthful, he did lead a life much of which sounds like it was from an adventure novel. Wanted to list and comment on where i had found my facts about his life, so i went back to the suburban public library where i had found and read three biographies of the Russian revolutionary—only to find that all were now unavailable. Asking about them, i was told unofficially by one library worker after a computer search that all three were really missing, had probably been stolen. Wasn’t that just like something that would happen to the footloose rebel? And, no, i was told, they were not being replaced, because that was futile since some kinds of books were just always being stolen. Hmm, not sure if that is a good thing or a bad thing, but it is frustrating.

In *Settlers*, i tried to quickly skip trace the genetic roots of where the left's disastrously out-of-the-ballpark class romance with the euro-settler working class here came from. Primarily to show that it's not a question of individual error, but of understanding that a settler colonial occupation society is not going to create working classes out of itself to fill the roles required in times of revolutionary crisis and change. They are if anything reactionary classes, fulfilling if anything a rearguard and counter-revolutionary role as they demand more and more subsidies.

Thus did "America" in real life foreshadow and be the later conscious model for both Hitler's early 20th-century European fascism and today's trend of traditional industrial classes in the imperial Western metropolis skewing sideways off the turnpike towards far-rightist political movements. Often glibly labeled in the media as "populist nationalism versus globalization." Which is too shallow to be actually true.

Kersplebedeb: We're getting near the end of 2020—it has been quite the year, with the biggest u.s. uprising in my lifetime, and now a chaotic whirlwind of activity and flux, on our side and our enemies'—what do you make of the current situation?

J. Sakai: Think we can scarcely miss what is happening, that right now we live at some turning point. Here the American white right is coming together in now less and less concealed shape, as the popular movement for violent settler colonial rule. To refurbish the lumpy furniture of the white past as our future. While the Trump White House reaches out to become a populist white dictatorship. Just as new George Floyd protests sweep the continent and beyond, city by city, using the name "BLM" or no name at all— simply intense anonymous anger and resistance, pushing angrily back against the lifelong pressure of police terrorism. Marches sometimes edging into night-time crowd attacks on state centers and bourgeois symbols. Contradictions central to actually existing capitalism are growing only sharper, more unresolvable.

Strikingly unlike the 1960s, when whites took part in nonviolent civil rights actions but not in violent so-called "ghetto riots," now even government buildings have been attacked and cops physically confronted with heavy white participation. A future left is starting to stir, different in its own right from all that which went before. In the 1980s–90s transition between old and new, for the first time the public demonstrations of violent u.s. white supremacist groups were physically challenged not just passively accepted, with young anarchists leading the way for everyone. All the time complaining that they were against all leaders. (A resistance culture here in Babylon needs a sense of radical humor.) And now that moment has gone into the possible future.

And at the same time, more and more "Americans" want some version of a social democratic welfare state, desperately hoping that this imperial way of life can be preserved for them in amber.

We can all get it, that everything has somehow changed in this moment. What's difficult is to comprehend it fully. To catch the inner nature and direction of this transformation as it unfolds.

In the past, some revolutionaries asked, "Can capitalism even survive without colonialism?" Now, in this year 2020, on this terrain, the big answer seems to be clearly "no." We should take this seriously, because the ramifications are perhaps beyond our present imagining.

Not content to just accept his shock award as imperial president, Trump has had to spend four years openly talking, scheming, and precariously inching towards a euro-settler dictatorship. Whether he ever wins Civil War 2 or ends his days in pathetic exile somewhere as the Bonnie Prince Charlie of white races past, Trump has had to tap the one superpower available to him: coming out as the acid hatemoutherd champion of the white race. Promising a return to the good old days of "great" uncompromised white settler colonial ownership of their "America" and all within it. As a perverted papal celebration of his commitment to White Power, Trump has repeatedly taken within his palms the bloody hands of the far right, the neo-fascists; just as the Republican Party itself has done for many years in stealth seg mode, at the inconspicuous grassroots local, district, and county levels.

Again—whether he wins or loses elections, lives or dies— the jinni is finally out of the bottle. Smallville may look the same, but nothing is the same.

After two generations of state-paraded “civil rights” and “equal opportunity” and “integration,” the white majority has spoken—it has experienced more “civil rights” than it thought it would ever see, and has come to the conclusion that it wants Hate. It wants White Power and an impossible return to the life of the post-WW2 u.s. empire at its zenith. Many settler men now want a return to full seg, everything short of chattel slavery. With women as largely servers and reproducers of whiteness; with New Afrikans, Latinos, Indigenous, and Asians recolonized and mostly out of white sight. And only a leader who utters Hate, who calls for mocking and attacking other peoples as less than human, can really satisfy their reality show now, after bitter years of white body blows and white diminishment.

None of his many blunders and lies and nazi-ish hints have cost Trump his core support of something close to a majority of the euro-settler population—especially concentrated among small business owners and those blue collar workers. Again, win or lose, it’s a fact he’s as popular in the polls with white voters as John F. Kennedy was when he ran for president. After all, if you feel that your superior-but-besieged race is in desperate circumstances, and you only have one superpower champion, you’ll rush to defend him all the more when he stumbles.

The other part of North America’s neo-colonial contradiction unfolding relentlessly this year was the great tidal wave of Black Lives Matter-labeled protests and campaigns. But how different from the now-classic 1960s rebellions these have been—and in so many ways, both positive and problematic. How right from the start the class contradictions came forward, where the now decaying term “civil rights” no longer has any positive meaning for anyone. But only stands for opposing lies, where both white and Black “Americans” pretend to believe there is some future within sight where they are not enemies.

One part has been the heightened leadership role of New Afrikan women. Starting from the original Ferguson protests in 2014, where inexperienced young Black lesbians were central to the organizing, young leadership and queer leadership has come out. The same new leadership also has more problematic sides, as all things do, much more than just the DeRay McKesson model (which was like my father’s Oldsmobile). We’ve watched the living dead—only they don’t know it themselves—emerge both from the hustle and from professional NGO managers and would-be liberal politicians. By odd coincidence, Black zombies are currently “in” with filmmakers.

As usual, the real changes, the long-range mass transformations, are occurring below the choppy policed surface. Whole cities are packing up and moving. Last year, an acquaintance who casually takes in various New Afrikan women’s talk sites remarked to me that the No. 1 subject right then was “Race War”—and that there was both lots of agreement and lots of disagreement, contradictory as that may sound. People are arming up individually, person by person, in an incoming tide, but seem also not finished yet working out what that means.

Also flaring at the edge of vision has been the role of a determined minority of white women in the protest wave. What was particularly visible was their role in less promising places to organize. In the white suburbs and small towns, and even in some klan-friendly white big city neighborhoods. There were over ten demonstrations in predominantly white Chicago suburbs last summer, not just in the city. Mostly small and organized by young white women who were new to this all. In Western Springs, a high school junior organized a demonstration and march through town; fists held high by other young white women her age, a small but brave group declaring to locally “amplify the voices” of the big city Black marches that seemed so far away.

This chemical reaction isn’t a new thing. As every other time that there has been a major wave of Black struggle in the u.s. empire’s long history, a white women’s struggle has taken up its own feminist politics in a synchronous wave, standing ambivalently next to the light of Black Freedom Now. Because many know that every step ahead for the white far right will produce more and more patriarchal ownership over their own bodies and their own futures. The enemy who wants to gradually reintroduce full colonialism always has to include “their own” women and children. Because women have always secretly been the “first colony.”

This isn't only a homebrewed political war of the settler colonial white right versus today's sudden broad liberal democratic coalition, which involuntarily includes the handcuffed left whether anybody likes it or not. This is that, but is also much larger than that.

Both sides know that we are somehow parts of larger global forces which are clashing all over. In a way somewhat like a World War. Maybe that's what we will become.

The largest transnational corporations and capitalist structural institutions are now also present in our backyards. Signaling away, if only in meaningless hand gestures, their "support" for the BLM protests, and implicitly disavowing anyone's right-wing nationalism. Maneuvering to protect the new world-wide culture of cosmopolitan multiculturalism so necessary for the transnational corporations and financiers working in orbit high above our now-parochial passport nations and politics.

On one level, the tsunami panic of transnational capitalists' attempted simultaneous clumsy warding off of and cooptation of BLM had an instant unpleasant taste all its own. Hilarious mixed with ominous. From the cover of Vogue magazine to the FedEx corporation to Netflix. While Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg declaimed in a preposterous lie, "We stand with the Black community"; just as Amazon improbably posted a "Black Lives Matter" banner on its home page. The CEO of Coca-Cola said that, "Companies like ours must speak up as allies to the Black Lives Matter movement," while Sprite, which has campaigned to be the soft drink of the world hip hop subculture, announced its "Give Back" program to hand out \$300 million to the New Afrikan community. Reconditioned Democratic Party politicians in flocks and all manner of white executives from coast to coast selfied themselves wearing Black Lives Matter t-shirts. And this was a long hesitant minute after the historic Ford and Carnegie Foundations' announcement that they were pledging to raise \$100 million for perpetually unspecified Black Lives Matter bribes ... oops, sorry, i mean "activities." Personally, i am waiting for the u.s. army to roll out a new Black Lives Matter heavy tank.

Kersplebedeb: Settlers and your work on this question have been attacked in questionable terms like "racist," "defeatist," "dishonest." Not to mention the truly hallucinatory crackpot dismissals circulating, and the weird role this plays as a negative symbol for various flavors of racist white revanchism. Do you think that the significant white vote—including of the white working class—for Trump will temper such bullshit in left circles?

J. Sakai: That would be nice, but i doubt it. Our settler colonialism is not mainly about some crude distant past that now can be taken for granted as a done deal, as is always implied. It can't be dealt with superficially as only some historified "moral debt," in unequal exchange for an unchanging settler colonial totalitarianism of the land. Settler colonialism here is about our very present conflicted lives and about the unseen future hurtling blindly towards us.

This theoretical controversy over the euro-settler working class, which the white elite-centered left always tried to ignore, dodge, or suppress, particularly since Settlers appeared in 1983, is in one sense now resolved. Now everything factually is crystal clear. (Not that the multitude of left political trolls and bare-ass preachers will stop yelling insults and complete nonsense, since that is all that they have left to do.)

A hidden aspect of this question is that it isn't about the euro-settler working class and its left apologists not being revolutionary enough. That it isn't about the euro-settler left trying to do radical class struggle but falling short. The nature of classes isn't about aspirational metrics of improvement, as in Oprah losing weight or Biden hoping to become more presidential than Obama. It's about the fundamental nature of a class and where it finds itself on the firing line of the actually existing class war.

How can any of this be a surprise, unless you stepped into the pitfall of this false working class theory and were completely detached from "America's" everyday reality? That as we talk a real majority of the settler colonial working class here in the 21st century are wearing red caps actual or metaphorical, but not with Lenin's baseball team logo. Voting for far-right hate with worn-out but actually true excuses of forcing "America" into being what it used to be all over again. Even willing to be bloody "deer" hunting buddies with fascism. Which says a lot today.

The euro-settler working class here never hesitated to join the Slave Patrols of the Old South, or their 1776 Revolutionary War counterpart in New England, the white patriotic Committees of Correspondence (which patrolled the night roads to capture and execute New Afrikans trying to escape Northern euro-settler enslavement by reaching the desperate sanctuary of British military lines). Or ever fought against people joining in the local settler colonial men's gangs and militias to raid and rape and loot and try to kill Indigenous people. The euro-settler working class supported every capitalist war of conquest and expansion, from the startup settler invasion colonies to u.s. imperialism raising itself high above the rest of the capitalist world as the temporary "lone superpower" with military boots of crumbling clay.

The historic u.s. left was always a house built on a foundation of shifting bone fragments and sand, always divided against itself. Trying to live out our beautiful revolutionary dream of replacing the violent exploitation of capitalism with a liberated world which would freely give "to each according to their needs." But at the same moment a settler left that never was willing to face how half-corrupted it was. With taking as the "normal" their lives in and loyalty to a privileged oppressor society, however up or down one's individual lot. This had ramifications so severe that it determined everything.

The established left here, whether communist, socialist, or anarchist, has always fought against being exposed as fronting for settler colonial domination. It is always being implied by them that real change is dependent on winning over the majority. Which happens to mean a pro-settler white majority here, to no surprise.

Anti-war anti-imperialism, Black Power, Indigenous land and treaty rights, Chicano power, counter-culture youth liberation, radical feminism, gay and queer rights—all the great breakouts that came out of that historic '60s wave were very much minority rebellions far outside the boundaries of majority approval. None of them approved of yet, to tell the truth. Coming from the margins and not the center. Ignored or subtly opposed by the dominant u.s. left of that day as too disruptive, too upsetting, too diversionary to the supposedly main task of building a working-class white majority.

Kersplebedeb: I remember you wrote as much—about change coming from the margins, not the bribed majority—in the interview "When Race Burns Class." When i first read you explaining that, it was incredibly encouraging, and that idea has stayed with me over the years. Can you give some concrete examples of how this has played out in your lifetime?

J. Sakai: So, one of the spontaneous white shifts of the 1960s was of a sex quietly leaving the left youth movement; here and there, by the ones and twos, hardly noticed at first. Like the earliest trickling in of a tide.

In one of her frank memoirs, the left intellectual Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz relates about her life in the first radical feminist women's collective, Cell 16 in Boston. In 1969 she went on a road trip with a close male anti-war comrade, who was on a speaking tour of the GI coffeeshops which the movement had started in Southern military base towns. Financing their organizing tour by selling "women's lib" Cell 16 literature they had piled into the back of their VW "bug" as they went.

Her plan was that while her male comrade would be the official speaker, she would try to informally follow him with an unscheduled talk on the politics of women's liberation. It had to be kind of improvised, because anything like women's liberation was strongly opposed in the actual existing left then.

It seemed to start off okay. At one base the coffeeshop filled with an audience of soldiers that was half Latino and Black, which was definitely unusual for anti-war meetings then, and was promising. After one GI half-jokingly asked, "Do we get free pussy if we desert?"—pointing to a then-popular white anti-war poster on the wall, which read "Girls Say Yas To Boys Who Say No"—the male speaker quickly called on Dunbar-Ortiz to answer.

Standing up and turning around from her seat in the audience, she gave it to them straight.

"I said to them that underlying support for the war was institutionalized patriarchy, wherein men were told that they must fight to prove their manhood and that if they didn't change their consciousness about their attitudes towards women, they were supporting the war just

as if they were there fighting. I told them that women wanted to be free and equal and not just mothers or sex objects, angels or whores.”

“The room fell silent as I spoke in my barely audible voice. When I finished the GIs applauded.”

Much more important to her was the discussion the audience had about what she said. “... I had never before heard a group of men seriously discussing male supremacy. I was struck by the irony that these young men—black, white, Latino—from poor, rural, and blue-collar backgrounds were more open to women’s liberation than the middle- and upper-class men in the anti-war movement.” Where it was commonplace for women trying to raise this question to be shouted down, often shunned, or forced out, even with threats of personal violence.

(Everyone back then, including the white explicitly pacifist “peace movement” and mostly Black non-violent civil rights groups, silently condoned movement men hitting “their” women, since that was dismissed as merely “personal problems.” It was surreal back then going into a left office in New York, and noticing that the receptionist’s face was heavy with makeup inadequately covering the bruises—knowing also that her husband was one of the most important protest leaders in “America.” Just as rape between “comrades” was banned as a subject except for private gossip. All dismissed merely as common human failings irrelevant to the struggle for liberation, or as something “nothing can be done about,” to be hushed up to save the movement from police intervention and embarrassment.)

Next, Dunbar-Ortiz and her friend went on to one of the main bases training new army recruits just before they shipped out to Vietnam. But at that GI coffeehouse they ran head-first into a stone wall: the director, a strong woman with a record of civil rights and anti-war views going back to high school. “Nobody is going to talk to my boys about women’s lib,” she insisted. And hours of arguments didn’t change her mind. “So we left,” Dunbar-Ortiz recalls. But a year later, she adds, that stubborn woman would herself leave to become “a full-time women’s liberation organizer in the South.”²

That’s what was slowly happening all over the left with many of the most committed women. Starting with handfuls of white women who had caught the spark from working in the Southern civil rights movement daring to oppose the Klan, radicalized white women were raising the question of their own restricted humanity. Even within the very movements putting forth new demands for freedom and justice.

Women had been quietly writing letters and papers about these ideas and sending them to friends, who sent them on into widening circles. In 1968 the first white women’s separatist position paper appeared, *Towards a Female Liberation Movement*. Men themselves were being named as the enemy, the sinew and material realization of patriarchy, while women started study groups and consciousness raising groups, women’s houses and women’s projects outside familiarity and law. This is the well-known and often-told history of a rising which threatened to change absolutely everything, and yet could not grow to fruition within the structures of the modern patriarchal neo-colonialism that eventually reinfected and contained it.

The point here is that to start together for root change, to shake themselves loose to go for liberation from age-old oppression, those women had to get free of their actually existing male left. Had to distance their activities and especially their own women’s decision-making. Whether it was the Old Left of marxist parties and small sects, or the New Left of the mass sprawling Students for a Democratic Society and campus-centered anti-war and civil rights struggles, they had to leave. As New Afrikans, Indigenous peoples, Latinos, and other colonially oppressed people had largely left before them.

² Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. *Outlaw Woman. A Memoir of the War Years, 1960–1975*. City Lights Books, 2001. Pages 198–200. Incidentally, during the anti-Vietnam War struggle days i had met both women involved in that political clash of wills at that GI coffeeshop, and had even worked with one. Both were respected in the movement then, and i recall hearing on the anti-war grapevine about their disagreement at that Army base town—and how the one later came out and crossed over to women’s liberation work. So Dunbar-Ortiz wasn’t just making up that great story.

Fairly openly, rebellious white women were students whose teacher was the constantly transforming Black liberation struggle. White women confronting their own oppression couldn't learn beyond a certain point from their own established settler left, even with all its century of accumulated anti-capitalist theory and teachings. Because that left was itself so corrupted and represented too much of the oppressor mentality that women coming into their own selves had to exclude in order to be free to punch out without reservations. The oppressed learn their most basic lessons from other oppressed. What is more simple to understand than that for revolutionaries?

Kersplebedeb: Indeed! But i want to stop for a moment: Going back to what you were saying about Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and her talk at that anti-war GI coffeeshop. How the GIs—"black, white, Latino—from poor, rural, and bluecollar backgrounds"—were questioning politics together. Weren't young white workers also doing that?

J. Sakai: Sure, but nowhere near enough of them. There were great moments in the 1960s–70s, like sudden lightning strikes and sheets of rain politically, when the longanticipated political and cultural rebellion turning old imperialist "America" upside down and inside out was being embraced by so many people from every area of society. And yas, for some mostly young white working-class people to turn towards left politics was one real but small stream in that torrent.

i'll never forget anti-war white working-class comrades like young Ed B., a German-American u.s. Marine veteran, a father and a new union construction worker, sitting-in and going to jail with young Black teenagers. Putting his life into their struggle. Nor the militant GI using the pseudonym "Joe Smith," in the "F—ked Up Fourth" in Vietnam.

Or much more famously, Peggy Terry, who ran for Vice-President with Eldridge Cleaver from the Black Panther Party on the Peace & Freedom Party protest ticket in the 1968 elections (and who never left the poor working-class hillbilly community she came from). Whether Cleaver's leap into electioneering was a good or bad move (it was heavily criticized then by many Panther Party members, for serious reasons), Terry was trying to follow Black revolutionaries into a new wider breakout of the struggle. She used to say that she first started figuring out about racism when the Ku Klux Klan showed up to try and terrorize her and other workers when they were organizing a union in their Southern factory.

It's important not to romanticize all that, though, or to take it out of its material context in the class war. When cautiously edging into the middle-class and upper-class left, white working-class men and women could be like pepper in the mix. But later, going back to the euro-settler communities and backgrounds they came from, they were too thin and incomplete a layer to have the same influence then in the mass.

They had also—and this is critical to understand—been politically abandoned by the middle-class and upper-class u.s. left. Mis-taught that the big revolutionary change would finally come when their white working-class majority soon joined us—and then they were left to go back into their conservative settler communities they knew were not going to do anything like that. It wasn't malice or anything deliberate. That '60s young student left that had spontaneously created itself into a mass dissident subculture didn't know any better. No one had anything better than the worn-out old failed theory about the "united working class" or similar such reformist garbage. There's a big price we pay in the real world, as revs, for corrupted revolutionary theory.

But they left their mark, all of them, though we don't see it.

Kersplebedeb: So much seems to have changed since that time. For one, just the idea of that level of sympathetic organizing within the u.s. military ...

J. Sakai: Indeed. While the lingering public impression of military service is still one of poorly paid enlistees from lower working-class and rural backgrounds taking risks for little reward, like in an old Hollywood movie, the reality is that u.s. imperialism's military is now qualitatively different.

Regrown from gene-altered DNA, the u.s. military today is primarily their world mercenary corps. Today there's no universal draft, which turned out to be a two-edged sword for us, too. Instead, they have an all-volunteer, more selective military that tries to be an elite mercenary global intervention force.

With special exotic superhero fighting units which are noticeably advertised as almost completely euro-settler in composition. With layers of technology and a shiftier role with which they hope to distance their very costly u.s. soldiers from the point of the spear.

Now you might join the imperialist military to live out single-shooter video games, but more often it's still to try hands-on, paid while you get an education and a new career. Sure, there's many young GI households living by payday loans and food stamps, or being ripped off by a car dealer in the neon McRetail strips outside bases—but then again, that's just blue collar life in “America.”

Things have changed from that old movie cliché, however. 21st-century u.s. military recruits don't primarily come from the white working class anymore; the majority are now from the middle classes. And there's a parallel trend: men and women from what are now termed “national security families” tend increasingly to marry persons of the same background, who understand each other's special values and service careers, not “civilians.” Almost like in their many millions they would be some embryonic new ersatz loyalist ethnic group for imperialism. Like the old armed frontier settler Cossacks became under the bygone expanding Russian empire of the Czars.

As the wife of one former elite Special Operations battalion commander pointed out (in u.s. army terminology, she was officially the unit's “senior spouse” with serious assigned duties leading other wives, although completely unwaged of course): the average u.s. “warfighter” is better paid than 75% of u.s. civilian government employees with similar experience, and has major other benefits like free health care and PXs comparable to Walmart's with average prices 30% lower than civilian stores. With a possible paid four years of full tuition and fees for college. By 2020, one million active duty and retired military were using the special “no down payment, low-interest” federal residential mortgages for their home purchases. “Anyone who thinks there's no such thing as socialism in America,” she said, “has never spent time on a military base.”³

There's a good reason this major change was made. “America's” global imperialism was hit by unexpected roadside bombs in the disastrous defeats of the 'Nam era. Not only trend-setting Vietnamese revolutionary military victory, but even more crucial: unprecedented levels of resistance not just at home but even inside the empire's armed forces. The 1960s–70s threat of mass military insurrections, including from even white servicemen, led by the outbreak of Black liberation. That was the crisis that made Washington step back to crazy-glue their iron fist back together again.

All it took to create that one rebel GI coffeeshop night when “women's lib” surprised the audience, was the mass drafting of millions of young men dropped randomly into a demented 1960s Asian land war they knew nothing about and felt they had no stake in.

Involuntarily uprooting even white youth away from their homes, friends, communities, and planned futures. Everything familiar to them. Mashing them into new regimented communities of similarly uprooted and uniformed youth. Sent far away to risk minimum-wage death or permanent disability in meaningless jungle firefights. All inside a big trumpeted war effort the incompetent Washington brass and politicians couldn't even win at. It wasn't much of a gamble to sow seeds of political questioning and resistance on that fertile ground.

³ Rosa Brooks. *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything*. Simon & Schuster, 2016. Pages 318–320; Alison Bowen. “Easing the Path to Owning A Home.” *Chicago Tribune* November 22, 2020. For poverty problems among young u.s. military families in the time of coronavirus and job losses in off-base civilian communities, see: Jennifer Steinhauer. “For More Military Families, Losing a Job or School Lunch Means a Search for Food Aid.” *New York Times*. December 17, 2020. Unlike most sources used here, this *How Everything Became War* book was an international bestseller that made an unlikely state policy star out of a professor of international law. Rosa Brooks was both a former advisor for Human Rights Watch and once the member of a top secret Pentagon committee which gave the final yes or no to individual u.s. assassinations of young Muslim activists. In her latter role Brooks rose to being a senior counselor to the u.s. Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy (she still lectures soldiers as an adjunct at the Army's West Point Modern War Institute). *How Everything Became War* never does explain its title subject, of course, but the book was so popular in the Establishment and warmly recommended by a number of top u.s. generals because it intellectually massages the growing contradictions in “America's” cancerous militarycivilian relationship, from a soothingly white liberal humanitarian but loyally pro-imperialist viewpoint.

So the imperial state learned and adapted. Once burnt, twice shy for them, too. It's actually a good example for us, on a small scale easy to chart, of how late capitalism in its metropolis uses its super-accumulated wealth from all over the world in actual class restructuring at home. Not in any "natural" unmediated way, of course, but by ruling class strategy force-feeding its morphing and reshaping.

As late as the Vietnam War, in the 1970s, the ruling class was still trying to get by with the traditional "citizen-soldier" mass military of temps. Drafted en masse from the working classes, the lower middle classes, and small farming families. To their shock, in 'Nam that broke down utterly. So much so that the Vietnamese communists at the time privately expressed being really disappointed with us young revs over here in "America." They'd seen drug-using, shoulder boombox carrying, soul and rock playing at top volume, u.s. soldiers clumsily penetrating the jungle, who were child's play to dodge as hometown guerrillas. The Vietnamese weren't slow, and had no trouble recognizing many GIs as politically disaffected foreign soldiers who didn't want to fight.

But under a big North Vietnamese infantry ambush trying to overrun them, the same careless u.s. units might suddenly tighten up and become hedgehogs of automatic weapon and mortar fire. Urgently calling in air support like it was their new religion. "FTA" may have been marked onto countless helmets, but as real kids of "America" no one was going to play the part of General Custer in the game.⁴

(Unlike when the Viets were earlier fighting not only regular European French draftees but also French colonial troops from North Africa—who the Vietnamese communists had some success encouraging to surrender or desert—GIs might be enthusiastic in sabotaging the war, but weren't surrendering to anyone. Some GI deserters in Sweden tried to explain it back then to the Vietnamese comrades—the situational difference between South Vietnamese Army puppet troops who fled or surrendered easily, and the wary, much more gnarly GI units themselves—but the Vietnamese representatives in those talks weren't happy about having to report back to Hanoi some stuff pretty negative and unorthodox by their soviet socialist standards.)

That same "FTA" do-for-yourself spirit, nonetheless, did lead to men replacing an unsatisfactory officer (like too gung-ho or too rule book) by their own informal "any means necessary." Often grenades rolled under tent flaps late at night. Black soldiers insisted on holding their own marches with banners around camps. More combat companies stopped actually seeking contact—once out of sight they instead relaxed the day away in agreed upon faked "patrol."

One by one, the critical big aircraft carriers carrying much of the air attack over North Vietnam were delayed and then even knocked out by the military anti-war movement. First the USS Midway, then the Ranger, the Forrestal, and then the Coral Sea, whose enlisted men and some officers not only forced it to return to San Francisco but held a large "SOS— Stop Our Ship" press conference once dockside. There were repeated sabotage fires on the big ships. In October 1972, the carrier Kitty Hawk returning to 'Nam was forced to head back home after Black sailors holding a rebellious meeting fought hand to hand for hours all over the ship against Marines sent to stop them. Then the carrier Constellation was forced to return to San Diego after sabotage and growing unrest. Once ashore, sailors mostly white held a demonstration giving the Black Power salute with upraised fists. Many navy ships had their own illicit anti-war newsletters, such as the Kitty Hawk's "Kitty Litter."⁵

⁴ "FTA," short for "Fuck The Army," was the great all-purpose anti-brass graffiti among u.s. Army troops then in the 1960s–70s, with it inked onto the front of many thousands of helmets in 'Nam (not usually taken up in other u.s. services, especially among Marines, who used their own graffiti phrases incorporating the slang dis "The Green Machine").

⁵ H. Bruce Franklin. *Crash Course. From the Good War to the Forever War.* Rutgers University Press, 2018. Pages 264–267. Franklin was widely followed, envied, admired and resented on the West Coast during the anti-war 1960s. As a controversial Stanford professor, his breakthrough literary criticism which insisted on raising up as important then-banned or marginal genres, such as criminal prison writings and science-fiction, had a wide effect. He was more immediately one of the main radical anti-war activists in the Bay Area. Finally burning out as one purist national leader in the birth of u.s. Maoism, a failed period of his life he later wrote off as a self-delusional fever. He retained his basic anti-capitalist view of u.s. society, though. Much of this memoir of his own capitalist war (he was a frontline air force veteran) and anti-war is shocking material with a positive jolt. Though to be clear, it's not about the u.s. revolutionary left.

As early as June 1971, the end was publicly apparent. That was the month the *Armed Forces Journal* bluntly admitted: “By every conceivable indicator, our army which now remains in Vietnam is in a state of collapse ... dispirited where not near mutinous.”

GI resistance to the Vietnam War was an amazing story of mass illegal and violent resistance to imperialism by the very soldiers supposed to carry out its rule. As such, it momentarily rocked the very stability of the capitalist state. Though it is also an important cautionary tale: for looking back at those military service resisters who were white, once they were demobilized and scattered back into settler communities across the span of the American continent, they as a whole became individualized and lost their political momentum.

The surprising strength of the military rebellions was due to how the anger at “Vietnam” had been taken over, overlaid, and deepened by the even more violent and insistent breakout of Black liberation politics becoming part of daily lived culture against imperialism and its settler colonial hegemony. Black liberation in that entire period was the big straw that stirred the drink for everyone who wanted freeing change. It may not be on some other day, but it was then.

So after their shocked post-defeat period of confusion, the capitalist state and its brass went back to work. Replacing part by part, through trial and error gradually remaking their all-important giant military Frankenstein. Of course, as we know from the strange case of America’s “Forever War” against Muslim peoples, no matter how well-equipped and trained, there’s lots that this costumed superpower military can’t do. Like, it doesn’t seem able in the final conclusion to win any wars at all. That’s an important enigma for us to think about.

Kersplebedeb: We will come back to that question, but right now i want to return again to this thread that keeps on coming up in this discussion, of the role of class in what you are describing. Class features centrally in all of your work; for readers of this interview who may not be familiar with your other writings, how should we understand different classes, and why is it important that we develop analyses of them?

J. Sakai: Once, when i was quite young and even more naive than i am now, i was taking inexpensive night classes at a local college with St. Clair Drake (co-author of the unparalleled 1940s study, *Black Metropolis*, and a small legend for having once been an organizer with an armed New Afrikan tenant farmers’ self-defense movement in the segregated terrorist Deep South). Not because i was that interested in studying “introduction to cultural anthropology” or “West African society,” but because i thought just listening to him might open rooms i never knew existed. Which it did.

One night i was amazed to hear him curtly dismiss, as with the back of his hand, E. Franklin Frazier’s then controversial study, *Black Bourgeoisie*. Which he said wasn’t even social science and shouldn’t be read. That book had surprised me—even scared me intellectually—for its cutting dissection of the insular family culture of that era’s small Black bourgeoisie and affluent middle class, saying words bordering on the scandalous on topics like the parentally sanctioned customs of their children. Frazier lit up what he regarded as the self-indulgent individualism and consumerism of the “Black bourgeoisie,” which he said was only imitating the sickness of white “American” culture. He said that their declared class political strategy, of eventually overcoming Jim Crow by the spread of their small business roles and government positions, was only a self-protective delusion minimizing the deepest evils of the capitalist racism they were caught in. i went up to professor Drake after that class and complained to him: “But wasn’t everything Dr. Frazier wrote in his book factually true?” (which we both knew it was). Picking up his briefcase, Drake scowled. “That isn’t social science, that is just a man trying to break with his class!” And strode away. (A bit of context against misunderstanding: As fellow rebel Black intellectuals, Frazier and Drake were colleagues and friends.)

This subject of class is so basic, but it’s really a sleeper. Like it’s so vast, “everything” almost. But “basic” isn’t the same as “simple,” as so many think. Class is deeper and more complex than we can cover right here, on the run as we are in this interview. We all know your damn love life isn’t simple, and raising your kids is too fraught and joyful to be simple, so why the hell should something as all-

encompassing as class be the only human thing to be simple? Am going to just lay down some road signs and warnings.

Class identity is real, but its reality is more complex and particular than just rote characteristics or obvious roles. Like the dark blue suits of the corporate manager and the crisp denim overalls of the millionaire farmer are more or less true like all capitalist work uniforms, but also front for layers of deeper roles and identities.

Here as much as in any other life-and-death subject, we need a concrete analysis of the concrete situation to analyze any class situation down to its useful conclusions. Class societies like in global capitalism are made out of building blocks of classes, to the overarching structure of a mode of production and distribution. Classes are the collective identities of people bound together by their common roles and interests and lives in economic production and distribution. People fight for advantages within society as classes. Advance or retreat as classes. All the time people leave their old friends or family, but being disloyal to your particular class is so much harder to even think of.

It's important practically to know that there are many different kinds of working classes in the world, not one—just as there are many kinds of capitalist classes. With varying cultures and differing experiences in their class character. Just as there are different types of lumpen: Marx and Engels thought there were in Old European history even lumpen/ aristocracy, not just the usual lumpen/proletariat. Like in our capitalist Babylon of today's mass affluent classes, we find thrown into our mix relatively so many lumpen/petty bourgeois as well as lumpen/capitalists (the one example we all know well of that latter is the Trump family). This is something significant to our practice, but rarely nailed down in print.

Capitalist society is not so eager to show its real decaying face, for all its loud media din and racket. We should keep in mind that classes constantly change. No matter how carved in living stone they seem, capitalist class structures are always evolving, sometimes drastically changing shape, morphing as human life itself surprisingly always does. As quantities of change in any particular aspect of reality continue piling up higher and higher, until finally at a nodal point their relentless accumulation forces its remaking into something completely new. When all that quantitative change topples into higher qualitative change, there occurs a transformation in the basic nature of that class, in that part of reality.

The different classes in capitalism are constantly in the process of change whether their individual members understand it or like it or no. The same with our settler colonialism as a specific form of capitalist hegemony.

This may seem at first more confusing than enlightening, but keeping our bookmark on these ideas, of constant motion and quantitative changes becoming qualitative transformations, helps when we analyze specific aspects of today's political global class war.

What is most important here is to avoid treating class in an alienated way, misunderstanding it as something mechanical, which is an error that left vulgar materialism has always been prone to. As though something called "the economy" forms and reproduces pre-packaged "class" as impersonal products over us, uncontrolled and above ordinary human life. Like it is often implied to young radicals by vulgar Marxist ideologues that they have only to wait around and the greedy profit needs of capitalism will inevitably shape and mass produce capitalism's own "hangman," the pre-packaged takeout proletariat ready-made to do the final revolution. Yeah, about when pigs fly by.

As we have said, capitalist society is never eager to show its real decaying face. And it definitely is far from the first society to mask what are to it really classes, but disguised as races or genders or ethnicities or religions. So that for much of "American" history, the main proletariats or lowest working classes were forced from birth to always wear concealing masks:

The mask of race, as though the sweated bloody commodities of their violently enslaved labors were merely some natural by-products of their New Afrikan or Indigenous subhumanity.

And the mask of gender, as though women giving up their physical bodies and minds were only doing what was biological and "natural" for them. Becoming consumed as lifetime parts in the worldwide

patriarchal family machinery, as well as bearing the bio-industrial and social reproduction of all necessary labor for the ruling class economy. Taking loving and being loved while in cages to be an eternal suffocating mask supposedly placed on their faces by the false deities “God” and “Nature.”

At the same time, the great history-shaping classes, such as the bourgeoisie, have always been in part self-creating, not just passively accepting some given economic or social roles. But fighting and innovating within the limits of material possibility to enlarge and transform themselves constantly. The long revolution to liberate this great humanity can accept being no less than that. And even more.

The book *Settlers* was written starting in 1975, it started out as just a short informal paper to explore a question of mine in this regard; but the work grew and grew following an unexplored path and ended up taking eight years of research and writing and sending texts in and out of the kamps, editing and rewriting by myself and others into underground publication in 1983 for a small outlaw group. It was raw theory sure enough, underdeveloped and wonderfully new-born to us, but not coming from any campus or its universitariat. It all came illicitly from prisons and poor working-class organizing. From solidarity work with guerrilla liberation fighters. Listening to the root understanding of the world held by African and Indigenous militants already at war for their peoples. *Settlers* then was very basic, theoretically simple, almost raw. Maybe now old but serviceable, like a still-loaded rifle from Wounded Knee.

Radicals have now taken the investigative work of settler colonial theory ranging in different ways beyond that book of labor history, of course. Which would have happened whether or not we had ever had the fortunate chance to do our work (so countless many of the oppressed had just this same insight but were silenced, muffled in blood, trampled under, never had the chance to be heard—it was never our unique idea).

So this is a politics that is still an outlaw coming as an outside threat to established reformist oppressor ideology, from the viewpoint of the oppressed. But drawing more attention, as what we’re told is the advanced superior capitalist world grows more dysfunctional all the time. Even the term “settler colonialism” has become widely used within progressive circles here in the u.s., not only in books about race politics but even in daily newspapers and classrooms. As the pulsing umbilical cord becomes so visible between the swelling of the violent white far right and the unacknowledged weight of “America’s” living dead history. As rebels look further over the devastation for deeper answers.

In that vein, a revealing blog post by the Indigenous revolutionary Rowland “Enaemaehkiw” Keshena Robinson, “Fascism and Anti-Fascism: A Decolonial Perspective,” written in the turbulent uncertainty after Trump’s naked settler colonial reappearance in 2016, reappraises white left theory on fascism in the first light of Indigenous decolonization. Confronting this settler colonial empire on the deceptively camouflaged ground of fascism/antifascism.

Just as there are also voices shining more light on new questions raised in today’s recharged white left protest breakouts. Such as Bromma’s 2020 interview: “Decisively breaking with both worker elite mythology and male leftism.” (Incidentally, Bromma’s earlier quick essay, “Notes on Trump,” analyzing what was behind his rise and the alt-right, is one of the most concise, tough-minded explanations of their place in the world capitalist crisis). So there is still more to do, to deal with taking on the hegemony of entrenched settler colonial capitalism here.

Several examples from young scholars are also significant. In the ground-breaking paper, “The Settler Order Framework: Rethinking Canadian Working Class History,” which appeared in the journal *Labour/Le Travail*, Fred Burrill draws the line between the old academic labor history defined as white settler labor and its official capitalist workplace organizations, and the new labor history which opens itself up to the fugitive story of Indigenous and other colonial labor from the margins in the making of Canadian capitalism.

Imaginative and reminding us of settler colonialism’s reality in a different-appearing setting, Zachary Samuel Gottesman’s “The Japanese Settler Unconscious: Goblin Slayer the ‘Isekai’ frontier,” in the online journal *Settler Colonial Studies*, shows how the colonial invasion and conquest mentality that created

what we know as Japan, is reenacted over and over again in surrogate form, in a popular Japanese video game set in the usual male fantasy cartoon universe.

As more and more comrades are taking up the investigating and the teaching which strengthens strategic understanding to bring it back into the struggle again.

Kersplebedeb: In terms of understanding the political moment we are in globally, the main contradiction is often described as being between globalized neo-liberalism and right-wing populist nationalism. Above you criticized this view as being overly shallow ...

J. Sakai: Indeed, though certainly that's how journalists and consultants are paid to explain it. So many of us have to follow those loud-speaking establishment guides right now, temporarily while we wait to find out what's going on. That doesn't make it true, though.

Usually contradictions don't only have one outward form, after all. They present their essence in myriad ways, just as a person can wear different clothes. To describe the clothes helps describe the person, but the clothing isn't the person.

It is closer to what's true, to say that the globalized capitalism of the transnational corporations has grown so extremely successful, so vast, that they have begun involuntarily ripping away from and moving above the nations that once birthed them. They no longer fit within them. So nations are in part still ruthlessly needed and in part tossed aside. By no means are they "over"; they are still very necessary but invisibly lessened, coming apart, left with dysfunctional societies and economies no longer corresponding to the lived locations of the old class society that once provided the territory for these capitalist beings in earlier life. If that makes sense.

So when Trump went on his would-be historic tirade or trade war with designated wrestling villain "Kung Flu" China, both sides had an unspoken agreement that many outsized capitalist beings like the Apple corporation or Tesla had to be exempt from the match. Otherwise, that would have merely been a public b.d.s.m. hookup. Since Apple, just for example, may be a world-famous u.s. company, but as we know in its years of global rise its famous iPhones were produced first in its own low-wage, prison-discipline production metropolis in Shenzhen, China, and now also in Shengzhou and other Chinese industrial cities. Where almost all iPhones still come from, manufactured by Apple's large Taiwanese production partner Foxconn corporation (and their even larger silent partner, the Beijing "Red" state capitalist dictatorship)

Both Chinese and u.s. capitalist empires are gaining a lot from this. And if the u.s.a. is Apple's largest national market, China itself is No. 3 right behind the No. 2 multinational EU. With a value this year reaching \$3 trillion and jostling shoulders with Amazon over being the No. 1 corporation in the world, Apple was left to profitably watch the imperialist mud-wrestling match from comfortable Chinese migrant worker-skin seats on the sidelines. It was way too transcontinentally sprawling and too awkwardly shaped, in either side's understanding, to fit inside the ring of their weirdo pointless nationalist trade war.

Will this imperialist flexing and shoving come in some near future to theatrical "conflict," or even some pointless actual miniature war—in one gender of armed activity or another? It's always possible, since "Red" China has always had plastic container take-out military conflicts with many of its smaller or weaker unhappy neighbors. Russia same same. (As one smartass poet once wrote, "Socialism is not a country whose neighbors curse geography.") While the u.s. empire itself hasn't won a real war since 1945 but is still "forever" actively engaged in mini-warfare in dozens and dozens of unknown countries on any given unpublicized day.

In this new neo-colonial period there are no longer clear dividing lines between what is military and what is civilian, between war and peace, commerce and crime, each of which take on the other's properties. Asymmetrical or surrogate military or financial or cultural actions can always happen every day, to gain some advantage or to disadvantage another within the ceaseless "creative destruction" of capitalism.

Any way it goes, it incidentally settles the left controversy of whether the era of imperialism—which began over a hundred years ago at the end of the 19th century and persisted through two devastating

world wars—has been replaced by a fabled era of globalization and peaceful world capitalist unification. We still live—no matter how perilous it seems to us all—in the final capitalist period of imperialism and deep national decadence, and its constant fighting between capitalist entities and powers of all sick shapes and kinds.

That's just one of many warning signs that this whole “globalization versus right-wing nationalism” thing isn't what people are assuming it is. It's not like a real fight, but more like a scripted play of capitalism—with real populations forced to act out its stage directions and lines with our lives.

Nor are the political fistfights ripping apart our own society what we are told they are. To a startling degree, we have been talking about contradictions which are developing in unresolvable ways. That grow only sharper but which cannot be resolved anymore within this actually existing capitalism. The fabric of societies themselves are distorted and are stretched to the breaking point—and then an involuntary tug beyond. Here and now. This is the present moment.

the end for just now

Part 2 (Conclusion of an interview emailed back and forth into mid-2022)

Kersplebedeb: We began this exchange in 2020 and are finishing it off in 2022. Biden is now president; you referred in the first part of this interview very much to Trump, but Trump failed to hold on for a second term, and he may not win or even run again in the future ...

J. Sakai: Am always going to focus on a Trump more than a Biden, since he was important in the new white breakout. Not Biden, who everyone knows is just another state manager/politician from the ruling class locker room. Even if our clown Trumpenfuhrer fades away personally like lumpen David Duke did, it's that Trump was the elected white power President of the settler colonial majority, not liberal corporatist Biden.

The fabled liberal future, in which people of color keep growing to be a new numerical majority of color over the white nation, is only an illusion. New Afrikans were a numerical majority in much of the Old South in the post-Civil War 1 Black Reconstruction era, and yet within a generation white settlers were the "majority" in total armed power race dictatorship over them everywhere there. We are simply going through an agonizing replay of that in a neo-colonial Batman costume.

Again, we have to start going beneath the immediate surface of politics into the underlying reality which first forms its coming shape. And as a necessary reminder, capitalism is a dangerously violent parent even to its own, and severe conflict and disloyalty between the ruling class and discarded u.s. euro-settler factions has happened before and will go on happening until the end.

Not since the fantasy capitalist Confederacy's total bloody loss in Civil War 1 and then the defeat of the rural Populist protest movement in the Plains states at the turn of the century, have some u.s. white popular classes taken such heavy body blows as in recent history. Although it occurs now in a different and much more difficult setting, that of the decline of u.s. empire within the growing dystopian arc of the capitalist system itself.

Remember, "America's" white classes are only privileged, not sacred or eternal. All too vulnerable their own selves to big capitalism's constantly growing "creative destruction" and ceaseless appetite for rolling everything back into yet greater capital accumulation. That's why they are always ready to jump to the right, to get back more of that settler privilege that they feel is their national birthright. Other versions of the right-wing "Make America Great Again" mass movement have happened before, and have experienced class political progress or defeat—or even in extreme cases, class whiteout. Nor have they themselves always been all that loyal to u.s. imperialism as their nation, when they felt their own desperate interests going in the opposite direction.

The naughty white working class of that Confederate South in the last Civil War, for example, ended up severely reduced in numbers, cut down like no-longer-needed herd animals by the end of the war. 13% of all white military-age men in the South had died in the few years of war, and even many more had been disabled (a year after the War ended, the state of Mississippi had to spend 20% of its revenues on artificial limbs). Some two million white Southerners were forced to migrate West and North looking for new jobs and new Indigenous land to steal to become really white again.¹

¹ Alan Greenspan and Adrian Woolridge. *Capitalism in America: A History*. Penguin Press, 2018. Page 84. This is a different kind of history of "America." Stripped down and perhaps easier to read, the legendary former longtime chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and his co-author, the political editor of *The Economist*, explain the u.s.a. primarily in terms of business investments, profits, and developing the capitalist class economy. Minor things like the rise of the Klan and lynchings, as well as changes in presidential politics, receive only brief lines to help frame the passing times as direct capitalist activity holds center stage. In its

The European conservative theorist of geopolitics, Friedrich Ratzel (who coined the ethnic nationalist slogan *lebensraum* made famous by “88”), visiting the u.s. South in 1874, was struck that he saw “no skilled workers, nor a vigorous white working class of any size worth mentioning.” He compared even the largest u.s. Southern cities he visited back then to those large but backward cities of colonized agricultural societies, such as non-industrial Havana or Veracruz, that displayed “an incomplete, half-developed profile.”² That reduced Southern white working class wouldn’t even start to really recover until the 1930s New Deal and the bloodbath industrial bonanza of WW2.

Even the late-19th/early-20th-century political defeat of the precarious small farmers and laborers of the Midwestern Plains in their Populist political uprising, whose presidential candidate was Nebraska’s William Jennings Bryan of “You shall not crucify mankind on a cross of gold” fame, also involved mass white class defeat.

Between 1890 and 1920, some u.s. Plains states of the Grain Belt saw widespread white demotion to tenant farmer status as well as actual large lower class removal, with many white bankrupt small farmers and jobless rural laborers forced on the road. Turned back in their attempted populist revolt by the iron walls of the railroad monopolies that controlled their crop sales, and the Wall Street financial interests that controlled their debt. While in one direction, some lingered to swell the anarchist IWW into the greatest rural radical labor organization “America” had ever known. In another direction, a surprising one million struggling rural Plains states whites in those years gave up on their loyalty to “America” altogether and moved camp across the border to remake their nationalistic identity as euro-settler Canadians. (Where some say their white settler anti-banking populism became one important seedbed for Canada’s own social-democratic left.)³

Flash forward to more recent history. Even before they became u.s. citizens, early European immigrant “ethnics” such as the Irish had always been counted on to be mass cannon fodder for “America’s” always-outward-moving military. So the fact that modern young white working-class men and boys took up the “FTA” spirit and joined the widespread mutinies against the Vietnam War in the 1960s, was a big shock to the u.s. ruling class.

At the same time, surreal as it may seem today, until the late 1970s a white postal letter carrier or union corporation factory guy could expect to own a home, support a wife and children on his single income, take family vacations—i.e., have some kind of lower middle-class lifestyle. Euro-american settlers got used to that real quick.

So white workers at that time not only expected middleclass incomes in union industries and trades, but increasingly refused to sacrifice themselves in imperialism’s neocolonial invasions abroad. In other words, were of less and less use to the u.s. ruling class.

Little surprise what happened next. Today, now that the u.s. industrial working class has been mostly offshored and local blue collar wages here miniaturized, many white towns and communities that once had a movie theater, maybe a small nearby hospital, restaurants and clothing stores, are often left with none of these. Only a fast food outlet or two and some bars. Since 1979, the number of u.s. manufacturing jobs paying over \$20 an hour has decreased by 60%. It is odd but normal now to take in a historic white working-class ex-industrial community that is like half-deserted, where a blue collar family you know is trying to squeeze every adult onto government disability and food stamps. It’s the new “unions.” It’s not just clichés about Appalachia and the upper Midwest “rust belt”—a recent magazine article notes in passing that “Holyoke, Massachusetts, once home to more than 25 paper mills,” is “now one of the poorest places in the state.” Without pausing for any explanation, since it assumes we all get it.⁴

own way, a very cold-blooded but telling exposition of how “America” was made into a great-but-nowdeclining economic empire. The blame now, according to the conservative authors, is the “encrusting” suffocation of liberal state benefits like Social Security, which bestow automatic income on the masses without their having to work every day or risk anything. Charming.

² Ibid. Pages 88–89.

³ Gabriel Kolko. *Main Currents in Modern American History*. Harper & Row, 1976. Pages 26–29.

⁴ Daniel Bergner. “Open Minds.” *The New York Times Magazine*. May 22, 2022.

Today, everyone senses our landscape distorting into what feels like the bulging shape of an incipient “civil war” of some yet unnamed kind. Professors and capitalist writers and mass media use that phrase, which has even been debated in contesting New York Times columns. Is Civil War 2 in the cards being dealt us or not?

The capitalist media is choking on these words, but can’t ever explain them. Because by not grounding political analysis in the u.s. empire’s permanent settler colonialism, we can’t get to the unresolvable contradiction of “America’s” post-modern capitalism. That it needs both old colonialism but in camouflaged form, along with a contentious partial de-settlerization of society (or a tactical step back from outright white master-race rule of the biosphere). Which is all an inescapable part of the bitter jumbled neo-colonial capitalist retreat and rearrangement of all classes old and new—and the resultant neo-colonial wars and civil wars like Uyghur genocide and “Iraqistan”—and now with Ukraine emergency alarms inevitably ringing in all our senses.

Kersplebedeb: We are returning to the theme of globalization vs. nationalism, and the limitations of that framework. In that light, and given that you brought it up, what are we to make of the Ukraine war? Are we at some kind of turning point?

J. Sakai: This Ukraine war certainly might become one critical turning point, though it is too early yet to see its full widening circles of consequences. In one way it is a turning point for us because the u.s. left has more or less been united for this moment, only under Biden’s leadership. Confused AOC can be his corporal now, “yessir!” Isn’t that the political gut punch people didn’t see coming?

When globalized economies became evident in the late 20th century, one of the first premature reactions in bourgeois political analysis was to jump us to the linear conclusion that now separate nations as old news would become unimportant, obsolete, and thus somehow would helplessly fade away. Yet the very reverse happened. Ditto tottering old empires and oligarch/plutocrat monopolies and bureaucrat state capitalism.

Globalization is not some “no speed limits, no traffic laws” economic and cultural free for all, with the fabled “free market” being the sole guide to what anyone can do down and dirty in the scrum. Capitalist globalization needs and is structured around extreme nationalism. How else could they keep the world in order and us under their boot? That’s why English is the mandatory language used by all pilots and air traffic controllers in world commercial aviation, just as a survey of the world’s leading scientific journals found that all the top 50 such publications were in English. In countries such as Germany, France, and Spain, many more university academic papers are produced in English than in their native languages. Many E.U.-based transnational corporations have quietly adopted English as their mandatory language for all company-wide management communications. (All of which also advantages the U.K. and Canada, Ireland and Jamaica, New Zealand and Australia and so on, of course, keeping alive in diffused form the Anglo-Saxon world of the dead British Empire—but within a globalized capitalism. As Vlad the Invader himself bitterly nags us about over and over.)

The universality of identity and outlook that is now natural and needed to make our evolutionary future out of today’s global crises, is also always under constant torque to be twisted into new narrowing capitalist forms. Globalization like everything else exists in contradiction and creates its opposites. “America” can hardly be the “lone superpower” of everything, when China’s trade and investment in Africa are replacing Britain’s and “America’s,” and when Iran is more powerful politically and militarily in the Middle East than either “America” or Russia. And when the biggest global cultural export of “America” isn’t Hollywood anymore but New Afrikan hip hop.

In globalization the capitalist world is becoming more multi-polar but not in the least democratic or egalitarian— and why should it?—and also even more complicated than anyone expected. Like, the natural tendency is for big capitalist industry to concentrate, with duopolies now being seen as the steady end state. Such as Boeing and Airbus in jetliners. But the real trend is much more complex than that.

For instance, we are used to seeing the duopoly of either yellow u.s. Caterpillar or Japan’s Komatsu in bulldozers and earth-moving vehicles on construction sites and highway projects in the u.s. as our

bus drives by. But that's just here, for us locals. Worldwide is a truer more multi-polar picture. While Caterpillar and Komatsu are indeed the world's No. 1 and No. 2 in market share of heavy construction equipment, white "America's" beloved "Cat" has only a 13% world share. The three leading Chinese companies have a greater share of world sales together than "Cat" and green John Deere, the other major u.s. company, combined. And Swedish and South Korean and Swiss companies are taking real (for them as small countries) market shares of heavy construction machinery, too. One or two percent of the entire global market for an expensive manufactured commodity is not small change anymore.⁵ Some companies specialize more in expensive but extra-heavily-built vehicles for Northern cold weather use, while others put more emphasis on less expensive and lighter equipment for use in flatland tropical climates. No matter how many "Cat" caps white men wear.

Not that many advantages do not persist from imperialism's previous configuration. Obviously, the u.s. dollar is the foundation currency for world capitalism, which every national treasury and local hedge fund must have access to. As such, the u.s. still enjoys cowboy leverage in the world financial system—at least for now.

And of course, "America's" FBI together with its elite special military units awkwardly function as globalization's makeshift neo-colonial super-duper police. Which is why the u.s. could arrest, move to New York, convict, and imprison the former commanding admiral of the Guinea-Bissau Navy. Which must have fascinated fellow Black inmates in their jail tier. Just as they are doing now with arrested Prime Minister Andrew Fahie, the elected leader of the British Virgin Islands. And former president Juan Orlando Hernandez of Costa Rica, who is also awaiting his u.s. trial. It was only an outraged revolt by the leadership of the Mexican Army that forced the FBI to release their recent chief commanding general from federal jail in New York. Under unique u.s. law, any person in the entire world from the UN Secretary General to Putin's maid can be arrested for alleged direct or indirect relationship to drug dealing or related money laundering, tried here, and imprisoned. Of course, the u.s. is primarily policing up its satraps and subordinates who run the neo-colonial states of the oppressed periphery.

What we see, once we start looking for it, is that "globalization vs. populist nationalism" may loom large in those publicized clashes that dominate our political news—but cannot be any fundamental contradiction of the system because the capitalist ruling class needs, uses and coordinates, and is behind both sides—both globalization and resurgent nationalism. Any more than you can say that big corporations versus state-incorporated trade unions are a principal class contradiction, when both forms of class activity are needed, shaped, and coordinated in symphony by the same ruling class and its state.

Checking off basics: nation-states are the way by which capitalist classes used to stake out and claim territorial class ownership of a particular human society and its lands as their exclusive property, as against all other rival capitalist classes. While under European feudalism there were shifting-in-shape-and-size aristocratic domains and principalities, but not nation-states as we know them (for instance, the present Normandy coast of France once spent more centuries as a feudal part of England than it has since as part of France).

Nation-states are where special bodies of armed men get uniforms that everyone must recognize as their license to kill and enforce overrule. Back in 1776 "America," the founding foreskins made massively violent racial enslaved labor openly legal and protected in national law and policy, as a necessary gear in the startup motor of its "infant empire's" capital accumulation. Copycatting patriarchy and the iron law of class society that no born woman may own her own body. Now, centuries later, the large but just-wetnursed Chinese "Red" state capitalist ruling class has similarly made its own mass enslaved and semi-enslaved proletariat, only in veiled form, legally and militarily chained for this same desperate cannibal hunger of startup capital accumulation.

Seen that way, a nation is an indispensable capitalist class instrument, encompassing both steering mechanism and hammer, even though as a form it is now outgrown historically by the humanity-

⁵ See: statista. "leading construction equipment manufacturers in 2020 based on global market share"; iSeekplant. "TOP TEN HEAVY EQUIPMENT COMPANY MARKET SHARES."

wide development of population, production, and culture. i mean, some say there's nothing like Arabic Icelandic hip hop. Or Cambodian queer Southern Californian fiction.

Same with rusted old empires and poisoned oligarch countries, neo-colonial tribes, transitory lumpen states—any old collectivities which don't really fit barrier-leaping humanity anymore, but which addicted ruling classes cannot do without when they need a patch or a fix. It's as if economic and cultural globalization and the interweaving of the world's populations is the rising ocean, while now under the surface the sinking structures of antique empires and nations are thrashing about as residual dinosaurs. Like in the Covid-19 pandemic reality tv game, in which industrial high-tech nations like "America," China, Great Britain, Russia, and much of the EU couldn't stop dropping and fumbling away any effective public health response.

The more new crisis a capitalist faction is in, the more it wants to have some old nation around it as a safety blanket. Ditto its old races, genders, and religions. That capitalist nation-states across the board increasingly don't work and are breaking down from anyone's standpoint, is the central trick bag in our world's free-falling capitalist plummet.

There are overriding practical reasons for all this, because in endgame system failure not enough is getting repaired or replaced, being obsolete isn't aging out to be improved. It's all happening, the capitalistic living and the dying, coupling and competing in every ancient and newest way possible, but all doing their gig work and sex work in one big crowded room. Citizens hoarding toilet paper but also cryptocurrency, while their imperial state hoards its vintage 1950s-era B-52 bombers, as nations willy-nilly join in essential commodity supply chains together while also trying to rain irrational war and sabotage on each other—it's all the norm for capitalist system dysfunction now.

For what it's worth, my outsider opinion has been that the most conspicuous old capitalist imperial leaders—like the royal Clintons and oligarch Putin and China's potentate Xi Jinping—have been completely unable to cope with their own nations' piling up and up life and death problems. As the world capitalist system's unresolvable contradictions come more and more due. So all the Borises, Vladimirs, and Bidens are desperately overplaying their own hands in shaky ventures economic and military to somehow "win," as their ruling class and maybe even their populace remembers once doing.

i mean, the trash fires of fleeing u.s. troops in "Iraqistan" have hardly cooled, but big capitalism's rulers appear not to have learned a thing from that world's-longest-running Hollywood movie. These are truly unprecedented big power capitalist gambles in which all sides later turn out to have lost. Costly conflicts where afterwards they can't find a winner. Although, even if certain of nothing else, "America" is determined right now to fight to the last Ukrainian. That will certainly teach the world a lesson—only what is it?

Keep in mind that this global class system is gigantic, containing billions of people—and like one of their huge oil tankers can turn only in a wide slow arc. Like in Mexico and Central America, for example, this same turning point of a great downward arc of a falling nation coming apart started decades ago. Into the final cataclysm of the capitalist system's global fall and crash.

Welcome to the steadily spreading chaos that we all sense as the background of our new times. The societies that are capitalism's human structure coming apart from the stress of this neo-colonial era's overriding contradictions. Here we see ruling class interests as well as the autonomic survival reflexes of capitalist societies kicking in: all hands desperately ventilating and pumping chest compressions to aging forms of settlerism and ethnic nationalism. While more and more actors outta all classes are grabbing at pieces of their coming apart nations for themselves before it's too late. Fighting as well over the long ago installed on/off power switch by which one race or nationality can own or control others.

Kersplebedeb: So nations are breaking down, and as you say various players are "desperately overplaying their own hands in shaky ventures economic and military"—what comes to mind for me is that this has consequences in terms of warfare ...

J. Sakai: When the 19th-century military theorist von Clausewitz said that war was just the continuation of politics by other means, he deepened everyone's understanding of conflict, from the Pentagon to Chinese peasants. Likewise, at the turn of the 21st century, two Chinese military officers in an army

unit assessing strategy published an extended paper/book on war in the neo-colonial era (although that is not a political term they are allowed to use). Which has again helped update the world's understanding. Peoples Liberation Army colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui's 1999 *Unrestricted Warfare* gave articulated focus to changes which young capitalist military and intelligence and foreign policy officers had been increasingly debating. It became so significant in the spirited discussions on revolutionizing strategy and tactics among u.s. officers throughout the services, that eventually a branch of the CIA had to arrange its full translation and obscure commercial publication.

A word of caution: the Chinese officers did not discover any new military theory themselves, they were usefully summing up the many post-modern leaps actually going on in everyone's conflicts. Not only the Vietnamese guerrilla victory over "America's" most technologically advanced imperialist military in the world. But also then right back in turn, the CIA's White House men in Brooks Brothers suits inventing and financing a global Islamic religious jihad to foil Russia's attempted colonization of Afghanistan in the 1980s. To mention only the two most stand-out examples besides our own post-modern 9/11.

Their basic theme is that now the rules of warfare have changed, in that there no longer are any rules, at all. That warfare which was formerly given identity by official declarations of war between states, and form by armies of men in distinctive uniforms using lethal specifically military weapons against each other (the countless women and children raped and killed did not count), has broken through all bounds and limitations that used to try and safely divide military activity from civilian activity, war from peace.

The two Chinese officers recognized, in their *Unrestricted Warfare*, not only how quasi-state actors like the Republican Party or Al-Qaeda (my examples) can wage unorthodox violent conflict to piece together gradual dominance, but that now all combatants can weaponize a wide range of formerly civilian things, such as computer viruses, net browsers, and financial derivative tools. Ditto we can say to mass religions and drug mafias, corporations, and charities—like u.s.-occupied "Iraqistan" used their women's uplift non-profits as weapons right alongside their men's criminal ethnic militias, shotgun married by broad-minded Imperial Big Daddy just like that.

Since "the battlefield will be everywhere," the Chinese theorists predicted wars will not necessarily be declared as such, that there will be no diplomatic, legal, or moral limits at all, that "all the boundaries lying between the two worlds of war and non-war, of military and non-military, will soon be destroyed."

This directly relates to what we have seen over the past years in Ukraine, visibly starting in a new Russian war plan of gradual conquest by indirection, seen attempted even before Russia's "half-sandwich" 2014 military occupation of the Crimea and much of Ukraine's eastern Donbas region. Coming out of the oven unmistakably when Putin's man Viktor Yanukovich tried to take the Ukrainian Presidency and then suddenly steer their country back into a USSR-type remarriage with Moscow. This was all borrowed wholesale from China's *Unrestricted Warfare* by Gen. V. Gerasimov, Putin's main military strategist and supposedly the chief planner of today's 2022 invasion. Some articles, even in the mainstream u.s. media such as *Time* magazine and *The New York Times*, linked the invasion with these new concepts of unlimited warfare by misdirection:

"Putin's strategy was one of unclarity, of blurry, gray movements in a fog of ambiguity, none of them rising to the level of war. American strategists sometimes call this the 'Gerasimov Doctrine,' after an essay published in 2013 by Valery Vasilyevich Gerasimov, the Russian army's chief of staff for the last ten years. 'The emphasis in methods of struggle,' Gerasimov observed, is on 'widespread use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military matters ... Overt use of force,' he advises, 'often under the guise of peacekeeping and crisis management, occurs only at a certain stage, primarily to achieve definitive success in the conflict.'"

That Putin's oligarch-state capitalism was already too weakened to carry out such advanced strategy as well as it wanted to in Ukraine, doesn't mean that the ideas themselves aren't increasingly organic to our moment. Armies are starting to supplement the role of expensive and scarce jet attack planes with flocks of bomb-carrying less expensive drones. Or recruiting thousands of smartphone-carrying civilians in the battle zone to act as your forward scouts and intelligence agents about enemy movements. Just

like the New Afrikan struggle here is spontaneously doing on the battleground of the streets. Europe hasn't seen such a real-life quick testing war laboratory since the 1936 Spanish Civil War prepped big fascism for WW2. Which suggests, hmm ...

Kersplebedeb: I have seen these developments referred to elsewhere as “fourth generation warfare,” and what you are describing certainly fits what seems to have become the norm over the past half-century. So the contradiction of capitalism surpassing the limitations of its historic nations, and the chaos that ensues from that, would be what is underlying these changes in how conflicts are being waged?

J. Sakai: We have to be careful to hold the lens of capitalist military theory the right way up, since it may seem to help us understand their wars—but is itself a blind alley. Capitalist militaries use terms like “fourth generation” war to systematize their own technical and managerial development. Starting with “first generation warfare,” which to them was the forming of European state armies in the 1600s—who fought in the first rigid formations of soldiers using powered weapons (i.e. muskets and artillery). Today’s “fourth generation warfare” is supposedly characterized by the mixing of regular and irregular forces and tactics, together with the strategic option of waging war directly upon unarmed civilian populations of the enemy, rather than targeting their more dangerous militaries.

How “new” and different this is, certainly sounds pretty questionable to revs, just being polite. i mean, we can test it using one well-established example that we all know about: at Wounded Knee in 1890, the Indigenous women, children, and elderly of the Lakota village (the young men were mostly elsewhere that day) were massacred without any quarter whatsoever, after the majority had disarmed themselves on demand by the invading Union Army cavalry troopers. It was also historic as a first Army enthusiastic field testing of white men’s newly developed u.s. machine guns, which proved highly effective against unarmed women and children trying to hide behind tents. Fleeing Lakota were hunted and ridden down for miles by the victorious u.s. army troopers, a full twenty of whom later received Congressional Medals of Honor to prove that everything that the u.s. military does in its massacres small and large is exceptionally courageous and honorable.

This was one of the last signal battles of the historic eurosettler war to conquer the Plains Indians and Make “America” Great Again. In post-modern military terms, the technological triumph of the u.s. army’s first machine guns and the elaborate propaganda awarding of the highest possible military honors by the “democratically-elected government,” were as important moves as that 7th Cavalry’s invasion of Indigenous lands itself.

So was trying out advanced “weapons of mass destruction” on unarmed civilians enough to qualify that 1890 day as good as “fourth generation warfare”? Or was it the Putinesque use of the “big lie,” and super elaborate propaganda which publicized and played up their own war crimes but successfully blamed the victims for making it all so necessary, that would make it like “fourth generation warfare”? i think the point is evident.

These “generation” terms were coined as abstract generalizations by the u.s. capitalist military to use in their own managerial theory about capitalist conflict, but they are not accurate about our real world clashes themselves.

And now, since to blab about “fourth generation war” is only like some technocratic jargon to the general public, the u.s. national security community have been instead trying out a more fashionable video game-type term, “hyperwar,” which means exactly the same thing.

We see “hyperwar” trotted out mostly when the housebroken u.s. media is reporting on Putin’s unsavory wars. Obviously, like in Ukraine, where regular Russian army and marine units are sided there with retreat veterans and paroled prisoners brought back as the privately uniformed Wagner Group, the more respectable face of an increasing mix of mercenary patch and fill units (such as Donbas Ukrainian town militias and companies of former Syrian army elite soldiers). While Russia uses its military weight advantage to do constant mass artillery and aerial bombardment not only of battlefields but also far beyond, trying to directly wipe out the target society itself. All this might be very striking, but is nothing that the u.s. military and other capitalist militaries haven’t done themselves

first, decades or even generations ago (during the long Afghanistan occupation, on most u.s. military bases there “American” mercenaries, politely called “contractors,” often outnumbered regular u.s. troops and aviation forces three or four to one).

Exotic sounding “hyperwar” might stand for some technical capitalist military configuration, but only obscures the actual military change and theory. While WW2, for example, is said by the u.s. capitalist military to mark the time where capitalism’s “second generation war” evolved into the “third generation war” of Nazi blitzkriegs and motorized wars of fast non-linear maneuvering, this is only a narrow technocratic viewpoint. More importantly, to begin with, wars in the capitalist world have distinct and complex political identities and characteristics.

We can gain some perspective by reaching way back in time, to a nodal point of the wave of change that is coming over us right now. The 1935–45 Sino-Japanese war involving millions of combatants, eventually took place within and was to “Americans” mixed up with the global World War 2, where all the major imperialist powers divided into two camps, and fought it out at the admission price totaling at least 60 million lives lost to decide which capitalist nations would colonize everyone else, rule or ruin.

The importance to us now of that 1935–45 Sino-Japanese war, is that it was one of the first great neo-colonial wars, and helped usher in the present era of neo-colonial global economics and politics. When people use the term “neocolonialism,” they usually mean only some money-grubbing trick or crime, where a bribed politician helps some corporate giant of the imperialist metropolis ravage the labor and resources of some peripheral nation. It is so much more than that.

Neo-colonialism occupies a final period of capitalism of its own, where colonial empires and great powers fell, and the new freedom of every capitalist entity to forage and ravage disregarding nationalities and borders around the world became what we call globalization. What the all-enveloping effects of today’s neo-colonial wars like in Ukraine and Ethiopia are to us, only serves to remind us of the shock wave caused by the Sino-Japanese war of the mid-20th century.

Revs saw the working out of the first successfully developed anti-capitalist revolutionary military practice and theory. The major 1935 Japanese imperialist invasion to make China a wholly owned and occupied Japanese colony, like Korea and Manchuria were then, was defeated in deliberately slowed protracted war by communist guerrilla forces famously represented by Mao Zedong’s political-military teachings. Anti-capitalist revolutionaries who consciously took control of time itself. (While in a contrast we are familiar with, the global “lone superpower” u.s. empire in its Muslim “forever war,” was enslaved and hag ridden by time). This is something capitalist conflict analysts rarely explain. Because in struggle politics is in command, not hardware nor techniques.

The ten-year Sino-Japanese war eventually became in part a theatre of global WW2, of course, but in itself it was one of the first great neo-colonial wars. Anti-capitalist revolutionaries understood this major strategic definition, while capitalist thinking worldwide did not, which meant it also didn’t usefully understand the war there.

The obvious power of all-out Japanese capitalist invasion initially created a great wave of mass defeatism, even among young Chinese militants. China, after all, was famously derided as “the weak man of Asia.” Whose last imperial dynasty had been unable to prevent Western imperialist nations and Japan from occupying China economically and militarily, with parts of the country even being garrisoned and directly governed by foreign capitalists, turning it into the world’s largest neo-colony for the West and Japan. While Japan itself, with its battleships and modern mechanized army, had easily defeated the Russian Czarist empire in their decisive war of 1905. Emerging onto the level of a new great capitalist power as apparently overwhelmingly powerful as China was “weak.”

The Communist revolutionaries reminded their people that far from being militarily invincible in China, as so many believed back then, the well-equipped Japanese fascist invaders were at an invisible but inescapable structural disadvantage to their ragged grassroots anti-capitalist opponents. As Mao pointed out, China was the greatest neocolonial economic prize in the world. With no imperialist power being in the end willing to let one of their other imperialist rivals swallow it all up for themselves. No matter how much troops and equipment the Japanese fascists poured into China’s vast land mass,

other imperialist powers would bend the world around to prevent them from being victorious. This bleeding Achilles heel would in protracted struggle combine with revolutionizing the Chinese exploited and oppressed for a new kind of people's warfare, to prove fatal for the arrogant invaders, a skinny young wanted fugitive Mao accurately predicted.

(Not that Mao was omniscient about all warfare, any more than you or i could be. Used to muse about his dire postwar warning that guerrilla warfare in the Philippines could never succeed—since that capitalist neo-colony has generated armed insurgencies of almost every kind over and over for my entire lifetime and might keep trying til they get over. However unpublicized or unnoticed here in the metropolis, just like Mexico has been.)

More important than the system's professionals explaining the development of their capitalist warfare, is understanding the war we are in. Ukraine might be not simply a neocolonial war—which it obviously is—but one of the major wars in the fall of the capitalist world-system. "Twilight" capitalism has forced the world on pain of destruction to learn new ways from it, to imitate it, for in the neo-colonial era it invariably teaches over and over all those it must keep intimate with both in production and systemic violence. New modes of production and conflict which leap over the limitations of old nation-state ways that only yesterday seemed invincible, embody how the retreat of the capitalist world-system puts everything we do and are through the grinding change mechanism of neo-colonialism.

Though this neo-colonial era pretends to do away with oppressor and thus also oppressed nations, it really only accelerates their interpenetration. Which has proven that capitalism cannot survive without colonialism. In a mere lifetime it has hollowed out the meaning of great national armies and industries on one hand, as on the other it drives hundreds of millions out of self-sufficient agriculture, handicraft production, and nature-based communities which functioned for centuries. Increasingly populating its computerized societies with reserve armies of labor that it piously and falsely identifies as some new phenomenon of "useless classes."

In a culture which makes a fetish of what is new, it is easy to forget that global capitalism's basic structures are to the contrary quite old. The two basic drives of the ceaseless accumulation of more and more capital but only to accumulate still more capital, together with the ceaseless dagger thrusts of "creative destruction," still compel capitalists and their class system to roll back and forth around the globe to now reconquer and recolonize and rape again the earth every day.

As though the displaced homeless proletariat and lumpen street masses of London and Paris in early 18th and 19th century industrial capitalism were only the harbinger of capitalism's final shape. For our rulers, even in their new global clothing, have never changed their fundamental structural drives as a class being made up wholly of capital.

Always wiping each other out as entire corporations or entire industries or even whole economic regions in what the noted critical economist Joseph Schumpeter famously named "creative destruction," calling it the basic inner life cycle of capitalism. As Schumpeter said: "The process of creative destruction is the essential fact about capitalism. It is what capitalism consists in and what every capitalist concern has got to live in."⁶

While the class structure itself may wear more fashionable clothing, in important ways it is still much as it was centuries ago, except for the foretold wiping away of the peasantry into the global industrial marginalized working class. Only it now envelops the world and the main class sectors have become gigantic in their transcontinental size. The difference in scale changes things, as quantitative change past a critical point becomes qualitative change in its basic nature.

Remember, capitalist classes are never born united and rarely even pretend to be. Capitalist classes are always born with major political-economic internal battles and severe splits of their own. That's the normal, the ordinary routine of the world. Just as they were born as a top dog class outwardly fighting us—their workers—capitalists are born inwardly fighting each other tooth and nail to the death.

⁶ Greenspan & Woolridge. op cit. Page 14.

To give one example of changes wrought by the difference in scale: that there are, depending on who counts, loosely 700 to 900 u.s. oligarchs today means that no one on Wall Street or Silicon Valley can be the “gatekeeper” anymore, selectively opening or closing the doors to the large sums of money needed to wage empire-wide political campaigns to wield the state. There’s no J.P. Morgan or Rockefellers politically anymore. (Even without factoring in how the internet has transformed new political agitprop and reorganizing.) While journalists have spotlighted a tiny handful of white right-wing big donors such as Rebekah Mercer as the financial support for the Trump right’s rise, this reaches the target but isn’t in any way hitting the bullseye.

While most u.s. oligarchs are fairly obscure white men keeping a low profile, there is a category we usually don’t think of politically that for other reasons is more visible to us: owners of professional sports teams. So looking at the 31 privately-owned NFL teams, at least four oligarch pro football owners are known to be Trump backers. Just as the men of the Ricketts family, which controls TD Ameritrade and owns the Chicago Cubs baseball team, have been hardcore Trump supporters (because their founding father is an open white power racist, the adult children have had to pledge that he is totally stonewalled from any management of their popular sports team).

Although Silicon Valley has used a progressive or even populist sheen as protective coloration, its actual ingrained hostility to people other than affluent white capitalist men has been proven over and over, and a number of its important figures are if anything to the right of Trump. Same same Wall Street and the financial elite. Now that flamboyantly goofy white power Trumpism has seeped into and become the hatchet’s edge of the renewed GOP, regular big finance capitalist oligarchs are publicly stepping forward as its special funders. Recently, to prepare for the 2022 GOP election campaigns, Ken Griffin of the large Citadel hedge fund donated \$20 million to the party; as has Stephen Schwarzman, chairman of Blackstone, the world’s largest hedge fund. While banking heir Timothy Mellon and insurance oligarch Patrick Ryan gave \$10 million each. Nor are they the only ones.⁷

If “only” ten percent or so of u.s. oligarchs would support an extended tear-the-house-down takeover by the white far right, that would still be a financial and political power base of close to a hundred u.s. oligarchs.

While cosmopolitan multicultural transnational corporations encompass some of the ruling class, that is significantly less of a Jesus save factor for liberal democratic society than it is home-staged to appear. And as “America” in its overreaching culture promotes more and more frequent mass shootings to be its classier version of the suicide vest bombings of those backward much poorer societies, only lost-in-space liberals and progressives are left defending old government as legitimate.

Kersplebedeb: i am reading Immanuel Wallerstein, about the rise and fall of world systems. But i’m always unsure to what extent it makes sense to trace what is happening today backwards, as opposed to trying to understand it in the context of everything else happening today. Though the past does tend to feel more interesting.

J. Sakai: You remind me, oddly enough, of Malcolm X. Didn’t he say, “Of all our studies, we have found history to be the most rewarding”? We always go back to our kitchen window to the past, to better understand. Because back in the past is where our present began, and that past is even now alive as a key part of our present. Everyone knows that.

But in the same way, our own present will be part of the future. We need at least a shaky smartphone photo of this future taking form now—a tentative look at its rough shape and a guide as to where revolutionaries will be at our work fighting in it. For now, constructing the outline of the future just using the clues already here in the present for us, if we can pick them out.

This is the anvil where revolutionary theory is being hammered out and tested still glowing hot. It’s no secret that capitalism as a planetary system is in severe disjuncture. It’s in everyone’s conversations and supermarket lines. The other week, was browsing a women’s vampires-and-werewolves paperback novel, when my eyes snagged on a line about a future Asian American Methodist bishop counseling a

⁷ Shane Goldmacher. “Drop in Small-Dollar Donations Alarms G.O.P.” The New York Times. July 27, 2022.

younger knight-wizard with a most non-biblical quotation: “The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters.” The young knight-wizard replies in her knowing ironic to the older woman: “Although I doubt Antonio Gramsci had our kind of monsters in mind.”⁸

i had not expected a real-life 1920s communist anti-fascist prisoner’s words foreseeing the raw interregnum awkwardly looming between old industrial capitalism and some new world-system, somehow dropped head-first into this fantasy novel landscape of post-apocalyptic supervillains and heroes (that was the first and last time he or his politics were mentioned there). But the mixing mix started to get more real when i heard that a writer in the pro-Trump conservative journal *American Greatness* had called on white men to now embrace their final metamorphosis for euro-capitalism: “The decent know that they must become ruthless. They must become the stuff of nightmares. The good man must spare not a moment to train, in both body and mind, to become the monster that he may need to become in order to slay the monsters that prey upon the vulnerable.”⁹

This country gradually takes on terminal aspects of its modern doppelganger, the desperately dancing for time liberal democratic German Weimar republic which went all to H (spoiler alert: they really really didn’t make it).

For us, “America’s” own Civil War 2 can be a reality check, a flashing little warning light. With at last our very own amateur fight night: a comical “Munich Beer Hall Putsch,” first-toe-in-the-water, January 6 test coup in the Capitol. Don’t forget that between his 2016 triumph and his 2020 defeat, clown Trumpenfuhrer actually gained 1.5 million voters in Democratic sunny California. The whole capitalist system here is now misfiring against itself, parts breaking down one by one, no longer working as the dominant hegemony it once was. Even in the rich garden headquarters society of the imperialist metropolis.

Because the feeling is of crises no longer passing but only kept unresolved, multiplying, our left conversations have taken to peppering phrases with “twilight” and “late” when describing the capitalist system. There’s a left cottage industry of intellectuals hesitantly but seriously writing about globalization deepening the crisis of world capitalism now. That so many differing radical theorists have turned their attention here is itself a signal flag. But revs need to search more directly into the gale.

Even if we weren’t conscious of it, we have long been steeling ourselves for the demise of the capitalist world-system. Even if explicit revolutionary theory on the end of capitalism has been late coming and incomplete. Many of us from all sides have turned much more to culture than Depression economics in feeling our way into the future. But isn’t that always true? As early as 1979, anti-capitalist literary critic H. Bruce Franklin pointed out that science fiction writing was then sampling the theme of the future as an apocalyptic dystopia, mistakenly confusing the end of capitalism for the end of farking everything. As he chipped in about the mindset of then-leading British SF author J.G. Ballard: “it is easier to imagine the end of the world, than it is the end of capitalism.”¹⁰

This aspect of our imperialist culture sonar sensing the ping of possible real-life existential end game, but too frightened to face it except in a transposed fictional form, has grown to wide screen dimensions. As rampaging zombies destroying everything human became normal fixtures in movies and television. Or flip side, same coin, society threatened/saved by supervillains/heroes who without words or permissions appear to matter-of-factly replace ordinary humans as the only beings who can determine the fate of the world. As Kanye West stalks to grab the microphone from Taylor Swift, while millions of refugee people of color driven from their dying nation-states are trying to overrun and erase with the mass of their “useless” bodies the parking lot border lines of the wealthy Western metropolis. Or so oppressor culture in shock mixes the drinks.

⁸ Ilona Andrews. *Blood Heir*. Nancy Yost Literary Agency, Inc, 2021. Page 77.

⁹ David Brooks. “The G.O.P. Is Getting Even Worse.” *The New York Times*. April 23, 2021.

¹⁰ This quotation is often seen right now, but almost always attributed to the left critic Fredric Jameson. As in it being described as “the famous Jameson quote” on one popular Goodreads page. Not that there’s any mystery about H. Bruce Franklin’s work, but Jameson is so much more “hip” and “in” right this moment to the shoddy white reformist intellectuals.

Since every previously existing civilization and stage of history known to people has encountered its end times, the idea that present world capitalism might itself run out of time is not a recognition limited to some obscure fringe. Last year I was reading Irish novelist Sally Rooney's latest bestseller, when I ran aground right into a thick passage. Two main characters are young women who were BFFs at university and afterwards talk frequently though living in different places, by long emails ranging from relationship gossip across to serious intellectual discussions. So one emails the other:

"Your paragraph about time reminded me of something I read online recently. Apparently in the Late Bronze Age, starting about 1,500 years before the Christian era, the Eastern Mediterranean region was characterized by a system of centralized palace governments, which redistributed money and goods through complex and specialized city economies. I read about this on Wikipedia. Trade routes were highly developed at this time and written languages emerged. Expensive luxury goods were produced and traded over huge distances—in the 1980s a single wrecked ship from the period was discovered off the coast of Turkey, carrying Egyptian jewelry, Greek pottery, blackwood from Sudan, Irish copper, pomegranates, ivory. Then, during a seventy-five year period from about 1225 to 1150 BCE, civilization collapsed. The great cities of the Eastern Mediterranean were destroyed or abandoned. Literacy all but died out, and entire writing systems were lost."

"No one is sure why any of this happened, by the way. Wikipedia suggests a theory called 'general systems collapse', whereby 'centralization, specialization, complexity, and top-heavy political structure' made Late Bronze Age civilization particularly vulnerable to breakdown. Another of the theories is headlined simply: 'Climate change'. I think this puts our present civilization in a kind of ominous light, don't you think? General systems collapse is not something I had ever really thought about as a possibility before. Of course I know in my brain that everything we tell ourselves about human civilization is a lie. But imagine having to find that out in real life."¹¹

That jab in the head caught me by surprise. The novelist, who is a socialist, didn't have to make up any fictional "general systems collapse" theory—that developed theory on the possible lessons of the fall of Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean societies exists, and the author of one scholarly book on the subject was even interviewed on a National Public Radio blog or something. Our obvious benefit from this idea is that it maybe opens our minds to considering how what we know are major problems in capitalism might even be much more.

What is pushing and hurrying us about is the ominous feeling that is lurking just behind everyone's shoulder now. A feeling that everything is somehow getting worse all the time, and that things only get worse and not better. In many countries, ours included, mass politics seem to be moving down the street towards a semi-fascist or maybe even fascist end, unless looming climate disaster gets us first. And no one seems to have any control over it. Like, no one is at the steering wheel.

It's as if the world is just sliding downhill towards X, and no matter how wide we try to open our eyes, somehow we can't encompass or take hold of it all. Even though the foreboding feels so damn big we should be able to see it with our naked eyes from across the solar system. Paradoxically it's too big for us to see.

Big economy/society "over-complexity" theory seems to make immediate sense—right now in this time of global supply-chain dysfunction, pandemic domino world upset, and unprecedented war and economic reprisals on everyone in general all at once—but is just one of a number of plausible theories explaining a near-term collapse of today's capitalist world-system. It is by far not even the most popular one right now, incidentally, though that doesn't make it wrong in my view. The most popular view would be global climate disaster, caused by relentless global warming from industrial capitalist civilization's greenhouse gas emissions. Even those who single out a different factor as the probable lever in tipping this world-system off into its final crash usually bring in climate disaster as a contributing factor for final system disaster. As the novel's character does herself in that weighty email.

¹¹ Sally Rooney. *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021. Pages 43–44.

What I've come to personally believe is that because today's capitalist crisis is so great, so enveloping of the entire system from horizon to horizon, it can be seen as many different crises or events, depending on what point or feature your eyes are focused on. All are probably real, but as parts of a greater final transformation of the capitalist world-system as a whole.

Not going to go over or even list all the different points of left opinion on the demise of capitalism. That's too big a detour to fit in here. But since my favorite interviewer/editor has raised the question of Immanuel Wallerstein's views on capitalist world-system change, let's use Wallerstein as an example to bounce off how my own views have developed here.

Left historical sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein was the most prominent developer of what is termed world-systems analysis or theory. Have read little of Wallerstein's thick basic writings myself, and certainly don't claim to understand them well enough to advocate yes or no. World-systems analysis tries to fuse all the varied Western academic fields such as sociology, history, anthropology, economics, astrology, and beyond into one theuryscope, trying to see how world-systems evolve and go through life cycles over long periods of time.¹² Wallerstein believed that every given world historic socio-economic system dies when its growth reaches its furthest limits (a variant away from Marx's historical materialist dictum that every type of historical society dies when it has exhausted its successive class role in further developing the means of production and distribution). And that capitalism's absolute need to always rake in capital accumulation and then double down again on even more capital accumulation has really reached its use-by date. As this world-system has effectively enveloped the entire globe and absorbed every human nation and people within it, and has thus hit its limits as a system.

Wallerstein saw this impact accentuating the current downward cycle of a regular "long wave" of the 50-year cycle of capitalist boom and ebb, first charted out by Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratiev. Which has now been finally disrupted in its cycle and is unable to rise up again, due to the lack of any new space or population to expand into and exploit more. This, he believed, has led to the system being "currently in the terminal stage of structural crisis," summing things up this way:

"So, to resume, the modern world-system in which we are living cannot continue because it has moved too far from equilibrium, and no longer permits capitalists to accumulate capital endlessly ... We are consequently living in a structural crisis in which there is a struggle about the successor system. Although the outcome is unpredictable, we can feel sure that one side or the other will win out in the coming decades, and a new reasonably stable world-system (or set of world-systems) will be established."¹³

There is a generalized timeline being booted about by some serious analysts for the world-system's fall and full eclipse into interregnum. In this regard, Wallerstein and fellow historical sociologist Randall Collins won some academic cred in predicting endgame crisis, because in the 1970s they correctly predicted the fall in that next decade or so of the Soviet Union. And although they developed different views on causation—what will finally trigger the toppling of the capitalist world-system—their timeframes at least were essentially similar. Wallerstein earlier said that he saw the time of capitalist world-system collapse in "terminal transformation" occurring approximately in the 2030–2050 range.

Interestingly, both researchers believed that the accuracy of their individual predictions wasn't going to matter much. Because both agreed with the widely held view that our world is in a desperate race to stop and then to some degree reverse global warming—the great battle over greenhouse gas emissions and industrial age pollution. Which will calendar-wise soon unleash itself after other contradictions have shot their arrows, and which scientists predict will cause such physical and social destruction that the capitalist world will no longer be functional or usable as a system of social organization in any case.

¹² Immanuel Wallerstein, Randall Collins, Michael Mann, Georgi Derlugian, Craig Calhoun. *Does Capitalism Have a Future?* Oxford University Press, 2013. Pages 57, 65. For a good browse, try his paperback selected works, which include not only some highlights from his world-system theory but also short writings on subjects such as race and ethnicity, the bourgeois as concept and reality, and liberalism: *The Essential Wallerstein*. The New Press, 2000.

¹³ Wallerstein, Collins, Mann, Derlugian, Calhoun. *op cit*. Page 35.

Whatever else most radical analysts who work to reveal capitalist endgame crisis may focus on, many of them also see capitalism's destructive blindness about the environment as bringing down on it the final, most physical, and least escapable fist in the 2050–2100 time period.

We note that Wallerstein believed that today's political struggle isn't actually over the fall of capitalism—which had already become a done deal in its early stages to him, fully in process—but over what future world hegemonic society will come to succeed it. Writing in the years before his death in 2019, he saw the future as “at best a 50–50 chance” between some new more democratic and more egalitarian world-system versus something highly repressive like fascism, which we all know hasn't waited for scholarly validation but is right now racing ahead of us everywhere.

My problem with all that has been that some left intellectuals might agree or not that this analysis or another one could be true, but what “proof” is that anyway? The 64 thousand dollar question applied here is how do we know that a systemic limit on accumulation is really going to finish off the capitalist system in the actually-existing now? Capitalism has gone through periods of no profits and big crisis before—like the 1929 Great Depression, for one—and didn't get that close to croaking. Got into emergency gear, went all crafty, reformed this while killing off that, sprinkled in some wars, and Bob's your uncle their capitalist profits were back. Capitalism has proven itself to be ruthlessly supple, capable of surprise strategies and reinventing itself to survive.

i mean, u.s. capitalism once way back in the mid-1860s went in just four quick years from having a vast chattel enslaved labor-based economy with millions of cheapestpossible unwaged workers, to suddenly no race-enslaved chattel property at all and the loss to many Southern capitalists of staggering amounts of one-half of their whole capital and business. But overall mister u.s. cap came out of it all bulging muscular. Ready to expand and conquer as never before.

So while i respect world-systems crisis analysis some, ditto other crisis analyses, wasn't sure that these theoretical predictions of capitalist system crash were firm and not jumping off-balance at clues. As our ever hopeful intellectual left has done so often before. (Though if there is a joker in the deck, it is certainly the already onrushing global climate change towards disaster.)

But my thoughts on this shifted gears when i started noticing something that i hadn't been hearing—that capitalism was actually destroying its own nation-states one after another. Some might be rebuilt later or not, but right now they are being gutted and taken down. This is an incalculable event. That's world changing beyond numbers.

To me the question of nations is so pivotal because that is how capitalism as a world-system has organized its societies structurally to do its work, apply its resources, and solve its problems. Nor is it true that in the absence of a functional capitalist nation, we can just jump in and go ahead with our neighbors to cheerfully and communally solve survival problems—check out Haiti for that one—because capitalism as its most bottom-line autonomic reflex will rather arrange to kill us all than let us remake our lives communally. Much of today's world can be explained by that one fact.

i initially ran into this understanding on the job—naturally, where else? When i first went to work at a suburban nursery around 9/11, the guys there provided a whole different learning experience about the world for me. That crew mostly came from a town in southern Mexico—largely happy young energetic teens and 20s, who came wading across the border or riding the coyote. We worked the garden season outdoors growing and loading into customers' SUVs, April until Christmas (selling fall plants then pumpkins and then Christmas trees and wreaths and all that is cash “plant” business, too). So they earned bucks to send home nine months a year, and then went home themselves to their vil to relax and play soccer every day and lord it up as young dudes who had some bit of u.s. cash for three nice months. Sweet to them.

It was all good until it wasn't. Year by year, their sky gradually darkened. At first the guys used to tell me that they weren't worried, since they had like a Mexican utopian vision. One married father told me that he knew his young son would be okay, since all Mexicans here had endless jobs for life—because for some strange reason in “America” none of the people liked to work (not saying it's true, just what they were saying). So Mexicans would gladly do all the real work. (Hey, in my favorite sushi joint all

four sushi chefs are Latino, only the boss and cashier are Asian.) They and the u.s.a. were really only two parts of one body, like heart and lungs, they thought, and sometime soon white people would realize that and end all this border nonsense.

Not only did that dream not happen, instead nightmares, like ICE harassment and crazy white hate, shrunk the livable environment here all around them, while getting back for the start of the work season from Mexico got harder year by year. The coyotes got way more costly and unreliable (or were under more heat from the drug gangs to turn over their merchandise faster). Some guys quit, tired of the fear and figuring it wasn't worth the gamble.

The end finally came when the Mexican government, without an official word, abandoned the area their hometown was in, and big patches of dead state spread over it, like killed-off coral reef zones increasingly spill over the seabed. i mean, the state officials and police were still there and continued riding on top of all the ordinary people, but they were no longer in charge. A fickle criminal syndicate was now the actual state. A shadow state.

One of the guys described going home that last winter. All of a sudden on the main highway into town there was a roadblock complete with men with rifles. Their rules were simple: they did whatever they wanted and you obey or they kill you (the police carefully spent the day on the other side of town). If you were unlucky enough to be driving a newish car or truck, they motioned you out and took it, for keeps. You had to give them your dollars and if you had anything nice—like gifts you'd brought back from "America" for your family—they would take those, too. Laying on almost personal tariffs, just like a Trumphenfuhrer, only daylight naked not covered up in misdirection. No misunderstandings allowed there, that afternoon.

So the people in that town had their little society and bare little economy to live within, poorer but at home. But under this lumpen capitaloid shadow state there was erratic informal taxation and threat of killings always, and if you wanted to travel somewhere it was safest to take the bus and not have anything conspicuous with you. You shouldn't just drive around if you could avoid it, that wasn't safe. Those in our workplace up here who decided to stick with their "good" jobs, didn't go home anymore to Mexico each year—too much hassle and risk. They lived here so they had no safe home either place. Yas, Mexican criminal mafia is different but is also morally and functionally equivalent to ICE, the u.s. government migration strong-arm agency. Crap @@@ shite. They weren't carefree smiling young guys on a work adventure anymore. Babylon is always so inviting, but in the end it's never fun.

Anyway, you know all this—it's nobody's secret that increasing sections of rural and even small city urban Mexico have been overrun or in part taken over by one drug cartel or criminal mafia or another in waves. It's bigger than the tired out "cops + robbers" or "poor colored people + plenty of crime" stereotypes that capitalist culture loves to stick in our sore heads. Just saying, because instead of mistakenly thinking i know something, picked up abstractly in the distance from the internet news, hearing it first hand from someone's life is when i started realizing the real, that capitalist nations that people lived in really were being essentially wiped out piece by piece, place by place. Holy crap, i thought. Makes sense on second thought: If the big guys like the u.s.a. and UK and Russia are all busy destroying even their own nations year by year—why not help everyone's neo-colonized peripheral nations come to go dead, too?

Of course, the u.s. empire—the home base of capitalist globalization—has pretty methodically been going around the world slowly, quietly rubbing troublesome nations jack out of existence for some time now. Oh, they still have wellpaid representatives at the UN and on embassy row, and they are still on the little Rand McNally globe maps of the world. They may or may not be rebuilt some day, but right now they no longer exist as functioning societies with actual coherent governments. It isn't just Iraq and Afghanistan. They also did it to Libya and Somalia, and of course u.s.- cursed Haiti and Syria, the refugee exodus capital. Then there's sub-Saharan Africa's rapidly disintegrating nations no longer in the news, to say nothing of Ethiopia. Chinese diplomats brought this up once at an international gathering, the strange coincidence of countries being internally destroyed after the u.s. "helps" them.

We are starting to see that old Latin phrase *interregnum*— the dislocated space in time between two kings or reigns without a rule or particular order. And in coming years we will hear it more and more as the existing capitalist worldsystem is replaced with the uncertain wasteland of struggle over a future gone beyond it. What does that transitory landing zone start to look like? Going to take a specific road, and go into that Mexican crisis in a bit more detail. So grab a seat if you're into this informal map-reading.¹⁴

This summer, a killing in Mexico made headlines in their news and a little bit in ours. It sheds some negative light, some piercing darkness, which helps define the shape of this. Two old Jesuit Catholic priests, who had dedicated their last years to a small and poor mountain village in Chihuahua state along the border, were shot down along with a local tour guide who was desperately trying to find sanctuary in their church. The murderer is already named by police as a figure in organized crime; he had been set in a rage that day, townspeople said, first kidnapping and disappearing/killing two brothers and burning down their house. Apparently because they and their amateur baseball team had just beat the rival team he had sponsored, as a local personage in a big drug cartel. A Chihuahua environmental activist told reporters simply: "He is a very bloodthirsty man."

Obviously, killing people isn't shocking anymore, but his targets were. Far off in the Vatican, Pope Francis himself said he was "dismayed" by the Jesuits' murders in their own church, and exclaimed on Twitter: "How many killings there are in Mexico!" For his part, the Mexican president said that the killings were "unacceptable." His prosecutors even offered a reward of \$250,000 for information leading to an arrest. So an official big deal. Yawn. Likely the Mexican army troops promptly sent there will someday bring a killer suspect forward in chains for a photo op eventually. Or perhaps by the time you read this some cartel might have disappeared this inconvenient guy. Or likely the story will just vanish from the news for months or years, until a convenient happy ending can be found. It's all very likely.

What isn't likely is the stereotyped criminal gang killings fiction we always get force fed to us. This isn't merely some irrational drug crime out on a personal "rampage." A senior area analyst for the respected International Crisis Group has pointed out: "There's mounting evidence that a lot of criminal actors are testing the waters to see what they can get away with," particularly in terms of taking over state authority in their regions. A Rector of one Jesuit university observed after the killings that Mexico was "a failed state."

This isn't a one-mafia-baseball-team deal. Other big criminal capitalist bodies, such as the Mexican state and its own neo-colonial sponsor, the u.s. empire, are heavily invested right with them. By the Mexican police's own admission, the alleged Sinaloa gunman had murdered a white u.s. schoolteacher from North Carolina in 2018, but had been allowed to walk around free and completely got away with it. That was the kind of off-side violent transgression that used to be taboo. The next year he was said by local journalists to have killed a Chihuahua state human-rights activist. Again, he is walking around

¹⁴ After the June 2022 slaying of the two Catholic priests, i took out one of my files of press clippings on the Mexican crisis. While these are separate news stories on different events in the crisis, they really are interconnected, and i urge anyone interested in diving deeper into the situation to simply read them all together. It's like an extended magazine article: Natalie Kittroeff and Oscar Lopez. "Catholic Church Joins Mexico's Critics After Murder of 2 Jesuit Priests." *The New York Times*. June 25, 2022 ; CBS News. July 6, 2022. 10:06 am. "Bishop proposes 'Social Pact' with drug traffickers to tackle violence in Mexico"; Maria Abi-Habib. "In Mexico, Farmers Are Caught in Middle of Drug Cartels Turf War." *The New York Times*. May 5, 2022; David Agren. "Witness testifies that El Chapo paid a \$100 million bribe to ex-Mexican president Peña Nieto." *Washington Post*. January 15, 2019 at 7:34 p.m. EST; Noah Hurowitz. "El Chapo Trial: Witness Alleges Presidential Bribes, Cartel Brutality." *Rolling Stone*. November 21, 2018. 12:54 PM ET; Randal C. Archibold. "In Mexico, a Growing Gap Between Political Class and Calls for Change." *The New York Times*. December 13, 2014; David Karp. "Is the Lime an Endangered Species?" *The New York Times*. May 30, 2014; Jose de Cordoba. "Bloody Struggle Erupts Over Avocado Trade." *The Wall Street Journal*. February 1-2, 2014; Santiago and Jose de Cordoba. "Executive Slaying Sparks New Fears." *The Wall Street Journal*. January 11-12, 2014; Ginger Thompson, Randal C. Archibold and Eric Schmitt. "Hand of U.S. Is Seen in Halting General's Rise." *The New York Times*. February 5, 2013; Mary Anastasia O'Grady. "The Real Victims of Mexico's Drug War." *The Wall Street Journal*. November 12, 2012; Jose de Cordoba. "Trial Exposes Odd Ties in Mexico Drug War." *The Wall Street Journal*. January 7-8, 2012. (contains Mexican Attorney General Office's color map of different drug cartel areas at that time). Look up if you are interested some of the many internet articles on drug cartel officer Jesus Zambada Niebla as well as Bush regime security official Robert Bonner (especially his op ed on Mexico in the *New York Times*).

free and publically sponsoring a local sports team, so can be fairly said to have completely gotten away with it. (And, obviously, he has killed many others, if anyone cared.)

So this shooting down of two local priests is a bold step up, but not out of the question at all. Since then, more violent attacks on the Church have occurred. To help consolidate state power, the drug cartel needs to have demonstrated authority with the local population over what kinds of independent social activity are permissible under their rule and what not. Or, as the International Crisis Group analyst said of the Mexican cartels now: “They feel they exercise de facto sovereignty.”

Particularly the Sinaloa Cartel, which was visibly among the largest and most powerful cartels, and got that way by almost two decades of covertly working with or for the u.s. government. This is said to have started around 2000 when Humberto Loya, a lawyer who was a top associate and payoff bagman to politicians for then-Sinaloa co-leaders Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman and Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada, agreed to provide the u.s. government with critical information on other drug cartels in return for immunity for their own lumpen “creative destruction” biz. Lawyers in the u.s. for another Sinaloa figure on trial have also sworn to the court that “Indeed the United States government agents aided the leaders of the Sinaloa Cartel.”

Of course, when “El Chapo” Guzman repeatedly embarrassed the Mexican government and became a legendary outlaw prison-escapee figure, they and u.s. national security had to hunt him down by making deals paying off rival gangsters. Cartels, just like legit world corporations, are constantly changing and in transformation, swelling, merging, shrinking, and splintering, concentrating into niches, switching names and business focus. Only, in the lumpen class zone everything happens much faster and with more relentless turnover.

Always the Mexican government tries to maneuver situations where the most publicity-troublesome criminal actors are chased to big fanfare, while other rival criminal groups are left alone to thrive and pay off in the extra space. During the presidencies of Felip Calderon and his successor, the Mexican murder rate actually tripled—while officially 96% of reported crimes got unsolved by the police.

Last winter and spring, “American” shoppers noticed shortages of avocados and then also limes and mangoes— with big price increases—as news came that Mexican drug cartels were trying to move in and take over commercial agriculture exports to the u.s. Governments on both sides of the border and even armed local militias of avocado growers mobilized to take back the towns and highways, which the very violent Jalisco New Generation Cartel defended not only with gunmen but with highway roadblocks and Taliban-style improvised explosive devices on roadsides. Jalisco cartel men even cut off a Mexican army base, which for a while could only be resupplied by air as though it were in remote Afghanistan. Finally, after a long eight-month siege, Mexican army units were able to enter Naranjo de Chila, the Jalisco cartel’s stronghold there. The Jalisco “soldiers” simply abandoned their center in Michoacán state and disappeared away for a while.

They usually act to repress a cartel in an area only when there is very bad publicity and they need to lift up their battered image. So it was noticed locally that the Mexican government with its army and police were driving away the Michoacán state’s then-dominant Jalisco New Generation cartel, but not other crime factions. In effect, the Mexican army infantry were fighting side by side with the un-uniformed “soldiers” of the ambitious Viagras gang of Jalisco’s rival, the United Cartels (who did not give the Mexican and u.s. governments the same public relations headache). By that point, both had been shooting at and besieging the Jalisco forces and their supporters in the town of Naranjo de Chila for months.

For over a decade, these lumpen economic organizations have episodically taxed the avocado crop in different ways, there being billions of dollars at stake. Now they are pushing once again to take it over, setting a high payoff “tax” of 10% at the packaging plants, in some places even taking over farms altogether. Same with limes now, as well as sometimes mangoes and livestock and timber. David Karp, a former Los Angeles Times journalist on farm markets and researcher on botany at the University of California at Davis, noticing the trends, wrote eight years ago: “Criminal cartels now control, to a

shocking extent, the growing and packing of much of the Mexican produce on which United States consumers depend.”

The cartels are not young, and in their own way are beginning to take on the bureaucratic sinews that mature businesses need. They always had not simply “soldiers” but also ship’s captains and mechanics and logistical planning managers. Now government rural health workers are frightened and some are leaving. Doctors and nurses are worried about being drafted into handling the consequences of prolonged battles and possibly being executed if their cartel patients die on them. Already the cartels put up their own sophisticated telecommunications systems with security in rural areas. They get the telecommunications technicians and engineers by simply drafting them; they usually disappear on their way to work, never to be seen again. There was one telling incident when some gunmen stopped a bus and took two telephone company employees away, but they were the wrong guys: phone company, yes, but not technicians—they did consumer phone bill collecting. Their rejected dead bodies were found soon after. This is like watching a raw capitaloid state of its own kind getting formed from scratch before our eyes.

A program director of a Mexican security research agency commented that with “mafias” organized crime is not simply big but has reached into “a gray zone where you tie legal with illegal, the crime with business and the crime with politics.” Since the cartels “understand that that they have more power than anyone else, the government or the businesses they extort.” In the wake of the killings of the two and still another priest, a Catholic bishop has called for a new “social pact,” which in return for less violence would give the cartels a legitimized voice in deciding Mexico’s major political and social questions.

Former Mexican President Calderon, in a speech at the United Nations, said that his earlier attempt to wage a heavily militarized “Mano Dura” or “tough hand” actual war on Mexican drug traffickers—which brought in the regular Mexican army for the first time—as the Bush administration had planned for him, failed because the massive drug economy in the u.s. creates such unstoppable social and political aftereffects swirling through the Global South: “This allows drug traffickers to create powerful networks and gives them an almost unlimited ability to corrupt; they are capable of buying governments and entire police forces, leaving societies and governments defenseless, particularly in the poorest countries.”

This was clever capitalist propaganda. President Calderon himself is said to have been given \$3 million in cash in suitcases via his national security chief, in return for protecting the Sinaloa cartel—this according to the sensational testimony of former Sinaloa lieutenant Jesus “El Rey” Zambada, a u.s. government witness at the 2018 Brooklyn trial of “El Chapo” Guzman. These payoffs included at least one delivery that “El Rey” Zambada himself took part in. The u.s. Department of Justice is also conceding that Calderon’s political opponent and successor as Mexican president was even more corrupt and involved with the cartels than he was. Or as one Wall Street Journal headline summed it up: “Witness testifies that El Chapo paid a \$100 million bribe to ex-Mexican president Peña Nieto.” So capitalist pro-u.s. state officials and cartel leaders are much more than “frenemies,” because they really do need and benefit from each other even as they still must also play out eroding deadly antagonistic roles in the capitalist system—as though their lives depended on it.

The mega-violent reality fits right into some “The Wire”- type blood drama or “FBI”-type television hoopla. Like the endlessly rebroadcast “tragic” picture here of carelessly dangerous but short-lived violent young men shaped by their intense poverty, caught up in the killing machine of their people’s street criminality. This has the seeming of some raw truth, like a Shakespearian tragedy—but really is only a surface frag of truth. It is high-class nonfiction mixed with high-class fiction, an art form made by wealthy advanced capitalism’s propaganda specialists with real blood and actual poor bodies offered up for verisimilitude.

What was really moving the earth there is even colder, much more implacable. A reality that capitalism can’t let us understand now. Cause at its heart it’s not primarily about bloody melodrama, but about capitalism’s irreplaceable old nations in free fall, damaged with no repair coming, and the u.s. empire and in this example its Mexican neo-colonial subordinates unable to halt or even slow the descent, just throwing in more and more improvised violent stop-gaps as best they can on the fly.

In case nobody noticed, the u.s. imperial Dept. of Justice has a long-term policy of regularly throwing its top Mexican satraps under the bus, always placing the blame for the massive drug trade and spreading criminal lumpen zone on them. Usually not until they leave office, of course. It is a cover story both for the unwillingness of the u.s. ruling class to stop its always-mounting drug addiction business, and for their implicit claim that u.s. imperial gunmen and detectives and military have to always be policing the neocolonial world of people of color in the periphery to protect innocent white communities. As though there were innocent white communities, which is the largest criminal fiction of all.

As over the decades the Mexican capitalist ruling class and their state apparatus have gradually shrunk away from society's daily functioning—and moved more profitably outward—the empty space has been taken over by lumpen/proletarian economic organizations with the u.s. empire's tacit agreement. Occupying an important social and economic space, with an improvised and grotesque morphing, partinside and part-outside of capitalism, Mexican crime cartels carry out many billions of dollars in world trade selling not only drugs of many kinds to illicit North American users, not only agricultural products to u.s. supermarkets, but also industrial goods and raw materials to manufacturers of other countries, such as millions of dollars of enriched iron ore directly from their ports to China.

Most important of all, they step in to supplement the old weakening neo-colonial state with a self-funding and autonomous robotic repressive force with capacities beyond what the FBI, Pentagon, the CIA, or the ruling class actors in Mexico City can do in public. Bullet in the head with that avocado, anyone?

In classic class formations, capitalists are largely free riders on their nation-states. Usually very willing, though, to heavily tax the middle and lower classes to support the state structures such as highways and water systems, the police and military, that allow society to function adequately for their capitalism. But back in the day, some capitalists always understood that they could well afford to contribute in special ways, to strengthen what was really their own society's continued future. Famous capitalists like the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, the wealthiest man in "America," helped lead the building of the "American" nation's public library system. While in another striking case, Julius Rosenwald of Sears Roebuck paid for the designing and building of over 5,000 basic schools to house New Afrikan formal education over fifteen Southern states, whose "seg" governments would only fund white settler children's school buildings.

There are no longer any Carnegies or Rosenwalds in that old noble patriarch b.s. way, since even oligarchs like Gates and Buffet cannot rescue long-neglected and now rundown whole capitalist nations, where everything is worn out and dinged and all inadequate anyway. Even more so in a new onrushing age where according to the International Organization for Migration, by 2050 as many as 200 million refugees will be battering down doors seeking shelter just from rising water levels alone (not counting droughts and floods, desertification, firestorms, failing economies, ethnic and religious genocides, invasions and civil wars). And anyway, big capitalism and the big bourgeoisie can't care that way anymore about whatever place they once came from that's rotting away no matter what—no one is Saranwrapping their old family condo—since they increasingly are simultaneously both more global and more individualistic in their existence.

We have to get something really reverse to the way most of us are led to understand. Big capitalism gets it that Mexico may be disintegrating just as the u.s.a. is, but from their point of view it is still golden just the way it is. Ruchir Sharma, who manages \$45 billion in investments in the Global South as Chairman of International Business for Rockefeller Capital Management, put it this way:

"In the class of [medium] countries with an average per capita income around \$10,000 and a population over 100 million, Russia is a laggard ... The most dynamic is Mexico, which has also produced ten cities of more than a million people since 1985 ... The flowering of second-tier cities in Mexico is intimately connected to the manufacturing centers producing cars and other exports bound for the United States. Among the fastest growing Mexican cities with populations of more than a million, three are in states on the U.S. border: Tijuana, Juarez,

and Mexicali. ... In central Mexico, Queretaro is a jack-of-all-trades, making everything from wine to appliances to trucks, as well as offering services from call centers to logistics ... Aguascalientes is home to Toyota's most modern manufacturing plant outside Japan."

Sharma warned investors, however, that the picture on the other side of the peso note is not so crisp. Mexico may have the fifteenth-largest economy in the world, but the Mexican state is bluntly not functional:

"One clear sign that a state is falling short is when it cannot even collect taxes, a failure that tends to expose both a general incompetence on the part of administrators and a popular disdain for the state. Mexico, for example, collects taxes equal to about 14 percent of GDP. That is quite low for a middle class country, and the lack of revenue is making it hard for the government to maintain law and order or suppress the corrupting influence of the drug cartels. Mexico spends just 0.6 percent of GDP on the military, the second lowest among large emerging countries ..."¹⁵

At this point, some might ask, why doesn't Mexico take substantial amounts of money from that flourishing big city industrial export economy and use it to fix the rest of Mexico and drive out the cartels? The actual bourgeois world isn't so straight-forward. And for sure the Mexican capitalist ruling class that controls the state isn't going to heavily tax its own self. They would all rather let the present situation just roll on. Which is why it has. And when and if that part of Mexico gets used up, they expect to just move on to the next disposable plastic part of the neo-colonial periphery.

No, in a zombie-world way, the drug cartels and criminal mafias are capitalist Mexico's real "military," and its real "police" as well.

As a neo-colony of the u.s. empire, Mexico's 130 million people are a giant reserve army of inexpensive labor to backstop and enrich the u.s. imperial economy. Just a truck ride over the border. And their own small but quite affluent Mexican local ruling class sees no need to be taxed to support a military, since it has no traditional enemies as a country except "America" itself. And the Mexican ruling class openly feels that it is the rightful task of the rulers in Washington to defend the neo-colony. So it has just enough official army and navy to protect the capital city and hold the industrial centers and gated luxury reserves for its main capitalist families. All the rest can just go to H and blow away. Mexico being a country is not the same thing as it existing as a functioning nation.

It's interesting here in a grim sense to turn to another page, that the Pentagon has warned Congress and the "American" public that there is a danger of them falling behind Russia and China in the next generation of advanced military weaponry. Which is said to be autonomous gun- and bombcarrying robots flying over or perhaps driving across the battlefield, killing left and right by self-directed AI computer decision-making. That's really scary.

What no one is saying, though, is that they have something like that already, only in less precise but also less expensive flesh form. "America's" forbidden drug cartels and the taboo larger men's criminal street organization culture in Latin America are exactly that. Autonomous and selfaware killing formations of disposable "robots" that capitalists aren't publicly associated with or responsible for, that spread out to gradually cover every town and small city in the countryside. Automatically homing in on and subjecting to lethal investigation any persons trying to cause trouble to the existing social order other than them, whether it be by working against oppression or stopping the destruction of the environment, or anyone for human rights or organizing peasants or workers. Then killing or terrorizing the automatically selected targets into silence.

Best of all from the capitalist viewpoint, these kind of autonomous political killing formations of male "robots" can even be made self-financing by their drug selling, lemonade stands, and community car washes. And it's all "off the books." Can't get better than that.

¹⁵ Ruchir Sharma. *The Rise and Fall of Nations: Forces of Change in the Post-Crisis World*. W.W. Norton & Co. 2016. Pages 141, 193-194.

Although capitalist media and culture never admits it, that is what they already know how to do. Which is why the security apparatus of the u.s. government has always not only used such formations, but has worked in the oppressed zone to create them where they didn't exist. Anywhere the oppressed poor have risen to fight for human rights in the u.s. neo-colonial region of influence in Central America, rightwing mercenary paramilitaries and drug gangs secretly allied to the capitalists and the army have formed to carry out mass killings, assassinations, and cleansing of territory.

In Colombia, a current government-appointed truth commission is trying to finally end the 58-year internal "culture of security," which was taught to Colombian government forces by the CIA, DEA, and u.s. military, and that resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths in a permanent "cycle of violence." The intelligence chief of the Colombian Army Fourth Brigade provided individual targets for a wave of assassinations of alleged leftists carried out by the Medellin drug cartel. While Western oil companies secretly funded right-wing paramilitary units for "protection," doubtless with the informed but secret approval of key u.s. officials. "The consequences of this concerted and largely U.S.-driven approach," the commission concluded, was a "hardening of the conflict in which the civilian population has been the main victim."¹⁶

This is the same Colombian "tough hands" model that was instituted during the Mexican Calderon presidency by the u.s. Drug Enforcement Agency. Excited at reports of the high tolls of political rebels killed, not just by the army but by paramilitaries and the drug cartels as well, Robert Bonner (Bush's chief of the Drug Enforcement Agency as well as simultaneously head of Customs and Border Protection) urged the u.s.-designed "Colombia model" on President Calderon, and publicly defended his Mexican protégé's actions then and thereafter.

The truth commission has since uncovered that many of those assassinated in Colombia were not doing anything illegal, of course. Which is why they had to be killed "off the books," as it were. More and more of big capitalism's ruling the world as the crisis deepens seems to be "off the books."

As Mexico's export industries are growing and the affluent middle and upper classes associated with that sector grow wealthier, paradoxically the number of Mexicans in extreme poverty only increases. Populist president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has deliberately targeted both ends of the spectrum. Programs used to help poor women and children are now being abolished in favor of subsidy programs giving cash to middle- and even upper-class families. While a long-established program that extended the standard half-day in Mexican schools to include a hot lunch and extra classes has been abolished. Formerly it improved children's learning while providing all-day childcare so that women could find employment. A newspaper article notes: "Today 44 percent of Mexicans—nearly 56 million people—are destitute, according to the most recent government data available."¹⁷

Most ominously, some thousands of communities have in this year's heat wave run out of water. Streams and rivers have dried up in the extreme drought and heat, and groundwaters, in aquifers below the surface, are being exhausted one by one. By Mexican law, factories have priority for water over human consumption. Right now, scarce water is being trucked in to dry neighborhoods and villages every day. This situation has no solution, and is only growing worse.

Kersplebedeb: Which brings us back to the climate catastrophe, and what it might mean for capitalism ...

J. Sakai: Easily the most popular system collapse theory right now, is the spreading climate disaster. This was certainly pushed by James Hansen's increasingly dire messages that the climate crisis is more severe and coming much sooner than even scientists had expected. Before he retired as director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, Hansen pioneered the first long-range computer climate modeling, and was one of the world's leading climatologists. He has been called the "father of global warming."

¹⁶ Julie Turkewitz and Genevieve Glatsky. "Soul-Searching Report From Colombia's Truth Commission." The New York Times. June 29, 2022; Phil Klay. "America's Ongoing Secret Wars." The New York Times. May 29, 2022.

¹⁷ Maria Abi-Habib and Oscar Lopez. "Plight of Mexico's Poor Worsens, Despite President's Promises." The New York Times. July 18, 2022.

He long years ago warned that increasing dangerous atmospheric CO2 levels had “become an emergency.” Almost 14 years ago Hansen said of the eliminating of all coal consumption worldwide by 2029 as the most realistically achievable first real step in the climate recovery process: “This is our one chance.” Since then, the bottom line is that nothing has been done except talk and public relations and increased burning of coal. Elizabeth Kolbert, environmentalist and author of *The Sixth Extinction*, says that in ignoring Hansen’s prior warning in time, “the planet will be committed to change on a scale society won’t be able to cope with.” Or as Hansen said: “if you melt all the ice, sea levels will go up two hundred and fifty feet. So you can’t do that without producing a different planet.”¹⁸

Most radicals who deal with collapse of the capitalist system, don’t predict with the assurance of a Wallerstein or a Collins that it will happen in the range of this date or another. Personally, i have no educated idea whether Wallerstein or Collins are right about their timing of system change. i only am certain that devastating changes beyond what we’ve ever seen will be happening—and very soon in historical terms.

Kersplebedeb: Are there other writers on this capitalist world-system crisis that you find useful now?

J. Sakai: There are many finally who are making contributions, but i find left political economist Minqi Li helpful because he gives us another angle of vision, since he doesn’t share the eurocentric Wall Street, Washington, and London vantage point on the world that is common even in the left, but instead analyzes today’s world-system crisis grounded in his China. While he goes vividly into the meaning of the climate disasters predicted by James Hanson, Li also shows how economic class issues are already politicizing and raising up into action masses of Chinese people.

He notes: “In fact, the Chinese economy is already struggling with unsustainable business and local government debt.” Since to him the huge bankrupt banks’ credit bubble, which is robbing millions and paralyzing the economy, is an assumed fact of Chinese life, just like the Party’s ruling dictatorship is. Whether Chinese capitalism’s giant bad debt bubble is politically sustainable—is another major question, in fact. In China there are already every day illegal protests of the thousands among millions of ordinary people from all walks of life, robbed of their pensions and life’s savings and even homes by the corrupt banking bad debt crisis, which is destabilizing their whole economy.

Minqi Li, who learned from the democracy movement and spent 1990–92 in prison there, also points to the political shock absorber of the mass mirage of a future prosperous capitalist middle-class life, a capitalist narcotic which took over a generation of parents and youth—but that to many has now left only the bitterest aftertaste.

“The dramatic increase in college graduates has led to sharp devaluation of their bargaining power in the job market,” Li writes. “In 2010, about a quarter of Chinese college students who graduated that year were unemployed. Many college graduates live in slum-like conditions on the outskirts of China’s major cities and are known as ‘ant tribes’ ... Those college graduates who are ‘employed’ often have to accept a wage that is no higher than that of an unskilled migrant worker. According to a survey by Beijing University, the national average monthly starting pay for college graduates in 2014 was 2,443 Yuan (about 400 u.s. dollars). By comparison, in 2013, the national average monthly pay of migrant workers was 2,609 (about 430 u.s. dollars) ... Since the 1990s, many of China’s college graduates have seen their middle class dreams smashed and have undergone a process of proletarianization. To these young people, the promise of a ‘free’ and prosperous capitalism is no more than empty words.” Li ties this to the regrowth of revolutionary politics. “In this context, many intellectuals and college students have been attracted to leftist ideas and become leftist activists.”¹⁹

China probably leads the world in the number of labor strikes and protest demonstrations. Li points out that:

¹⁸ Elizabeth Kolbert. “The Catastrophist.” *The New Yorker*. July 27, 2020.

¹⁹ Minqi Li. *China and the 21st Century Crisis*. Pluto Press, 2016. Pages 33, 95, 137.

“The so-called ‘mass incidents’ (a term used by the Chinese government to refer to a wide range of social protests including strikes, sit-ins, marches, rallies, and riots) increased from about 8,700 in 1993, 60,000 in 2003, to 120,000 in 2008. It is estimated that in recent years, the annual occurrence of massive incidents has stayed above 100,000. According to the data collected by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, the cases of various forms of the ‘social order’ violation increased from 3.2 million in 1995, 11.7 million in 2009, to 13.9 million in 2012. In some large-scale mass incidents, tens of thousands of people participated in riots and occupied local governments for days. Assuming that a mass incident on average involves about 100 people, there would be about 10 million Chinese people who are involved in various social protests each year.”²⁰

Li feels that the capitalist world-system might be even more vulnerable to collapse right now than many believe, because China as the gigantic center of world industrial production, as well as having become a major financial and consumer economy, is more fragile and teetering-on-the-edge than Westerners understand. And that Chinese events could well trigger and then force a systemic collapse of actuallyexisting capitalism around the globe. Which reminds us that the struggle is always wider than we think.

As a homemade theorscope on how capitalist worldsystem breakdown is taking place right now, this has been very incomplete. A quick pencil sketch maybe of parts of its wildly transitioning shape. i had to leave out many, many aspects entirely, just to squeeze this study down to interview size. Somehow rambled into the Mexico thing, which i didn’t plan on talking about at all. Was going to explore what has changed so drastically for today’s u.s. ruling class—and does the left understand the capitalist ruling class at all? But that got sidetracked totally. So please understand all the limitations here. Think of this as just a kit to jump start the battered family van with.

& Before we go, let’s pause around the further question of the interregnum a minute. Perhaps one reason the left has been so reluctant to handle the hot event horizon where world-system capitalism is ending, is that we are so uncertain about how to handle the reality of the interregnum. Where at first anyway the odds aren’t with us in Las Vegas. “We’re not ready yet!,” lefty thinks to themself. **So i want to talk about it to get used to the idea.**

Once, long ago, there was no interregnum in radical thinking—why Gramsci’s pocket parable about the delay in a liberated world and the jack-in-the-box appearance instead of fascism had such an impact on us. Capitalism and anti-capitalism were supposed to be intrinsically counterbalanced in a kind of zero-sum game: as capitalism declined, the radical workers’ left that was massively opposing them would grow in parallel measure, rising to take the inevitable hand-over as the natural inheritors of society. All neat and happy. Or so early hopeful radical thinkers from Europe’s 19th century, who had never seen socialism or for that matter fascism either, believed.

Our actual dirty world picture has little to do with those old silent movies, and is way more frighteningly complicated and challenging, of course. Capitalism as a world-system has been faltering for some time, but there is no guarantee that an anti-capitalist left of any strength will be there immediately to take over from it. It is possible that capitalism will fall into a chaotic confused landscape. That is what I have been talking about here.

Kersplebedeb: This reminds me of passages in the book *Night-Vision*, by Butch Lee and Red Rover, especially the chapter “The Changer and the Changed.” In this new twilight reality, what should we be prepared to do? How should we prepare to intervene?

J. Sakai: *Night-Vision* is a prescient revolutionary writing of the late 20th century, and still perhaps the most unsettling one. In “The Changer & the Changed,” Butch Lee wrote with a surgical scalpel, cutting away reformism’s scar tissue without painkillers, without compromise:

²⁰ Ibid. Page 182.

“But at its essence, the growing chaos of the neocolonial world order is that many different peoples— armed with conflicting capitalist agendas—have been loosed to fight it out. As transnational capitalism hides behind and backs first one side and then the other—or both—to indirectly use the chaos they see no class interest in containing. “This chaos is itself a deepening contradiction of the system, one that no one can be certain of riding, not even the ruling class. And on this charged terrain, dis-unity and not unity is the changed strategic need of the oppressed. This is hard to grab, since it goes against truisms inherited from colonial times. And we think that dis-unity is what’s spontaneously going on all around us anyway, when it’s really an unconscious unity around wrong principles. Old slogans used the picture of unity to make people feel strong: “Sisterhood is Powerful,” “Black Unity,” “The People United Will Never Be Defeated.” But these are dead phrases now, not truths but decaying shells.”

And notice that she prefaced the chapter with an acid quotation from the notorious 19th-century revolutionary, the Moor: “The weapon of criticism cannot replace the criticism of weapons.”

Often we are all asked, “What should we do?” In the long history of the struggle it is not unusual to be thrown back, to have to restart anew it feels like. Even in the most difficult of times, we have to remember what is basic for us because it is the most practical. To tell the truth. To do the serious and difficult work of learning which truth is key, and then telling it to people who are searching for justice. Which is all there is to do, but is a lot harder than people think. If you assume that things like early 1960s nonviolent civil rights militancy were politically simple, you would be wrong. Often we were thrown into despair because despite the wonderful energy, being on the real offensive for the first time in our young lives, and lots of jail time, we couldn’t budge the racist system at all. And all our charismatic often brilliant leaders lied to us, all the time. Dr. King used to blow smoke rings at us regularly, until his final political awakening that he needed to personally redirect the struggle here, from opposing “discrimination” to overthrowing the system of capitalism, which he explicitly named as the problem (and, yes, his personal breakthrough surprised all of us in the struggle, too). That’s when they quickly pushed their red button and had him assassinated.

That was painful to learn, but it was the rock bottom truth. Not that the leaders were all evil, but most of the time they didn’t know how to proceed without lying. In a capitalist culture, whether on Wall Street or Main Street, “leading” or being the boss is lying as you cover up x and polish up z. The only leader we found to be telling us the truth as fully as he understood it, whether we liked it or not (and largely we didn’t like it), was Malcolm. And he was everyone’s great teacher. Even today, looking out over a world of so many political movements and struggles, i am not seeing more like him. He was usually rebuked by liberal media and intellectuals for not having a detailed program for ending racism in “America” (an idea that today makes me laugh). He would usually say that his belief was that if you could tell people the truth then they would work out what to do. That isn’t the end of our journey, but it certainly has to be the start.

Most things we can’t grasp about the interregnum yet, but there are significant parts we can start with. Particularly about the two contending political forces everyone expects to see—far-right formations including fascism against the new world working class. Two closely related class forces which the present left more or less knows lots of historical-scholarly things about, but in a practical everyday way knows surprisingly little about.

In the interregnum, much of what people say right now won’t matter. Because it will be a new environment with unfamiliar terrain, one that will be constantly impressing us with its own demands. Requiring new people self-selected for that go-round.

Each new historical period ruthlessly requires a different generation of rebels, with different abilities and their own specific character suited for their times. After all, the left generation that fought for the “industrial democracy” of politicized mass unionism worldwide in the 1930s, before plunging into the biggest world war ever, was really not the same as the 1960s youth radicals who smoked dope like

“Detroit Red” and jammed a monkey wrench into the whole giant machinery of the Pentagon’s Vietnam War.

Right now we can see the beginning signs of this system’s transition, its breakdown structurally. Most visibly in the old “law and order” which cannot be maintained in the ruleless interregnum space between capitalism and its successors. The political left and the political right will not be the only players. Radical upsurges are always signaled and then also accompanied by tidal waves of mass crime and outlaw cultural movements, since the oppressed and everyone else held down sense that the old restraints have torn loose. We aren’t the only players on the block, not by far, and in times of change never will be.

The Bolshevik leader Lenin learned that the hard way, luckily to little damage except to his pride and his shoe leather. Working late one night as they often did trying to set up a new regime, Lenin with his bodyguard and a few other comrades drove across the Russian capital in an expropriated nice auto. He had rejected his bodyguard’s suggestion that they just crash in communist apartments near their offices, since he wanted to get home. Driving down a deserted street in the dark without traffic, they came to a revolutionary checkpoint. Young “red” fighters manning the barricade waved down the auto, their rifles aimed at the car and its passengers. The communists were peeved that the young “red” guards didn’t recognize Lenin’s face and were unimpressed with them, and had to haul out their wallets and ID. At which point it turned out that the fighters were not really bolsheviks after all, but armed bandits—

Soon Lenin and his comrades were walking wearily towards the nearest communist group apartment, as their plush car with the imitation “red” soldiers and their money and their papers and the bodyguard’s pistol all roared off into the distance. Understandably angry, Lenin started telling off his bodyguard. Demanding to know why he hadn’t used his gun to defend them instead of insisting that they surrender. The bodyguard was pretty angry himself, and promptly tore comrade Lenin a new one. Pointing out that his starting a one-pistol gun battle against a gang armed with rifles would have only gotten them killed. And it was his job to keep Lenin alive, not be a western gunman. Further, that it would have made a lot more sense if Lenin hadn’t insisted on the lot of them going all the way across town in deserted streets instead of just bunking at a place comrades had near their offices. Guess he was right sheepish on top of embarrassed, but Lenin had to apologize. You live and you learn.²¹

Late 20th-century globalization reinvented popular piracy of oil tankers and cargo freighters (reaching like 1,000 attacks a year, i believe), but that is overshadowed by what’s going on in the streets now. Last winter, business news reported that the commercial losses from urban looters attacking freight trains here were “out of control.” As proof, one journalist brought back photos from a Union Pacific rail yard of the mountains of debris left over after the train burglars had gone through everything looking for electronics, brand name clothes, and other choice goods : “... there’s looted packages as far as the eye can see. Amazon packages, UPS boxes, unused Covid tests, fishing lures, epi pens. Cargo containers left busted open on trains ...”²² The National Retailers Federation estimated these losses from “‘organized crime’ groups” as high as \$1 billion a year, and called for much greater rail policing.

Confess, i got nostalgic when i read that. When you read “organized crime” here you are meant to think the Italian mafia or something, but really in these cases it’s more likely bands of New Afrikan

²¹ Lenin never wrote much about his own life, particularly in the chaotic time when the revolution was going on, so this isn’t something i read about (my best friend seized my set of the collected works anyway, when we moved into separate places and divvied up the bookcase). This great story of Lenin getting held up by stick-up guys posing as red guards was told to me by an old trotskyst, as part of the mostly unwritten lore of the marxist-leninist movement. i was young and not in his faction of the left, but he tried to wise me up anyway. He said it came from a French socialist who had gone to Russia to work with Lenin and his communist international and was a first-hand witness. Much later, that French comrade published his own memoir, parts of which were translated into English and circulated in the movement here. Was struck by the story so much that i kept asking questions about it, to get that older comrade to repeat the tale so i could remember it best i could. Can’t prove the facts, but in some dusty old sectarian journal or zine from the way past i think it was passed on.

²² Dani Romero. John Schreiber. “LA freight train looting ‘out of control’ as thieves worsen supply chain bottlenecks.” Yahoo/finance Wed, January 19, 2022. 6:47 AM.

and Latino kids usually. Back in the day when we were raising kids on not much money, had an older Asian acquaintance who knew and every month or so dropped by with a few bags of produce he had gotten at work. You know, to stretch our food budget. One day he called, said he had arranged to get us a whole big bunch of vegetables and fruit. Only i'd have to come by his job after ten that night with a car, so he could load my trunk with bags of grapefruit and oranges, tomatoes and lettuce, til it looked like a grocery store (which it did).

My friend did the graveyard shift at one of the Union Pacific freight yards, where stuff from California came in (i had worked at a yard, too, but different railroad down on the South Side). i showed up of course, and he showed me around. i asked him if giving us all this stuff was a risk, and he said nobody would even notice or care. Showing me some rail cars that were already half empty.

He explained that you can't speed with a long, zillion-ton train of loaded heavy rail cars without a lot of braking once you get into the city. The risk is too great. So your freight train is going only maybe 5 miles an hour as it very slowly winds through poor neighborhoods getting ready to come to a safe stop in the yards. Bands of teens run alongside the train, trying to break into the cars and climbing in, quickly searching for really good stuff like televisions and jeans. If a rail car had new washing machines they'd gladly try a few of that, too. Good cash stuff on the streets. Which they could ease off to the track side, then if necessary come back with a borrowed truck and vanish with into the night. They only had brief windows of time to get into each rail car and do whatever and jump out. If they ran across oranges or veggies they might take some to sell and a bag or two for mom and the neighbors, but it's not really that valuable to them or to the railroad.

Not simply crime, but the amount of fearless transgressive activity right now, is more than i've ever seen since the 1960s. It is like a torrent from a fire hydrant that's shoving everything around before it. If anything, the police and capitalist media are frantically trying to downplay it as much as they can. Mostly, it isn't "political" of course—and too much of it is anti-social—but it all definitely stepped up a whole level on the streets after George Floyd. It's the big dance.

In the same way of edging outside the lines, women here after the second disaster knifing Roe v. Wade to death by the Supreme Hate Court, were inspired both by the generationchanging novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and by the 1960s underground "Jane" women's abortion collective in Chicago, and started small illegal groups to quietly provide medication abortions wherever they are. On their own, desperate women are going around their state laws and using internet resources to illegally "self-manage" abortions. No one is saluting the flag anymore first thing in the morning. (The first great abortion disaster was enacting Roe v. Wade itself, which temporarily granted u.s. women abortions only so as to rebind with looser chains their obeisance to the principle that born women may not do anything with their bodies without patriarchal permission.)

The full meaning of "Jane" and the twin abortion disasters remains unspoken even now by the actually-existing left, because too many still don't get it. Or don't want to get it. Let's dial the clock backward to the raw situation we grew up and lived in, where abortion was outlawed and policed and imprisoned and "always" had been. One thing no one ever says, i guess because it is "dirty" talk, is that in those backward, unscientific days in the A-bomb 1940s and polio vaccine 1950s and moon rocket 1960s, is that many, many thousands of women here needed abortions all the time. Always have. This was civilization without "the pill" yet, remember. (As Butch used to say triumphantly when "the pill" arrived: "Freud was wrong—for women, chemistry is destiny!") But except for rare public statements adding up to nothing, the postwar u.s. imperial left politely ignored the issue in a manly way. Keeping both respectable and legal. It was much more important to them to demand public support for the steelworkers' strike or some such issue, of which the then-existing left had a truckload.

On the surface. Below that, in hidden daily life, the desperate need for and massive illegality and fear around abortions churned lives across the left just as in the larger body of society. If you were wealthy or even just very affluent, of course, no prob. Airplane off to Mexico or many other warm and sunny tourist places for a legal abortion vacation. (One of the fav Mexican doctors for that among

progressives was an old radical friend of the great artist Diego Rivera, whose large house and clinic was informally a gallery for his patients of many of Rivera's paintings).

In those old days, the Communist Party, while fading fast, was still the 800-pound gorilla in the room, whose membership and sympathizers even controlled some AFL-CIO unions and were a majority of the anti-capitalist left. Although the Party never said so publicly, women in and around its ranks who got in trouble could on an individual basis quietly find Party doctors who would arrange abortions. Knew women who did that, gratefully.

People today somehow assume that because the women's "Jane" collective was in operation in the 1960s, that women in Chicago had that covered. You only wish. Although "Jane" eventually had done thousands of abortions, as a small secretive and illegal outfit, of course relatively few women in Chicago knew about them even as they edged more and more into the daylight to spread the rebellion. My comrade Butch knew in a casual movement way some of the "Jane" women, but of course didn't know their secret. In part because she was older and in different currents in the left. Women she unknowingly knew who were in "Jane" were like white university student activists, who tended to be straight and to live on the North Side (even if they went to the University of Chicago southside). Those who were less reputable, coming out of the South Side Black rebellion and the street drug culture, as Butch did, were less likely to be with that crowd.

That doesn't mean that women not in that know never got knocked up or needed any less abortions. Abortions were a real issue for women in and around the left back then, a need as immediate and personal as a next meal and a place to lay your head and safety from violence. In our stream of young South Side non-Communist Party, non-respectable rebels back then and there, if you needed an abortion people knew of two options (certainly there were more than two around, but illegally dangerous as it was different groupings had different contacts, just like with copping a gun or scoring dope).

One was the "next day" guy. Who had a very small shabby storefront on 63rd street in the "ghetto." He was not any doctor or nurse, just a middle-aged Black man, and for \$80 he would give you a really foul smelling drink you had to take on the spot, and keep it down which was not always easy as it didn't taste any good either. But it worked, women swore, if you went to him no later than the next day after sex.

Usually you were dealing with the need much later than that. For that you needed a real doc, and the one we knew of then was way down south of Chicago near Galesburg. He was an old hostile white country physician, who didn't make any pretense of respecting the women who came to him. It was all about the greenbacks, and for \$400 he would do a quick "D&C" with tools old style (\$400 was real numbers back then, like you could get an okay used Ford or Chevy or Plymouth with it). You had to call him for an appointment first and immediately take the one and only he gave you. His phone number was the real secret, and he questioned you to feel safer that you weren't setting him up. Though he was never nice or "professional." He was doing a profitable crime he loved to scumbag women he despised, and he didn't even try to cover that up. Maneuvering in desperation outside the law isn't as romantic as idealists sometimes like to picture it.

But the thing with illegal contacts is that sometimes you can't locate them for a while or ever again. My comrade Butch had a young friend, not an intellectual but around the left because she was an outcast, too. Very poor and a high school student—and suddenly preg by a guy she didn't love and with a family that was breaking up and telling her she was on her own. And Butch couldn't find any resource we knew about, except the CPUSA doctors. Who paradoxically because they had maneuvered within the medical system so successfully, ran into a wall in this case. They were used to on the sly arranging completely legal medical abortions in hospitals—but couldn't do it with that girl, since as a familyless minor the legal hurdles were too big. She had the kid, then lost the kid since she tried but couldn't earn enough working crap jobs to support them with no regular child care anyway. Had to drop out of school, and by the laws then she could never return to public school. Salvaging her life alone after such loss was a tough piece of work, and in some ways though she did it, she always moved with the scar of that bitter oppression.

This experience wasn't uncommon. You are probably wondering why i am giving all these old details? It is to show how control or not over abortion was real and material to women's practical lives in a threatening way around the left back then. That was the majority experience in society, not a brilliant breakthrough like "Jane." Which is why the reformist men's left ducked and dodged it all as too dangerous in all senses of the word, as completely as they could. Here is the first lesson: we don't ever need a left like that again. It's too late for that. It is not even openers in the wild card game of replacing capitalism with a liberated human world-system.

For generations, women in and around the left had to deal with the need for their women's safety—including abortions and the constant haze of men's violence—completely informally on their own. Their lives and all women's lives weren't judged as needing "political" struggle. Whether communist or socialist or anarchist, the left's priorities didn't include that at all. Yas, we all know of brave left women earlier in history who spoke out as exceptions. But Butch's point which she later blew her stack about a lot was, why couldn't the anti-capitalist left have made that kind of illegal underground work for women the first priority, the main thrust of reorganizing the culture. Not in the 1960s, which was too late, but starting decades before like in the 1930s say.

Her point was that whether it was a "Jane" or a communal subversive day care and school replacing bourgeois "education," or women's dead-secret armed patrols outside the law, women must sooner or later organize themselves to make or provide and control the heart of what they need in society. "Jane" wasn't just part of a hallway towards a Roe v. Wade, but something alternative and much better, much richer in her eyes. If revs don't understand that lesson, which people's struggle itself repeats for us in various ways and forms over and over, we are trying to climb a stairway but tripping on the first stair. To find the future the oppressed need to liberate us all, we need to move towards the danger. Not easy to do, for sure.

The whole 1960s shakeup against the "American" status quo wasn't only directly fighting the state in terms of antiwar and anti-racism, and cultural rebellions from dope to gender to music. They were heralded by a wave of unafraid outlaw activity of all kinds, including straight-up rude crime both good and evil. That's what we are experiencing right now. Rough change of all kinds is coming, and the left will grow out of that, too

the end

Introduction from “Marginalized Notes / Monday Nov. 28, 2022”

Like most interviews, this discussion was never researched in the first place. It reflected whatever current news and talk was bouncing off my own thoughts and long memories. When i needed a fact or a name spelled out, like everyone else i just quickly went to the internet pantry. Didn't even think of endnotes, since others could just google things like i did. A few times, it became convenient to use an old book or a clipping file from my bookshelves, but that wasn't much and i didn't worry about it.

That was when i hadn't planned on anything past the present Part 1. But after delays going to press during the pandemic, and my trying to answer continued questioning from my editor, Karl K., led to adding an even longer Part 2—and using specific sources on facts more heavily not simply my memory.

(BTW at the same time, discovered that some of the sources of my facts had up and disappeared themselves. Just ran away into the forest of knowing. i couldn't re-find several internet sources i had earlier used.)

Anyway, my editor has always liked source notes whether endnotes or footnotes, arguing that giving people leads where they can read an author's sources more extensively on their own, is a real help to some readers. Finally, he wore me down and i've tried to note sources if only in incomplete ways, particularly in Part 2. Good luck in the hunt.

46. A Case of Mutual Aid

Deleted reason: not anarchist
Subtitle: Wikipedia, Politeness, and Perspective Taking
Author: Joseph M. Reagle Jr.
Topics: Wikipedia, mutual aid
Date: 2004
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Introduction

The anarchist Peter Kropotkin once wrote that “Mutual aid is as much a law of animal life as mutual struggle” (1902). At the time, he was responding to arguments arising from Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*: that in nature and society individual creatures ceaselessly struggle against each other for dominance. Kropotkin took pains to explain and provide examples of how animals and humans survive by cooperating with each other. Interestingly, Kropotkin also contributed the article on anarchism to the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica*, a collaborative product of the Scottish Enlightenment and a precursor to the Wikipedia, a collaborative, on-line, and free encyclopedia.

This paper explores the character of “mutual aid” and interdependent decision making within the Wikipedia. I provide a brief introduction to Wikipedia, the key terms associated with group decision making, and the Wikipedia dispute resolution process. I then focus on the cultural norms (e.g., “good faith”) within Wikipedia that frame participation as a cooperative endeavor. In particular, I argue that the “neutral point of view” policy is not a source of conflict, as it is often perceived to be, but a resolution shaping norm. However, the naive understanding that this policy is about an unbiased neutrality is also problematic. I conclude by identifying some notions from negotiation literature that may be inappropriate or require adaptation to the Wikipedia case.

Wikipedia

The Wikipedia is an on-line “Wiki” based encyclopedia. “Wiki wiki” means “super fast” in the Hawaiian language, and Ward Cunningham chose the name for his project in 1995 to indicate the ease with which one could edit Web pages. In a sense, a Wiki captures the original conception of the World Wide Web as a browsing and editing medium. However, when the Web began its precipitous growth the most popular clients lacked the ability for users to edit a Web page.

The Wiki changed this asymmetry by placing the editing functionality on the server. Consequently, if a page can be read, it can be edited. With a Wiki, the user enters a simplified markup into a form on a Web page. To add a numbered list item with a link to the Wikipedia one simply types: “# this provides a link to [[Wikipedia]]”. The server-side Wikipedia software translates this into the appropriate HTML and hypertext links. To create a new page, one simply creates a link to it! Furthermore, each page includes links through which one can sign in (if desired), view a log of recent changes to the page (including the author, change, and time), or participate in a discussion about how the page is being edited on its *Talk Page* – and this too is a Wiki page. These powerful features are representative of Cunningham’s (2004) original design principles for Wiki: that it be open, incremental, organic, mundane (simple), universal, overt (there’s a correspondence between the edited and presented form), unified, precise, tolerant, observable, and convergent (non-redundant content). The application of a general tool facilitates a surprisingly sophisticated creation!

Yet, as is often the case, the consequence of this quick and informal approach was not foreseen – or, rather, was pleasantly surprising. Wikipedia is the populist offshoot of the Nupedia project started in March of 2000 by Jimbo Wales and Larry Sanger. Nupedia’s mission was to create a free encyclopedia via rigorous expert review under a free documentation license. Unfortunately, this process moved rather slowly and having recently been introduced to Wiki, Sanger persuaded Wales to set up a scratch-pad for potential Nupedia content where anyone could contribute. However, “There was considerable resistance on the part of Nupedia’s editors and reviewers, however, to making Nupedia closely associated with a website in the wiki format. Therefore, the new project was given the name ‘Wikipedia’ and launched on its own address, Wikipedia.com, on January 15 [2001]” (Wikipedia 2004hw).

Wikipedia proved to be so successful that when the server hosting Nupedia crashed in September of 2003 (with little more than 23 “complete” articles and 68 more in progress) it was never restored. As of today, there are over 50 different language Wikipedias (2004wa); the original English version exceeds 390,000 articles, including most of the Nupedia content. The Wikimedia Foundation, incorporated in 2003, is now the steward of Wikipedia as well as a new Wiki based dictionary, compendium of quotations, collaborative textbooks, and repository of free source texts.

However, aside from the actual artifact and its history, one of the most interesting features of the Wikipedia is the community itself. One might characterize it according to the definition Kropotkin wrote of in his *Britannica* article on anarchism: “harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups.” Yet, as one can imagine, having thousands of participants editing a Web site so as to produce a coherent product and congenial community is a significant challenge.

Interdependent decision-making

Kelley et al. (2003:3) define interdependence as “The manner in which two individuals influence each other’s outcomes in the course of their interaction.” Wikipedia certainly fits the bill: it is difficult to conceive of a large collaborative project that is as accessible to the general public as this one.

Not surprisingly, Wikipedians sometimes disagree: each contributor resisting the other’s influence on the joint outcome of a contested article, Barki and Hartwick (2001:7) define interpersonal conflict as, “a phenomenon that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals.” In such cases the parties may enter into a “negotiation, or bargaining as it is sometimes called, [which] is a discussion between two or more parties with the aim of resolving the divergence” (Carnevale and Pruitt 2004: 2). In the Wikipedia context, I would qualify this definition’s connotation that such discussion is an exceptional or at least a salient event; Wikipedia is itself, really, a continuing discussion. Yet, when that discussion becomes particularly heated and participants become polarized the theory and practice of negotiation is relevant.

In recent negotiation literature a foundational concept is that of “integrated potential”: these are options capable of integrating the interests of the parties such that joined utility can be increased (Carnevale and Pruitt 2004). I expect that the integrated potential within the Wikipedia context is huge: any contribution other than that which deletes other useful contributions, or otherwise significantly impairs such contributions is integrative.

Wikipedia disputes

In an article entitled *Problems of Conflict Management in Virtual Communities*, Smith (1998:146) identified four causes of disputes in on-line (MUD) communities:

1. Internet community is diverse

2. Ambiguous goals contribute to conflict
3. Asymmetric dependence and power leads to much conflict
4. Administrator response can unintentionally intensify player conflict

Generally, these factors are relevant to the Wikipedia context. However, the Wikipedia does benefit from having an explicit goal and way of achieving it via its Neutral Point of View (Wikipedia 2004wnp) policy which I discuss below. Furthermore, in contrast to the MUD environments that Smith studied, the Wikipedia environment is much more egalitarian: contributions are accepted from all, including the anonymous, and there are few personal privileges that come with an elevated status, but many hassles.

The Wikipedia is often presented as a contentious community because of the occurrence of *edit wars* (Wikipedia 2004wew): participants repeatedly edit or revert articles to a previous state in order to remove another contributor's text. As an example of the contentious presentation, on 2004 November 10, two popular press articles on Wikipedia were forwarded to the Wikipedia-l list. A New York Times article entitled *Mudslinging Weasels Into Online History* (Boxer 2004) summarized the history of edits to the Bush and Kerry articles during the last stages of the U.S. presidential election. And *The Onion* (Groznic 2004) included a parody of a letter from a "super-fan" taking issue with the Wikipedia entry on "Weird Al" Yankovic.

Yet, the vast majority of Wikipedia contributors and articles are not the subjects of severe dispute. A number of pages within the Wikipedia document ongoing disputes; the following statistics are those for the English language Wikipedia (2004wra, 2004wrm, 2004c, 2004ss) as tabulated on 2004 November 16.

In the cases of arbitration or mediation requests, such documentation typically identifies disputes between two contributors, occasionally more (e.g., naming conventions for geographical objects in Poland). By tabulating the number of list items on the identified page or its archives I estimate 52 total Requests for Arbitration (with 0 active) and 74 archived Requests for Mediation (with 8 active) between users. Note, that there are over 13,200 users who have "edited at least 10 times since they arrived," half as many which are considered "active," out of a total of 135,763 registered users.

While not a substantive dispute, vandalism is much more common as it is often petty and easily done by anonymous users – or "sock puppets" wherein users participate with more than one identity. Consequently, vandalism entries are often associated with an IP number (the number associated with a Internet host) rather than an actual account name since IP numbers are more difficult to change. The Vandalism in Progress page (Wikipedia 2004wvp) for the past 5 days includes 25, 15, 12, 10 and 7 entries respectively and each entry may affect more than one page – though it is by no means certain all vandalisms are noted or identified. Yet, there are over 390,000 English pages (Wikipedia 2004wa).

However, even a relatively few disputes can be costly to those unfortunate enough to encounter them:

- Disputes take a significant amount of time and can cause participant exit.
- Disputes can boil over into other topics.
- Disputes drive the policies that then affect the rest of the community.
- Disputes attract much attention from outside of the community.

Consequently it is worthwhile to consider how disputes are mitigated or resolved.

The process

In the presence of social conflict Carnevale and Pruitt (2004:3) identify the following strategies that can be used in negotiation. I have provided (silly) examples from the *Talk Pages* associated with Wikipedia's *Lamest edit wars ever* (Wikipedia 2004wle):

- Concession making (obliging or yielding): when a characterization of Grace Kelly as a gay icon was challenged, the original author conceded "I've been at peace with removing her as a gay icon days, if not weeks, ago" (Wikipedia 2004tgk).
- Contending (dominating or competing): during a disagreement over the appropriate spelling of flavored/flavoured chips/crisps a user commented, "I'm going to keep fixing the spelling till I get banned, it seems." (Wikipedia 2004tjc).
- Problem solving (integrating or mutual gains bargaining): the same chip/crisps debate was settled by describing them as "seasoned."
- Inaction or Withdraw: after debate about commercial bias on the SkyOS page a participant responds "... I am not willing to contribute here, if the people around here dare to call me biased" (Wikipedia 2004tjs).

In continuing disputes (Wikipedia 2004wdr), participants can volunteer to a truce (refrain from editing the article) and "cool off," or, failing such magnanimity, an administrator might protect/lock the page for a period. Additionally, users can conduct polls or invite comment from the larger community in order to gain perspective – but it might also expand the debate. Failing informal resolution, participants may request mediation by a third-party and even obtain an advocate on one's behalf. As a last resort, users might request arbitration that can produce an enforceable decision. (These last two steps are characterized as *joint decision-making* and *third-party decision-making* by Carnevale and Pruitt (2004:4)).

Wikipedia communion

The notion of "dispute resolution" is surprisingly optimistic: as if agreement and harmony are the natural state from which disputes sometimes errantly arise and must be swiftly corrected. Yet to characterize social relations as inherently conflicted – as is sometimes done with Wikipedia – is also mistaken. (Debates regarding stability versus conflict within social models have a long history. Burrell and Morgan (1979) distinguished the bias in such models as regulation or radical; Deetz (1996) as consensus or dissensus.)

Instead, one needs to recognize and appreciate that social interaction exists in a complex web of individual subjectivity, social structure, and cultural meaning. Diverse interests and expertise can be innovative or costly (Levina 2002). Close relations within a group are important for coordination and links across groups are important for learning (Reagans and Zuckerman 2001). Groups that cooperate do a better job of finding integrative agreements, but groups are also more likely to defect than individuals in a prisoner dilemma task (Morgan and Tindale 2002). Groups are not necessarily harmonious or contentious. Additionally, innovation and efficiency are not the only reasons for groups. Rheingold used the term "communion" to describe that which was both sought and exhibited by some of the earliest electronic communities, an arrangement that "feels to me more like a kind of gift economy in which people do things for one another out of the spirit of building something between them, rather than a spreadsheet calculated quid pro quo" (1993:59). Some communications theorists use the term "inter-subjectivity" to identify an awareness of and intention to convey information to another. And philosophers such as

Habermas (1991) and Grice (1975) have proposed theories of community and discourse from which social institutions and cooperation can be constituted.

My point, simply, is to warn of my own hesitation in drawing too sharp a line between agreement and conflict. The consequent of this hesitation is my continued search for behaviors and norms that facilitate productive interaction rather than simply creating facile agreement or avoiding productive conflict.

The epistemic stance

A misunderstood notion about Wikipedia is that much contention arises from its Neutral Point Of View (NPOV) policy (Wikipedia 2004wnp): that debates arise from this seemingly impossible requirement to remain objectively neutral. Yet, the NPOV policy is quite the opposite and instead recognizes the multitude of viewpoints and provides an epistemic stance in which they all can be recognized as instances of human knowledge – right or wrong.

The NPOV policy seeks to achieve the “ fair “ representation of all sides of the dispute such that all can feel well represented. Articles should explain without advocating, characterize without engaging, and honor the intellectual independence of the readers by refraining from dogmatism. Hence, the clear goal of providing an encyclopedia of all human knowledge explicitly avoids many entanglements. Yet, when such disagreements do occur they often involve the NPOV. Most often, this is because a new participant is ignorant of or in opposition to the NPOV policy. In some circumstances, the debate legitimately raises substantive questions about NPOV. Consequently, while the perception is that NPOV is the source of much debate, it may act rather as a heat shield: reducing conflict and otherwise channeling outstanding arguments in the productive context of the primary goal of developing an encyclopedia that is representative of many viewpoints.

An additional, related, stance is that Wikipedia is not a place for original research. This permits the community to avoid arguments about crackpots, pet theories, neologisms, and vanity links (i.e., a person links from the Wikipedia to a site they wish to promote). If one has “a great idea that you think should become part of the corpus of knowledge that is Wikipedia, the best approach is to publish your results in a good peer-reviewed journal, and then document your work in an appropriately non-partisan manner” (Wikipedia 2004wno).

It is important to note that this stance does have important ethical implications. The policy of only reporting on what it is well-known has significant implications for minority views. This is acknowledged and debated within the Wikipedia community and the present norm is that Wikipedia should be fairly representative and proportional to the phenomenon it seeks to capture.

Within the Wikimedia projects, this stance has led to the development of Wikisource for collecting primary source materials, and a proposal of a collaborative Wikiresearch project. Additionally, Wikinfo, an offshoot of Wikipedia, was *forked* from Wikipedia so as to operate under a different philosophical stance that encourages a set of sympathetic and critical articles on a single topic: a “sympathetic point of view is a way of encouraging a pluralism of content, rather than limiting content to an unattainable encyclopedic goal” (Wikinfo2004).

Politeness and perspective taking

The Wikipedia’s Dispute Resolution (2004wdr) article advises that “the best way to resolve a dispute is to avoid it in the first place” by improving someone’s contribution – rather than reverting it – and resisting the temptation to respond to rudeness in kind.

On the Wikipedia mailing lists and Talk Pages there is a surprising level of civility; participants often volunteer to take “a timeout” and even apologize. Such behavior is recommended in a number of Wikipedia policies. For example, Neutral Point of View (2004wnp) counsels that,

- If we’re going to characterize disputes fairly, we should present competing views with a consistently positive, sympathetic tone.
- We should all be engaged in explaining each other’s points of view as sympathetically as possible.
...
- Unless the case is really egregious, maybe the best thing is to call attention to the problem publicly, pointing the perpetrators to this page (but politely—one gets more flies with honey) and asking others to help.

Wikipetiquette (2004ww) recommends that participants:

- Assume good faith.
- Be polite. People can’t see you or know for sure your mood. Irony isn’t always obvious, and blunt, raw text can easily appear rude. Be careful of the words you choose — what you intended might not be what others think.
- Concede a point, when you have no response to it; or admit when you disagree based on intuition or taste.
- Be prepared to apologize. In animated discussions, we often say things we later wish we hadn’t. Say so.
- Forgive and forget.

Staying Cool When the Editing Gets Hot (2004wsc) advises that if one is being attacked one should “just ignore it,” “politely ask the person to stop”, and most amazingly: “Edit their words to remove the insulting part—rephrase it as a simple statement of their beliefs, for example.” When humans are likely to exhibit over-confidence in their rightness (Kahneman and Tversky 1995) regardless of their lack of expertise or knowledge, such advice is an important corrective influence.

A consequence of these guidelines is that participants often find themselves *writing for the enemy*, as, “We should all be engaged in explaining each other’s points of view as sympathetically as possible”; while, “The other side might very well find your attempts to characterize their views substandard, but it’s the thought that counts” (Wikipedia 2004wnp).

In the field of knowledge management this notion is known as *perspective taking*. In this conceptualization of group learning, participants have unique perspectives about related domains. By entertaining the perspectives of others they are able to engage in “perspective making”: identifying hidden commonalities (i.e., using of similar words for different concepts or different words for similar concepts) and unique information (Boland and Tenkasi 1995) in order to form a more valuable synthesis. In the negotiation context, “negotiators often fail to understand adequately the perspectives of their opponents. Misunderstanding the interest of one’s negotiation opponent can lead to erroneous attributions (Morris, Larrick, & Su, 1999), a failure to maximize joint gains (Thompson & Hrebec, 1996), and impasses (Thompson, 1990)” (Galinsky and Mussweiler 2001).

Additionally, these Wikipedia practices are very much aligned with Yankelovich’s (2001) notion of *dialogue* which relies upon the notion of empathy:

The gift of empathy — the ability to think someone else’s thoughts and feel someone else’s feelings — is indispensable to dialogue. This is why discussion is more common than dialogue: people find it easy to express their opinions and to bat ideas back and forth with others, but most of the time they

don't have either the motivation or the patience to respond empathically to opinions with which they may disagree or that they find uncongenial.

Psychologists have further found a cognitive relationship between cooperative/competitive *priming* tasks and the cognitive performance of subsequent tasks. Carnevale and Probst (1998) found that competitive situations, or even the expectation of them, lead to an impairment in problem-solving and categorization tasks – more rigid black-and-white thinking – relative to cooperative situations.

Finally, better solutions tend to be arrived at when participants approach a negotiation with a problem-solving orientation: a desire to solve a problem given the other parties needs (Pruitt and Lewis 1971). Consequently, Wikipedia, either purposefully or accidentally, reflects many findings in the literature on how to encourage productive interdependent collaboration.

Collectivity and Value

While key terms from the literature on interdependent decision-making, and findings on cognition in the psychology literature, are immediately relevant to the Wikipedia, this literature also includes a wide scope of material that is less readily relevant. Perhaps this is because of a bias towards individualistic and economic models of human interaction.

As already alluded to, in the Wikipedia context it is difficult to distinguish between agreement and disagreement. Furthermore, while negotiators hope to achieve an integrated agreement by finding non-zero sum opportunities, most all Wikipedia interactions qualify as such: the Wikipedia is collective, there's not much point in being invested in a single article only. (One might have the appropriate expertise for a single article, be proud of such an article, but, unlike other negotiations, one does not happily walk away from the relationship with the Wikipedia with that single article.)

Much of the experimental literature (i.e., that based on game theory (Axelrod 1984) and mixed-motive collective-bargaining (Kelley 1966)) presumes that the interests of the parties can be independently quantified and that the value of the joint product is divisible. If one is involved in an edit war, is there such a thing as a BATNA: the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (Fisher, Ury, Patton 1991)? (I believe there is, but the options are mostly the same for the participants: exit.) Are such alternatives quantifiably valued? In the Wikipedia, one's interest is grounded in ideology rather than material commodities. In this production function, time and effort are the input, any output is a collaborative non-divisible product with extraordinarily variable valuations – based in the “eye of the beholders.”

Conclusion

The Wikipedia is an intriguing case for study because of its growing popularity, its novelty as an example of “commons-based peer production” (Benkler 2002), the central role of cultural norms, and the transparency and self documenting character of its discourse. In this paper, I briefly reviewed a few concepts from the interdependent decision-making literature that are relevant to this community. However, I also expressed hesitation about viewing interaction as simplistic agreement or disagreement, and how the productive character of this interaction is not readily adapted to traditional models based on quantifiable valuations of interests and divisible joint products.

Furthermore, the inter-subjective realm of agreement, of “communal discernment” (Sheeran 1996), when there is a “high” that accompanies “a moment of increased coherence, where the group is able to move beyond its perceived blocks or limitations and into new territory” (Bohm, Factor, and Garrett 1991) remains largely unexplored.

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47. Exiting The Vampire Castle

Deleted reason: Not anarchist

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Authors: Mark Fisher, (k-punk)

Topics: call outs, liberalism, identity politics, acid communism

Date: November 22 2013

This summer, I seriously considered withdrawing from any involvement in politics. Exhausted through overwork, incapable of productive activity, I found myself drifting through social networks, feeling my depression and exhaustion increasing.

'Left-wing' Twitter can often be a miserable, dispiriting zone. Earlier this year, there were some high-profile twitterstorms, in which particular left-identifying figures were 'called out' and condemned. What these figures had said was sometimes objectionable; but nevertheless, the way in which they were personally vilified and hounded left a horrible residue: the stench of bad conscience and witch-hunting moralism. The reason I didn't speak out on any of these incidents, I'm ashamed to say, was fear. The bullies were in another part of the playground. I didn't want to attract their attention to me.

The open savagery of these exchanges was accompanied by something more pervasive, and for that reason perhaps more debilitating: an atmosphere of snarky resentment. The most frequent object of this resentment is Owen Jones, and the attacks on Jones – the person most responsible for raising class consciousness in the UK in the last few years – were one of the reasons I was so dejected. If this is what happens to a left-winger who is actually succeeding in taking the struggle to the centre ground of British life, why would anyone want to follow him into the mainstream? Is the only way to avoid this drip-feed of abuse to remain in a position of impotent marginality?

One of the things that broke me out of this depressive stupor was going to the People's Assembly in Ipswich, near where I live. The People's Assembly had been greeted with the usual sneers and snarks. This was, we were told, a useless stunt, in which media leftists, including Jones, were aggrandising themselves in yet another display of top-down celebrity culture. What actually happened at the Assembly in Ipswich was very different to this caricature. The first half of the evening – culminating in a rousing speech by Owen Jones – was certainly led by the top-table speakers. But the second half of the meeting saw working class activists from all over Suffolk talking to each other, supporting one another, sharing experiences and strategies. Far from being another example of hierarchical leftism, the People's Assembly was an example of how the vertical can be combined with the horizontal: media power and charisma could draw people who hadn't previously been to a political meeting into the room, where they could talk and strategise with seasoned activists. The atmosphere was anti-racist and anti-sexist, but refreshingly free of the paralysing feeling of guilt and suspicion which hangs over left-wing twitter like an acrid, stifling fog.

Then there was Russell Brand. I've long been an admirer of Brand – one of the few big-name comedians on the current scene to come from a working class background. Over the last few years, there has been a gradual but remorseless embourgeoisement of television comedy, with preposterous ultra-posh nincompoop Michael McIntyre and a dreary drizzle of bland graduate chancers dominating the stage.

The day before Brand's now famous interview with Jeremy Paxman was broadcast on *Newsnight*, I had seen Brand's stand-up show the Messiah Complex in Ipswich. The show was defiantly pro-immigrant, pro-communist, anti-homophobic, saturated with working class intelligence and not afraid to show it, and queer in the way that popular culture used to be (i.e. nothing to do with the sour-faced identitarian piety foisted upon us by moralisers on the post-structuralist 'left'). Malcolm X, Che, politics as a psychedelic dismantling of existing reality: this was communism as something cool, sexy and proletarian, instead of a finger-wagging sermon.

The next night, it was clear that Brand's appearance had produced a moment of splitting. For some of us, Brand's forensic take-down of Paxman was intensely moving, miraculous; I couldn't remember the last time a person from a working class background had been given the space to so consummately destroy a class 'superior' using intelligence and reason. This wasn't Johnny Rotten swearing at Bill Grundy – an act of antagonism which confirmed rather than challenged class stereotypes. Brand had *outwitted* Paxman – and the use of humour was what separated Brand from the dourness of so much 'leftism'. Brand makes people feel good about themselves; whereas the moralising left specialises in making people feel bad, and is not happy until their heads are bent in guilt and self-loathing.

The moralising left quickly ensured that the story was not about Brand's extraordinary breach of the bland conventions of mainstream media 'debate', nor about his claim that revolution was *going to happen*. (This last claim could only be heard by the cloth-eared petit-bourgeois narcissistic 'left' as Brand saying that he wanted to *lead* the revolution – something that they responded to with typical resentment: 'I don't need a jumped-up *celebrity* to lead *me*'.) For the moralisers, the dominant story was to be about Brand's personal conduct – specifically his sexism. In the febrile McCarthyite atmosphere fermented by the moralising left, remarks that could be construed as sexist mean that Brand *is* a sexist, which also meant that he *is* a misogynist. Cut and dried, finished, condemned.

It is right that Brand, like any of us, should answer for his behaviour and the language that he uses. But such questioning should take place in an atmosphere of comradeship and solidarity, and probably not in public in the first instance – although when Brand was questioned about sexism by Mehdi Hasan, he displayed exactly the kind of good-humoured humility that was entirely lacking in the stony faces of those who had judged him. "I don't think I'm sexist, But I remember my grandmother, the loveliest person I've ever known, but she was racist, but I don't think she knew. I don't know if I have some cultural hangover, I know that I have a great love of proletariat linguistics, like 'darling' and 'bird', so if women think I'm sexist they're in a better position to judge than I am, so I'll work on that."

Brand's intervention was not a bid for leadership; it was an inspiration, a call to arms. And I for one was inspired. Where a few months before, I would have stayed silent as the PoshLeft moralisers subjected Brand to their kangaroo courts and character assassinations – with 'evidence' usually gleaned from the right-wing press, always available to lend a hand – this time I was prepared to take them on. The response to Brand quickly became as significant as the Paxman exchange itself. As Laura Oldfield Ford pointed out, this was a clarifying moment. And one of the things that was clarified for me was the way in which, in recent years, so much of the self-styled 'left' has suppressed the question of class.

Class consciousness is fragile and fleeting. The petit bourgeoisie which dominates the academy and the culture industry has all kinds of subtle deflections and pre-emptions which prevent the topic even coming up, and then, if it does come up, they make one think it is a terrible impertinence, a breach of etiquette, to raise it. I've been speaking now at left-wing, anti-capitalist events for years, but I've rarely talked – or been asked to talk – about class in public.

But, once class had re-appeared, it was impossible not to see it everywhere in the response to the Brand affair. Brand was quickly judged and-or questioned by at least three ex-private school people on the left. Others told us that Brand couldn't really be working class, because he was a millionaire. It's alarming how many 'leftists' seemed to fundamentally agree with the drift behind Paxman's question: 'What gives this working class person the authority to speak?' It's also alarming, actually distressing, that they seem to think that working class people should remain in poverty, obscurity and impotence lest they lose their 'authenticity'.

Someone passed me a post written about Brand on Facebook. I don't know the individual who wrote it, and I wouldn't wish to name them. What's important is that the post was symptomatic of a set of snobbish and condescending attitudes that it is apparently alright to exhibit while still classifying oneself as left wing. The whole tone was horrifyingly high-handed, as if they were a schoolteacher marking a child's work, or a psychiatrist assessing a patient. Brand, apparently, is 'clearly extremely unstable ... one bad relationship or career knockback away from collapsing back into drug addiction or worse.' Although the person claims that they 'really quite like [Brand]', it perhaps never occurs to them

that one of the reasons that Brand might be ‘unstable’ is just this sort of patronising faux-transcendent ‘assessment’ from the ‘left’ bourgeoisie. There’s also a shocking but revealing aside where the individual casually refers to Brand’s ‘patchy education [and] the often wince-inducing vocab slips characteristic of the auto-didact’ – which, this individual generously says, ‘I have no problem with at all’ – how very good of them! This isn’t some colonial bureaucrat writing about his attempts to teach some ‘natives’ the English language in the nineteenth century, or a Victorian schoolmaster at some private institution describing a scholarship boy, it’s a ‘leftist’ writing a few weeks ago.

Where to go from here? It is first of all necessary to identify the features of the discourses and the desires which have led us to this grim and demoralising pass, where class has disappeared, but moralism is everywhere, where solidarity is impossible, but guilt and fear are omnipresent – and not because we are terrorised by the right, but because we have allowed bourgeois modes of subjectivity to contaminate our movement. I think there are two libidinal-discursive configurations which have brought this situation about. They call themselves left wing, but – as the Brand episode has made clear – they are in many ways a sign that the left – defined as an agent in a class struggle – has all but disappeared.

Inside the Vampires’ Castle

The first configuration is what I came to call the Vampires’ Castle. The Vampires’ Castle specialises in propagating guilt. It is driven by a *priest’s desire* to excommunicate and condemn, an *academic-pedant’s desire* to be the first to be seen to spot a mistake, and a *hipster’s desire* to be one of the in-crowd. The danger in attacking the Vampires’ Castle is that it can look as if – and it will do everything it can to reinforce this thought – that one is also attacking the struggles against racism, sexism, heterosexism. But, far from being the only legitimate expression of such struggles, the Vampires’ Castle is best understood as a bourgeois-liberal perversion and appropriation of the energy of these movements. The Vampires’ Castle was born the moment when the struggle *not* to be defined by identitarian categories became the quest to have ‘identities’ recognised by a bourgeois big Other.

The privilege I certainly enjoy as a white male consists in part in my not being aware of my ethnicity and my gender, and it is a sobering and revelatory experience to occasionally be made aware of these blind-spots. But, rather than seeking a world in which everyone achieves freedom from identitarian classification, the Vampires’ Castle seeks to corral people back into identi-camps, where they are forever defined in the terms set by dominant power, crippled by self-consciousness and isolated by a logic of solipsism which insists that we cannot understand one another unless we belong to the same identity group.

I’ve noticed a fascinating magical inversion projection-disavowal mechanism whereby the sheer mention of class is now automatically treated as if that means one is trying to downgrade the importance of race and gender. In fact, the exact opposite is the case, as the Vampires’ Castle uses an ultimately liberal understanding of race and gender to obfuscate class. In all of the absurd and traumatic twitterstorms about privilege earlier this year it was noticeable that the discussion of *class* privilege was entirely absent. The task, as ever, remains the articulation of class, gender and race – but the founding move of the Vampires’ Castle is the *dis*-articulation of class from other categories.

The problem that the Vampires’ Castle was set up to solve is this: how do you hold immense wealth and power while also appearing as a victim, marginal and oppositional? The solution was already there – in the Christian Church. So the VC has recourse to all the infernal strategies, dark pathologies and psychological torture instruments Christianity invented, and which Nietzsche described in *The Genealogy of Morals*. This priesthood of bad conscience, this nest of pious guilt-mongers, is exactly what Nietzsche predicted when he said that something worse than Christianity was already on the way. Now, here it is

...

The Vampires’ Castle feeds on the energy and anxieties and vulnerabilities of young students, but most of all it lives by converting the suffering of particular groups – the more ‘marginal’ the better – into

academic capital. The most lauded figures in the Vampires' Castle are those who have spotted a new market in suffering – those who can find a group more oppressed and subjugated than any previously exploited will find themselves promoted through the ranks very quickly.

The first law of the Vampires' Castle is: individualise and privatise everything. While *in theory* it claims to be in favour of structural critique, *in practice* it never focuses on anything except individual behaviour. Some of these working class types are not terribly well brought up, and can be very rude at times. Remember: condemning individuals is always more important than paying attention to impersonal structures. The actual ruling class propagates ideologies of individualism, while tending to *act* as a class. (Many of what we call 'conspiracies' are the ruling class showing class solidarity.) The VC, as dupe-servants of the ruling class, does the opposite: it pays lip service to 'solidarity' and 'collectivity', while always acting as if the individualist categories imposed by power really hold. Because they are petit-bourgeois to the core, the members of the Vampires' Castle are intensely competitive, but this is repressed in the passive aggressive manner typical of the bourgeoisie. What holds them together is not solidarity, but mutual fear – the fear that they will be the next one to be outed, exposed, condemned.

The second law of the Vampires' Castle is: make thought and action appear very, very difficult. There must be no lightness, and certainly no humour. Humour isn't serious, by definition, right? Thought is hard work, for people with posh voices and furrowed brows. Where there is confidence, introduce scepticism. Say: don't be hasty, we have to think more deeply about this. Remember: having convictions is oppressive, and might lead to gulags.

The third law of the Vampires' Castle is: propagate as much guilt as you can. The more guilt the better. People must feel bad: it is a sign that they understand the gravity of things. It's OK to be class-privileged if you feel guilty about privilege and make others in a subordinate class position to you feel guilty too. You do some good works for the poor, too, right?

The fourth law of the Vampires' Castle is: essentialize. While fluidity of identity, plurality and multiplicity are always claimed on behalf of the VC members – partly to cover up their own invariably wealthy, privileged or bourgeois-assimilationist background – the enemy is always to be essentialized. Since the desires animating the VC are in large part priests' desires to excommunicate and condemn, there has to be a strong distinction between Good and Evil, with the latter essentialized. Notice the tactics. X has made a remark/ has behaved in a particular way – these remarks/ this behaviour might be construed as transphobic/ sexist etc. So far, OK. But it's the next move which is the kicker. X then becomes defined *as* a transphobe/ sexist etc. Their whole identity becomes defined by one ill-judged remark or behavioural slip. Once the VC has mustered its witch-hunt, the victim (often from a working class background, and not schooled in the passive aggressive etiquette of the bourgeoisie) can reliably be goaded into losing their temper, further securing their position as pariah/ latest to be consumed in feeding frenzy.

The fifth law of the Vampires' Castle: think like a liberal (because you are one). The VC's work of constantly stoking up reactive outrage consists of endlessly pointing out the screamingly obvious: capital behaves like capital (it's not very nice!), repressive state apparatuses are repressive. We must protest!

Neo-anarchy in the UK

The second libidinal formation is neo-anarchism. By neo-anarchists I definitely do not mean anarchists or syndicalists involved in actual workplace organisation, such as the Solidarity Federation. I mean, rather, those who identify as anarchists but whose involvement in politics extends little beyond student protests and occupations, and commenting on Twitter. Like the denizens of the Vampires' Castle, neo-anarchists usually come from a petit-bourgeois background, if not from somewhere even more class-privileged.

They are also overwhelmingly young: in their twenties or at most their early thirties, and what informs the neo-anarchist position is a narrow historical horizon. Neo-anarchists have experienced nothing but capitalist realism. By the time the neo-anarchists had come to political consciousness – and many of them have come to political consciousness remarkably recently, given the level of bullish swagger they sometimes display – the Labour Party had become a Blairite shell, implementing neo-liberalism with a small dose of social justice on the side. But the problem with neo-anarchism is that it unthinkingly reflects this historical moment rather than offering any escape from it. It forgets, or perhaps is genuinely unaware of, the Labour Party's role in nationalising major industries and utilities or founding the National Health Service. Neo-anarchists will assert that 'parliamentary politics never changed anything', or the 'Labour Party was always useless' while attending protests about the NHS, or retweeting complaints about the dismantling of what remains of the welfare state. There's a strange implicit rule here: it's OK to protest against what parliament has done, but it's not alright to enter into parliament or the mass media to attempt to engineer change from there. Mainstream media is to be disdained, but BBC Question Time is to be watched and moaned about on Twitter. Purism shades into fatalism; better not to be in any way tainted by the corruption of the mainstream, better to uselessly 'resist' than to risk getting your hands dirty.

It's not surprising, then, that so many neo-anarchists come across as depressed. This depression is no doubt reinforced by the anxieties of postgraduate life, since, like the Vampires' Castle, neo-anarchism has its natural home in universities, and is usually propagated by those studying for postgraduate qualifications, or those who have recently graduated from such study.

What is to be done?

Why have these two configurations come to the fore? The first reason is that they have been allowed to prosper by capital because they serve its interests. Capital subdued the organised working class by decomposing class consciousness, viciously subjugating trade unions while seducing 'hard working families' into identifying with their own narrowly defined interests instead of the interests of the wider class; but why would capital be concerned about a 'left' that replaces class politics with a moralising individualism, and that, far from building solidarity, spreads fear and insecurity?

The second reason is what Jodi Dean has called communicative capitalism. It might have been possible to ignore the Vampires' Castle and the neo-anarchists if it weren't for capitalist cyberspace. The VC's pious moralising has been a feature of a certain 'left' for many years – but, if one wasn't a member of this particular church, its sermons could be avoided. Social media means that this is no longer the case, and there is little protection from the psychic pathologies propagated by these discourses.

So what can we do now? First of all, it is imperative to reject identitarianism, and to recognise that there are no identities, only desires, interests and identifications. Part of the importance of the British Cultural Studies project – as revealed so powerfully and so movingly in John Akomfrah's installation *The Unfinished Conversation* (currently in Tate Britain) and his film *The Stuart Hall Project* – was to have resisted identitarian essentialism. Instead of freezing people into chains of already-existing equivalences, the point was to treat any articulation as provisional and plastic. New articulations can always be created. No-one is essentially anything. Sadly, the right act on this insight more effectively than the left does. The bourgeois-identitarian left knows how to propagate guilt and conduct a witch hunt, but it doesn't know how to make converts. But that, after all, is not the point. The aim is not to popularise a leftist position, or to win people over to it, but to remain in a position of elite superiority, but now with class superiority redoubled by *moral* superiority too. 'How dare you talk – it's we who speak for those who suffer!'

But the rejection of identitarianism can only be achieved by the re-assertion of class. A left that does not have class at its core can only be a liberal pressure group. Class consciousness is always double: it involves a simultaneous knowledge of the way in which class frames and shapes all experience, and a

knowledge of the particular position that we occupy in the class structure. It must be remembered that the aim of our struggle is not recognition by the bourgeoisie, nor even the destruction of the bourgeoisie itself. It is the class structure – a structure that wounds everyone, even those who materially profit from it – that must be destroyed. The interests of the working class are the interests of all; the interests of the bourgeoisie are the interests of capital, which are the interests of no-one. Our struggle must be towards the construction of a new and surprising world, not the preservation of identities shaped and distorted by capital.

If this seems like a forbidding and daunting task, it is. But we can start to engage in many prefigurative activities right now. Actually, such activities would go beyond pre-figuration – they could start a virtuous cycle, a self-fulfilling prophecy in which bourgeois modes of subjectivity are dismantled and a new universality starts to build itself. We need to learn, or re-learn, how to build comradeship and solidarity instead of doing capital's work for it by condemning and abusing each other. This doesn't mean, of course, that we must always agree – on the contrary, we must create conditions where disagreement can take place without fear of exclusion and excommunication.

We need to think very strategically about how to use social media – always remembering that, despite the egalitarianism claimed for social media by capital's libidinal engineers, that this is currently an enemy territory, dedicated to the reproduction of capital. But this doesn't mean that we can't occupy the terrain and start to use it for the purposes of producing class consciousness. We must break out of the 'debate' set up by communicative capitalism, in which capital is endlessly cajoling us to participate, and remember that we are involved in a class struggle. The goal is not to 'be' an activist, but to aid the working class to activate – and transform – itself. Outside the Vampires' Castle, anything is possible.

**48. Workers Launch Wave Of
Wildcat Strikes As Trump Pushes
For 'Return To Work' Amidst
Exploding Coronavirus**

Deleted reason: not anarchist enough
Author: It's Going Down
Authors: It's Going Down
Topics: COVID-19, United States, general strike
Date: March 26, 2020
Date Published on T@L: 2020-04-02T03:05:22
Source: Retrieved on 2020-04-02 from itsgoingdown.org

In only a matter of days, the economic collapse brought on by the coronavirus pandemic has completely changed everything about our lives. In many ways, the growing crisis has laid bare the already existing contradictions which threatened to pull this society into open class conflict; from low paying jobs, increasing austerity, brutal police, the quickening of ecological collapse, an out of control housing crisis, and a growing carceral State.

But with millions of people now wondering how they are going to make ends meet and pay rent, let alone survive the current epidemic, a new wave of struggles is breaking out across the social terrain. Prisoners and detention center detainees are launching hunger strikes as those on the outside demand that they be released, tenants are currently pushing for a rent strike starting on April 1st, the houseless are taking over vacant homes in Los Angeles, and workers have launched a series of wildcat strikers, sick-outs, and job actions in response to being forced onto the front lines of the pandemic like lambs to the slaughter.

But as tensions flare and economists predict upwards of 30% unemployment in the coming months, there is also a growing push from within the elites to herd us all “back to work.” Trump has stated that he wants things back to ‘normal’ by Easter, a move which threatens to undo anything that has been achieved by social distancing and attempts at quarantine. More and more, the refrain from within the Trump camp, *Fox News*, and sections of the MAGA aligned Right as Republicans and Democrats near a deal for a corporate bailout, is that mass death is acceptable as long as the economy, (read, Trump’s bid at re-election), is salvaged.

Meanwhile, as one report wrote:

The World Health Organization has warned that within the next several weeks—around the time of the Easter holiday—the US will have become the global epicenter of the pandemic.

Dr. Tom Inglesby, director of the Center for Health Security of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, warned that curbing social distancing could cost millions of lives. “Anyone advising the end of social distancing now needs to fully understand what the country will look like if we do that,” he tweeted. “COVID would spread widely, rapidly, terribly, could kill potentially millions in the yr ahead with huge social and economic impact across the country.”

In cult like fashion, Trump is building support among his base for the mass die-off of a large segment of the population by proclaiming that the “cure” cannot be “worse than the problem,” while leading the charge to end social distancing by Easter. Such a move would lead to the deaths of potentially millions of people, many of them ironically Trump supporters. At the same time, both corporate parties are pushing for a bailout package (that Trump himself may benefit from) which will only further continue to transfer massive amounts of wealth into the hands of the uber-rich.

But in the face of this, anger is mounting. On social media over the past few days, calls for both a rent strike and a general strike have gone viral as have hashtags such as #NotDying4WallStreet. But much more important than Twitter being awash in class rage has been the spike in wildcat strikes and militant rank-n-file actions throughout March.

As the economy crashes and US society depends more and more on the continued operation of dwindling supply chains, workers in service sector jobs that remain open, such as at grocery stores, not only find themselves working at a crucial node in the economy – *but with a new sense of potential power*. This means simply that workers at different points in supply chains can have a huge impact on the economy and thus gain leverage, simply by engaging in direct action or refusing to work.

As *Bloomberg* wrote:

These pockets of resistance along the supply chain underscore the balancing act needed to contain the coronavirus and protect workers deemed essential while delivering goods and services. It's an especially acute issue given that transportation, labor and other logistical woes have already made it hard to get food where it needs to be in the pandemic era.

While none of the meat plant incidents have so far caused operational disruptions, there are concerns that more may be coming, causing supply chain hiccups right as consumers are binge-buying groceries to fuel shelter-in-place lockdowns.

The U.S. pork industry has requested more guest worker visas, and there's speculation that plants have been running full-tilt not only to supply unprecedented retail food demand, but also to get as much production in as possible before virus-related disruptions slow the pace.

While barely mentioned in the mainstream press or on cable-news, already there is a growing wave of wildcat strikes, self-organized labor actions, sick-outs, and work stoppages – much of it centered around the refusal to work in environments where workers may be exposed to the coronavirus.

If Trump is serious about forcing millions of other people back to work by Easter in mid-April, ensuring the death of potentially millions at the hands of the coronavirus, then calls for a general strike and potentially even broader revolutionary action will only continue to gain steam and popularity.

Here's a roundup of what's already gone down.

Auto Workers

Work stoppages and wildcat strikes have broken out in several auto industry factories, as workers demand an end to the spread of coronavirus in their workplaces. The revolt began on March 12th, when:

Workers at the Fiat Chrysler Windsor Assembly Plant downed tools [on March 12th] over concerns about the spread of coronavirus at their plant and after learning that a worker at the FCA Kokomo Transmission Plant in the United States was diagnosed with the potentially deadly disease.

This was followed by:

Workers at Fiat Chrysler's Sterling Heights (SHAP) and Jefferson North (JNAP) assembly plants in Metro Detroit took matters into their own hands last night and this morning and forced a shutdown of production to halt the spread of coronavirus.

The work stoppages began at Sterling Heights last night, only hours after the United Auto Workers and the Detroit automakers reached a rotten deal to keep plants open and operating during the global pandemic...The same day, scores of workers at the Lear Seating plant in Hammond, Indiana refused to work, forcing the shutdown of the parts factory and the nearby Chicago Assembly Plant.

[On March 18th], workers on SHAP's first shift followed suit, staged a sit-in and refused to touch vehicles rolling down the line once their shift began. Because hundreds of people handle the vehicles in rapid succession on the assembly line, they are a major potential

source of transmission for the virus. Management again sent workers home and canceled the second shift today. “This is awe-inspiring,” one young SHAP worker [stated], referring to the workers’ action to force the closure of the plant.

Workers at Dundee Engine Plant in Ann Arbor and Toledo North Assembly followed suit with their own job actions shortly afterward. Shifts at Warren Truck Assembly and Ford’s Michigan Assembly have also been sent home.

A Facebook Live video from Toledo showed dozens of furious workers crowded around Local 12 Vice President Brian Sims, demanding that the plant be shut down, who then retreats through the back door yelling at workers to “calm down.”

In an interview with *Labor Notes*, one auto worker stated:

The UAW should be actually fighting for us to get off of work. The union and the company care more about making trucks than about everybody’s health. I feel like they aren’t going to do anything unless we take action. We have got to band together. They can’t fire us all.

Agricultural Workers

In Georgia, several dozen Perdue workers at a poultry plant of about 600, walked off the job on March 23rd over growing anger at low pay and concerns surrounding the spread of the coronavirus at a time of increased production and workload. In media interviews, those involved in the wildcat strike explained how the company sees them as expendable. According to one report:

Approximately 50 employees at the Perdue Farm plant near Perry, Georgia, walked out March 23 saying they didn’t feel safe in the plant because of the coronavirus, according to WMAZ in Georgia.

Workers say they don’t feel safe working around others who could have potentially been exposed to COVID-19, according to WMAZ. They add that they feel Perdue isn’t doing enough to keep employees safe and isn’t sanitizing their workspaces.

Amazon

On March 18th, Amazon warehouse workers in Queens staged a wildcat strike after management attempted to push them back to work following a one day shutdown of a facility after someone at the plant tested positive for coronavirus. According to one report:

Amazon warehouse workers at a processing facility in Queens, New York City, received a text from management: “We’re writing to let you know that a positive case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) was found at our facility today.” Amazon temporarily closed the facility the same day but quickly reopened on Thursday.

This news, and the decision by Amazon to reopen the facility, sparked outrage among the warehouse workers, who refused to work and ultimately caused the facility to shut down on Thursday night. In a video posted on social media by “Amazonians United NYC,” a worker voiced his anger.

“We know what you’re doing. We can see that there’s an absolute disregard for our lives. We don’t buy it anymore.” Another worker joined, saying: “It’s not possible that in four hours you’ve disinfected every package after you got a positive diagnosis.”

Bar Workers

Workers at Crush Bar in Portland took action, launching a sit-in after being laid off in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the group's report:

We did it! 48hrs after staging our sit-in, management provided us with our accrued sick time checks. Thank you for the community support that helped us draw attention to this injustice. We couldn't have done it without you.

With that said, we the workers are still waiting to hear back on our second and third demands: half pay for cancelled sick hours and the guarantee that every laid off employee be rehired upon the bars reopen.

PDX Eater wrote of the action:

Last night, all 27 of Crush's employees were laid off, in preparation for today's forced closure of all dine-in food and drink businesses. At around 3:30 p.m. today, 12 employees arrived at the bar and then refused to leave, protesting owner John Clarke's decision to lay off all employees without any financial aid, with the claim that he broke the law by denying their use of accrued sick hours to cover lost wages. The protest, which was set to last for up to 24 hours, was dispersed by Portland police after an hour.

Bus Drivers

On March 17th, bus drivers in Detroit launched a wildcat strike, in response to dirty buses and lack of access to areas where drivers can wash their hands. As one report wrote:

Detroit has shut down the city's public bus system because a vast majority of the drivers refused to work over concerns about the coronavirus.

The city is negotiating with Detroit Department of Transportation drivers to alleviate their concerns in hopes of restoring bus service Wednesday.

"Due to the driver shortage, there will be no DDoT bus service today," the city said in a statement. "We are asking passengers to seek other forms of transportation while we work to address our drivers concerns. We apologize for the inconvenience."

Drivers have been expressing concerns that they aren't adequately protected from the coronavirus. Among the concerns: The buses aren't cleaned frequently enough, and drivers have been unable to wash their hands because of the statewide shutdown on many businesses.

The wildcat strike also resulted in free fares for riders:

The drivers' union backed them up and their brief work stoppage, less than 24 hours, won all their demands. Fares will not be collected for the duration of the coronavirus crisis.

In Birmingham, Alabama, bus drivers on March 23rd also protested and went on wildcat strike, refusing "to work scheduled routes due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) concerns."

Call Center

Call-center workers and members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), in Portland, Oregon, launched a one day strike on March 4th, leading to workers receiving paid leave in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin on March 18th, other members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), also known as Wobblies, engaged in a sick-out strike to demand better pay and working conditions, especially in the face of COVID-19, which has brought with it an increased work-load.

The union reported on social media:

Days after our sickout, an expression of collective discontent and a protest of our working conditions, CapTel admin have announced that we will be given 15 extra minutes of aux time per shift. For an 8-hour shift this means that ~91% adherence is needed to avoid discipline. CapTel Workers Union has had a stated demand for a 90%-adherence requirement in our five-point platform from day one.

Let's keep pushing forward for \$15/hour, our other demands, and workplace democracy. Let's remember that this break from the normal austerity that governs our workdays can be ended by the whim of admin at any time. The boss's promises are just words; a union contract is set in stone.

City Maintenance

On March 20th, several dozen city workers walked off the job in Cleveland, Ohio. According to one report:

Up to 35 Cuyahoga County sewer maintenance employees walked off the job or called in sick Friday morning, citing coronavirus safety concerns, according to Public Works Director Michael Dever.

The sanitary engineers, who maintain regional sewer systems for 39 Cuyahoga County communities, did not want to continue working because they were concerned about going into people's homes and being in close proximity to one another, among other possible reasons, Dever said.

Construction

In Las Vegas, construction workers are pushing for a wildcat strike. According to one report:

Construction workers at the Las Vegas Convention Center site said they are considering walking off the job this week because they said they don't feel their health is being taken seriously.

"Things are getting scary at work," one worker said. "A large group of us are ready to walk off the job."

Construction workers on site of the Las Vegas Convention Center expansion say conditions were unsanitary before coronavirus was an issue. They say they haven't gotten any better.

"As far as trying to prevent the spread, they're telling us to wash our hands, enact social distancing but as far as actually protecting us, they haven't done much," said one worker.

Electricians

According to *Organizing Work*:

Electricians working on a long-term renovation project at Kaiser Hospital in Sacramento decided to walk off the job due to unsafe working conditions, related to potential exposure to COVID-19.

In an interview with one of the workers, they stated:

What happened yesterday was the result of a lot of talking amongst the rank-and-file over the preceding couple of days – everyone is aware of the severity of the outbreak and the risk it poses to our health and to the health of our loved ones. We saw a lot of abrupt changes around the hospital, for example bringing in large tents to set up testing sites for COVID-19, and we would be walking down a corridor to get materials for our job site a few feet from where these were being set up, and at least a couple of our guys were going through a different part of the hospital, and saw a patient being escorted by hospital staff wearing gowns and masks, and they would yell at our guy to get out of the hallway.

So I showed up in the parking lot in the morning, and there was already a large meeting of union electricians, kind of a spontaneous thing, and at least one of the other crews was going to do the same thing that day...We all agreed to get our shit and go.

Fast Food

Fast food workers at McDonald's in San Jose and Los Angeles, California walked off the job on March 20th. According to one report:

The workers said they were angry over their hours being cut, and the restaurant chain allegedly failing to provide soap, gloves and any training on how to protect themselves from COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

Not to be outdone, Wobblies in Portland, part of the Burgerville Workers Union, walked out of one store over coronavirus related working conditions:

Yesterday, every employee at the SE 92nd Avenue Burgerville location went on a one-day strike to protest what they claim are unsafe working conditions related to the coronavirus outbreak. The shop re-opened today, and almost 40 of Burgerville's other locations remain open, but the Burgerville Workers Union (BVWU) has issued a list of requirements during this pandemic.

The strike was largely in protest of a reduced staff making it difficult to maintain sanitation standards and protect workers. While Burgerville locations are open for drive-through customers, all of its dining rooms have been closed, and a press release from the company states that nearly 70-percent of workers have been furloughed or partially furloughed. "How can we keep people safe with a skeleton crew?" Mark Medina, an employee at the 92nd Avenue location, says. "Maintaining sanitation standards takes a lot of work. Burgerville corporate claims to care about the community, but, by cutting costs like this, they're putting us all at risk. People could die."

Garbage Collectors

Garbage collectors in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania launched a wildcat strike to demand hazard pay and access to protective gear. As one article wrote:

Today, a group of several hundred, mostly African-American sanitation workers in Pittsburgh, members of Teamsters Local 249, went out on an illegal, wildcat strikes to protest unsafe working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The strike comes as momentum for strikes goes with #GeneralStrike becoming the top trending topic on twitter in the United States with even popstar Britney Spears calling for a General Strike. Many are wondering if strikes like Pittsburgh's sanitation workers strike could be the beginning of a growing strike wave as Trump demands that workers risk their lives to return to work quickly.

Workers in Pittsburgh and elsewhere are resisting calls to work in unsafe conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. "We want better equipment, protective gear. We have no masks, "one African-American sanitation worker told WPXI. "We want hazard pay. Hazard pay is very important," the worker told WPXI. "Why? Because we have high co-payments on insurance on any type of bill. We risk our lives every time we grab a garbage bag".

"Here we are at my job. Ain't picking up no rub," African-American sanitation worker Fitzroy Moss said in a Facebook live video. "The rubbish is sitting there. That's all they care about is picking up the garbage. They don't even care about our health."

Port Workers

In Oakland, California in the bay area, port workers are threatening to walk off the job in response to unsafe and unsanitary working conditions. According to one report:

Some dockworkers at the Port of Oakland are threatening to refuse work at a terminal that they say isn't properly sanitizing equipment and facilities for employees. The move could halt logistics operations and further strain the global supply chain amid the coronavirus outbreak.

49. What is Dadaism and what does it want in Germany?

Deleted reason: not anarchist, but open for more discussion on this one

Author: Dadaist Revolutionary Central Council

Authors: Richard Huelsenbeck, Raoul Hausmann

Topics: dada, German Revolution, art, communism

Date: 1919

Date Published on T@L: 2021-06-08T11:38:54

Source: Retrieved on 8th June 2021 from libcom.org

Notes: Manifesto written by Richard Huelsenbeck and Raoul Hausmann, first published in ‘Der Dada 1’ (1919), in the context of the unfolding, German revolution.

1 Dadaism demands:

1. The international revolutionary union of all creative and intellectual men and women on the basis of radical Communism;
2. The introduction of progressive unemployment through comprehensive mechanization of every field of activity. Only by unemployment does it become possible for the individual to achieve certainty as to the truth of life and finally become accustomed to experience;
3. The immediate expropriation of property (socialization) and the communal feeding of all; further, the erection of cities of light, and gardens which will belong to society as a whole and prepare man for a state of freedom.

2 The Central Council demands:

- a. Daily meals at public expense for all creative and intellectual men and women on the Potsdamer Platz (Berlin);
- b. Compulsory adherence of all clergymen and teachers to the Dadaist articles of faith;
- c. The most brutal struggle against all directions of so-called “workers of the spirit” (Hiller, Adler), against their concealed bourgeoisism, against expressionism and post-classical education as advocated by the Sturm group;
- d. The immediate erection of a state art center, elimination of concepts of property in the new art (expressionism); the concept of property is entirely excluded from the super-individual movement of Dadaism which liberates all mankind;
- e. Introduction of the simultaneist poem as a Communist state prayer;
- f. Requisition of churches for the performance of bruitism, simultaneist and Dadaist poems;
- g. Establishment of a Dadaist advisory council for the remodeling of life in every city of over 50,000 inhabitants;
- h. Immediate organization of a large scale Dadaist propaganda campaign with 150 circuses for the enlightenment of the proletariat;
- i. Submission of all laws and decrees to the Dadaist central council for approval;
- j. Immediate regulation of all sexual relations according to the views of international Dadaism through establishment of a Dadaist sexual center.

50. On Capitalism and Desire

Author: Guattari & Deleuze

Authors: Felix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Actuel

Topics: anti-psychiatry, not-anarchist, interview, Gilles Deleuze, schizoanalysis, psychoanalysis, capitalism, desire, Felix Guattari

Date: 1973

Source: Desert Islands and Other Texts by Gilles Deleuze. <archive.org/details/DesertIslandsAndOtherTexts>

Published Date: 2021-09-26

Notes: This uses the editor's title. The original is "Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari" in *C'est Demain la veille*, ed. Michel-Anroine Burnier (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), pp. 139–161. This interview was initially supposed to appear in the magazine *Actuel*, one of whose directors of publication was M.-A. Burnier.

Delted Reason: Not anarchist enough.

Actuel: In your description of capitalism, you say: "There isn't the slightest operation, the slightest industrial or financial mechanism that fails to manifest the dementia of the capitalist system and the pathological character of its rationality (not a false rationality at all, but a true rationality of this pathology, this madness, because the machine works, there can be no doubt). There is no danger of it going insane, because through and through it is already insane, from the get-go, and that's where its rationality comes from." Does this mean that after this "abnormal" society, or outside it, there can be a "normal" society?

Gilles Deleuze: We don't use the words "normal" and "abnormal." Every society is at once rational and irrational. They are necessarily rational in their mechanisms, their gears and wheels, their systems of connection, and even by virtue of the place they assign to the irrational. All this presupposes, however, codes or axioms which do not result by chance, but which do not have an intrinsic rationality either. It's just like theology: everything about it is quite rational if you accept sin, the immaculate conception, and the incarnation. Reason is always a region carved out of the irrational—not sheltered from the irrational at all, but traversed by it and only defined by a particular kind of relationship among irrational factors. Underneath all reason lies delirium, and drift. Everything about capitalism is rational, except capital or capitalism. A stock-market is a perfectly rational mechanism, you can understand it, learn how it works; capitalists know how to use it; and yet what a delirium, it's nuts. This is what we mean when we say that the rational is always the rationality of an irrational. Something that has not been discussed in Marx's *Capital* is the extent to which he is fascinated by capitalist mechanisms, precisely because, at one and the same time, it is demented and it works. So then what is rational in a society? Once interests have been defined within the confines of a society, the rational is the way in which people pursue those interests and attempt to realize them. But underneath that, you find desires, investments of desire that are not to be confused with investments of interest, and on which interests depend for their determination and very distribution: an enormous flow, all kinds of libidinal-unconscious flows that constitute the delirium of this society. In reality, history is the history of desire. Today's capitalist or technocrat does not desire in the same way a slave trader or a bureaucrat from the old Chinese empire would have. When people in a society desire repression, for others and for themselves; when there are people who like to harass others, and who have the opportunity to do so, the "right" to do so, this exhibits the problem of a deep connection between libidinal desire and the social field. There exists a "disinterested" love for the oppressive machine: Nietzsche has some beautiful things to say about this permanent triumph of slaves, about the way the embittered, the depressed, or the weak manage to impose their way of life on us.

Actuel: What, precisely, is proper to capitalism in what you've just described?

Gilles Deleuze: Perhaps it's that, in capitalism, desire and interest, or desire and reason, are distributed in a totally new way, a particularly "abnormal" way. Capital, or money, has reached such a stage of delirium that there would be only one equivalent in psychiatry: what they call the terminal state. It's too complicated to describe here, but let me just say this: in other societies, you have exploitation, you have scandals and secrets, but it's all part of the "code." There are even explicitly secret codes. In capitalism, it's completely different: nothing is secret, at least in principle and according to the code (that's why capitalism is "democratic" and "publicizes" itself, even in the juridical sense of the term). And yet nothing is admissible. Legality itself is inadmissible. In contrast to other societies, the regime of capitalism is both public and inadmissible. This very special delirium is proper to the regime of money. Just look at what they call scandals today: the newspapers talk about them incessantly, everyone pretends either to defend themselves or to go on the attack; but the search for anything illegal comes up empty-handed, given the nature of the regime of capital. Everything is legal: the prime minister's tax returns, real-estate deals, lobbyists, and generally the economic and financial mechanisms of capital— everything except the little screw-ups; still more to the point, everything is public but nothing is admissible. If the left were "reasonable," it would be satisfied with vulgarizing economic and financial mechanisms. There's no need to make the private public, just admit what is already public. Then a dementia without precedent would be found in all the hospitals. Instead, they keep talking about "ideology." Ideology has no importance here: what matters is not ideology, and not even the "economic / ideological" distinction or opposition; what matters is the organization of power. Because the organization of power, i.e. the way in which desire is already in the economic, the way libido invests the economic, haunts the economic and fosters the political forms of repression.

Actuel: Ideology is smoke and mirrors?

Gilles Deleuze: That's not what I mean. Saying that "ideology is smoke and mirrors" is still the traditional thesis. On one side you put the serious stuff, the economy, the infrastructure, and then on the other side you put the superstructure, to which ideology belongs. And thus you restrict the phenomena of desire to ideology. It's a perfect way to ignore how desire works on the infrastructure, invests it, belongs to it, and how desire thereby organizes power: it organizes the system of repression. We're not saying that ideology is smoke and mirrors (or any other concept that serves to designate an illusion). We're saying: there is no ideology, the concept itself is an illusion. That's why it suits the Communist Party and orthodox Marxism so well. Marxism has given such emphasis to the theme of ideologies precisely to cover up what was going on in the USSR: a new organization of repressive power. There is no ideology, there are only organizations of power, once you accept that the organization of power is the unity of desire and the economic infrastructure. Let's take two examples. Education: the Leftists of May '68 wasted a lot of time insisting that professors publicly criticize themselves as agents of bourgeois ideology. It's stupid, and it fuels the masochistic impulses of academics. They abandoned the struggle against the competitive examination and opted instead for polemic, or the great public anti-ideological confession. During which time, the most hard-line profs were able to reorganize their power without too much difficulty. The problem of education is not ideological in nature, it's a problem of the organization of power: the specificity of educational power makes it appear ideological, but that's a red-herring. Power in grammar school, now that means something, every child is subjected to it. The second example: Christianity. The Church is all too happy to be treated as an ideology. They want to discuss it—it encourages ecumenism. But Christianity has never been an ideology. It is a very original, specific organization of power which has taken diverse forms from the Roman Empire through the Middle Ages, and which was able to invent the idea of an international power. It's far more important than ideology.

Felix Guattari: The same goes for traditional political structures. It's always the same old trick: a big ideological debate in the general assembly, and the questions of organization are reserved for special committees. These look secondary, having been determined by political options. Whereas, in fact, the real problems are precisely the problems of organization, never made explicit or rationalized,

but recast after the fact in ideological terms. The real divisions emerge in organization: a particular way of treating desire and power, investments, group-Oedipuses, group-super-egos, phenomena of perversion... Only then are the political oppositions built up: an individual chooses one position over another, because in the scheme of the organization of power, he has already chosen and hates his opponent.

Actuel: Your overall analysis of the Soviet Union or capitalism is convincing, but what about the particulars? If every ideological opposition by definition masks conflicts of desire, how would you analyze, for example, the divergence of three Trotskyite splinter-groups? What conflicts of desire, if any, do you see there? In spite of their political quarrels, each group seems to fulfil the same function for its members: it offers them the security of a hierarchy, a social milieu on a reduced scale, and a definitive explanation of the world... I don't see the difference.

Felix Guattari: Provided we recognize that any resemblance to an existing group is purely fortuitous, we can imagine that one of the groups initially defines itself by its fidelity to the rigid positions of the communist left during the creation of the Third International. Now you adopt a whole axiomatics, down to the phonological level—the pronunciation of certain words, the gesture that accompanies it, not to mention the structures of organization, the conception of the relationships to be maintained with allies on the left, with centrists and adversaries... This universe can correspond to a particular figure of Oedipalization, very much like the intangible and reassuring universe of the obsessive who loses his bearings as soon as you displace a familiar object. This identification with recurrent images and figures is meant to achieve a certain kind of efficacy that characterized Stalinism—except for its ideology, precisely. In other respects, they keep the overall framework of the method, but they're receptive to change: "Comrades, we must recognize that if the enemy remains the same, the conditions have changed." So the splinter group is more open. It's a compromise: the initial image has been crossed out while being maintained, and other notions have been added. Meetings and training sessions multiply, but so do external interventions. As Zazie says, the desiring will has a way of harassing students and militants.

As for the basic problems, all these groups say more or less the same thing. Where they radically differ is style: a particular definition of the leader or propaganda, a particular conception of discipline, or the fidelity, modesty, and asceticism of a militant. How do you propose to account for these differences if you don't go rummaging around in the social machine's economy of desire? From the anarchists to the Maoists, the diversity is incredibly wide, analytically as well as politically. And don't forget, beyond the shrinking fringe of splinter groups, that mass of people who don't know what to choose: the leftist movement, the attraction of unions, straightforward revolt, indifference... We must try to explain the role these splinter groups play in crushing desire, like machines grinding and tamping it down. It's a dilemma: to be broken by the social system, or to fall into your preordained place in these little churches. In this respect, May '68 was an astonishing revelation. Desiring power accelerated to a point where it exploded all the splinter groups. They regrouped later on when they participated in the business of restoring order with other repressive forces: the CGT [Communist Workers' Union], the PC [Communist Party], the CRS [the riot police], or Edgar Faure. I'm not saying that to be provocative. It goes without saying that the militants were courageous to fight against the police. But if we leave the sphere of struggle, the sphere of interests, to consider instead the function of desire, you must admit that the recruiters of certain splinter groups approached the youth in a spirit of repression: they wanted to contain the desire which had been liberated to re-channel it.

Actuel: Sure, but what is a liberated desire? I see how it could work on an individual or group level: artistic creation, smashing windows, burning things, or even simply having an orgy, or letting everything go to hell through sheer laziness. But then what? What would be a collectively liberated desire on the scale of a social group? Can you give any precise examples? And what does that mean for the "totality of society," if you don't reject that term as Foucault does.

Felix Guattari: We chose as our reference a state of desire at its most critical and acute: the desire of the schizophrenic. And the schizophrenic who is able to produce something, beyond or beneath

the schizophrenic who has been locked up, beaten down with drugs and social repression. In our opinion, some schizophrenics directly express a free deciphering of desire. But how does one conceive of a collective form of desiring economy? Well, not locally. I have a hard time imagining a small group which has been liberated staying together as it is traversed by the flows of a repressive society, as though one liberated individual after another could just be added on. But if desire constitutes the very texture of society in its totality, including its mechanisms of reproduction, a movement of liberation can “crystallize” in that society. In May ’68, from the first sparks to the local clashes, the upheaval was brutally transmitted to the whole society—including groups that had nothing at all to do with the revolutionary movement: doctors, lawyers, merchants. Vested interest prevailed in the end, but only after a month of burnings. We’re headed for explosions of this type, yet more profound.

Actuel: Might there have already occurred in history a vigorous, lasting liberation of desire, beyond brief periods of celebration, war, and carnage, or revolutions for a day? Or do you believe in an end to history: after millennia of alienation, social evolution will one day turn around in a final revolution to liberate desire forever?

Felix Guattari: Neither. Not in a definitive end to history, and not in provisional excess. Every civilization and every epoch have had their ends to history. It’s not necessarily insightful or liberating. The moments of excess, the celebrations are hardly more reassuring. There are militant revolutionaries who feel a sense of responsibility and say: excess, celebration, yes—“at the first stage of revolution.” But there is always a second stage: organization, operation, all the serious stuff... Nor is desire liberated in simple moments of celebration. Just look at the discussion between Victor and Foucault, in the issue of *Les Temps Modernes* devoted to the Maoists.¹ Victor consents to excess, but only at “the first stage.” As for the rest, the serious stuff, Victor calls for a new State apparatus, new norms, popular justice by tribunal, invoking an authority exterior to the masses, a third party capable of resolving the contradictions of the masses. We come up against the same old schema again and again: they detach a pseudo avant-garde able to bring about syntheses, to form a party as an embryonic State apparatus; they levy recruits from a well-educated, well-behaved working class; and the rest, lumpen proletariat, is a residue not to be trusted (always the old condemnation of desire). These very distinctions only trap desire to serve a bureaucratic caste-system. Foucault responds by denouncing the third party, saying that if such a thing as popular justice does exist, it certainly won’t come from a tribunal. He clearly demonstrates how the “avant-garde / proletariat / non-proletarian plebs” distinction is originally a distinction which the bourgeoisie introduces into the masses, to crush the phenomena of desire and marginalize it. The whole question turns on a State apparatus. Why would you look to a party or State apparatus to liberate desires? It’s bizarre. Wanting improved justice is like wanting good judges, good cops, good bosses, a cleaner France, etc. And then we are told: how do you propose to unify isolated struggles without a State apparatus? The revolution clearly needs a war-machine, but that’s not a State apparatus. It also needs an analytic force, an analyzer of the desires of the masses, absolutely—but not an external mechanism of synthesis. What is liberated desire? A desire that escapes the impasse of individual private fantasy: it’s not about adapting desire, socializing and disciplining it, but hooking it up in such a way that its process is uninterrupted in the social body, so its expression can be collective. The most important thing is not authoritarian unification, but a kind of infinite swarming: desires in the neighborhood, the schools, factories, prisons, nursery schools, etc. It’s not about a make-over, or totalization, but hooking up on the same plane at its tipping point. As long as we stick to the alternative between the impotent spontaneity of anarchy and the hierarchical and bureaucratic encoding of a party-organization, there can be no liberation of desire.

Actuel: Do you think that capitalism in its beginnings was able to subsume social desires?

¹ Pierre Victor was the pseudonym of Benny Levy, the one-time leader of the Proletarian Left (*Gauche proletarienne*), which was outlawed. Cf. *Les Temps modernes*, “Nouveau Fascisme, Nouvelle démocratie” no. 310 bis, juin 1972, pp. 355–366.

Gilles Deleuze: Of course. Capitalism has always been, and still is a remarkable desiring-machine. Flows of money, flows of the means of production, flows of man-power, flows of new markets: it's all desire in flux. You just have to examine the many contingencies that gave birth to capitalism to realize how inseparable from the phenomena of desire are its infrastructure and economy, and the extent to which it is a criss-crossing of desires. And don't forget fascism. It too "subsumes social desires," including the desires of repression and death. Hitler and the fascist machine gave people hard-ons. But if your question wants to ask: was capitalism in its beginnings revolutionary, did the industrial revolution ever coincide with a social revolution? The answer is no. At least I don't think so. From its birth capitalism has been connected with a savage repression. It very quickly acquired its organization and State apparatus. Did capitalism entail the dissolution of previous codes and powers? Absolutely. But it had already set up the gears of its power, including its State power, in the fissures of previous regimes. It's always like that: there is very little progress. Even before a social formation gets going, its instruments of exploitation and repression are already there, aimlessly spinning their wheels, but ready to swing into high gear. The first capitalist are waiting there like birds of prey, waiting to swoop on the worker who has fallen through the cracks of the previous system. This is what is meant by primitive accumulation.

Actuel: In my view, the rising bourgeoisie was imagining and preparing its revolution throughout the Enlightenment. The bourgeoisie in its own eyes was a revolutionary class "to the bitter end," since it came to power by bringing down the Ancient Regime. Whatever the movements that existed among the peasantry and the working class, the bourgeois revolution is a revolution carried out by the bourgeoisie—the two terms are synonymous. So, it is anachronistic to judge the bourgeoisie by the socialist Utopias of the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries; it leads to the introduction of a category that never existed.

Gilles Deleuze: Here again, what you're saying fits the schema of a particular kind of Marxism: it supposes that the bourgeoisie is revolutionary at some point in history, and even that it was or is necessary to go through a capitalist stage, through a bourgeois revolutionary stage. That's a Stalinist point of view, but it's hard to take seriously. When a social formation exhausts itself and begins to leak on every side, all sorts of things come uncoded, all sorts of unpoliced flows begin circulating: for example, the migrations of peasants in feudal Europe are phenomena of "deterritorialization." The bourgeoisie imposes a new code, both economic and political, so you might think it was revolutionary. Not in the least. Daniel Guerin has said some profound things about the Revolution of 1789.² The bourgeoisie never mistook its real enemy. Its real enemy was not the previous system, but that which had escaped the control of the previous system, and the bourgeoisie was resolved to control it in its turn. The bourgeoisie owed its power to the dissolution of the old system; but it could exercise this new power only by considering the other revolutionaries as enemies. The bourgeoisie was never revolutionary. It had the revolution carried out for it. It manipulated, channeled, repressed an enormous surge of popular desire. The people marched to their death at Valmy.

Actuel: They certainly marched to their death at Verdun.

Felix Guattari: Exactly. This is precisely what interests us. Where do these eruptions, these uprisings, these enthusiasms come from? They can't be explained by a social rationality, and the moment they're born, they're rerouted, captured by power. A revolutionary situation cannot be explained simply by the analysis of interests present at the time. In 1903, the Russian Social-Democratic party is discussing its alliances, the organization of the proletariat, and the role of the avant-garde. All of the sudden, while the Social-Democrats are "preparing" for revolution, they're rocked by the events of 1905 and have to jump aboard a moving train. A crystallization of desire on a wide social scale had occurred, whose basis lay in still incomprehensible situations. The same is true of 1917. In this case, the politicians again jumped aboard, and they gained control of it. Yet no revolutionary

² D. Guerin, *La Revolution francaise et nous* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1976). Cf. also, *Lutte des classes sous la Premiere Republique: 1793—1797* (Vans: Gallimard, 1968).

tendency was willing or able to assume the need for a Soviet organization that would have allowed the masses to take real charge of their interests and desires. Machines called political organizations were put in circulation, and they functioned according to the model Dimitrov had developed at the Seventh International Congress—alternating between popular fronts and sectarian retractions—and they always lead to the same repressive results. We saw it again in 1936, 1945, and 1968. By their axiomatics, these mass machines refuse to liberate revolutionary energy. Red flag in hand, this politics in its underhanded way reminds one of the politics of the President or the clergy. And in our view, this corresponds to a certain position vis-a-vis desire, a profound way of envisioning the ego, the individual, and the family. This raises a simple dilemma: either we find some new type of structure to facilitate the fusion of collective desire and revolutionary organization; or we continue on the present course, heading from one repression to the next, toward a fascism that will make Hitler and Mussolini look like a joke.

Actuel: So then what is the nature of this profound, fundamental desire that we see constitutes humanity and human beings as social animals, but which is constantly betrayed? Why is it always ready to be invested in those machines of the dominant machine, like opposed political parties which are nonetheless the same? Could this mean that desire is condemned to a pure explosion without consequence, or to perpetual betrayal? One last question: can there ever be such a thing as a collective and lasting expression of liberated desire at some point in history? If so, how?

Gilles Deleuze: If we knew the answer to that, we wouldn't be discussing it, we would just go out and do it. Still, like Felix said, revolutionary organization must be the organization of a war-machine and not of a State apparatus, the organization of an analyzer and not of an external synthesis. In every social system, you will always find lines of escape, as well as sticking points to cut off these escapes, or else (which is not the same thing) embryonic apparatuses to recuperate them, to reroute and stop them, in a new system waiting to strike. I would like to see the crusades analyzed from this perspective. But in every respect, capitalism has a very particular character: its lines of escape are not just difficulties that arise, they are the very conditions of its operation. Capitalism is founded on a generalized decoding of every flow: flows of wealth, flows of labor, flows of language, flows of art, etc. It did not create any code, it created a kind of accounting, an axiomatics of decoded flows, as the basis of its economy. It ligatures the points of escape and moves ahead. It is always expanding its own borders, and always finds itself in a situation where it must close off new escape routes at its borders, pushing them back once more. It has resolved none of its fundamental problems. It can't even foresee the monetary increase in a country over a year. It is endlessly crossing its own limits which keep reappearing farther out. It puts itself in alarming situations with respect to its own production, its social life, its demographics, its periphery in the Third World, its interior regions, etc. The system is leaking all over the place. They spring from the constantly displaced limits of the system. And certainly, the revolutionary escape (the active escape, which Jackson invokes when he says: "I've never stopped fleeing, but as I flee, I'm looking for a weapon")³ is not the same thing as other kinds of escape, the schizo-escape, the drug-escape. This is precisely the problem facing marginal groups: to make all the lines of escape connect up on a revolutionary plane. In capitalism, then, these lines of escape take on a new character, and a new kind of revolutionary potential. So, you see, there is hope.

Actuel: You mentioned the crusades just now. Do you see the crusades as one of the first manifestations of collective schizophrenia in the West?

Felix Guattari: The crusades were indeed an extraordinary schizophrenic movement. Suddenly, thousands and thousands of people, during a period that was already divided and troubled, were totally fed up with their life; spontaneous preaching rose up everywhere, and whole villages of men set out. It is only afterwards that a frightened papacy tried to give this movement direction by leading it

³ George Jackson, a militant African-American, was imprisoned in San Quentin and Soledad, where he was murdered on August 21, 1971. Gilles Deleuze and members of the GIP collaborated on a special edition: *L'Assassinat de George Jackson* (Paris: Gallimard, coll. 'Intolérable,' 1971).

off to the Holy Land. This strategy had two advantages: it gets rid of the wandering gangs, and it shores up the Christian outposts threatened by the Turks in the Near-East. It didn't always work: the Venetian Crusade wound up in Constantinople, and the Children's Crusade veered off to the South of France and quickly lost any sympathy people had for it. Entire villages were captured and burned by these "crusading" children, whom the regular armies finally had to round up, either killing them or selling them into slavery.

Actuel: Do you see any parallel here with contemporary movements, such as the road, or hippy colonies, fleeing the factory and the office? Is there a pope to co-opt them? The Jesus-revolution?

Felix Guattari: A recuperation by Christianity is not out of the question. It's already a reality, to a certain extent, in the United States though much less so here in France or Europe. But you can see a latent recuperation beneath the naturist movement, the idea that we could withdraw from production and reconstitute a small society out of the way, as though we weren't all branded and corralled by the capitalist system.

Actuel: What role can still be attributed to the Church in a country like ours? The Church was at the center of power in Western society well into the eighteenth-century; it bound and structured the social machine before the nation-State emerged. The technocracy has deprived it today of its old function, so the Church, too, appears adrift, a rudderless ship divided against itself. One can ask whether the Church, pressured by currents of progressive Catholicism, is not becoming less confessional than certain political organizations.

Felix Guattari: What about ecumenism? Is that not the Church's way of landing on its feet? The Church has never been stronger. I don't see any reason to oppose the Church to technocracy; the Church has its own technocracy. Historically speaking, Christianity and positivism have always gotten along quite well together. There is a Christian motor behind the development of the positive sciences. And you can't really claim that the psychiatrist replaced the priest, nor that the cop replaced him. Everyone is needed in repression! What has become outdated in the Church is its ideology, not its organization of power.

Actuel: Let's address this other aspect of your book: the critique of psychiatry. Can one say that France is already under surveillance by psychiatry at the local level? And just how far does this influence extend?

Felix Guattari: Psychiatric hospitals are essentially structured like a state bureaucracy, and psychiatrists are bureaucrats. For a long time the State had been satisfied with a politics of coercion and did nothing for almost a century. It was only after the Liberation that any signs of anxiety appeared: the first psychiatric revolution, the opening of the hospitals, free treatment, institutional psychotherapy, etc. This led to the great Utopian politics of "localized" care: limiting the number of internments, and sending teams of psychiatrists out into the population like missionaries into the bush. But not enough people believed in the reform, and without the will to carry it out, it got bogged down. Now you have a few model services for official visits, and a few hospitals here and there in the more underdeveloped regions. Still, we're headed for a major crisis, on the scale of the university crisis, a disaster at every level: equipment, personnel training, therapy, etc.

The institutional surveillance of children has been, on the whole, undertaken with greater success. In this case, the initiative escaped State structure and financing, falling instead under diverse associations, such as childhood protection agencies or parental associations... Because they were subsidized by social security, the establishments proliferated. The child is immediately taken in charge by a network of psychiatrists, tagged at an early age, and followed for life. One can expect solutions of this type for adult psychiatry. Faced with the current impasse, the State will try to denationalize institutions and replace them with institutions governed by the law of 1901 and most certainly manipulated by political powers and reactionary family groups. We're indeed headed toward the psychiatric surveillance of France, if the present crisis doesn't liberate its revolutionary potentials. The most conservative ideology is spreading everywhere, an insipid transposition of the most Oedipal concepts. In the children's wards, they call the director "uncle," and the nurse "mother." I have

even heard things like: game groups follow a maternal principle, and workshops a paternal principle. The psychiatry of surveillance looks progressive because it opens up the hospital. But if that implies a surveillance of the neighborhood, we will quickly come to regret the closed asylums of yesterday. It's like psychoanalysis: it functions beyond the confines of walls, but it's much worse as a repressive force, it's much more dangerous.

Gilles Deleuze: Here is a case. A woman comes in for a consultation, explaining that she's taking tranquilizers. She asks for a glass of water. Then she says: "You see, I'm a cultured woman, I've done graduate work, I love to read, and all of a sudden I can't stop crying. I can't stand the subway... And then I start crying as soon as I read anything... I watch TV, I see those images from Vietnam: I can't stand it." The doctor doesn't say too much. The woman continues: "I've been working a little for the Resistance: I act as a mail-box." The doctor asks her to explain. "Of course, I'm sorry, you don't understand, do you? I go into a cafe and ask: is there anything for Rene? Then they give me a letter to send." When the doctor hears 'Rene,' he wakes up: "Why did you say 'Rene'?" This is the first time he has asked a question. Up to this point, she has been talking about the subway, Hiroshima, Vietnam, and the effect it has on her, on her body, how it makes her feel like crying. But the doctor only says: "Well, well, 'Rene.' What does 'Rene' mean to you?" The name 'Rene' implies someone who is reborn [re-ne]. A renaissance. Resistance?—forget about it, he passes that over in silence. But renaissance, that fits the universal schema, the archetype: "You want to be reborn," he says. The doctor has found his bearings: at last he's on track. And he forces her to talk about her mother and her father. This is an essential aspect of our book, and it's totally concrete. Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts have never paid attention to delirium. All you have to do is listen to someone in a state of delirium: the Russians worry him, and the Chinese; I've got no saliva left, I was sodomized in the subway, there are microbes and spermatozoa everywhere; it's Franco's fault, the Jews' fault, the Maoists' fault. Their delirium covers the whole social field. Why couldn't this be about the sexuality of a subject, the relation it has to the idea of Chinese, Whites, Blacks? Or to whole civilizations, the crusades, the subway? Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts have never heard a word of it, and they're on the defensive because they're position is indefensible. They crush the contents of the unconscious with pre-fabricated statements like: "You keep saying Chinese, but what about your father? —He's not Chinese. —So your lover is Chinese?" It's like the repressive work by the judge in the Angela Davis case, who assured us: "Her behavior is explicable only by the fact that she was in love." But what if, on the contrary, Angela Davis's libido was a revolutionary, social libido? What if she was in love because she was a revolutionary?

This is what we want to tell psychiatrists and psychoanalysts: you have no idea what delirium is; you've got it all wrong. The sense of our book is this: we've reached a stage where many people feel that the psychoanalytic machine no longer works, and a whole generation is beginning to have had it with all-purpose schemas: Oedipus and castration, the imaginary and the symbolic—they systematically efface the social, political, and cultural content from every psychic disturbance.

Actuel: Your association of capitalism with schizophrenia is the very foundation of your book. Are there cases of schizophrenia in other societies?

Felix Guattari: Schizophrenia is indissociable from the capitalist system, which is originally conceived as an escape, a leak: an exclusive illness. In other societies, escape and marginality exhibit other aspects. The asocial individual of so-called primitive societies is not locked up; prisons and asylums are recent notions. They're chased away or exiled on the margin of the village and die there, unless they can be integrated into a neighboring village. Each system, moreover, has its own particular illness: the hysteria of so-called primitive societies, the paranoid-depressives of great Empires... The capitalist economy functions through decoding and deterritorialization: it has its extreme illnesses, that is, its schizophrenics who come uncoded and become deterritorialized to the extreme, but it also has its extreme consequences, its revolutionaries.

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