

Library Socialism & The Irreducible Minimum – Srsly Wrong Ep 196



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S2Z_iH9wEw

Narrator

Warning: "If you have a garden and a library, then you have everything that you need." That's a quote from Cicero.

(School bell ringing)

Teacher

All right, class. Set– settle down, please. No more– hey! I saw that paper airplane. All right. So, today's lesson– I'm just gonna– (chalk sounds) "Library Socialism and the Irreducible Minimum." Okay. Does anyone here know what an irreducible minimum is?

Jonathan

Teacher, didn't Paul Radin argue that tribal economies are distinguished most remarkably by their emphasis on the concept of an irreducible minimum, and that they operated on the principle that every human being has the inalienable right to an irreducible minimum consisting of adequate food, shelter, and clothing, in sharp contrast to imperial societies in which tribute supports an elite class, or the commercial system in which profit furthers capital accumulation?

Teacher

You know what, everyone? Jonathan gets a sour dino gummy. There you go.

Jonathan

Oh, yay! Mm, it's sour.

Teacher

Yeah, so, you're absolutely right that the term "irreducible minimum" has its origin in the Polish-American anthropologist Paul Radin, (chalk sounds) who was, at one point, was a major influence to Murray Bookchin, one of the founders of social ecology.

Jonathan

Oh, yeah. He wrote the textbook, "The Ecology of Freedom", we all use.

Teacher

Yeah. That's Library Socialism School for you. So, Bookchin sort of integrated this idea into his sense of preliterate tribal societies, that their social relations had three composite elements. Usufruct, the irreducible minimum, and complementarity. So, Bookchin agreed with Radin that this was a principle that many tribal societies function by, that people wouldn't fall below a certain level of basic support.

He gives the example of skeletal remains of Neanderthals from 50,000 years ago, where a Neanderthal who was disabled at birth, clearly, and wouldn't be able to survive in the context of the wilderness without social support, its skeleton was matured to the point that it was clearly taken care of and allowed to live out a natural life cycle. Bookchin argued the same burdens being placed on people of differing abilities or differing status can be used subtly for dealing with people on highly unequal terms.

To quote Bookchin, "Whenever possible, special treatment was given to the infirm, the elderly, and the weak to equalize their material position. Pre-literate people seem to have been guided by the principle, 'the equality of unequals,' a maxim that forms the foundations for the ideal of freedom." We at Library Socialism School don't just, like, automatically listen to Bookchin on everything, (chalk sounds) but that's a pretty good point.

Jonathan

Teacher, this Library Socialism, I understand how usufruct fits into that, because libraries lend out books on a kind of usufructian basis– you use it, and then return it for others to use, and we want to expand that to all areas of society so there’s libraries on a usufructian basis for things like computer equipment, or sofas, or boats. But what is the ”irreducible minimum?” Why would that be a fundamental principle of libraries?

Teacher

Great question, Jonathan. Here is a sour candy gummy.

Jonathan

Yayy! Mmm.

Teacher

See? See, everyone? That’s what happens when you participate in class and ask a good question. If you think of an existing lending library, (chalk sounds) it already is actualizing the principle of the irreducible minimum when it comes to books, and increasingly to things like use of computers, movies, television shows–

Jonathan

Don’t forget, many libraries offer various kinds of workshops and skills trainings.

Teacher

The Library Socialist position is that this is one of the most glorious examples of Actually Existing Library Socialism that needs to be upheld. Also within that category is things like The Pirate Bay. Libraries use the principle of usufruct to bring about an irreducible minimum. And that’s what Library Socialists advocate for:

Jonathan

Ooh...

Teacher

A global library system that uses the principle of usufruct to actualize the irreducible minimum, to make sure that people never fall below a certain level, and to strive that we increase that irreducible minimum in pace with the development of technology, and within the development of social relations towards more freedom, more egalitarianism, and then to use the forces of nature to actualize greater ethics, rather than work against the forces of nature, which would include stewardship of our home, Planet Earth.

Jonathan

How many people even believe in this Library Socialism thing? Is this a well-established political tendency?

Teacher

Well, I mean, the substance of the ideas are believed by a lot of people. As far as that actually identify as Library Socialists, well, it’s basically, like, just us at the school.

Jonathan

Oh.

Teacher

But, you know, just a developmental understanding of ideology– an ideological framework would necessarily start at a small point. So we’re sort of closer to the beginning than the end of the...

Jonathan

Right. So it’s new.

Teacher

It’s important to not go with what’s popular, Jonathan. It’s important to go with what’s right. You could be the only person in the universe who understands the centrality of libraries in the actualization of socialism. You could be the only one. But if it’s right, you’ve got to speak your truth.

Jonathan

Okay, Teacher.

Teacher

Okay, kids. How 'bout we all take an early recess? Because one of the other fundamental ideas behind Library Socialism is that leisure is revolutionary in itself.

Jonathan

Oh, c'mon, teacher, please no—

Kids

No, please, no recess!

Jonathan

We want to learn!

(Kids protest)

Kids

We want to learn from you, Teacher—

—Library Socialism—

—learning a lot, Teach—

—Bookchin text we could read...?

Teacher

Okay, no, kids, please— trust me. I appreciate your enthusiasm for learning about this subject matter. But, please, go take an extra-long 35-minute recess. Leisure's good for your soul. You can come back rested up. If you must, talk about it out there. Talk amongst yourselves. But do what you want.

Jonathan

Okay.

Teacher

Appreciate this realm of freedom now, because you're eventually gonna have to face the crushing reality of wage relations.

(School bell)

☒ *Opening Theme Song by Conor Drake*

(00:06:17)

Shawn

Hey, folks, and welcome back to *The Srsly Wrong Podcast*. This is the only podcast on the internet that lets the dead bury their dead. I can feel the fecund outspring of revolutionary potential. Can you, Aaron?

Aaron

I'm sorry, I—

Shawn

From death comes life.

Aaron

So— mm. True.

Shawn

Haven't you ever seen *The Lion King*?

Aaron

Yes, I have. Not the new one. The old one.

Shawn

Yeah, of course.

Aaron

Circle of life.

Shawn

It's not the chain of life.

Aaron

Or the line of the life? The square of life?

Shawn

The Triangle of Life.

Aaron

And the Triangle of Life, actually, if you look at it, it's an arrow, and it points to the theory that's going to lead us to a better society. And if you look at that arrow, and what it points at, it points at Library Socialism.

Shawn

Oh, really?

Aaron

Yeah. The Triangle of Life.

Shawn

Wow. So there you have it. The top of the signaling heap, folks.

Aaron

So this is the second episode in our Library Socialism series. First was Library Socialism and Usufruct, now we've got Library Socialism and Irreducible Minimum. And— who knows, for the future. We do.

Shawn

We got a lot of positive feedback on the first Library Socialism episode, which is great, because I was pretty excited about it.

Aaron

This Library Socialism thing makes a lot of sense, and there's a lot of connections there, and we didn't even realize how much sense it made and how many connections there were until we started explaining it. Yeah. I was super happy with that episode. Super happy that people enjoyed it.

Shawn

But before we get into anything serious, one more light sketch that will make us all feel good about our lives.

☒ *Chipper Music*

(00:07:42)

Narrator

And now we go to the old Crushing Reality of Wage Relations Sketch, where we examine how the current society tries to meet people's needs.

(Workplace sounds)

Boss

Well, the resume's great. You've got a ton of experience here. I know that our dishes are gonna be well-washed. Almost never broken, it looks like. Only broke two dishes in the whole four years you were there.

Dishwasher

Yeah. It's a real point of pride for me. I never break dishes.

Boss

Great. Yeah, well, we're prepared to hire you. The starting wage is \$13 an hour. Your schedule will usually be: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, night shift; Friday, morning shift. But just this once to get you started sooner, we do have a shift available this Saturday morning as well.

Dishwasher

Those shifts aren't ideal, but we can get back to that. The \$13 an hour is gonna be a real issue, because I do need to pay my rent, and I'm gonna need at least \$15.

Boss

I understand that you were more recently employed at \$15 an hour— and, hey, that's great— but we do have a wage schedule here. We hire dishwashers at \$13 an hour. Which, usually, at the whole table of us drinking, talking about running restaurants, I'm usually the generous one at \$13 an hour starting wage for a dishwasher.

Dishwasher

Right. Okay, but—

Boss

So maybe you're missing that context? But that is the context.

Dishwasher

Thank you for that context. Here's a bit of context I think you might be missing. The reason jobs exist, and wages exist, is so that people who do productive work can meet their needs.

Boss

That's not how we do the contracts. The contract is, like, "You will get paid this rate per hour, minus deductions."

Dishwasher

And, like, I need a job that pays me enough to live, is what I'm saying.

Boss

Oh, yeah, that makes sense.

Dishwasher

So don't you think there should be a responsibility to pay enough to live, at least?

Boss

I can't think of why that would be. I think you're missing out that, like, we don't need to. We're not supposed to. People who are at, like, your wage range, it's the norm to treat you with a high level of disrespect. You know, I'm jerking your shifts around, moving you to different times of the day, canceling shifts last-minute and stuff like that. Just to put it in economic terms, not that you would necessarily understand, but there's a low supply of dishwasher jobs comparative to the amount of people who are willing to work dishwasher jobs. I'm just—

Dishwasher

I got it—

Boss

—swimming in potential dishwashers right now. And so, \$13 an hour is more than generous to find an adequate dishwasher. And, yeah—

Dishwasher

I understand what you're saying—

Boss

—if he breaks five dishes? So be it.

Dishwasher

—and you're correct that I really have no leverage in this situation, and no bargaining power. If I take this job, every day that I come in for another shift I'm gonna feel more and more like the society that I live in is just so deeply dysfunctional to allow me to so thoroughly disregarded as a human being. You're— you're okay with that?

Boss

We care about our team members here. We understand life happens. Sometimes we get frustrated. But I say, get a different lens on this. You're 80% of the way to paying your rent and your basic expenses with this job. Aren't you gonna say, "Thank you for the job"?

Dishwasher

Is that a requirement of the job?

Boss

No, no, yeah, no, it's not a requirement. It's just how we do— it's sort of the company culture around here. Always have a smile on. Thank each other for things, like opportunities that I'm giving you. Showing up on time early, staying late. It's not required—

Dishwasher

Is it part of the company culture to maybe reward employees who work hard with extra cash bonuses on the day when they might really need it, or maybe company culture to let people have days off with pay if they need it, or...?

Boss

I've never heard of any company culture like that. That's—

Dishwasher

Oh, really?

Boss

Yeah.

Dishwasher

Oh, yeah, I'm just kind of brainstorming things that would make sense, so.

Boss

Well, (chuckles) there's a reason that I'm the boss and you're the dishwasher, let's just say that. Those inferior ideas could never last five minutes in the shark tank of the business world. Now I'm gonna go to my office and watch YouTube videos. Could I count on you to generate some profit for us on Saturday?

Dishwasher

I will clean dishes.

Boss

That's what I like to hear. Part of the family.

Dishwasher

That's incredibly awkward.

Boss

You're like a son to me.

Dishwasher

I'm- I fundamentally resent this whole interaction.

Boss

You're allowed to think that stuff, but just never say it, okay? That's my only request.

Dishwasher

Okay, bye.

Boss

Bye. Yeah, remember, any narrative about the workplace that you speak should be filtered through the lens of your boss, bye!

☒

(00:11:52)

Shawn

As I mentioned on the last Library Socialism episode, a really key part of my political development came through the Pirate Party. And it was through the lens of the Pirate Party, which was focused a lot on Net Neutrality, legalization or decriminalization of filesharing, that I began to see politics from a perspective more willing to challenge base assumptions.

In particular, one of the things that really captured me about filesharing was how we had this technological capacity to distribute information in a new way, and that there was actually powerful people, political forces, monopolies, that were trying to prevent the dissemination of information. Both Metallica attacking Napster saying people can't listen to their new album, but also in a much more real and visceral sense, the U.S. government saying that Wikileaks can't publish files that show that they have committed war crimes.

Aaron

We have increased the human capacity to disseminate information via technics. And so, being able to look at our technological capabilities and, like, what we actually can do should be the benchmark against which we're measuring what we are doing.

Shawn

Yeah. Because, I mean, you could say that music, movies, et cetera, it's flippant, unimportant stuff.

Aaron

You don't "need" to listen to music.

Shawn

(Laughs) But, I mean, just think, on one hand you have seven billion-plus people who can either have access to something, or not. And then on the other hand, you have a much, much smaller group of people that want to lobby to control the world market of information to prevent that from happening. The choice is, like, which side are you on? All seven billion, or the monopoly? And that was the frame that I would talk about sometimes back when I was younger and involved in this sort of activism, and get into some really, really fierce debates with people who weren't ready to have their mind opened. (Laughter)

You know, this is something that drives people up the wall. Like, this argument. Especially to tell a musician, "Oh, yeah, that guy should be able to listen to your music without paying." It's so embedded in their sense of self, that, "I'm a musician, a musician gets paid for their work, otherwise they can't live, and so you're saying that you should steal food from my children's mouths in order to give someone the flippant experience of listening to music. Whereas my experience of selling music isn't flippant— it's my life."

Aaron

Yeah. When you're talking about framing those people who might have an interest in controlling the dissemination of information versus the seven billion people who might have an interest in consuming that information without paying for it, in the current society the way it's set up right now, if they don't have some control over the information that they're putting out there, and if everyone's getting it for free, and no one's paying them, then it is taking food out of their kids' mouths.

Shawn

Yeah. Insofar as the system is designed to withhold or give food to your children's mouths based on whether or not people buy your CDs? Absolutely.

(00:14:51)

☒

Shawn

I want to thank everyone in our audience who is a support on Patreon. You make the show alive. Without you, we couldn't do the show. If you're not doing that, you have the option to. \$6 a month will get you access to the entire *SRSLY WRONG* library, including our series on revolution, which we withhold.

Aaron

Yeah, we've made artificially scarce.

Shawn

Yeah. We applied the principle of artificial scarcity to generate a revenue pump under capitalism. It worked, to do that. Before, people didn't really donate that much. And then afterwards it's, like, "Wow, that sounds like a good episode." And it is! So please, please chip in.

Aaron

Because we need money to meet our needs, as everyone in society does. So, Patreon. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to put as much time into this show as we do.

Shawn

Yeah. We all are suffering from the crushing reality of wage relations, so I particularly appreciate the people who are helping to free up more and more of our time away from the crushing reality of wage relations to work on the podcast that we love.

☒ *Music fades*

(00:15:53)

Shawn

The question of how can artists get paid, how should artists get paid, is a good question. But I want to make a side point before we answer it. When we talk about the people on the side of the monopoly, now, these are some powerful organizations based mostly out of the U.S. that are pushing for their copyright, patent, intellectual property provisions to be put in global treaties, in these often secret deals that are negotiated in private, never voted on by, like, the actual citizens of the countries.

This system, as it currently stands with the intellectual property monopoly, is not putting foods in the bellies of the children of artists. Your average artist is not making a living off of their art. The level of success that people need to be able to follow their passions like that is something that most artists just never get the chance to, under this system. And then even when they do they're often put into predatory contracts where the same middlemen that are lobbying for these restrictive copyright laws are the major beneficiaries of their success rather than them.

So if you want to readjust intellectual property to actually benefit artists instead of, like, middlemen and profiteers, you're gonna want some changes to the system. But I think the greater question of how should artists get paid is better answered in the context of, how should people be free? In order to be free, you need to have money. If you don't have money, you're not free, in this society. If you can't pay your rent, you're not free. If you can't pay your cell phone bill, you're not free. If you can't pay for food, you're not free.

Because freedom isn't just some abstract thing. It's actually material. Like, your ability to have a place to stay, to have food for yourself and your family, that precondition of freedom allows you to make choices. If you don't have that money, you don't have choices. You're going to be forced into predatory contracts, or you're gonna be forced to work jobs that you don't want to work.

Aaron

Yeah. Freedom's contextual. Like, if you get left in the middle of a forest somewhere without any supplies or understanding of how to survive in the forest, but you have complete, total legal freedom, you wouldn't be "free," in the kind of sense that matters, in the sense that you're free to pursue your own development. The current system for artists, but just for people more generally, doesn't give people options or strategies for getting what they need in order to be free. Because the main strategy we have for that right now, as you said, is money.

Shawn

So, yeah. The question, "How do artists get paid?"— it's an interesting question, because "get paid" becomes a stand-in for, "have their basic needs met." "How do artists have their basic needs met?" is the real question, but because we live under a system where basic needs are met through spending power, that gets turned into, "how do artists get paid?" With the forest example, you're in the forest by yourself, you're free from a boss and a landlord, you're free from someone telling you what to do. Police, borders, social reputation, all these things that can be constricting on you as an individual, that can feel constricting or legitimately cause unfreedom. But unless you know survival skills, you're not free to do anything. You're free to die.

Aaron

And even if you do know survival skills, then, like, you're free to use them, or die. Like, you have two options then. But you don't have the freedom to pursue your electronic music career. Like, you can't make a computer.

Shawn

Yeah. And just for contrast, if you're absolutely incredibly, fabulously wealthy in this society, you know, a multi-billionaire type, they have so much freedom with that. They can make someone dressed as a bear go to their friend's house in ten minutes. They can make a tower. They can make a bridge. Like, the incredible amount of power that is given to money and those who have hoarded the most money is staggering. Of, like, that freedom to do things comes with money under this system.

(00:19:40)

☒

Narrator

We now go to Wrong Boys Dictionary Time.

☒

Wrong Shawn

Let's drag out this enormous dictionary. (Dragging and exertion noises) Ughh— it's so full. So many— new words.

Wrong Aaron

So big. Maybe we should split it up into multiple volumes.

Wrong Shawn

That's such a good idea. And to think, after we just spent \$2.3 million getting one, enormous luxury book, when we could have got a multi-volume set. D'uh. Well, anyways.

Wrong Aaron

Live and learn.

Wrong Shawn

Turning the enormous page... (Page flips) Tiny drumroll, please? You have the drum set?

Wrong Aaron

Mm-hmm. Do you want me to drag it out, or...?

Wrong Shawn

Yeah, drag it- yes.

Wrong Aaron

Okay, jeez. (Dragging and exertion noises)

Wrong Shawn

Yeah, maybe we should have got a regular size drum set. We spent way too much money on this plus-sized set.

Wrong Aaron

All right. Here's a drumroll- (Timpani)

Wrong Shawn

Today's word of the day is: "The wage of consent." (Cymbal crash) You get the pun? The "wage" of consent. (Laughter) (Music fades in) The same way that sleeping with someone who's below the "age of consent," it's a violation of their capacity to freely consent because of differential between the parties. The "wage of consent" is the line on which you can actually consent to do work. If your basic needs aren't met, you're facing coercion. So if we want to actualize freedom, and give people the preconditions of freedom, we need to give them enough money that they literally can freely consent to work or not. One way to refer to that- I wouldn't, like, usually use the term- "wage of consent." So, just a clever little phrase to demonstrate that.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. Yeah, write it down in your own dictionaries.

Wrong Shawn

Cross out a word that you never use and just replace it with, "the wage of consent," which you would start using all the time.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah, absolutely. Do you want to drag all these huge things back into storage?

Wrong Shawn

I think in order to leave the Wrong Boys Dictionary Time bit, we have to go over to that enormous switchboard over there, (Beeps, boops) and turn the four-foot-wide dial, which will switch the track from this pre-recorded ad back to the sort of conversation of the show. So do you want to just grab this enormous...?

Wrong Aaron

Yeah, sure, that sounds like how reality works.

Wrong Shawn

This dial is, like...

Wrong Aaron

My workout for the day.

Wrong Shawn

You get so much exercise editing the podcast when you have a dial-based editing system, and it's so large.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. How much do you think this would weigh? 250 pounds?

Wrong Shawn

Oh, easy.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah.

Wrong Shawn

Probably more. Okay– Ungh! (Happy chime) And now back to *SRSLY WRONG*, where we go to Shawn and Aaron having a conversation already in progress.

☒ *Chimes*

(00:22:00)

Shawn

So how do artists get paid? Well, I think the best way to pay artists is to reform societal institutions in a way that people never fall below a certain level. So, in social ecology they refer to that as the "irreducible minimum." We've also referred to it on the show before as a "guaranteed basic outcome." So, like, housing, food, telecommunications, human rights, education– like, these are things that you should be able to count on, you should be able to set your watch to. And to actually address that problem, like, upstream and say, like, we're gonna make sure that poverty ceases to exist, and that people have what they need on a fundamental level, allows us to really unlock the real, like, creative and cultural potential of humanity.

Aaron

And it just– like, it happens to be that we have this astounding productive capacity, and an ability to do things that sound like science fiction to certain people, like provide food for everyone, provide housing for everyone, create a global super-high-speed train transportation network, provide everyone with healthcare.

Shawn

Our obligation is to, at the very least, socially provide for others as a group what is absolutely needed, let no one fall off the wagon of need. But in a highly technologically-advanced literate society, where the status of the cumulative technology of humankind is sort of beyond our imagination– like, the technological capacity we have is beyond, I think, what any individual grasps right now– then, like, yeah, of course, we should also strive to push ourselves to the highest limit of ethics within that context.

Aaron

Something about the way that we talk about these things sometimes really grates on me, like there's this distinction between "needs" and "wants" or various, like, flippant things. And, like, it reminds me almost of the way Boomers talk about Millennials and, like, "Oh, they're, like, drinking coffee every day. You don't need coffee every day. Think about the down payment on your house if you didn't spend \$5 on coffee every day." You're just doing this thing that you don't "need." And it's, like, true enough. Like, if basic needs, if need means "need for sustenance," nobody needs coffee every day. Nobody needs avocado toast.

Shawn

Yeah. You should just be drinking oat water. (Aaron laughs) Back in my day, we didn't have avocado toast, with a little salt and pepper. We just drank oat water and we liked it.

Aaron

Yeah, it's– so, like, I just– I feel like there's some confusion sometimes about the way that we talk about needs. And, like, what actually is a "need." Because on the one hand, we want to rule in, living in our current society, contextually, sometimes people need a cup of coffee in the morning to get going. Like, it's not meeting your need for basic survival sustenance. But it might be needing your need for energy when you didn't get enough sleep. And, like, people need energy.

This is something I say a lot but, like, whenever you talk about a need you have to say, "need for what?" And, like, we want to rule in coffee a lot of times, but we also want to rule out owning ten yachts.

And we don't say you don't "need" that. Everything people do is trying to meet some need or another. That's what motivates humans. Like, you feel a deficiency of some kind and you want to do the thing. Like, people who own ten yachts are doing that because they have a need for aesthetic pleasure. It's probably very beautiful to be out on the ocean on your yacht.

They have a need for rest and relaxation. They're using the yacht to meet that need. They have a need for affection and connection with other people, and so they bring their friends on the yacht with them, and enjoy time with other people. For someone who owns ten yachts, the yachts are actually meeting a lot of their needs. The problem with one person owning ten yachts is that it gets in the way of other people meeting their needs, and that there's far less resource-intensive ways for that person to meet their need for aesthetic pleasure, for rest and relaxation, for connection and affection with other people.

Or for even— not saying going on a boat is a need, but it's a strategy for meeting needs. But there's less resource-intensive ways for that person to have access to a yacht. So there's absolutely no action any humans have ever taken throughout history that wasn't an attempt to meet some need for themselves. When people talk about, like, "Oh, you just want that, it's not a need," like, a lot of times we're talking about strategies for meeting needs and how effective they are, and the different kinds of strategies, and what affects they have on other people.

I was looking in, like, my old Google Drive notes and I wrote a thing about this exact thing that I'm talking about in 2011 when I was very interested in the Zeitgeist Movement and their vision of a technological utopian future, and talking about a society that meets needs and, like, what that means. And this framework really made a lot of sense to me. And I kind of copped it from nonviolent communication, the idea of needs and strategies for meeting needs and, like, sort of tragic attempts to meet needs that don't work, or attempts to meet needs that hurt other people's needing needs.

Shawn

Yeah. So the Boomers are criticizing the Millennials saying, "Oh, absolutely you need sustenance. But the strategy of paying \$12 for avocado toast it meet those needs is not an effective strategy, and you're depriving yourself of meeting further needs in other contexts." That would be, like, the sort of giraffe ears, very sympathetic view of the anti-Millennial avocado toast thing. It's a critique of a bad strategy for meeting needs that actually is preventing people from effectively even meeting their own needs through spending more money than they need to on— seen as a luxury meal compared to good old fashion oat water.

Aaron

Yeah. But they not taking account the way that avocado toast and oat water, they have the same amount of calories. It was some really heavy oat water. (Laughs)

Shawn

You've just got to drink a lot of it, friend.

Aaron

Might— might equally meet your need for sustenance, for calories, but it won't, like, equally meet your need for variety and for joy, which is something people use food to meet their need for joy and for play, and for—

Shawn

And yeah, for the social interaction of meeting in a restaurant and, like, being able to just sit down with a friend and relax, and eat together and chat and not worry about the—

Aaron

And, like, sure, you could both sit together sipping your oat water...

Shawn

I'm— I'm thirsty for oat water from all this— all this talking. Good old fashioned nutrient-dense oat water. (Laughter) On the subject of, like, the basic question of, like, how basic is basic, and how that scale functions, and, like, how we can more effectively think about it — one that I've heard some social ecologists talk— like, Demand Utopia calls it the "geshie"— which is, like, short for the "gestalt", which

is, like, a Hegelian term. And the geshie is the realm of the good. Of greater or lesser good, not greater or less evil. And it's like there's a certain threshold where you've passed into the realm of the good.

At the very, very bottom of the geshie scale is, like, where you know that people won't starve, they won't be homeless, they won't be denied medical care that they need, et cetera, and stuff like that. That's like the basic. Like, that's just, like, the threshold in which it becomes adequate. But then it's a realm of greater or lesser good. So, like, achieving the lesser good of knowing that homelessness doesn't exist anymore— which, obviously, compared to our current society, would be an incredible step forward in itself, is still only, like, the beginning, the very basic of a spectrum which has much greater possibility.

Aaron

One way to think about this, which has its flaws but it very well-known, is, like, Maslow's "hierarchy of needs." So if you look at the bottom you've got your physiological needs— breathing, food, water. They also include sex, sleep, and excretion. Oh, man, if you couldn't need your need for excretion...

Shawn

That's why we need public washrooms. Poopoo peepee politics. Classic episode. Check it out.

Aaron

Just above physiological is safety, security of self, employment. We have family, you have health, property. Above safety is love and belonging, friendship, family. Above that is esteem— self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others. And then at the very top is self-actualization, creativity, spontaneity. So, you know, while I reject the idea that this is some strict hierarchy, that each level builds on in some straightforward way. That, like, you can't get your needs for safety and love and belonging met until you have your physiological needs met just actually isn't true. Like, people can experience love when they don't have a home. I still think it's true that when we're talking about creating a society where people can get their needs met, it's most important to start at the bottom.

Shawn

I can imagine a context in which the Maslow's hierarchy of needs things could be sort of, like, useful for talking about stuff in certain contexts. You're just giving people a framework, or a point of reference to work with as one potential map we can use to navigate these things. But I— I just have serious problems with the way that it's structured, and some of the assumptions baked into it. And also just calling it a "hierarchy" rubs me the wrong way, as someone who's very sympathetic to, like, the anarchist critique of hierarchy.

Aaron

It's more of a taxonomical hierarchy than a...

Shawn

It's weird. Yeah, so, it's, like, a taxonomical hierarchy in saying, like, these things are more fundamental than these things, and they build upon each other— which is not really even the way that a taxonomical hierarchy, in terms of, like, separating, like, genus and phyla of species would work or something like that. It's a different sort of thing when you're talking about building on each other.

Aaron

Yeah. Yeah, it's more like it is a pyramid. Like, the top of the pyramid isn't gonna be there if the bottom isn't there. Like, you know, it'll fall down.

Shawn

But it's weird 'cause hierarchies actually work the opposite way, where the top is the agency. So it's just sort of a confusing metaphor. Probably a web of needs would be more accurate, like the same way that we used to think of nature as having a food chain, where you have, you know—

Aaron

Yeah, smaller animals being eaten by bigger animals, yeah.

Shawn

Exactly, yeah. And it's just like, "Humans are at the top of the food chain." Like, that was the way that people talked and thought about it, even within sciences. But it's just totally a pseudoscientific concept. It totally does not map to the reality of, like, biology and the way that animal species interact

with each other. A more accurate and modern understanding is a food web of, like– you know, in some contexts, it might eat this, and sometimes it might eat this. So, yeah, it's like a circle. It's a big cross-referencing thing. And I feel like when it comes to basic needs, similarly, like, there's interesting ways these things interact with each other. But hierarchy is almost entirely the wrong framework for it.

Aaron

One example, they put "friendship" in the middle of the pyramid, and then put– physiological needs are on the bottom. But for a lot of people, the fact that you have friends has kept people in housing. Like, "Hey, you can sleep on my sofa for a while until you find a new place." Having that need in the middle met actually allowed for your bottom of the pyramid needs to get met, rather than the other way around. It wasn't, the bottom was the base. Like, they can interrelate in all different kinds of ways.

But the reason I think it's useful is because it does illustrate this intuition that a lot of people have, that some needs are quote-unquote more basic. But at the same time I think it actually can be a limiting way of thinking about this stuff. For me, the minimum level of geshie, of goodness, would mean that there are strategies realistically available to everyone to get all of their needs met, all the way up the hierarchy, or using different versions.

There's this Max-Neef human needs model which doesn't place them hierarchically. He says, subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, and freedom. The minimum level, to me, is like, we should have some strategies available to everyone to have all of those needs met. And then the realm of the geshie, the– the new horizons to push for after that, the space for expansion, is in creating more new, better strategies for meeting people's needs.

Strategies that meet more needs for less resources. Strategies that meet needs in new and novel, entertaining, fun ways. Like– and the more strategies that society can offer, that our technological capabilities make possible, the more strategies we should offer. So, yeah. I just– I think the distinction between needs and wants is better understood as, wants are strategies for meeting needs. And the things people think are needs a lot of the times are also just strategies for meeting needs.

So when artists in our current society say, "I need to get paid," it's like, no, what you actually need is food, shelter, safety, love, belonging, friendship, entertainment, transportation, healthcare, self-esteem, creativity, affection, cooperation, communication, closeness, companionship, play, joy, integrity, humor, autonomy, meaning, challenge, competence– these are things people need. Getting paid to make your music is the strategy that you want to follow for meeting your needs. So it's just good to have clarity on what's a strategy and what's actually a need, because it can open up more potential routes, more potential strategies for getting your needs met.

(00:35:26)

(Forest sounds and footsteps)

Tom

Wow. Feel the crunch of twig and branch underneath your feet.

John

That's nature. Ahh.

Tom

That's– hear those birds?

John

Wonderful.

Tom

It's so good to get some fresh air and just hang out, just the two of us, of the three triplets.

John

Yeah, yeah. It's kind of become a thing between us.

Tom

It's not that I don't like Artemis.

John

No, the times we spend with him–

Tom

He's a great triplet.

John

-are great, yeah.

Tom

But, I mean, he just talks so much. He's, like- everything is the Artemis show constantly.

John

And, like, in certain social situations, I like the way he talks way more than- like, at a restaurant or something I don't have to worry about dealing with waiters and waitresses. Artemis is on it. He's talking, and I can focus on the menu.

Tom

Yeah. I mean, and sometimes when it's just you and me and we're dealing with someone, there can be an awkward silence. There can be a weird moment. But Artemis always fills this stuff right up.

John

Absolutely, yeah.

Tom

It's- he's a great part of the team. But it's just- a little alone time.

John

Yeah, no, it's...

Tom

Yeah, I mean, I don't need to justify myself to you. You get it more than anyone else in the world.

John

You remember last time I was telling you about kind of the history of libraries?

Tom

Is that a bear cub? Yeah, I do remember that. But, no, is that a bear cub?

John

Oh my god. Oh my god.

Tom

There's the mom.

John

Okay. Um... Maybe...

Tom

We can just go the other way.

John

Yeah. There- there was a fork a little bit back.

Tom

Don't want to spook 'em. We want to respect that they live here, you know? We're just visitors.

John

Yeah. It's their home. Yeah. After last time I got to thinking, like, librarians and libraries do so much to meet the needs of people, but, like, how do they meet their needs, you know?

Tom

Yeah. Librarians give, give, give, give. But you can't pour from an empty cup, librarians.

John

So, yeah, I was kind of talking about how throughout the 1800s and 1900s is when libraries as we know them came to be in America, and it was sort of a quiet little revolution. But at the same time there was another kind of quiet revolution going on, which was that women were moving into the workforce, and they were also becoming able to go to school and get educated. Early on in library history it was kind of thought that women's impressionable minds had to be protected from libraries, and some of the less delicate information contained in there.

Tom

Really?

John

Yeah. That was extremely messed up.

Tom

So recent, too. It's just fuckin' weird.

John

But then with this, like, booming new creation of libraries around the country, and this sort of excess of women who had received education, a lot of women entered into libraries. So along with, like, nursing and teaching, librarianship became seen as feminine. And this actually had some kind of, like, positive effects on library culture, even though it was based on sort of stereotypes of what women were like.

Libraries began to be seen as places of hospitality—like, sort of warm and welcoming environments that were meant to be of service to the public. A place where people come in and are welcomed with kindness, and given individual attention about their needs and help accessing what they needed to access. A place kind of like a well-kept home where people are catered to, and people thought women were sort of naturally more able to do this.

Tom

Wow, that's such a trip. Because I love libraries, and I love, sort of, that aspect in theory and heart behind libraries.

John

Yeah.

Tom

But then to essentialize that to people who are being, like, disenfranchised from participation in society— that's a weird thing to chew on. But also— then it also embeds this sort of, like, liberatory feminism within the Library Socialist movement, in a sense. Like, the legacy of freedom and the legacy of domination are both so present in—

John

Yeah, it's a—

Tom

—this sort of, like, genesis of librarianship.

John

And then, like, as more women entered librarianship, the kind of status of librarianship declined as a prestigious position in society.

Tom

Oh, yeah. Because when women a field of work the wages of that field tend to stay stagnant or go down, right? Like—

John

Yeah. And the— and that—

Tom

—it's one of the cultural impacts of patriarchy?

John

That's exactly what happened. So you have all these, like, highly-educated women entering this field, but being paid low wages in general, and also lower wages than the men who are working in the same field, and the women also had very little opportunity for advancement to the kind of, like, really prestigious positions in the library world— the heads of big libraries, or just upper management and those kinds of things, because the few men who did enter librarianship tended to pass over all the women for the good spots. So you had all these well-educated women in the field who are not getting their needs met. You know, either not getting enough wages, but also just not getting their need for equality and dignity and respect met in the workplace. And so, this leads directly into the birth of the library union movement, which in America happened in 1917.

Tom

Oh, 1917? Do you know what happened in October that year?

John

Yeah, of course.

Both

That's when Thelonius Monk was born. (They laugh)

John

Ah, what a great jazz pianist.

Tom

Yeah, and you know what? Since you and me and Artemis joined that Thelonius Monk fan club, I feel like I've learned a lot about his life and his legacy, and obviously his incomparable piano jazz music.

John

But, yeah. That's not the only thing that happened that year. Actually, some women, librarians in this case, banded together to leverage their collective power as workers to demand concessions from their bosses. And the New York Public Library Union was formed in May of 1917. And it's membership was largely dominated by women, and its first executive board was 100% women. After the union in New York was formed, it was quickly followed by library unions being formed in Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington, D.C.

And these library unions were all being kind of criticized as seditious, as all unions at the time were being criticized as seditious. But also, as unfeminine, and against the library spirit because they were too focused on their selves, and not on service. So it's taking these actually good values, this positive side of cultural femininity is being associated with libraries, but then it's being turned around and used as a stick to beat these women, who are asking for equal treatment in the workplace, that positions in libraries should be given out not on the basis of sex, but on the basis of ability, and that there should be equal pay for equal work between men and women librarians.

One of the reasons the Boston Library Union was formed— again, largely by women— was in response to a process of, quote, "professionalization" that was threatening to have women who'd worked their entire lives to decent positions in the library threatened with unemployment, as it was being considered to replace them all with a batch of mostly male college graduates. The Boston Herald at the time said, "These girls consider themselves as well as equipped to carry on the work as any college graduate."

Tom

Was that meant as a compliment at the time?

John

I don't know. I didn't read the whole article, but I kinda doubt it. So these were just, like, some kind of, like, real salt of the earth, rabble-rousing unions. The one exception being the Washington D.C. Library Union, which as I was reading about this all, seemed like it was trying to kinda distinguish itself. It was in favor of professionalism. It was kind of, like, the, "I'm not like the other library unions" library union. So this was kind of a real tension in the library world, because a lot of librarians saw themselves as professionals, and so they didn't do that union thing. That's what, like, grimy blue collar workers were doing.

So there's all these tensions, and it kind of, like, comes to a head at the 41st Annual American Library Association Conference in New Jersey in June, 1919. The conference kind of, you know, starts off slow. There's some, like, speeches about libraries and moderation and higher principles and all that. And then this, uh, guy named George Bowerman takes the stage and does this fiery speech calling out librarians for their anti-union fetishism, and calling for sympathy and better service to the laboring classes. And this kind of really angers the professionalists at the conference, who don't want to be associated with those elements.

And next up is Maud Malone, from the New York union, and she launches into a direct attack of professionalism, calling it a very undemocratic idea that's being used to distinguish librarians from the masses and kind of place them above the masses. She's making a critique of hierarchy here, and saying that librarians are, quote, "connected intimately with the labor movement, because the workers furnish

the greater proportion of the reading public.” And, quote, “that after all this talk of professionals, you know that librarians are actually workers.” And then she went on to accuse the library establishment of perpetuating discriminatory hiring and promotional practices on the basis of sex, and calling for equal pay for equal work.

So Maud and the other women from the New York union try multiple times to raise this issue at the conference, and kinda keep getting nowhere. So eventually they force a vote by the full general assembly on a resolution which read, “Be it resolved, that we are against this system of removing women without reason, and are in favor of opening all positions in library work, from the Librarian of Congress down to that of page, to men and women equally, and for equal pay.” Kind of just, like, an amazing bit of determination from this library union. But unfortunately the resolution was completely crushed in a vote 121-1, only a single person voting in favor of it.

Tom

Wow. That’s a crazy bit of history there, this library union stuff. I never even would have thought to look that up.

John

And, like, really the movements died out after that. There’s some more library union activity in the ’30s. It was a lot more male-centered that time, part of larger union movements that were going on. And then it kinda died out again until there was another revival in the ’60s and ’70s, this time dovetailing with the feminist movements of the time, so they were a bit better. But again, kind of dying out. And honestly, since then it seems like there’s been very little library union movement. This attitude of professionalism is still a major part of library culture, and only something like 15% of libraries in the United States are part of any kind of union.

Tom

Well, you know how I was talking recently about how I’ve decided to start identifying as a Library Socialist?

John

Mm, yeah.

Tom

And that I was hoping to take steps towards building a more utopian society based on the principles of usufruct, the irreducible minimum, and complementarity?

John

Mm-hmm, yeah.

Tom

And that we could have a society that globally works on a type of library lending system of various kinds, and that me and some friends of mine have started a reading group about it, and we’re serious about sort of bringing it through?

John

Mm-hmm.

Tom

Well, that anecdote, that historical example makes me think– and I’ve never thought this before– that maybe one of the - the major steps both as a narrative victory, but also as a mechanistic victory, is creating a global union of librarians.

John

Definitely. Well, especially because the role of librarians is gonna need to be so vastly expanded in this new society to not just help give people access to the information that’s in books, but to all the services. You know, most services, you’d be able to get through various libraries of kinds. So really, a librarian union– yeah, it really does seem like it would be absolutely necessary.

Tom

Hey, this looks like a good spot to set up for that picnic that we were talking about.

John

Oh, yeah. Definitely. I brought a nice little blanket, and we could just lay out this whole spread. It's gonna be delicious.

Tom

I can finally crack this thermos full of wine. (Laughs)

John

Oh, nice.

Tom

Oh, I'm such a lush. I'm just kidding. But, I mean, let- let's definitely drink the wine. I'm just joking about being a lush. I-

John

Oh, good-

Tom

-I drink responsibly.

John

When you said you were kidding I thought, "Oh, no, did he just bring juice?" 'Cause I was lookin' forward to that wine.

Tom

Oh, no, it's wine. I was joking about whether or not it's a problem for me. It's not.

John

Phew. I mean, "phew," that it's not a problem for you. But also, "phew," it is wine. Because-

Tom

You know who it's a problem for, is Artemis. Some of the time.

John

Yeah. He just needs someone to tell him, "You've had enough for the night, Artemis." He just sometimes has trouble knowing for himself.

Tom

And that's where we come in.

John

I hope there won't be too many mosquitoes around here. But...

Tom

Oh, well, you know, Grandpa always said a few bug bites means you had a good time. So.

John

Yeah, that never made sense to me.

Tom

No, yeah, I didn't- I was like, "What the f..." Well, it's- it's an okay phrase, I guess.

John

Yeah, I guess I kinda get it. I shouldn't be like, "Oh, I don't get it at all." I understand what he's saying, but...

Tom

Yeah. Like, bumps on the road, and...

John

Yeah. All right, well, let's pour some wine into these little plastic cups. (Wine pouring) And you want to plastic cup cheers?

Tom

Cheers. Here's to respecting the history struggle of librarians, in the hope that one day they shall be fully liberated, as all of us are, in one big library.

John

Oh, baby. This is good- such good wine.

Tom

Oh, yeah. After a hard hike like that?

John

Phew. "Phew." That's all I gotta say...

Tom

A little wine— a little wine goes down good. But make sure to drink water, too. It's dehydrating.

(Forest sounds fade)

(00:48:18)

Shawn

Around the time we were first sort of playing with the idea of, like, basic income versus basic outcome, and the idea that basic income as a totalizing program saying, like, all of your needs are gonna be met through this cash payment is, like, a financialization of those needs. And that you could do— people have called it, like, "universal basic services," where instead of getting money you can just go get free food, and that you can just get free housing, and you don't need to get the money, pay the rent in this cyclical thing. Just, like, give them housing in the first place.

And it was around that time that I first got connected with an organizing group that was trying to convince Jean Swanson to run for city council in Vancouver. And so we've got an episode, 130, "Jean Against the Machine", which is an interview with Jean Swanson when she was running for city council on a by-election following this. And last year Jean was actually elected to city council in Vancouver on a platform of fighting to end homelessness, build social housing, and taxing mansions. And I was her campaign manager in that campaign, not just for her, but for the entirety of the political party she's with, COPE.

But really early on in, you know, meeting and interacting with Jean a few times, like when I had first met her, I saw that she had made a critique of basic income. And I had just written a defense of basic income for a labor newspaper. But I was— at this point I was, like, really, really becoming impressed, like, incredibly impressed with Jean, and her record, and the way that she talked about things, and looking up to her as someone who had expertise from being in the fight against poverty for so long and, like, being someone who is, like, pretty uncompromising with that stuff.

And it was through the mentorship, or admiration of Jean that sort of, like, started the severity of my feelings towards homelessness and poverty. Not that I was, like, ever in favor of homelessness and poverty or something like that. But in retrospect, when I think about how much I'm against it now and, like, how much I think it's important to, like, center and make a priority to eradicate poverty— which is something we could do in, like, a really short period of time if we put our minds to it, like, actually structurally attempted to do it.

But this is, like, the heart of the irreducible minimum. Like, anti-poverty activism is the heart of the irreducible minimum activism in the current day. Because there are people who are falling so far below even the basics. Now, they might get enough food to keep their body alive. They might be able to stay underneath an overpass, and not get rained on and stuff. Like, that's sort of, like, crummy basic that you were talking about before, Aaron, of just, like, sort of basic. Depends on what you mean by, "basic."

Aaron

Need for what? Survival? They're not surviving as long, but you know, day-to-day, surviving, enough food.

Shawn

Yeah. So, I mean, our social responsibility to people in poverty is greater. And so, like, this was part of the development of my political views on the irreducible minimum, that was just really, really impactful, is realizing to the depth that homelessness is a moral nightmare. That it's— it's something that is worse than it seems.

Aaron

Yeah.

Shawn

That whatever amount of indifference in poverty that I had built up within myself as a type of coping mechanism for living in an unjust and stratified society, it was unethical to carry that. And seeing homelessness more closely, and thinking about homelessness more deeply, is something that I feel like I'm much, much better off for, now.

Aaron

When we did the homelessness episode, I think we were both in that sort of place, of just really feeling it on, like, a deeper level because of— like, you describing your experience— I don't really want to talk about it that much, but someone that I know became homeless around that time. And so, it was, like, much more real to me thinking about it.

(00:51:51)

☒

Narrator

Welcome back to Wrongtopia History Time. Today's Wrongtopia History Lesson: The Falling of Wrongtropolis to the New Enclosure.

☒

Historian 1

After just a mere couple of decades of a very promising usufructian experiment, areas of Wrongtopia began to fall to reactionary forces. The location Stationaries in the megacity of Wrongtropolis were able to cut off many of the nomadic travelers from the libraries and dispensaries of Wrongtropolis.

Historian 2

What they did was make library access contingent on residency within one to two kilometers of the library. And, of course, nomad groups— of which there are five on Wrongtopia— don't have a residence address. And so, this effectively cut them off from the library systems. And nowhere was the brunt of this felt harder than in Wrongtropolis.

Historian 1

It's worth noting, and it's kinda funny, the Stationaries were so caught up in the cultural logic of usufructian utopia that they never dreamed of truly privatizing the boats, the books, and so on. They just thought of making a smaller access group to the libraries. The logic of libraries was so embedded by this point.

Historian 2

They actually had a slogan: "Irreducible minimum for some, not for all." And it really caught on with a kind of tribalistic mentality that certain Stationaries had, where they saw themselves as tied to the ground upon which they didn't move around from.

Historian 1

Another famous slogan from around that time in a similar vein was, "They can move. We can't." This sort of, like, deterministic belonging—

Historian 2

Oh, yeah, as if Stationaryism or Nomadism weren't choices people made as groups, but rather castes that people were born into.

Historian 1

And an underreported part of this whole dynamic, actually, was that the Stationaries' campaign would have never picked up if they hadn't hired some of the Techno-Nomads who ran a PR and communications firm. They managed the whole campaign to sort of take over city hall and build the narrative to privatize and close people off from these libraries, the nomads. So, ironically, nihilistic, anti-librarian nomads became one of the driving forces of the success of this Stationary movement. It's a fascinating little snippet of history there.

Historian 2

(Sighs) You had nomads with nowhere to sleep. You know? And where— where do they go? They just all sleep in the park, but then the police are harassing them. And, of course, empty hotels, empty sleep libraries as they were sometimes called, available free to anyone who's a Stationary— which makes

no sense, 'cause they live there. And so you just start to see this systematic locking out of nomads from the necessities of life. So it became a much more luxurious life for the Stationaries. It really caused a lot of social strife.

Historian 1

Yeah. I mean, you could just imagine the conflict of going to the local hay dispensary for your horse as a Stationary, and you're just completely surrounded by Horse Nomads desperate for hay. Like, that's just a recipe for conflict. And there was conflict for a long time.

Historian 2

Oh, yeah.

Historian 1

And in the same way that the destruction was, in a sense, partially pushed forward by the Techno-Nomads, who were themselves going to be excluded, it was Stationaries who had a change of heart, who saw the - the problems and errors in society, and used their relative position in society to amplify and give comfort and aid to revolutionary nomads. Secret, nighttime access to the hotels.

Historian 2

Yeah. There was whole sandwich smuggling operations where Stationaries would smuggle sandwich ingredients, assemble the sandwiches, and hand them out to nomads.

Historian 1

So while it was true that a lot of Stationaries who benefitted from their social position of this unjust enclosure were fully committed to the worldview that would justify it, there was a certain amount of Stationaries who saw the ethical error of the judgment of Wrongtropolis, and who used that advantage to help bring the system down on itself. It's just an interesting little piece of Wrongtopia history there. When all was said and done, Wrongtropolis had inaccessible libraries only for the few.

☒

Historian 2

And that's all the time we have for this week's episode.

Historian 1

Yeah. We'll catch you next time on Wrongtopia History. If you want to hit up our Patreon, it's just six bucks a month for access to the whole archive and bonus episodes, uh, as they come out-

☒ *Music fades*

(00:56:18)

Shawn

So the irreducible minimum is the level that we have a responsibility to make sure that everyone meets. But that sort of speaks to- there's a tension sometimes in the way that we talk and think about social justice issues, where people will be, like, "Oh, I'm not a feminist, I'm a humanist. I think everyone should have rights. All lives matter." Which I think can be used in disingenuous ways, but often comes from a really sort of, like, sweetheart, best intentions-

Aaron

Yeah, low-information place, like-

Shawn

Trying to look at the big picture and have a big heart. But the flaw in the thinking there, and the reason that it's important to affirm that Black lives matter and, say, Indigenous lives matter over all lives mattering is because even where you can have a technical equality of saying, "All lives matter," if there's a disparity in the reality of the situation for different groups under that, then the "all lives matter" becomes something that's obscuring that difference, and not pointing out what's needed, which is extra effort to make up the difference for colonization and slavery.

In order to achieve an irreducible minimum in a real sense, you need to give specialized attention to groups that are disadvantaged, at least in part. So, like, I guess I was never, like, strongly against it, but I'm increasingly convinced that, like, reparations are the right course, and that it's something

that could contribute positively to society. Like, reparations to the descendants of slaves and colonized Indigenous nations is, like, I think, probably the right course to take.

Aaron

If we're talking about class reductionist position that would say, like, "Oh, we just give money to everyone who's in poverty. It doesn't need to be racially-based. We don't need reparations," I think one of the things that that's missing is that reparations isn't just about making sure that people in these racial groups have their physical needs met. Like, it is strategy for doing that, and it's a good one, and for increasing wealth in those communities that have not been given access to wealth historically. There's— there's a lot of things that it does.

But it's also a strategy for a kind of cultural atonement, which is a way of, like— like, people have a need for mutuality and respect in their human relations. And reparations, in addition to helping with class issues that affect people along racial lines, is also a strategy that simultaneously meets those needs for respect and mutual understanding and recognition of past wrongs, and atonement for past wrongs. And I think because we talk about "needs" a lot of the time on this sort of, like, purely physical basis, that kind of stuff can be thought of as less important. But it's actually really important. And the fact that this thing can meet both of those kinds of needs makes it a very good strategy.

(00:59:03)

Sarah Silverman (recording)

Hi, sweet buttercup faces. Who deserves love? You do. (Laughter) (*from the audience: "Cacaca-cow! Caca-cow!"*) Okay. That person just wants attention, so don't give it to him. (Laughter) That's so awful. Why is that a thing? "He just wants attention. Don't give it to him." (Laughter) Those are, like, the saddest two sentences I've ever heard. You're even acknowledging what his acting out is about— a need for attention. The fact that you're actively choosing to withhold it is mean. He just wants attention. Give it to him! (Laughter) Honestly, why are we disgusted when we sense human need? "He just wants water. Don't give it to him." (Laughter) "Ew, look how thirsty he is. He's, like, mwah, chomping his lips." (Laughter)

(00:59:49)

Shawn

Yeah. There's needs that you can sort of take for granted, but if they're not there, it's pretty rough. Like, just even, like, the feeling of being seen and understood, that someone gets where you're coming from, someone gets what you're about and, like, actually understands you.

Aaron

Yeah. Yeah, people will be like, "Oh, you know, it's a snowflake. 'I need to be understood.'" There's this, like, cultural shitting on those kinds of needs as, like— or, it's a weird masculinist thing, I think. It's, like, "Oh, I don't need anyone." Stoicism or something. But think about going through your life having never felt seen or understood by anyone. You don't feel it in your house or your family. You don't feel it at school. Like, because people do live like this, and it's, like— it can be psychologically and emotionally devastating never, ever having that feeling of, like, connection or of, like, being seen. I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

Shawn

Well, and I think the absence of that in society, too, is also, like, ironically, like, the very people who would criticize snowflakes for, like, the social justice fixation on stuff of, like, making sure that people feel heard and - and stuff like that, are themselves struggling to feel understood and feel heard—

Aaron

Yeah.

Shawn

—and then finding ways to do that, to act out, and by connecting through, like, really vulgar and cruel politics based on, like, detached irony or, like, seeking attention for attention's sake. Like, all this stuff comes from, like, the same place of, like, unmet needs. And that's how the Mr. Rogers shit really

fits into the irreducible minimum. These, like, subtle social things that we take for granted if we have them, but really feel when they're not there.

There's this quote from the creator of Steven Universe in an interview, when it came to, like, representation of gay characters on the show or something like that was, "I want children to know that they belong in the world." And that phrase has always stuck with me as this, like, really powerful, high-level Mr. Rogers shit. And I think that's really what social justice gets right here. And, like, that people who consider themselves sort of, like, rationalists or whatever shouldn't sleep on.

Now, if you have a critique of maybe certain ways that people go about things, and there's plenty of room for critique, but the underlying premise of how a model that focuses on one group or another towards specific ends as a means of fostering social harmony by making sure that everyone feels seen and understood, and that we mutually acknowledge the past together and, like, come to a shared understanding of it and stuff... I think of my, like, Boomer dad telling me that he- (laughs) that he thought there was too many gay characters on TV shows now. You know, he thinks Pride has went too far. (Laughter) Yeah. That's- that's my Boomer dad. "My Boomer Dad!" It could be, like, a sitcom.

Aaron

The- I think it was just, like, last year, or the year before, was the first time that I remember going to a theater to see a movie- like, a mainstream movie that was- not just had a gay character in it, but was, like, about a gay- it was, like, "Call My By Your Name" was one, but I saw a different, like, smaller movie in a theater a few months before, and it was, like, a very strange experience. Because I've seen so many movies where you're, like, watching this heterosexual romance play out, and it's just normal. And it actually- it just is, like, actually a really powerful experience for gay people to, like, see that stuff in those contexts. For it to, like, be normal and to be part of the culture. And it's, like, I'm 30 years old. And that's the first time I remember that ever happening. And, like, I get that it seems like a lot, because there was none before or whatever. Or, it's- yeah...

Shawn

Yeah. It's like the same kind of thing of, like, when women talk 35% of the time or something, people will say that they seem to have talked more than half the time, because, like, they're so used to the social expectation of men talking way more than women.

Aaron

Right, right.

Shawn

But, yeah. And, like, I- my dad's wrong about that, because number one, like, one in ten people are gay, and I don't think one in ten stories are about gay people. So there's still a gap to be closed there, Dad. (Laughs) But also, just, like, the question of representation in media. Now it's, like, obviously not- you know, I don't care for the girl power of Margaret Thatcher, et cetera. You know, like, that critique's valid. But just the idea of, like, being in a culture that affirms that you belong in the world by showing you representation of yourself, it's really psychedelic for me to try to wrap my head as a straight guy.

Aaron

Right.

Shawn

Just that- that idea that, like, I could have went to the movies for 30 years and never saw a character who shared one of my fundamental characteristics, you know? One of the characteristics that defines my sense of love in the world.

Aaron

Yeah.

Shawn

Which is, like, a pretty big deal.

Aaron

Yeah. Like, the Mr. Rogers shit, it's so important. Because this more, like, ephemeral stuff, this, like, meeting people's needs for their need to be seen, their need for respect and integrity and creativity, and

all these things that are a bit more ephemeral. It's, I think, easier, a lot of the time, to focus on needs that can be met through production, because we have such massive productive capability, and we're not using it to meet people's needs, and it's such a great tragedy, and— that we're like, "Yeah, we need to build houses, we need to get food into people's bellies, we need to get them clothes." Like, these are all problems that can be solved with mass production.

But these more subtle things, these more ephemeral things are cultural, and they are needs that need to be met in the social sphere, and can't be necessarily met through mass production. And so even in, like, prefigurative institutions we're building or, like, within leftist spaces when we talk about mutual aid and, like, helping someone who can't pay their rent, or Food Not Bombs doing amazing work, stuff like that is great. But we also, I think, need to be prefiguratively working on those social relations that we want to have in the future, that help people get all of their needs met.

Shawn

And I think that's part of the reason the irreducible minimum frame really speaks to me. Like, I think there's an irreducible minimum in how we treat each other. And, like, this is a type of politics that we've been developing and playing with over the course of the show since we started. How we treat people that we disagree with, how we treat people that are different types of enemies. "Enemies" in quotes, you know? Like, there's a lot of people that maybe we consider enemies that are probably best not thought as enemies. We should probably keep that category pretty small.

And stuff like the death cult humor and, like, the guillotine jokes and stuff like that, part of the discomfort that comes with that, I think, for a lot of people, who usually don't speak up, is— you know, it's intended to be sort of cathartic and comedic and so on, and I understand that. But to carry ourselves so casually with a disregard for the human dignity of others is poisonous. I think it's the wrong way to talk and think about these issues. Library Socialism, we hold that we can pull this thing off sweetie-pie.

Aaron

And not just that we can pull it off sweetie-pie, but that doing it in another way puts the project itself in serious jeopardy, for the reasons that we've just been laying out. That, like, it's not enough to just be meeting people's physical needs. We need to be creating and acting out social relations that meet people's needs as well.

Shawn

And that fits in, also, to the broader political project of amplifying the principles of a library, a lending library, to the entirety of society, and abolishing patriarchy, decolonizing, and making sure that everyone's basic needs are met, among other things. The fact that we do live in a technological moment where the sort of totality of human technological potential is at the largest peak that it's ever been, our material context is basically just new. I don't think that we need to compromise our values in order to win.

I think, if anything, that we should fully commit to our values and see how far we can actually push them. And just try to assemble the arguments and make the arguments in public. Like, we have a public square that's different than ever before. We have the capacity for a new internationalism based on this networking technology. What we don't have is all the arguments of, like, what we should do to make the world better just laid out clearly in a way that your Boomer dad who doesn't like Pride can understand, you know? Like...

Aaron

There's a lot of narrative work that needs to be done on that level, and I think people sleep on that a little bit, or think, "Narrative work? Like, what does that even mean?" But, like, meeting someone's need for belonging, to feel like they belong. Meeting someone's need for, like, trust and mutuality and affection. In a tribal society, where you live with about a hundred other people, and sometimes you move around in kind of a group together, that's a completely different question from an advanced, technological, global society where it's possible to fly around the world. Like, there's so many lonely people in our society right now, despite there being people surrounding them everywhere. We have this

kind of isolation while in the midst of all these people. It's something that I don't think people in the past could have even imagined that would be possible.

Shawn

Like, one day, we're gonna have such abundance that you're gonna have glowing tablet in your pocket that can connect you to anyone in the world, or any sort of music that's ever been written. It'll allow you to communicate with people via this thing called writing.

Aaron

And we'll have these, like, mega-cities with millions and millions of people in them, and these huge buildings stacked way high up to the sky. Like, tons of dwellings per level. And then—

Shawn

Hot and cold running water.

Aaron

Yeah. That's— (Laughs) Yeah, fuck. (Laughter) And also, at the same as that, all these millions of people, like, a huge chunk of them are gonna be, like, really lonely and feel, like, disconnected.

Shawn

Mm-hmm. They're gonna go home to their cushioned sofas and watch light projections of other human beings acting out stories. And there's gonna be this deep, disconnected feeling from the rest of the world.

Aaron

Yeah. And so, I think that the way we meet these kinds of needs is under-theorized. But also, I think that the negative effects of not having these needs met in society have real harmful effects on our movements. And so, if our movements aren't aware of these social relations and trying to prefigure these social relations, they end up, in various ways, amplifying the alienated, atomized culture that we live in. So I think the prefiguration stuff's really important. The sweetie-pie stuff's really important. And I do think a lot of theory-building, narrative work, and, like, building the arguments is really important.

(01:10:22)

☒

Narrator

Welcome back to Wrongtopia History Time. Today's history lesson: The Resistance of the Aqua Stationaries.

☒

Historian 1

During the process of the original sort of revolution leading to a usufructian society there was this popular distaste with luxury that was really, really intense. Like, where people really, really looked down on having luxury items. It was almost ostentatious how much people rejected being ostentatious. Like, and— yeah—

Historian 2

Yeah. A lot of that gets really focused on the yacht as an example.

Historian 1

Casting out the yachts together and saying, "We reject these yachts. We're not even gonna loan them out from our library. We're gonna dispose of them." It was pretty popular. And Wrongadelphia, they shipped them all out on the back of commonly-owned trucks and dumped all those luxury yachts in Old Wrong Bay.

Historian 2

At first, people just kind of ignored them. But then, someone didn't have a place to sleep one night, they said, "Hey, this yacht's kinda nice." And they'd just swim out over to the yacht, and they'd spend the night on the yacht. Traveling Aqua Nomads, of course. One of the five groups of nomads, who live on the seas in large boats. Some of them have a special bubble technology that creates an air bubble around them, and they jet around in the water just like that.

Historian 1

Yeah. Some Aqua Nomads just swim. They've got special fins for it. They can breathe underwater. I mean, there's all sorts of weird sort of pieces of the Aqua Nomad world. But what ends up happening is about five years after they dump these yachts, that they basically had a full yacht city there now. They had planks going from yacht to yacht so people could walk across. There was, like, a city square, which was one of the larger yachts. They even had a library on an old abandoned cruise ship.

Historian 2

Yeah. It was kind of a beautiful little flourishing in an unexpected place.

Historian 1

In the climate that led to the enclosure of the libraries, one of the really popular sentiments was the idea that these boat people were somehow less than human, or less deserving. That they were dirty or lesser. And they actually even sent people from Wrongadelphia to the Aqua Nomads as sort of a form of punishment.

Historian 2

These were opinions that people had about all types of nomads. They're dirty, different, worse than us. Those living on the yachts were still kind of thought of as Aqua Nomads, though they tended to think of themselves as Aqua Stationaries, because they didn't move. The yachts didn't go anywhere. It was a kind of permanent structure, as ad hoc as it was with the planks and stuff.

Historian 1

Most people who lived there would live their whole lives there.

Historian 2

So to call them "nomads" really was a misnomer at this point, and it was more of a political classification used to other them.

Historian 1

Yeah. It was a description of their class status, not whether they move or not.

Historian 2

When the enclosure movement hit Wrongadelphia, that belief that these people were technically nomads led to them being excluded from the Greater Wrongadelphia Library System. Now, they still had their library, of course, on the cruise ship at the center of their shantytown, and they made things work. But they were cut off from the larger network. And eventually the Stationary political system made the decision to incorporate the yachts that they lived on into the private Wrongadelphia library system. So actually privatized the places that they'd lived for generations out from under their feet.

Historian 1

Any just reading of this, even if you're to say, "It's within the rights of the Stationaries to withhold the access of the libraries to Nomads," there's no argument whatsoever that these Aqua Stationaries were Nomads themselves. They lived their whole lives there. And this was on the books for a long time. They managed to survive out there by working together. Simple solution to most problems.

Historian 2

They always knew that the day when the Stationaries might try to make good of the law that was on the books would come. And so they, along with a network of Aqua Nomads and Horseback Nomads who supplied them with various weapons from around the world, and they created a stash of weapons.

Historian 1

They brought in a second cruise ship to store weapons.

Historian 2

You know, they— they stored the weapons hoping and praying that they would never need to use them. But, unfortunately...

Historian 1

One day, troops from Wrongadelphia came up to the shoreline.

Historian 2

Yeah. Trying to force them out to be Aqua Nomads, a life they've never known, with no boats. Very few bubble technology, and almost nobody had gills. So it was just a disaster.

Historian 1

But, luckily, the Aqua Stationaries made clear that they intended to stay, and they intended to defend themselves. And they shot at the soldiers from Wrongadelphia with bullets and guns a lot, and shot more bullets and more guns.

Historian 2

They did also have bombs planted at strategic points around the city saying, "We will blow up some of your key library reserves, one every hour until your people stand down." And luckily they only had to light off one of those bombs before the city, Wrongadelphia, gave in.

Historian 1

Yeah. There's this really funny old story from that day when these Sea Stationaries, because they had water legs, right? They grew up on these boats, they could walk across these planks effortlessly—

Historian 2

Mm-hmm, good stabilizer muscles.

Historian 1

There was a couple waves of these soldiers coming on to their turf, right? But they didn't have their water legs. So there was this one kid, he must have been 18, 19, recruited fresh out of junior high. And he's walkin' across these friggin' planks, right? And he's, like, "Whoa-whoa!"— you know, going back and forth, and he gets in the sights of one of the snipers. And he's wobbling, he falls back and forth, and the Stationary shoots him through his scope square between the eyes, exploding his head, spreading blood and brain everywhere and he dies. (Laughs) And he falls in the water.

Historian 2

That must have been quite a sight. A real victory for the people on the boats to see that child die.

Historian 1

Yeah. I guess that's the innate character of war. It's sort of weird. This was always told to me as a funny story, but now as I re-tell it, I see it as sort of a tragic and oddly gory story that's out of character.

Historian 2

I think a lot of people lose some perspective and character when thinking about war and, like, seeing, again, the deaths of children, honestly, a lot of the time— 18-year-olds, just kids— as something glorious. And, eh, it's a weird thing that happens.

Historian 1

Yeah. But, I mean, the resistance— like, super righteous—

Historian 2

I mean, they had the right to defend themselves, obviously—

Historian 1

And they totally won. Like, they shot more times, and the casualties were pretty low overall...

Historian 2

And good strategy.

Historian 1

That's just, like, one specific...

Historian 2

Yeah. It was a real victory for kind of the downtrodden in society, getting to keep their yachts.

Historian 1

Yeah. When the downtrodden got to band together and protect the people who were trying to take their yachts from them?

Historian 2

It really warms the heart, because stealing a yacht from someone who needs it? Despicable.

Historian 1

Yeah. Especially— I mean, it was their way of life. They don't know any other way. They have nowhere to go.

Historian 2

Anyway. So, they won. And that was good. A bittersweet ending. A bit gory, but they won. And, uh, that was a bit of Wroingtopia history. Thanks for listening.

☒

(01:17:16)

☒ *Infomercial Music*

Wrong Aaron

Well, now, I know what you're all thinking out there. This Library Socialism idea where you use the principle of usufruct in order to create an irreducible minimum for all people across the planet in a complementary system sounds really, really great. But I have a few objections.

Wrong Shawn

Now, just because we're presenting some extremely great ideas doesn't mean that it's not fair to think critically about them, and ask questions. We're not saying, "Oh, mindlessly accept everything we say."

Wrong Aaron

Oh, no.

Wrong Shawn

"Don't ask any hard-hitting questions about it."

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. We asked our producers to give us the hardingest hittingest questions.

Wrong Shawn

And you know what it's like to have your producers on your ass. You gotta make things right. So, first question: (Funky synth chime) "How can we provide for everyone's basic needs? Won't that make them dependent?"

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. And some variations on this question— make them lazy, make them stupid, even. Turn them into buffoonish ghouls walking around with no motivation. Really, husks of people.

Wrong Shawn

And the answer is, well, I mean, how can we provide basics for everyone? Well, we already have the technological and material capacity to do so. We just lack the social capacity to do so. So we're trying to remedy that here.

Wrong Aaron

And as for your second question, "Won't it make them dependent, or ghoulish husks?"— uh, no. No, it won't.

Wrong Shawn

It won't turn them into ghoulish husks at all. And, actually, if you think about it, just sort of the premise of the question, this sort of concept of nurturing dependency, are you dependent on having a grocery store nearby? Should we get rid of all the grocery stores in your neighborhood because it's making you dependent on grocery stores?

Wrong Aaron

There's a lot of people out there dependent on other people for social connection. We really need to get rid of all other people so you can learn to find social connection by yourself. It's just a malformed question that's kind of hard to answer, because in some sense we're all dependent on one another. That's the human condition. We're a social species. We are dependent on each other to meet each other's needs. That's how humanity works. That's how being a human works.

Wrong Shawn

Dependency is something that happens in various forms, in complex ways. It's not always a bad thing for someone to be dependent on another, or an organization to be dependent on certain individuals within it. Like, depending on things and depending on people is actually neutral. And if someone needs a house, if someone's sleeping on the streets, regardless of the whole story there, like, just that one

piece of information tells you enough– if someone needs a place to stay, we collectively on the largest scale, on the largest access to resources and power– which is, like, usually government institutions– have a responsibility to meet that person’s needs. And they are dependent in that situation on someone connecting them to shelter.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah, that’s true. They’re already depending on us, us as a society, and we’re not being dependable. Like, people are already dependent on society for the needs that they can’t meet. But society needs to be dependance to provide those things that they need.

Wrong Shawn

Yeah. So another way of phrasing this question would be, ”How can we provide basics for everyone?” Won’t that–

Wrong Aaron

”Won’t that make our society a dependable one?” And the answer is, yes, it will. The second question: (Funky synth chime) this one’s directed at me, so I guess I’ll read it. It said, ”Aaron mentioned that yachts actually meet certain needs for rich people. So are you saying that rich people should all get to keep their yachts?” And the answer to that is: no. Nobody should own a yacht all for themselves as private property. That’s not part of a Library Socialist society.

Wrong Shawn

So in the long-term, yeah, I mean, this is gonna cease to exist. So...

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. Not yachts themselves. I mean, who knows what the future might bring. Maybe there’ll be no desire for yachts or need for– I don’t know. But...

Wrong Shawn

Maybe something will displace yachts as the new luxury sea travel.

Wrong Aaron

I just want to refer back– I mentioned the Max-Neef fundamental human needs framework, and they have a method of classifying need satisfiers that I think really gets to the heart of this issue. Private property systems, and in this case, specifically the private property of owning a yacht, is a type of need-satisfier for rich people that can be called an ”inhibiting satisfier,” which is a satisfier which over-satisfies a given need for some people while in turn seriously inhibiting the possibility of satisfying the needs of other people.

The kind of satisfier that you want to have in a society that’s attempting to meet all people’s needs is a synergistic satisfier, which satisfies a given need while also simultaneously contributing to the satisfaction of other needs. This would be more like a usufructian property type of relationship. So they can go to the board library, or yacht library, or whatever the futuristic type of library by the sea is. Maybe there’s a boat available right now, who knows. Maybe there’ll be lots available. Maybe you’ll have to book in advance. But this way it’s not that some people just get it whenever they want, and some people never get it. It’s a synergistic satisfier. It allows for all people to satisfy needs.

And just to further drill down a bit on the different types of satisfiers, I think it’s useful. There’s ”violators,” which can claim to satisfy needs, but in fact make satisfying a need more difficult. So one example of this would be, say, trickle-down economic policies, which claim to be satisfying the need for getting more economic resources into the hands of those in poverty, but in reality it actually makes it more difficult for them to get more economic resources. There are pseudo-satisfiers which claim to be satisfying a need, yet in fact have little to no effect on really satisfying that need.

One example of this might be someone who needs love and affection taking an opiate instead of getting love and affection. It’s a pseudo-satisfier. It kind of does, but it doesn’t actually. ”Singular satisfiers,” which just satisfy one need and are neutral into how other needs are satisfied. So we want to focus on synergistic satisfiers, and probably some singular satisfiers as well, depending on the product, and stay away from violators, pseudo-satisfiers, and inhibiting satisfiers in our needs-meeting society.

Wrong Shawn

So our proposal is both the opposite of letting rich people keep their yachts, and the opposite of taking their yachts away.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. That's a great way to put it.

Wrong Shawn

Next question here: (Funky synth chime) "Can you clear this up for me, please? Are you advocating for a Bolshevik-style 1917 revolution, a social democratic, quote, 'political revolution,' a la Bernie Sanders, or more of an anarchistic occupation / prefiguration style revolution? You've talked about revolution before, but you've been unclear which sort of sub-definition you're using." Thanks for the question, that's a great question.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah, great one. Yeah.

Wrong Shawn

So we're not advocating for any of those types of revolutions, and in fact, the opposite of all of them. Library Socialists advocate for a mixture between prefigurative, entryist, and narrative tactics, and the reason for that is that narrative tactics such as communications work, door knocking, organizing people through conversations, that sort of stuff, that's what makes political life happen. That's, like, the canvas on which politics is painted on.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. You have to talk to people. You have to win hearts and minds. You have to get people onboard with your story.

Wrong Shawn

And that in itself is a tactic. And so, in addition to that, there's also the tactical front of getting access to resources and institutional power through various forms of entryism, or it's not just entryism, it's also connecting with people who are already in those positions of power and trying to change their trajectory through narrative work. So, Library Socialists are very sort of hard-nosed realists about the fact that it's going to take a lot of money to overthrow capitalism. We need access to resources if we want to challenge inequality and class society.

And so, one of the ways that we do that is through institutions. And then the other piece here is prefiguration, which means that, you know, we attempt to be an embodiment of our own ethics and high ideals. So that can mean things like trying to make better democratic processes, looking for representation, and undoing inequalities even within our organizations. But it also means things like, broadly speaking, being the change you wish to see in the world, even on an institutional sense. Say, like, building counter-institutions.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. Things that can meet people's needs right now. We want to create a society that meets people's needs. To the extent that we can prefigure that now by meeting people's needs, that's a tactic. That's part of this.

Wrong Shawn

And so, these three things work in a complementary fashion to one another. We don't want to just cover gaps on behalf of the system and be like, "Oh, don't worry, like, us activists will do it. Uh- (laughs) we'll feed people. You don't have to feed people." But what we need to do is actually make our prefigurative organization obsolete using our organization's bully pulpit to shift the burden for feeding the people to organizations like cities, states, et cetera, that have a higher capacity to do it. And then also we can move onto new, other projects, and keeping the wheels turning.

Wrong Aaron

Okay, next question: (Funky synth chime) "So, you are saying that you want to abolish private property and steal everything I have?" Ooh. That's a bit combative, but okay, we'll- we'll answer it.

Wrong Shawn

Yeah. Let's start with, "stealing everything you have." Now, I don't want to steal everything that you have.

Wrong Aaron

Nope.

Wrong Shawn

But in the transitional period to Library Socialism I think a really natural way to do that is to continually increase taxes on the rich, and taxes on wealth, to make it less and less financially viable to own mass swaths of things while other people have very little. Cracking down on tax havens, sufficiently taxing capital gains, taxing land value increases— all this stuff together can sort of, like, start the process on, like, the re-commonization of this massive wealth inequality, a lot of which is— is very old, and came from, like, enclosure of the commons.

Wrong Aaron

I wouldn't call that theft. If you would call that theft, then yeah, I guess there's gonna be some stealing some of what you have. But it's gonna be taxes and it's all gonna be fair and above the board. It's gonna be sweetie-pie.

Wrong Shawn

And in some cases, you know, like, with large Western mining corporations dealing in the developing world and stuff, there might be eminent domain government seizure of assets and so on, in certain contexts. I could only speculate the details. But that sort of stuff, it seems pretty above board and sweetie-pie to me. Like...

Wrong Aaron

Oh, sure. Yeah. Especially when you have companies acting in such a way that they're kind of, like, extracting a whole bunch of wealth from poorer nations and pocketing it. It's not really theirs in the first place. That's more like an unstealing that's going on.

Wrong Shawn

Yeah, yeah. You can think of it as, like, paying a debt that's owed.

Wrong Aaron

Exactly, yeah.

Wrong Shawn

That's more the— the trajectory of Library Socialism, is actually to go back and collect on all these debts.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. And whether we call that abolishing private property or not?

Wrong Shawn

I would speak with a little more clarity that, quote, "abolish private property." A better way to talk about it would be that we're changing property relations. When you say, "abolish private property," it almost endorses this idea of, like, private property is this static thing that is out there rather than a relationship between individuals in society. So when we talk about changing property relations, we're talking about changing the way that we see and interact with the idea of property, which is ultimately what we aim to do. That doesn't mean that part of the transition to Library Socialism would be taking the things that you have. In most cases, for most people, it'd be something more like requesting that you don't intentionally destroy the stuff you have, and when you want to get rid of it, returning it instead of throwing it out.

Wrong Aaron

If you don't need it anymore, let someone else use it.

Wrong Shawn

Next question: (Funky synth chime) "You say that you fundamentally want to change property relationships. Does that mean you're gonna take my toothbrush and make us use communal toothbrushes, spreading mouth diseases?" Great question, and I'm glad that you asked it.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah.

Wrong Shawn

No, we won't be taking people's toothbrushes. There'll be a buyback period— mandatory, in the long-term. You have to come and return your toothbrush, and— and put it in, and...

Wrong Aaron

There'll be a massive informational campaign about the dangers of keeping your own toothbrush in your bathroom. Aerosolized fecal particles that do land on every single person's toothbrush, and when they brush their teeth, it's—

Wrong Shawn

They've got poo on the mouth.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. It's, like, you think you're brushing your teeth with toothpaste, but it's actually toothpaste mixed with fecal particles. Now, those might be just be your fecal particles if you're the only one who uses your washroom. But more than likely, other people also use your washroom, and that's where it can really be an issue, when other people's fecal particles are in your mouth.

Wrong Shawn

We as Library Socialists, we do advocate for the long term to sort of sunset the current idea of the toothbrush. You know, the modern toothbrush was invented in probably the mid/early 700s in China from boar hair. But before that, for a long time, human beings brushed their teeth with pieces of twig and branch, which they chew at one end, creating a sort of a - a brushy end which they could use to brush their teeth, and the other end they could use as— as a toothpick. And there's a lot of natural plants that are actually really good for your teeth. They have antibacterial properties and astringent properties.

Wrong Aaron

Unlike, kind of, just plastic bristles don't naturally have antibacterial properties.

Wrong Shawn

No, absolutely not. And neither boar hair. If you could imagine, people have been brushing their teeth with tooth-cleaning twigs for millennia. We're talking about since 3,000 BC.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. Like, time immemorial.

Wrong Shawn

And then it's year 700, and a guy's like, "Hey, let's put some dirty boar hair in our mouth."

Wrong Aaron

"I'm here to disrupt cleaning teeth. I'm the Elon Musk of China in the year 700."

Wrong Shawn

"Oh yeah, one thing: it has no astringent or antibacterial properties." (Laughs) "Is that a problem for anyone?" (Laughter) I don't know why this took off. But I know that right now Big Toothbrush has a stranglehold on our idea of oral hygiene. And part of the picture here is returning to the teeth-cleaning twigs. But also part of the picture is moving beyond the toothbrush. Or at least the common toothbrush. I can imagine a beautiful future where we do have shared toothbrushes.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. Imagine this. Every time you want to brush your teeth, you head into your washroom, you press a button, and from a tube appears a toothbrush. Hundreds of other people may have used it before, but it is cleaner than any toothbrush you've ever used to clean your dirty teeth.

Wrong Shawn

And how does it work? Well, there's a toothbrush facility in the city where when you are finished with your toothbrush you drop it down a tube, it goes to the processing facility, it's professionally sanitized, checked for quality, and then returned to the network.

Wrong Aaron

Yep.

Wrong Shawn

Every time you brush your teeth, you're dealing with a perfectly clean brush. It doesn't matter it's been used by other people.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah. It's really just something you've got to get over at this point.

Wrong Shawn

And for you to be smarmy about that when there's literally other people's shit on your toothbrush right now? It's, like, get over yourself.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah, okay. Whatever. But, hey— some people may not like that, and we can talk about other options. We can design a sort of facemask that puts little robots in your mouth and shoots water at your teeth, or scrubs your teeth with little cute hands, like, robot hands. That could be one thing. Who knows. We'll figure all kinds of things out.

Wrong Shawn

Yeah. The future of dental hygiene is still unwritten, friends.

Wrong Aaron

But I'll tell you one thing. It won't be, like, "Oh, my toothbrush that I leave sitting on the counter with aerosolized poo everywhere." I'm just sorry. That's not happening. That's— honestly, should be a thing of the past already.

Wrong Shawn

Laser sound effects. Like, robot sound effects. "Hello, this is the year 4000." "My toothbrush!" (Laughter)

Wrong Aaron

Ridiculous.

Wrong Shawn

"I've got poopoo on my toothbrush and I like it."

Wrong Aaron

"Don't you dare take this away from me."

Wrong Shawn

"Ugh! He's trying to take away my poo-brush!"

Wrong Aaron

"Oh, don't rub your teeth with that poo-brush. It's so gross." "No, let me rub it on my teeth. I really want to." (Laughter)

Wrong Shawn

"I need that poo and there." (Laughter)

Wrong Aaron

"My teeth don't have enough poo on it."

Wrong Shawn

So, yeah. I mean, in the long term, we are gonna request that you voluntarily return your toothbrushes. We're not gonna take them. But...

Wrong Aaron

But we think most people will choose to. (Music fades in) And, uh, yeah. I guess that's about it for questions. Looks like we...

Wrong Shawn

Hm. Yeah. All— all concerns as— "assuaged." (*as-swahj-ed*)

Aaron

(Laughs) Fully "assuaged?"

Shawn

(Laughs) Is that how that word is pronounced...?

Aaron

(Laughs) I think I've heard "assuaged." (*as-swayj-ed*)

Wrong Shawn

All of the concerns assuaged.

Wrong Aaron

If you came into this ep worrying, "Oh, it won't be assuaged, my concern." Well, don't you feel like a fool?

Wrong Shawn

"My concern is inflamed! It- it needs to be assuaged somehow." Well.

Wrong Aaron

You're welcome.

Wrong Shawn

You're welcome.

☒ *Music fades*

(01:34:01)

Wrong Shawn

So we thought it would be fun to show you what our irreducible minimum utopia looks like. Actually what it looks like in practice.

Wrong Aaron

As you know, all utopians are dreamers, and utopias are in people's dreams. So Shawn and I are gonna both fall asleep. Of course, we'll be hooked up to the machine that reads our dreams, (electronic changing sounds) and also syncs our brainwaves to one another so we have the same dream, and records us in our dream for you.

Wrong Shawn

The first step is we'll just get into these trays here. In case of...

Wrong Aaron

Mm-hmm. Well, don't forget to put on your PJs first, for napping.

Wrong Shawn

Oh, yeah, of course. I usually sleep in the nude, but I- just- just kidding. I mean, I do, honestly, frequently, but...

Wrong Aaron

Right, right. Yeah. The machine comes with PJs.

Wrong Shawn

So then you put these clamps on, (click) and I understand there'll be a small pinprick as it injects with a mild sedative that'll put you sleep faster, and...

☒ Lullaby

Wrong Aaron

Oh, and it's even playing a nice little lullaby for us as we drift off.

Wrong Shawn

Incredible tech these days. Incredible technology, this- you can read dreams...? See beautiful dreams...

(Sounds of Aaron sleeping)

(Sharp sound)

Wrong Shawn

Oh, I guess they give you a second pinprick if you're slow to sleep. Can't... wait to share these... beautiful dreams... utopian...

(Dream chimes)

Dream Aaron

All right, everyone! And welcome to Shawn and my collective dream.

Dream Shawn

This is our one big dream, where we dream about a perfect irreducible minimum society. So, uh, without further ado, let's explain some of the incredible stuff we're seeing right now here in our utopian dreams.

Dream Aaron

If only this was a visual podcast, because the sights are astounding. But we will describe what's going on for you all. So the first thing I noticed is that all the restaurants have a mandatory free option here.

Dream Shawn

I mean, the great thing about that is that, you know, there's this existing food distribution networks that exist, these companies receive goods, they produce finished meals, they distribute them to the public, and that already-existing force has been tapped into for the public good. It's beautiful. Another thing is that, the rice and bean stations at key areas in the city to provide cheap or free basic full proteins for people is just incredible. There's been a revolution in this irreducible minimum society in the way that food is seen. It's something that you're as entitled to as clean air.

Dream Aaron

Yeah. And I think another big part of that has been the decommodified urban food towers that I'm seeing all over the place. That's really, I think, changed people's relationships to what food means. I think it's also just really cool that fruit trees are planted around pretty frequently, and it's all, "Hey, why not? They make fruit, people can eat it." It makes a lot of sense. Also makes sense that there's a lot more trees now because, of course, all the roads have been torn up and replaced with green spaces to help make our cities a) more beautiful and b) into carbon sinks rather than carbon emitting with all the cars. Inner city transportation, obviously, has been replaced with, you know, bicycles for people who are able. There's beautiful bike paths. But there's also personal public transport stations, very frequently, easy to get to, accessible for everyone, and take you from point A to point B on a kind of looping, branching, cart system that's actually faster than cars ever were within the city.

Dream Shawn

I gotta say, this fare-free, high-speed rail and public transit, there's no doubt that is an irreducible minimum achieved.

Dream Aaron

Yeah. There's basically nowhere you can't go.

Dream Shawn

There's absolutely no homelessness. You know, it turns out homelessness is easy to solve. You just produce lots and lots, thousands and thousands of units of public housing which you allow people to move in at a fraction of their income, no matter what their income is. So that's completely taken care of through public assets, generate revenue for the democratic institutions to spend without taxation.

Dream Aaron

Everyone has a guaranteed basic kind of shelter from the elements. And so easy to do, too. Yeah, just building all this social housing.

Dream Shawn

And of course, this is a thriving society with a well-educated population, because all elementary, high school, and university is tuition-free. And for the duration of your stay in school you're actually paid a wage as a student for your basic needs. But luckily it's also a sort of universal basic services society. Your basic needs are taken care of, and part of that is the opportunity to use your capacity to learn and contribute.

Dream Aaron

When they were building all this social housing they thought, "Hey, why don't we build a bunch more buildings?" And a lot of those buildings became schools. But a lot of them also became libraries. More and more libraries. Many were filled with books, but then others started to become filled with other things that people might need. The schools and skills-training centers— just, wow. Opening that

up for everyone. Allowing people to kind of dip in and try different classes and see what they might be interested in.

Watch people doing things that they love. And from watching that, being able to help decide what they wanted to pursue for themselves. Again, that universal basic purpose, it's really a way to spark that in people, and to create an environment in which everyone is best able to discover what that is for themselves. It's really a beautiful, beautiful thing, these hybrid library-university / skills-training centers bring to society.

Dream Shawn

There's such a microcosm of this society that we're dreaming of, right? These centers become sort of the embodiment, in the smallest sense, of the principles of the larger society.

Dream Aaron

Absolutely.

Dream Shawn

This love of education extends even further to just access to information generally, that information shouldn't generally be safeguarded from the public. That our technological process, or the progress of our ideas, and the totality of human experience, emotion, art, should be accessible to everyone. So that includes music, TV, movies, books, but also blueprints, recipes, and all intellectual property has been moved to the commons. And it's not just enough to have access theoretically to all this information, but people actually have help accessing that information via the librarians at these centers that you're talking about.

Dream Aaron

They're also community spaces where people go and actually forge lasting human connections with other people who are in the same kind of physical proximity to them. Because this society understands that human connection is a human need. Even though we're in a technologically advanced society with huge cities, millions of people living in them, there isn't that kind of, like, atomization and alienation of the previous society. But instead, through design and through intention, we have created spaces that fulfill not just every other human need, but the human need for connection, also.

Dream Shawn

I mean, everyone deserves friends. And people should have access to opportunities that help them to make friends along common interests. And sometimes it requires a little bit of help from someone else who— who's in your corner, and that you can meet with and talk to. And that's the sort of stuff that we have in this beautiful utopian dream.

Dream Aaron

Yeah, absolutely. And I think just one of the last kind of fundamental things you really want to point out is that in this beautiful utopian dream, all people have fundamental human rights.

Dream Shawn

So that includes the United Nations protected right to paid time off, because vacations are important.

Dream Aaron

Oh, yeah. Vacations, leisure, of course.

Dream Shawn

That involves the basic human right to free or cheap telecommunications. You get a good phone with lots of data. Cheap bills or no bills, based on your income level. And the telecommunications are run by a union of both customers and workers.

Dream Aaron

But also, like, kind of more abstract traditional politic rights, like the right to a trial, the right to freedom of movement, the right to speak your conscience— these kinds of things.

Dream Shawn

And I'll go further. This utopia gives you the right to a good life. The right to a joyful, positive existence that was worth living. And that is one of the roles that we have as a society and duties that

we have to each other, is to ensure that everyone's irreducible minimum is met, and that the irreducible minimum is a pleasant experience in this world.

Dream Aaron

The philosophers said it for decades before this society was built, but once you actually start providing people with realistic and accessible strategies for meeting all of their needs, not just some of their needs— not in a kind of, like, rat race situation where some people can get them, and some people don't, but everybody can get all of their needs met because there's enough synergistic strategies for doing that, for meeting people's needs, then what you get at the end is a society where the vast, vast majority of people, if not everyone, gets a good life with plenty of joy.

Obviously no life is only joy, and only pleasantness. That would be actually not preferable, because the spectrum of human emotions is there for a reason, and you experience anger and sadness when bad things happen, and that's actually good. But on the whole, on balance, most balance say, "I had a good life. I had a meaningful life. There was a lot of joy in it. And I happy to have been here, and happy for all those who will come after me." And that's just— that's a wonderful thing.

Dream Shawn

Ah, well. It's time to wake up from this beautiful dream.

Dream Aaron

Oh, no, do we have to?

Dream Shawn

I don't wanna go, I don't wanna go... (Chuckles)

Dream Aaron

Oh, yeah, hm. But we are renting this machine by the minute, and it's pretty expensive, so we do have to go...

Dream Shawn

It is— yeah, it's one of the most fascinating pieces of technology, I think.

Dream Aaron

Yes, no, definitely, yeah...

Dream Shawn

Dream measuring stuff, and...

Dream Aaron

Yeah, recording within dreams.

Dream Shawn

(Sighs) Bye-bye, world. Bye-bye, perfect world. Hope to create you someday!

Dream Aaron

Bye! I love you.

Dream Shawn

Love you, Perfect World. (Kissing sounds) I'm gonna kiss the world as well.

Dream Aaron

Yeah, we're kissing the world as we wake up.

(01:43:30)

(Computer sounds. Kissing sounds.)

Wrong Shawn

Ah! Oh...

(Wretching sounds)

Wrong Aaron

It's a side effect of the mission, and drugs.

Wrong Shawn

You wretch. You vomit.

Wrong Aaron

Yeah.

Wrong Shawn

Phew. Oh... (Deep breath) You know that moment when you realize you're not in the perfect world, uh, kissing the ground anymore, and you're just—

Wrong Aaron

Yeah, you waked up from your dream.

Wrong Shawn

—kissing cold air in the year 2019 with the dystopian legacy that we're inheriting?

Wrong Aaron

Yeah, don't remind me. Don't remind me. Ugh, okay. (Switch flipped, machine powers down) I'm gonna get a mint, because I don't— I can't do this right now. And then we'll get back to the show. After I get the mint.

(01:44:17)

Shawn

So, libraries are this utopian microcosm. The public library as it currently exists is this incredible glimmer of the potential that it could exist of the next society, you know? It's the collaborative commons.

Aaron

Yeah. It's, like, a foreshadowing. But, like, that's not quite the right word. I almost want to say, like, a pre-echo, or a— elements of the future good society leaking backwards in time into our society.

Shawn

But, yeah. I mean, obviously time is one enormous hyper-object, and what we experience as time is an illusion, so that makes sense. But, I mean, seriously, there is, like, a glimmer of, like, this potentiality that you can see this piece of in libraries. And one part, I think, that sort of carries a lot of revolutionary political potential is the sort of librarian figure.

Aaron

Yeah. If you think about what a librarian does now in the current library society, is that they help connect people to that sort of universal basic amount of information. They make that minimum real in a way, because they make it accessible to people. They play this role as an intermediary who knows where the information is, and knows how to connect people to it. And not just information, but also the other kinds of irreducible minimums that libraries help to give to people, like community space, computer access, certain kinds of skills trainings. There's often English and second language meeting groups and classes in libraries. There's computer skills classes and things like that in libraries. Librarians help connect people to all of those universal basic services that libraries already provide. And so, if we're talking about an expanded library society, that role and that type of thing would also need to be expanded.

Shawn

Yeah. I mean, under the current system we both lack the resources to give people to meet their basic needs, but then also when the resources do exist, there's hardly any opportunity for them to get access to those resources, because there's a requirement to fill out paperwork, or call a certain hotline, and just to know that it exists in the first place you have to stumble across either some sort of booklet that explains it, like, organically, or have someone connect you to it. So, like, this cultural potential of a societal sort of librarian who knows where things are, and helps people connect to the things that they need, I think, is like— it's a big piece of sort of the legacy and prefiguration of current libraries, that we can pull out when we're constructing a more beautiful, utopian, usufructian, irreducible minimum and complementary society.

Aaron

Because what good is all this stuff if people don't know how to get to it? What good is having a skills-training center if you don't know how to access and interface with this center? If you don't have somebody helping you navigate it, because that's how humans can navigate things in society, and get connected to things they need, is that they need help sometimes. It's just a really important part of society, is that we rely on each other. We depend on one another. And we want our society to be

dependable back to us in return. And librarians playing that role as those who connect us to what we need makes us a more dependable society.

(01:47:42)

☒ *Emotional music*

(Crying sounds)

Dad

Son, son! Hey, what's- hey, what's goin' on, man?

Son

Dad, some- some of the other kids at school told me that Mr. What-Was-Is-And-Ever-Will-Be (sniffs) isn't actually real. And that there's no Great Library in the Sky, where everything that has ever been and ever will be is retained, and that when is something is lost, it's truly lost forever.

Dad

Hey, hey...

Son

It's irretrievable.

Dad

Buster, uh...

Son

Is that true?

Dad

Look, you know, we- we don't need a big library in the sky with an all-knowing man named Mr. What-Is-Was-And-Ever-Will-Be who can retrieve anything from all points in history in order to have a vibrant and- and positive library society that's worth being proud of. Hey, come on, chin up.

Son

But librarians, real librarians, have to make choices, Dad! They can't just keep everything accessible and useful today. They can only do that for some things. That's Mr. What-Was-Is-And-Ever-Will-Be's job to keep everything. (Cries)

Dad

Yeah, hey, hey-

Son

No, I'm going- I'm going to my room.

Dad

Buddy-

Son

I don't want to talk to you.

Dad

Ah. (Sighs) You don't need to retain everything. That's...

Partner

Well, yeah, it's hard to accept that, for some people. Don't want anything to be lost. I- I get that.

Dad

Yeah, oh, I mean, I totally get it. When I was a kid, I wanted everything to be retained, too.

Partner

Yeah, I mean, that's why we have the- the story, Mr. What-Was-Is-And-Ever-Will-Be. That's why we tell that to kids.

Dad

But at a certain point you need to grow up and have a little bit more mature view of this idea of sort of a righteous and necessary churn.

Partner

I agree. He had to learn it sometime, but it's always gonna be a painful process. And that's just part of growing up. It's weird, it's almost like just seeing that, like, the loss of innocence there, the loss

of that childish notion, it's almost like the same kind of loss that he was coming to grips with. Because it's, like, that's gone forever now. The realization that the world isn't all you thought as a kid is a type of loss that's final in that same way.

Dad

Well, I mean, the things that we know and experience, or at least retained as long as we are, it's—maybe the universe isn't all stored in one place, but it's certainly stored in a distributed sense across all of us. At least, the parts that are most relevant to us. There's a lot of retention going on, if you look for it.

Partner

You know, he'll understand that someday. It's just hard for kids. Maybe we'll give him a few more minutes and then go up and talk to him a bit more.

Dad

(Sighs) Kids. Freakin' kids, am I right?

Partner

Yeah.

☒ *Emotional music gradually swells*

Dad

(Laughs) It's just— "I want everything to be retained." Well, maybe everything shouldn't be retained all the time. "What about the righteous churn?" or something. "I don't want the righteous churn." Well, maybe you need it...

☒ Music fades

(01:50:35)

Shawn

So, this has been *The Srsly Wrong Podcast*. We have been your utopian librarians for the day, knowing where things are and then helping connect you to them, the things that you need.

Aaron

I wouldn't call myself a librarian because of this, but...

Shawn

Yeah. I mean, shout out to all the real librarians out there, organizing librarian unions, helping people access the books and services that they need at the library. Very cool.

Aaron

True heroes.

Shawn

If you want to help Aaron and I meet our irreducible minimum, we have a system where you can become a patron donor to the show.

Aaron

We've actually reached the point where my irreducible minimum has been met. And, like, now it's crunch time. Let's focus. We need to meet Shawn's irreducible minimum as well. We're one-half of the way there, basically.

Shawn

And if we get all the way there, I promise we'll literally do it forever.

Aaron

Yeah. Even after one of us dies or both of us dies, we will get hooked back up to the big sleep dream machine, which will keep us mechanically alive into the future dreaming of new episodes that it will then record. Someone else will have to edit them, but they will be distributed.

Shawn

So you heard it here first. We have 400 patrons on Patreon. If we get up to 800 patrons, it will be post-scarcity Srsly Wrong. That's right!

Aaron

And if you do it, you get access to bonus episodes, full archive, a Facebook group, Discord server, all kinds of great goodies to entice you along the way. Episodes a day early for just six sweet, small, little dollars, once every month.

Shawn

That sweet six, we used to call it.

Aaron

And we give our thanks and praises to those who choose to give more, of course.

Shawn

Well, it's a new feature on the show, the Srsly Wrong \$20 on Patreon shout-out. Thank you to Brittany. Thank you to the Kern County DSA. And thank you to Bill Bishop. And also thank you to Skeptical Safety Guy. Your particularly generous contributions of \$20 brings the show into existence. I mean, all patrons bring the show into existence. But that generosity is super, super appreciated.

Aaron

Yeah. It's terrific, as I would say.

Shawn

A terrific twenty.

Aaron

Terrific twenty. Yeah.

Shawn

Also, please, hit us up and review us on iTunes. Post the show places. Tell us that you listen to the show. This makes a huge difference. I know not everyone can chip in the money. You can do lots of stuff that really helps. You can shout us out on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram. You can shout us out over Gmail. You can shout us out over Hotmail. You can shout us out on Usenet or BBS boards.

Aaron

Wherever you go on the internet—

Shawn

IRC.

Aaron

—you can shout us out there.

Shawn

You can leave episodes of our show on USBs in public. You do you.

Aaron

Free USB, as long as you listen to the MP3. Honor system, but listen to it. Seriously.

Shawn

Dot MP3. Thank you so much! We love you.

Aaron

Love you—

Shawn

Do you? Do you love them as well?

Aaron

Mm-hmm.

Shawn

You just didn't seem as committed as me. It's— sorry. (Laughs)

(01:53:54)

Narrator

Next time, on Srsly Wrong: The history of Wrongtopia's future is finally settled.

(War sounds: machine guns, sirens, screaming)

Soldier 1

I can't believe it's come to this. Bullets!

Soldier 2

Duck! There's a bomb—

Soldier 1

Guns! Agggh!

(Explosion)

(Gavel striking)

Politician 1

All those in favor say, "Aye."

All

Aye.

Politician 2

I can't believe it's come to this—

Politician 1

—It's come to this. Voting on democratic resolutions to end this insanity?

(Whoosh)

Diplomat 1

Mm. And you sign— I'll sign here, and you can sign there.

Diplomat 2

Wow. Can't believe that it's come to this. Signing a treaty with the enemy.

Diplomat 1

It's actually come to diplomatic relations.

Diplomat 2

Yeah.

(Whoosh)

Legislator 1

Well, I have to say. I disagree. And I—

Legislator 2

Yeah— mm, well...

Legislator 1

—I would like to present the evidence that's contrary to that.

Legislator 2

I can't believe it's come to this. Little nit-picky, wonkish disputes about the laws to replace the old, unjust laws in our society. And it's come to this.

(Whoosh)

Narrator 1

And so, it just kept coming.

Narrator 2

It came to all sorts of places and methods of changing Wrongtopian society from the fallen state it had fallen to after locking the Nomads out from the resources of the library society, and the class conflict that created, the caste system that created, and eventually erupted into all sorts of social change to overturn that order once again back to an order where everyone's needs are taken care of.

Narrator 1

And that's the story of the usufructian counter-counter-revolution where the irreducible minimum was returned to the people of Wrongtopia.

Narrator 2

It wasn't a perfect society that they built during that period, but it was more perfect than anything that had come before it. The end.

☒ *Music shifts*

Narrator

And so, Wrongtopia History went on for five long, wonderful audio seasons, and was cherished by children around the world. The end.

☒ *Music shifts*

Narrator 2

And so, that last bit of narration was eventually removed from all the places in which it was broadcast, or addended to with this bit of narration, because it did contain an error. Wrongtopia History actually ran for six seasons, not five. That's an important bit of history to note, the actual amount of seasons. And after that mistake was corrected, the misconception it caused was mostly eradicated from society. Though a few people never did get the memo, it was relatively minor and it was mostly okay. (Door knocking) What?

(Volume clicking down)

Spouse

Chris, what are you doing in there?

Chris

I narrate. What do you think? It's my job. God.

Spouse

It's dinner time.

Chris

Okay? Well, I'll be down in a minute, after I'm finished—

Spouse

But why don't you just come down for dinner? Everyone's at the table set.

Chris

I mean, people need to know what's going on. That's why narration exists.

Spouse

Do you have to narrate at dinnertime? Like, they don't need it right away, do they?

Chris

Yeah, of course they need it right away. The information needs to be free. No, you know what? If I go back to it now I'm already gonna be all messed up. All I had to do was say, "The end." I had done the thing. But now I'm too upset to do that. So I'll come down to dinner.

Spouse

Yes, thank you. The kids are waiting.

Chris

You knew what this would be like when you married a narrator, all right? You knew.

Spouse

I definitely knew that you had a passion for your job, but I didn't expect it to be so disruptive.

Chris

Okay. Well, I mean, I tried to impress upon you what this meant. How can I stay mad when I see my beautiful children at the dinner table?

Spouse

Look at this spread. You've been narrating for god knows how long. I was making dinner for the whole fam.

Chris

Well, thank you for making— this is beautiful.

Spouse

And all I ask is you show up at the time that I set the table.

Chris

Okay, well, narration sometimes is very time-sensitive, and it's important. Okay?

Spouse

Yeah, I know. And sometimes you get in the zone. But hey, look, this can't be an every night thing.

Chris

All right, but you know, you enjoy a timely narration.

Spouse

Yes. And I think you're great, and I want you to follow your dreams! But I just need this.

Chris

Okay. Okay, I'm here—

Spouse

Some of the best narration I've ever heard. You think I don't want you to succeed as a narrator?

Chris

No. I just think sometimes you don't take into account what that actually means. All the listeners now waiting for me to eat dinner, instead of getting their narrative completion.

Spouse

You are just impossible. You know that?

Chris

Let's just put a pin in this discussion, and we'll have a nice dinner.

☒ *Music shifts*

Chris

And so, we put a pin in it. But that didn't make the problem go away. The end.

☒ *Music swells, thunderous applause*

Shawn

Oh.

Aaron

Oh, yeah.

Shawn

Yeah.

Aaron

Bravo, bravo. Great ep.

Shawn

That was a really good one. That was a quality ep.

Aaron

Definitely. Top eps.

The Library of Unconventional Lives

Library Socialism & The Irreducible Minimum – Srsly Wrong Ep 196

<[youtube.com/watch?v=8S2Z_iH9wEw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S2Z_iH9wEw)>

thelul.org