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# Willful Disobedience Volume 4, number 3–4

Various Authors

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Fall-Winter 2003

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Don't ask for the formula for opening up worlds  
to you in some syllable like a bent dry branch.  
Today we can only tell you what we are not,  
what we don't want. — E. Montale

**Life cannot simply be something to cling to.** This thought skims through everyone at least once. We have a possibility that makes us freer than the gods: we can quit. This is an idea to be savoured to the end. Nothing and no one is obliging us to live. Not even death. For that reason our life is a tabula rasa, a slate on which nothing has been written, so contains all the words possible. With such freedom, we cannot live as slaves. Slavery is for those who are condemned to live, those constrained to eternity, not for us. For us there is the unknown — the unknown of spheres to be ventured into, unexplored thoughts, guarantees that explode, strangers to whom to offer a gift of life. The unknown of a world where one might finally be able to give away one's excess self love. Risk too. The risk of brutality and fear. The risk of finally staring mal de vivre in the face. All this is encountered by anyone who decides to put an end to the job of existing.

Our contemporaries seem to live by jobbing, desperately juggling with a thousand obligations including the saddest of them all — enjoying themselves. They cover up the incapacity to determine their own lives with detailed frenetic activity, the speed that accompanies increasingly passive ways of behaving. They are unaware of the lightness of the negative.

We can choose not to live. That is the most beautiful reason for opening oneself up to life with joy. 'There is always time to put an end to things; one might as well rebel and play' — is how the materialism of joy talks.

We can choose not to act, and that is the most beautiful reason for acting. We bear within ourselves the potency of all the acts we are capable of, and no boss will ever be able to deprive us of the possibility of saying no. What we are and what we want begins

face, shouting "I AM!" against every constraint society has invented. I wish to state, once and for all, I do not want to be civilized.

with a no. From it is born the only reason for going armed to the assault of an order that is suffocating us.

On the one hand there is the existent with its habits and certainties. And of certainty, that social poison, one can die.

On the other hand there is insurrection, the unknown bursting into the life of all. The possible beginning of an exaggerated practice of freedom.

From *At Daggers Drawn*

# A Few Words On the Mystical Basis of the “Neutrality” of Technology

There is an assumption popular among leftists and other radicals who still feel some attachment to the concept of progress or even to Marxian theoretical constructions that technology, as such, is neutral. The assumption is particularly amusing because those who hold it will accuse the critics of technology of having a mystical and ahistorical conception of it. What these apologists for technology claim is that the critics of technology promote “technological determinism”, making technology the central determining factor in social development, and thus losing sight of the social factor. They end up by proclaiming that the problems do not lie in the technological systems as such but in who manages them and in how they choose to utilize them.

Doubtless, there have been those who have attributed essential determining powers to technology. One of the greatest proponents of this view was Marx, whose economism was decidedly a technological economism. In his perspective, economic necessity created technological developments (such as the early industrial factory) that then created the basis for the supersession of the dominant economic system. Thus, Marx’s economism incorporated a kind of technological determinism as well.

Marx’s fault lies precisely in his determinism (an unavoidable consequence of the fact that his critique of Hegel was limited to

for the source. It is certainly true that capital expands itself into every corner of the world, but it is necessary to recognize what this system is in order to understand the significance of this expansion and recognize what needs to be attacked. Capital, and in fact civilization in its totality, is an ever-expanding **system of limitations**, an attempt to bring everything that exists under control.

Thus, the revolt against this system is a refusal of all limitations. And the refusal of limitations is also the refusal of renunciation, self-sacrifice and obligation. Marx and many other early communists wanted a scientific revolution that occurred in accordance with a rational historical development. Many present-day “radicals” want a revolution based upon the renunciation of “privilege” on the part of those who are supposedly less oppressed and the sacrifice of their energy to the causes of those supposedly most oppressed. Bakunin, however, recognized that only the unleashing of the wildest passions of the oppressed and exploited could truly create a force capable of tearing this society down.

But the unleashing of our wildest passions requires the rejection of every vestige of christian and bourgeois morality, of every limitation imposed upon us by external and internal ideological police. In the struggle against domination and exploitation here and now, we are facing a global order that grants no quarter in its insistence upon conforming everything to its mechanized, measured rule. To place any limits on ourselves, to renounce anything, is to lose everything. Once again, the principle that the means must contain the end applies. Against civilization’s greeting card sentimentality, channeled and commodified wants and measured calculations, it is necessary to unleash passions, desires and reasons that know no measure and recognize no limits and, thus, cannot be bought off.

There are those whose lives center around lost and vapid fairy tales. They need an ancient dream to justify the breaths they steal — their crime of being alive. But for this crime there is no forgiveness. It can only be the ultimate act of defiance, spitting in authority’s

From the moment civilization began, it has been developing technological systems for expanding its control. Control, of course, operates through the limitation of the capacity of that which is controlled to act or function on its own terms. Thus, contrary to the way in which they are frequently perceived, technological systems have not developed in order to broaden human capacities, but in order to limit the autonomy of both the wild world and human individuals (who as such are always potentially “wild”) and thus enforce power. Technological development ends up practically limiting the relationships possible among living beings and between living beings and their environment by channeling these into increasingly homogenized and rationalized modes of activity and interaction.

The chatter about bourgeois society placing great value upon the individual is ridiculous. The “individual” of bourgeois society has always been a mere cipher with nothing individual about it. In fact, bourgeois society placed its greatest value — it least in the ideological realm — upon reified Reason. Beginning in the Renaissance, the ideology that nature and society, and therefore also the individual, should be subjected by every means necessary to the dictates of Reason began to dominate. Individuals such as Giordano Bruno, who saw a universe permeated with passionate life that flowed and surged beyond the limits of Reason and Religion, were looked upon as heretics and sometimes faced the stake. For this reified Reason, no longer a tool of living individuals but rather a power over them, was essentially mechanistic and its aim was precisely to limit the wild surging experienced by Bruno and other so-called heretics, to bring it under control of the newly rising capitalist order. Here we find the justification for ever-increasing technological development leading to industrialization, Taylorism, cybernetization and on to the latest intrusions of technology directly into our bodies.

If it is an error to think of bourgeois ideology as centering around the individual, it is equally wrong to see the central problem of capitalism as being that of excessiveness, of a lack of limits. This is an example of a very common error in analysis, mistaking a symptom

turning Hegel — a historical determinist — “right side up” rather than rejecting his fundamental constructs). A truly historical, as opposed to a mystical, approach to social struggle and all the factors involved in it has to reject any form of determinism, because it begins from the idea of history as human activity rather than as an expression of any overarching metaphysical value or conception. Thus, any product of history has to be viewed as a product of its contexts in terms of the concrete social relationships in which it developed. From such a perspective, there can be no such thing as a “neutral” technology.

Technology always develops within a social context with the explicit aim of reproducing that context. Its form, its purpose and its possibilities are determined by that context, and this is precisely why no technology is neutral. If we understand technology as large-scale systems of techniques (such as industrialism, cybernetics, etc.), then we do not know of any technological system that was not developed within the context of domination, class rule and exploitation. If Marx, in his myopic Hegelian vision, could somehow see communism in the industrial system, it is only because his vision of communism was the negation of individual freedom, the absorption of the individual into the “species being” that was manifested in the compulsory collective productive process of the factory. In fact, the industrial system was developed for one purpose — to maximize the amount of profit that could be gotten from each moment of labor by increasing the level of control over each and every movement of the worker on the job. Each new technological development within the industrial capitalist system simply increased the level of control over the processes to the point where now they are mostly automated, and nanotechnology and biotechnology are creating the basis for bringing this control directly into our bodies on a molecular level.

Just as the ideologies of any epoch are the expression of the ruling system of that epoch, so the technologies of any epoch also reflect the ruling systems. The conception that technologies are neutral,

that we could simply reappropriate the technological systems and use them for our ends, is a mystical conception granting an ahistorical innocence to technology. Like ideology, those systems of reified ideas through which the ruling order enforces its domination, technology is a product of the ruling order, created to reinforce its rule. The destruction of the ruling order will involve the destruction of its technology, of the system of techniques it developed to enforce its rule.

At this point the technological systems developed by the ruling order are so intrusive and so harmful that to even pretend that they could be used for any liberatory purpose is absurd. If Marx, following Hegel, wanted history to have a final, determined end, we now know such a view is far too Christian to ever be truly revolutionary. Revolution is a wager, and that wager is precisely that the unknown, which offers the possibility of the end of domination and exploitation, is worth risking, and that taking this risk involves the destruction of the totality of this civilization of domination and exploitation — including its technological systems — that has been all we have ever known.

are always limits placed upon our capacity to fight against this society. This may be more fully understood if we remember that the society in which we live — the society of domination and exploitation, of property and social control, of domestication and measurement — is based precisely upon limitation and its acceptance.

Power and property have gone hand in hand since the beginning of civilization and exist through the imposition of limits. The power to rule requires the existence of methods for controlling the activity of those ruled. These methods involve limiting the activity of others through varying combinations of coercion and manipulation. If one of the main reasons to establish one's rule is that of controlling property, property is equally one of the means of extorting compliance from those ruled. This is because property itself is perhaps the fundamental limitation. Property exists only through the exclusion of all except the so-called owner and the power (i.e., the state) that grants and enforces property rights from access to that which has been defined as "property". This exclusion, of course, depends on the capacity that exists for enforcing it. But to the extent to which it can be enforced, it is a limitation through which the rulers of this society are able to control those they rule.

And from these combined limitations of political power and property spring further limitations: work, domestication, technological systems, industrialism ... Work is coerced activity. No one denies that it is necessary to carry out some sort of activity, to make exertions, in order to create our lives and weave them together in a way that pleases us, but this is not the same as work. Work is forced upon us when those things that we need to create our lives are made inaccessible to us by others — the owners or controllers of social wealth. In order to get back some of that which has been taken from us (transformed into a product for sale), we have to give over the greater part of our time to the projects of those who rule us, projects that have as their ultimate purpose the continuation of the social relationships of power and exploitation.



## Against Renunciation. *The revolt against civilization will be expansive or it will not be at all.*

It is always the principle of useful suffering and willing sacrifice that forms the most solid base for hierarchical power.

— Raoul Vaneigem

Despite nearly two centuries of theoretical and practical experience and several decades of critique specifically aimed against them, christianity and its pallid offspring, bourgeois morality, continue to rear their ugly heads in revolutionary anarchist circles. New ideologies continue to arise calling for self-sacrifice and renunciation. Whether they wrap themselves in the cloak of anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-speciesism, the refusal of privilege, radical environmentalism or any of the myriad of disguises available to them, these calls to limit oneself in the name of social transformation must be recognized as counter-revolutionary, because they are chains placed upon revolt.

Calls for self-limitation are always presented in the fine-sounding rhetoric of compassion or in the stronger language of obligation. In either case, it is the language of morality, and as revolutionaries, we need to recognize that the limits imposed by morality

## The Tiniest Monstrosities: Nanotechnology and Social Control

In the pursuit of full control over every aspect of existence, the ruling order has begun to push the development of technologies that manipulate matter on the scale of the nano-meter, that is to say a millionth of a millimeter. At this level, the level of atoms and molecules, and thus of proteins, carbon compounds, DNA and the like, the distinction between living and non-living can begin to get hazy and many of the proposals relating to this technology stem from this haziness. Nanotechnology creates new products through the manipulation of molecules, atoms and subatomic particles. While biotechnology manipulates the structure of DNA to create new organisms through the recombination of genes, nanotechnology goes further, “breaking down” matter into atoms which can then be put back together to form new materials, literally created atom by atom. At present, attention is focused on the carbon atom, but scientists would like to have control over the every element of the Periodic Table to use at will. This would allow them to combine characteristics (such as color, resistance, melting point, etc.) in ways previously unknown.

Much of the research in nanotechnology is also connected to biotechnological research, looking into the possibility of manipulation of atoms on the biomolecular level. This is the origin of nanobiotechnology. The proponents of this research speak publicly of a

myriad of possibilities that this toying with the borderline between living and non-living matter on the atomic level could provide: self-cleaning plastics in which enzymes feed on the dirt, airplane wings full of proteins that function as adhesives if the wing is damaged and thus repair it, ensembles of atoms intended to be used as food or drink that are capable of combining in varieties of ways to create the desired food or beverage, ultra-fast computers with circuits based on a “framework” of DNA, electric conductors of dimensions on a nano-scale in a protein base — i.e., the “living plastic” built upon a genetically manipulated bacterium capable of producing an enzyme that scientists claim can polymerize.

But these are just the worthless knick-knacks displayed before the public to provoke infantile desires in the consumer who will then crave their satisfaction. These gadgets are little more than public relations activity. Much more significant are the miniaturized information processors to be found in each of these gadgets. This miniaturization opens the door to the presence of intelligent micro chips on any product on the market. Already, certain manufacturers are having chips placed on products that permit their movements to be traced. Miniaturized to the nano-scale such chips would be impossible for the consumer to detect.

As with every technological development of recent years, the proponents of nanotechnology also publicly proclaim the “humanitarian” uses of this technology — in medicine, in food production, in the general “improvement” of our way of life. But the real interests of the rulers of this world in developing this technology lies elsewhere (as was hinted at above).

Nanotechnology, like nearly every technological system developed in the past sixty years, has been largely developed in the framework of military studies. A clear example is that of the MEMS (micro-electrical-mechanical systems), the first generation of nano-machines. These are miniature receivers and motors the size of a grain of dust, the prototypes of which are already coming into use in industry. The application currently being studied is that of a surveil-

Politics is the art of **recuperation**. The most effective way to discourage all rebellion, all desire for real change, is to present a man or woman of state as subversive, or — better yet — to transform a subversive into a man or woman of state. Not all people of state are paid by the government. There are functionaries who are not found in parliament or even in the neighboring rooms. Rather, they frequent the social centers and sufficiently know the principle revolutionary theories. They debate over the liberatory potential of technology; they theorize about non-state public spheres and the surpassing of the subject. Reality — they know it well — is always more complex than any action. So if they hope for a total theory, it is only in order to totally neglect it in daily life. Power needs them because — as they themselves explain to us — when no one criticizes it, power is criticized by itself.

Politics is the art of **repression**. Of anyone who does not separate the moments of her/his life and who wants to change given conditions starting from the totality of their desires. Of anyone who wants to set fire to passivity, contemplation and delegation. Of anyone who does not want to let themselves be supplanted by any organization or immobilized by any program. Of anyone who wants to have direct relationships between individuals and make difference the very space of equality. Of anyone who does not have any we on which to swear. Of anyone who disturbs the order of waiting because s/he wants to rise up immediately, not tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. Of anyone who gives her/himself without compensation and forgets her/himself in excess. Of any one who defends her comrades with love and resoluteness. Of anyone who offers recuperators only one possibility: that of disappearing. Of anyone who refuses to take a place in the numerous groups of rogues and of the anaesthetized. Of anyone who neither wants to govern nor to control. Of anyone who wants to transform the future into a fascinating adventure.

From “Il Pugnale”, May 1996

Politics is the art of **calculation**. In order to make alliances profitable, it is necessary to learn the secrets of allies. Political calculation is the first secret. It is necessary to know where to put one's feet. It is necessary to draw up detailed inventories of efforts and outcomes. And by dint of measuring what one has, one ends up gaining everything except the will to lay it on the line and lose it. So one is always taken up with oneself, attentive and quick to demand the count. With the eye fixed on that which surrounds one, one never forgets oneself. Vigilant as military police. When love of oneself becomes excessive it demands to give itself. And this overabundance of life makes us forget ourselves. In the tension of the rush, it makes us lose count. But the forgetfulness of ourselves is the desire for a world in which it is worth the effort of losing oneself, a world that merits our forgetfulness. And this is why the world as it is, administered by jailers and accountants, is destroyed — to make space for the spending of ourselves. Insurrection begins here. Overcoming calculation, but not through lack, as the humanitarianism that, perfectly still and silent, allies itself with the executioner, recommends, but rather through excess. Here politics ends.

Politics is the art of **control**. So that human activity is not freed from the fetters of obligation and work revealing itself in all its potential. So that workers do not encounter each other as individuals and put an end to being exploited. So that students do not decide to destroy the schools in order to choose how when and what to learn. So that intimate friends and relatives do not fall in love and leave off being little servants of a little state. So that children are nothing more than imperfect copies of adults. So that the distinction between good (anarchists) and bad (anarchists) is not gotten rid of. So that individuals are not the ones that have relationships, but commodities. So that no one disobeys authority. So that if anyone attacks the structures of exploitation of the state, someone hurries to say, "It was not the work of comrades." So that banks, courts, barracks don't blow up. In short, so that life does not manifest itself.

lance powder that would be sprayed onto a battlefield or into an area under observation in order to gather certain kinds of information.

In fact, this is much like the "smart dust" the proponents of which present it as a "convenience" that could be spread on walls of buildings, connected to heating, air conditioning and electrical systems and switch on or off heat, air conditioning, lights, etc. as needed. But experiments have also been going on with possible uses of the "smart dust" as a means of police surveillance.

The robo-cop or robo-soldier of the future is likely to be a micro- or nano-robot, versatile, relatively inexpensive, nearly impossible to detect, capable of intruding into almost any space.

Nano-technology is an ideal medium for vastly extending social control. Consider the Veri-Chip, a product of the Florida company, Applied Digital Solutions. This chip is about the size of a grain of rice and is intended to be inserted under the skin through injection. It can be programmed to hold information about the person into which it is injected and can also be linked to the Global Positioning System (GPS). It has been offered on the market since April 2002. The company advertises it as a means for storing one's medical information directly on one's body and also as a kind of electronic bodyguard against abduction for the rich. But other possibilities of a much more sinister sort are not forgotten. The company's CEO suggested that the Veri-Chip would make a great alternative to the green card and has also recommended its use on children, the elderly and prisoners. A technology with so much potential for social control is likely to be brought in to use on broader and broader levels until it is considered normal. Then it would just be a small step toward making it mandatory — at first through an indirect blackmail: "No, you don't have to get this chipped placed under your skin but if you don't, you won't be able to get a job, collect benefits, have a bank account, make purchases, etc., etc..." But quite possibly they will eventually be legally required with penalties for refusal or removal of the chips.

In fact, in Britain the government has proposed implanting chips in convicted pedophiles. These chips would not only register the location of the “wearer”, but also the heart rate and arterial tension. Another words, not the specific signs of sexual arousal, but those of nervousness and fear — the same nervousness and fear that a thief or a saboteur might feel while in the act. Using the alarm that has been roused by the media over pedophilia — a definitive case of creating a public consensus favoring increased social control in the name of children who have no say in the matter — the project of carrying social control directly into our bodies is justified. And once people are used to the idea that certain people should be monitored, this monitoring will be easily broadened in scope.

The fear for the safety of children already provides another are for the broadening of this monitoring. Experts and parents’ associations in Britain recommended that all children be chipped after two girls were raped and murdered in 2002. In this way all children would become the wards of the state and its technological apparatus for life. The question then becomes: who will protect the children from the penetrating eye of their parents and the state? Who will protect them from the inescapable network of technological control?

The importance of nanotechnological research to those in power is made evident by the huge appropriation of funds for this research. The US government invests 600 to 700 million dollars a year in this sector. The European Union also invests several hundred million Euros in this research in which multinationals such as Philips, Motorola and STMicroelectronics are involved.

These chips demonstrate only one of the ways in which micro- and nanotechnology blur the distinction between living and non-living beings through the penetration of the machine into the living body — the cyborg of science fiction. But nano-biotechnology takes things further, with the actual creation of organic machines through atomic manipulation. It is here with the creation of machines that seem to carry out biological functions (proponents of

cancel all those that happen. Politics invites everyone to participate in the spectacle of this motionless movement.

Politics is the art of **deferment**. Its time is the future, which is why it imprisons everyone in a miserable present. All together, but tomorrow. Anyone who says “I and now” ruins the order of waiting with the impatience that is the exuberance of desire. Waiting for an objective that escapes from the curse of the particular. Waiting for an adequate quantitative growth. Waiting for measurable results. Waiting for death. Politics is the constant attempt to transform adventure into future. But only if I resolve “I and now” could there ever be an us that is not the space of a mutual renunciation, the lie that renders each of us the controller of the other. Anyone who wants to act immediately is always looked upon with suspicion. If she is not a provocateur, it is said, she can certainly be used as such. But it is the moment of an action and of a joy without tomorrows that carries us to the morning after. Without the eye fixed on the hand of the clock.

Politics is the art of **accommodation**. Always waiting for conditions to ripen, one ends up sooner or later forming an alliance with the masters of waiting. At bottom, reason, which is the organ of deferment, always provides some good reason for coming to an agreement, for limiting damages, for salvaging some detail from a whole that one despises. Politics has sharp eyes for discovering alliances. It is not all the same, they tell us. The Reformed Communist party is certainly not like the rampant and dangerous right. (We don’t vote for it in elections — we are abstentionists, ourselves — but the citizens’ committees, the initiatives in the plazas are another thing). Public health is always better than private assistance. A guaranteed minimum wage is still always preferable to unemployment. Politics is the world of the lesser evil. And resigning oneself to the lesser evil, little by little one accepts the totality in which only partialities are granted. Anyone who contrarily wants to have nothing to do with this lesser evil is an adventurer. Or an aristocrat.

this dimension of the political always reappears wherever any organization supplants individuals and any program keeps them in passivity. It always reappears wherever an ideology unites what is separated in life.

Politics is the art of **mediation**. Between the so-called totality and individuals and between individual and individual. Just as the divine will has need of its earthly interpreters, so the collectivity has need of its delegates. Just as in religion, there are no relationships between humans but only between believers, so in politics it is not individuals who come together, but citizens. The links of membership impede union because separation disappears only in union. Politics renders us all equal because there are no differences in slavery — equality before god, equality before the law. This is why politics replaces real dialogue, which refuses mediation, with its ideology. Racism is the sense of belonging that prevents direct relationships between individuals. All politics is participatory simulation. All politics is racist. Only by demolishing its barriers in revolt could everyone meet each other in their individuality. I revolt, therefore, we are. But if we are, farewell revolt.

Politics is the art of **impersonality**. Every action is like the instant of a spark that escapes the order of generality. Politics is the administration of that order. “What sort of action do you want in the face of the complexity of the world?” This is what those who have been benumbed by the dual somnolence of a Yes that is no and a More later that is never. Bureaucracy, the faithful maidservant of politics, is the nothing administered so that no one can act, so that no one recognizes their responsibility in the generalized irresponsibility. Power no longer says that every thing is under control, it says the opposite: “If I don’t ever manage to find the remedies for it, let’s imagine it as something else.” Democratic politics is now based on the catastrophic ideology of the emergency (“either us or fascism, either us or terrorism, either us or the unknown”). Even when oppositional, generality is always an event that never happens and that

nanotechnology have talked of machines capable of reproducing themselves using methods similar to that of the asexual reproduction of cells), that the fear of the “grey goo” arises, the fear that these microscopic machines capable of reproducing themselves could eventually penetrate into everything, tearing down molecules to carry out their programmed functions and in the process melt everything down.

Of course, this fear is of the most extreme and apocalyptic sort. But in the name of “progress” even the most legitimate fears — like the fear of the total monitoring of existence, or the fear of possible infection from nano-biotechnological developments — are to be set aside. The misdeeds of techno-science and the disasters it causes are always attributed to “bad use”, because technology, of course, is neutral. That these disasters seem to follow one right after another somehow does not raise any questions about this alleged neutrality, about whether any “good use” is possible.

The role of the experts has always been to justify the technological system, to explain how the ongoing parade of disasters are mere separate incidents, aberrations that do not reflect at all on the system itself. We can no longer let them be the ones to make the decisions about these matters. And taking back the capacity to decide for ourselves on this matter can take only one road, that of attack against the system of domination and exploitation in all of its aspects. By the time the scientific experts are telling us about these technologies, they are describing a decision that has already been made over our heads. To seek any dialogue with them or with the ruling powers they serve at this point about them is useless. We need to recognize these developments for what they are — a further stealing away of our lives, an attack upon any capacity for self-determination that may be left to us.

The opposition to these latest technological developments cannot go the path of so many past movements of opposition, that of attempting to dialogue with the masters of this world. In such dialogue, the masters always win. Perhaps in a few places, the mon-

strosities produced by these technologies have to be labeled, so that we have a “choice”, But the monstrosities still become a normal part of our existence.

Nanotechnology creates the tiniest monstrosities capable of the greatest horrors, because they are capable of carrying the systems of social control directly into our bodies. We cannot even pretend that there is any room for dialogue here any longer. This is a blatant display by the rulers of this world that the maintenance of social peace is an act of war against all the exploited and dispossessed. It is necessary for those of us who desire the freedom to create our lives on our terms, who desire to remain human individuals capable of any sort of autonomous action, to act destructively against the entire system of social control, the totality of this civilization in which machines ride people and people slowly transform into machines. Here and now.

## Ten Blows Against Politics

Politics is the art of **separation**. Where life has lost its fullness, where the thoughts and actions of individuals have been dissected, catalogued and enclosed in detached spheres — there politics begins. Having distanced some of the activities of individuals (discussion, conflict, common decision, agreement) into a zone by itself that claims to govern everything else, sure of its independence, politics is at the same time separation between the separations and the hierarchical management of separateness. Thus, it reveals itself as specialization, forced to transform the unresolved problem of its function into the necessary presupposition for resolving all problems. For this reason, the role of professionals in politics is indisputable — and all that can be done is to replace them from time to time. Every time subversives accept separating the various moments of life and changing specific conditions starting from that separation, they become the best allies of the world order. In fact, while it aspires to be a sort of precondition of life itself, politics blows its deadly breath everywhere.

Politics is the art of **representation**. In order to govern the mutilations inflicted on life, it constrains individuals to passivity, to the contemplation of the spectacle prepared upon the impossibility of their acting, upon the irresponsible delegation of their decisions. Then, while the abdication of the will to determine oneself transforms individuals into appendages of the state machine, politics recomposes the totality of the fragments in a false unity. Power and ideology thus celebrate their deadly wedding. If representation is that which takes the capacity to act away from individuals, replacing it with the illusion of being participants rather than spectators,

zational model of the power centre that is supposed to manage and control everything. We should proceed to action immediately, not waiting for orders or signals from anywhere.

We should fight in intermediate struggles alongside the excluded, for housing, food, shelter, wages, against police repression, against social control. But always trying to push these struggle further, helping them expand into the unknown of insurrection.

In the social war for freedom the participation of anarchists can be of great importance.

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories

Vancouver, Canada

October 16, 2003

## The Back Side Of History *By* *Massimo Passamani*

Putting the past back in play in order to make an adventure of the future. I believe that the reasons for keeping past theoretical and practical experiences from becoming material for historians are contained in this perspective.

History is always the history of the masters, and this is not just because, as is well known, they are the ones who write it, but also because this world, their world, forces us to look at it through its own eyes. The organizers of obedience have always used the past for police and propaganda purposes, but this did not keep them from knowing it. On the contrary, precisely this knowledge has allowed power to unite events in the coherence of control, sacrifice and repression. For the past to carry out its function as an argument for the current society, it is necessary, as a minimum, to know what to remove, which is to say, the most significant reasons and episodes of the struggles of the exploited — everything that history presents merely as defeats. The exploited, on the contrary, have rarely been able to rescue history from a dull chronology — or a calendar vision with so many dates to celebrate — in order to find another coherence for it, that of revolt, and so to understand the motives, the most radical moments, the limits of the latter.

The apologists for domination have obviously not given up rewriting the past, but they are increasingly unfamiliar with it. In a world where one responds to every cause for malaise with a remedy that is even worse and that guarantees only the complete irresponsibility of the one who applies it; where the passivity of work is

extended into “free time” through the contemplation of a screen (television or the computer); in which the masters themselves — powerful because of the submission that is conceded to them in the hope that they, at least, know where this world is going — are that much more self-assured because they have increasingly made the law “as long as it lasts” their own — in such an idiotic world that desires eternity, the past has no meaning. Now, if, on the one hand, this reinforces the totalitarianism of the present society (outside of me there is nothing), on the other hand, it renders its administrators more stupid. For the moment, since they can allow it. The intelligence — even historical — of a strategy of preservation is proportional to the dangers of revolt.

On the same level (here is why I said that one looks at history with the eyes of the masters), even subversives have felt “freer” once relieved of the weight of knowledge of the past. This is the idea that history (not just that of specialists, but even that which does not separate ideas and actions, that is written out of desire and that arms the intelligence) ends up imprisoning life. What goes unnoticed is just how historical this idea is. (What is the difference whether a reflection originates from reading what someone has said or whether it originates in knowing what someone has done? Let’s think of it as so many individuals together. Why is the first reflection considered, for example “philosophy”, while the second is considered “history”? In my opinion, there is no distinction.) Paraphrasing a well known aphorism, one can only say that the present ignorance has retroactive value. Now, this ignorance has many faces, if, as is evident, its distributors are, above all, the historians (including those “of the movement”).

So as not to go on for too long, it is enough to consider all the advertising noise with regard to a film on the Spanish revolution. To many anarchists this did not seem right. At last, the black and red banner, the revolutionary union, the collectives, self-management, Durutti. Now, to tell the truth, we ourselves are speaking.

sabotage and flying squad self-organization — with varying degrees of real autonomy.

A purely economic view of the class struggle is useless. Capitalism does not just control the world of work, but also the home and the entire social territory in which the exploited live. The enemy class uses to its advantage systems of oppression such as patriarchy and racism that predate capitalism and industry, and which divide the excluded amongst themselves.

There are many social problems inherent to the class struggle that the action of anarchists can be useful in confronting. The moral value system passed down by the exploiters to the exploited. The democratic ideals of tolerance and dialogue. The religious tendency of the workers and unemployed to look for a guide to bring them vengeance. The bigotry and irrationality that cause the exploited to battle each other, leaving the class enemy unscathed. These are the subjective elements of class society that can’t be ignored by those who really want to destroy this rotten system.

Refusing the role of the vanguard, the elitist group that is supposed to educate and guide the masses, anarchists above all act for themselves, in their own interests, not claiming to represent their entire class. But for the anarchist struggle to become revolutionary it must become social, expanding through solidarity in action. Our relationship with the mass must be informal and direct. We must recognize the mass as individuals, avoiding the danger of falling into generic perspectives and ideology.

To limit ourselves to spreading counter-information and declaring our convictions to the masses would not make sense, and would be just another form of elitism. We must always re-evaluate our analysis and attempt to advance through discussion and the gathering of information, but we must also act.

Our organizational forms should be fluid and adaptable, capable of destructuring when necessary, based on simple principles that can be used by anyone; self-organization, direct action and permanent struggle. We must reject the political party and activist organi-



# Social Struggle, Social War

The struggle that insurrectionary anarchists engage in is social, rather than political or economic. Insurrectionary anarchists attack institutions of the political State and the capitalist economy as part of a project to completely demolish all forms of exploitation and control. We attempt to make a total and up-to-date critique of society, and this means that we reject limited viewpoints that privilege one form of oppression over another or one sector of the excluded class over another.

The ranks of today's excluded are immigrants, the indigenous, the employed and unemployed, and there is no reason why any one of these sectors should be considered the advanced guard of the struggle.

The capitalist economy depends not only on production, but also distribution and consumption of commodities. So the old Marxist analysis that says only the workers in the manufacturing sector can be revolutionary does not make sense. Agricultural workers, indigenous peasants and the unemployed can attack capitalism at the point of distribution by blocking roads, and at the point of consumption through theft and looting. Sabotage is a flexible tool that can be put to use by any excluded or exploited individual. For those employed in the capitalist marketplace there are various techniques of self-organized direct action possible at the individual, group and mass levels. Absenteeism, destruction of machinery, theft and information tampering occur regularly in all workplaces.

Politics is alien to the exploited. There is mass abstention from the electoral process. Unionization is declining, and extra-union activity on the part of union members is growing through the use of

Personally, to make myself clear, I have nothing against the discussions and books about the Spanish revolution. But has all this talk about it contributed to making us understand this distant event better (and this "better", for anarchists, would have to be in the sense of a current perspective)? Frankly, I don't think so. It seems to me, on the contrary, to contribute more to mummification, to testimonial, to monumental history. As often occurs, the occasion predetermined the contents. Books on libertarian revolution have increased. And yet, what does one say about a revolutionary movement — not just Spanish — like that of the 1930's? What would self-management of the factories mean now? What do we do about unions? To which places of capital could an insurrectional conception now be linked? How do we create the possibilities so that in the revolutionary moment it passes suddenly, without transition, to the destruction or radical transformation of these places? What does it mean, in reality, to overthrow authority, what does it mean to abolish the market? Only by posing questions like these does discussion of revolutionary Spain take on significance. Only in this way does it become an open question in itself. But one can understand little if one looks to it as the realization, however temporary, of an ideal. With such an approach, all that is left to do is to distribute the small images of the saints. And then, for this celebration, it is necessary to dress up the events (even the bureaucratic control and the counter-revolution of leading "anarchists") in their Sunday best. Why, for example, is so little known about the days of May 1937 in Barcelona? Why does no one speak of the calls from the uncontrolables who said that the "anarchist" ministers were reactionaries like all the rest, and that it was necessary to shoot them as well, just like all the others?

A few pages of history says more than an entire encyclopedia when the theoretical suggestion for a practice of reinventing it is read into the events themselves. One need only read in this way to know it. It would then be interesting to really reflect on the dirty tricks and the mistakes (and also on the splendid, joyous strengths)

of those days. To connect those days to other insurrections and to other errors. To connect them to the present. To give an example, one could reread the history of insurrectional movements through the fracture — moral rather than police-related — represented by money (one thinks of the refusal to attack banks, starting from the Paris Commune, passing through revolutionary Spain, ending up at the French May [1968]; or, on the other hand, of the expropriations by workers in insurgent Patagonia in the 1930's). Just as one can read it under the subterranean sign of gratuity and of the festival, or of amorous relationships. Or, or...

But those who attack property, silence leaders and shake up current social relationships without any aims, what might they tell us about individuals who tried to do this yesterday, the day before, or seventy years ago?

a wedge between the homeless and the rest of the exploited. One recent campaign along this line has been the production of cards which list all of the charitable and government bureaucracies that exist to manage the homeless. These cards are available to anyone in quantity. Rather than giving cash or food to panhandlers, one is to give them these cards, thus reinforcing the idea that they must be processed through the proper channels to meet their needs. After all, if they go through the proper channels, in our democratic society, certainly their rights will be upheld.

So indeed, on all fronts, the American ruling class is fighting for democracy, because democracy is perhaps the most effective swindle that any ruling class has ever come up with to keep those they rule in line. Abstract equality, the ideology of rights, the myth of the “common good” and the work ethic all work together to blind the exploited to the real conditions of their existence, to create false hopes for changing those conditions within the context of this society and to allow the masters of this world to present their interests as the interests of all. Our liberation depends on our rejection of the democratic swindle, not in favor of some other form of rule, but as an aspect of the rejection of all rule, of every form of domination and exploitation. If the most reasonable response the American soldiers in Iraq could make to their situation is mutiny and desertion, our most reasonable response here is to move toward insurrection through autonomous direct action and attack against the institutions that dominate our lives. But our reasons are not those of the rulers, and will appear to them as barbarous madness. But as to their opinion, why should we give a damn?

them. Like most of the powerless, the American soldiers generally resign themselves to the circumstances they are in, “only following orders”. It is hard to know how much of the Iraqi population is involved in the resistance or to what extent it is controlled by various factions contending for power. So I cannot say if the Iraqis are equally resigned. From here, it seems not.

Ultimately, the war in Iraq is an expression of the war of the rulers against those they rule. This war is always going on as a preemptive attack against potential rebellion. The rulers fight it on many levels. Certainly, convincing poor people and people with few opportunities within this society to join the military in order to “better” themselves is a tactic in this war, as is the rousing of patriotic fervor. What better way to counter a potentially dangerous enemy than to convince them that your interests are their interests? The democratic ideology makes this particularly easy. After all, aren’t we all “equal” before the law? Don’t we all have the same rights, as well as obligations to the “common good”? When the work ethic combines with the democratic myth, even the disparity between a Bill Gates and the homeless panhandler sleeping in some downtown doorway can be justified. After all, we are told, he worked hard for all that wealth. He’s just another citizen like you or I. Any of us could do it too... So the ideological framework of society works to convince the exploited that this world really can function in their favor...

And yet, the war of the rulers against the poor has never stopped taking its toll. As soldiers are sent off to Iraq, here in American cities, the war against the exploited is on the offensive as the criminalization of homelessness advances. In many cities, homeless camps are subject to sweeps, laws are being passed making sleeping in “public” areas such as parks illegal day or night, laws against sitting on sidewalks are being passed. Little by little, every aspect of the existence of the homeless that is not institutionalized is being criminalized, thus forcing homeless people into increasing dependence on institutions. In addition, the authorities promote perspectives that drive

## Different Aims, Different Methods: On the incompatibility of reform and revolution

Reformist consciousness is always expressed in the form of justification.

Contrarily, the behavior of the rebels seemed unjustifiable.

— Yves Delhoysie

I have always contended that reform and revolution are incompatible. But the full significance of this statement requires a deep examination of what one means by these terms. First of all, in order to be clear from the beginning, when I speak of revolution I mean **social** revolution, i.e., the overturning of all social relationships. But here the fundamental question of the relationship of reform to revolution still remains.

Within progressive ideology, reform and revolution are simply matters of degree. A revolutionary perspective is supposedly just more extreme than a reformist perspective but has the same aims, and could thus use reformist methods alongside its revolutionary methods. The extent to which even some of the most extreme anarchists buy into this perspective is made evident by the extent to which they address so much of their communication to activists,

progressives and reformists, seeking acceptance of their own practice within these circle, and the extent to which they will find justifications for a variety of reformist practices they carry out, from litigation on various issues to allowing themselves to be represented in the mass media.

Yet it should be quite clear that social revolution as described above has nothing to do with progress. I believe it was Apollinaire who said “...the new does exist apart from the consideration of progress. It is implied in surprise.” And in this statement we can see the basic difference between reform and revolution. Reform has as its basis the continuation of the present order and simply seeks to make progress toward lessening its misery or rather the extent to which we feel it. Social revolution, on the other hand, is as destructive as it is creative, seeking to completely overturn current social relationships in order to make way for the creation of something new, something utterly unlike what existed before. Revolution stems from the recognition that our present existence does not offer us anything that can really make up for the impoverishment that it imposes on us and that it is thus in our best interest to stake our lives on destroying this society and leaping into the unknown.

So a social revolutionary position is not simply a more extreme position on the same spectrum on which reform lies. It is something absolutely other than reform, something as opposed to reform as it is to reaction, conservatism or any other part of the political spectrum. The revolutionary critique is thus not essentially **extreme**, but rather **radical**. In other words, it goes to the roots; it asks the fundamental questions, and in doing so comes to recognize that what appear to be separate problems and issues of this society are in fact deeply connected, and that the real problem is this society itself. And this cannot be reformed away.

Since social revolution is something absolutely other than reform in its aims and in its critique, it must also be absolutely other in its methodology of practice. Reformists have accused revolutionary anarchists of being “negative” for as long as there have been revolu-

So the US claim that it is in Iraq to establish democracy is simply another way of saying that it invaded Iraq to establish and enforce its control in the region. In other words, it is an admission that this military operation is nothing other than an invasion and occupation. This is why there was never any real welcome of the troops by Iraqis (beyond a few events staged for the cameras). One does not welcome invaders, one resists them.

And so the US has wound up in a war that is not likely to end soon. Destruction, atrocities, injuries and deaths mount on all sides, and the American soldiers in Iraq are not prepared for what they are facing. Due to the quick disintegration of the Iraqi government at the outset of the invasion, no truly organized Iraqi military force currently exists. The resistance in Iraq is, thus, basically a relatively unorganized guerrilla operation (or more likely a number of independent guerrilla operations). Some aspects of it seem to be more formally military, while other aspects are reminiscent of the Intifada in Palestine. American soldiers have never been particularly well trained for dealing with this sort of resistance.

Taking this into consideration while also looking at the way in which the proclaimed reasons for which this war was begun — to find and destroy the supposed Weapons of Mass Destruction and to bring an end to the alleged connections between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda — have proven to be swindles, one is left to wonder what morale could possibly be left among American troops. Certainly, sharing a bit of turkey with the Turkey in the white house isn't enough to overcome the ongoing reality that these soldiers are facing in Iraq everyday, not just in terms of the dangers they face, but also in terms of the atrocities they are constrained to carry out in the name of those capitalist ideals of humanity and democracy. Certainly, mutiny and desertion seem like the most reasonable response, but in this world reason generally serves power, and the reasons that contradict power are labeled crime or madness.

The people of Iraq and the occupying soldiers consist mostly of individuals who feel powerless in the face of forces for greater than

lowest common denominator (it is no accident that one of the most common phrases heard in the assertion of rights between individuals in conflict is: “You’re no better than me!”). This is maintained through rights and obligations which the government is to protect and enforce.

This abstract equivalence hides very real difference, particularly differences in wealth and power. The owners of the world are merely citizens like you and I; the rulers are just our representatives. These are the swindles that blind us to the fact that our lives are not our own and never can be in the framework of democracy and the social system it upholds. For even if we were to “self-manage” the current order of things through “direct democracy”, the system itself, with its abstract equivalence and its reified community would continue to define our existence on its terms, in order to guarantee its reproduction.

Although there are democratic regimes all over the world at this point, the United States maintains a hold over the ideology of democracy. This is why, for example, duly elected heads of state in countries whose policies contradict US interests can be referred to as “dictators”, whereas countries with absolute rulers whose policies coincide with US interests can be referred to as democracies. Thus, when the Bush administration says that the reason for the invasion and occupation of Iraq is to establish democracy, this is not the lie some would claim. The administration is simply saying that they are in Iraq to establish and enforce US hegemony there.

In fact, US hegemony would most likely be served best by the establishment of a representative system. Iraq is made up of a variety of contending factions — various Shi’ite sects, Kurdish groups, Sunni sects and secular currents. The establishment of a representative democratic system under US tutelage could provide a structure for these contending groups to carry on their conflicts through political as opposed to military means, providing the social peace necessary for the US to maintain its control in the region with the fewest possible hassles.

tionary anarchists. Bakunin’s calls for destruction and praise of the “wicked passions” of insurgent populations even frightened those revolutionaries who desired a more orderly insurgence, one they could control. The reformists and the proponents of orderly revolution are not wrong in their assessment of a truly revolutionary anarchist perspective. It is utterly negative in relation to this society, rejecting its most fundamental categories. And even that which is creative in the anarchist perspective — individual freedom, autonomy, self-organization — is a negation of all authority, all hierarchy, all representation, all delegation of responsibility.

The methodology of anarchist practice aimed toward social revolution stems from a few basic principles. The first is direct action in its original and most basic meaning: acting directly to accomplish whatever task one wishes to accomplish, from the publication of a flyer to the destruction of some aspect or instrument of the system of domination and exploitation. Implied in this is the necessity of the autonomy of struggle. This means the rejection of all organizations or structures such as parties, unions or formal federations that seek to represent the struggle. In addition it means the rejection of every ideology and every role, because these too, in their own way, become representatives of struggle, defining its contours and limits. Direct action and autonomy cannot function in any practice involving dialogue with the rulers of this society, in any context of compromise or negotiation with the enemy. Thus, to maintain autonomous direct action in practice requires that we remain in permanent conflict with the ruling order as we go about our struggle, and that we express this in active ongoing attack against that order as we encounter it in our daily lives. Behind these principles of practice is the most basic principle — that if we, as anarchists and revolutionaries, are ever to have any chance of accomplishing our aims, our ends must exist already in our means.

What is perhaps most interesting about the methodology of autonomous direct action attacking the institutions that comprise this order and refusing to back down or negotiate is that it is a methodol-

ogy that can be used in intermediate struggles as well. Any careful look at the history of uprisings and revolutions will show that no uprising began with a fully worked out total critique of the social order. Rather they were born when frustration over specific conditions combined with a loss of faith in the capacity of the ruling order to deal with those conditions. Often in these situations, people will organize themselves in order to deal with the specific struggle at hand, and in the process put into practice a methodology very much like that described. Thus, there is no reason why anarchists should not pursue the application of these methods to specific struggles where they are at, in this way practically undermining the methodologies of reform that so frequently recuperate the anger of people over the conditions of their daily existence.

But the very basic principle, that the end must already exist in the means used to achieve it has further implications. Even in the most revolutionary anarchist circles, reformism raises its head in relation to specific forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, heterosexism and the like, though in a mostly negative form as rejection of the implications of a fully revolutionary anarchist perspective. As I said earlier, social revolution is the complete overturning of existing social relationships. Just as in the struggle against domination and exploitation, it is necessary to reject all hierarchical, authoritarian and representative relationships, so in the struggles against racism, sexism, hetero-sexism and the like, it is necessary to reject the social constructs of race, gender, sexual identity, along with every form of nationalism. I understand that these categories and identities can be useful for improving one's conditions **within** this society. But this is precisely why clinging to these identities is a reformist practice. What many people fear in the revolutionary rejection of these categories is that it will lead to the refusal to recognize the reality of racism, sexism, etc. But just as a revolutionary rejection of hierarchy, authority and delegation is a practical confrontation with these social relationships aimed at their destruction, so also the rejection of race, gender, sexual preference, etc., is a practical

## The War Continues

Despite the proclamations of victory last May, the war in Iraq continues. Not that this is any surprise. After all, the aim of the US government was not simple to move in quickly, destroy an enemy and then leave, but to invade and occupy. It was inevitable that there would be resistance, and this means ongoing warfare, ongoing death and destruction.

By this time, even the Bush administration doesn't talk of "Weapons of Mass Destruction" as a reason for the war. The deception behind those claims has become far too evident, and it is in the best interest of the ruling regime to sweep them under the rug as best it can. The rhetoric that the president has been using recently is much more reminiscent of those 19<sup>th</sup> century American politicians who saw in the United States the salvation of the world. The US military is in Iraq "to spread democracy".

What is interesting about this rhetoric though, for those with any knowledge of history and any capacity to read between the lines is that it does reveal the true aims of the US in Iraq. As should be clear to anyone who has read WD in the past, I have no illusions about democracy. It has never had anything to do with freedom or self-determination; rather it refers to a form of rule. More specifically, in the present era, it refers to that form of rule exercised by the United States government and the governments of the European Union (along with increasing numbers of governments around the world as the hegemony of capital is more thoroughly established worldwide). The ideological essence of democracy lies in the conception of an abstract equivalence of every person. This abstract equivalence is realized by the legal reduction of every one to the

of struggle on such a basis would be quite unreal and terrifyingly inhuman.

But illness can become a weapon if one understands it both in its causes and effects. It can be important for me to understand what the external causes of my illness are: capitalists and exploiters, State and capital. But that is not enough. I also need to clarify my relationship with MY ILLNESS, which might not only be suffering, pain and death. It might also be a means by which to understand myself and others better, as well as the reality that surrounds me and what needs to be done to transform it, and also get a better grasp of revolutionary outlets.

The mistakes that have been made in the past on this subject come from a lack of clarity due to the Marxist interpretation. That was based on the claim to establish a DIRECT relationship between illness and capital. We think today that this relationship should be INDIRECT, i.e., by becoming aware of illness, not of illness in general as a condition of ABNORMALITY, but of my illness as a component of my life, an element of MY NORMALITY.

And then the struggle against this illness. Even if not all struggles end in victory.

confrontation aimed at the destruction of these social constructions. It is thus not an attempt to run away from the very real problems of racism, sexism, hetero-sexism, ethno-centrism and so on, but rather to confront them in a revolutionary manner — a manner aimed at the destruction of this entire social order and the overturning of all social relationships — rather than in a reformist manner that seeks to guarantee every social category its rights.

Ultimately, an anarchist social revolutionary perspective is completely incompatible with a reformist perspective, because it is born from revolt. Reform assumes that the present social order can be improved and brought to the point of accommodating the needs of all by recognizing their rights. Revolt is born when one recognizes that this society can never recognize her or him on that most basic level, as a concrete (as opposed to abstract) individual. It is thus a total rejection of this society, its methods, its roles and its rules. Reform seeks to justify the existence of each category within society (and these categories are already socially defined). Revolt cannot be justified within the terminology or categories of this society, because revolt is an act of hostility against this society and all of its categories. And revolution is the conscious extension of this hostility with the aim of completely destroying the present society in order to open the way for something completely new. It has nothing to do with reform, because it is not a question of progress, but of surprise, of launching into the unknown of freedom.

## Yes, It Can Be Done

Since April 2001 in Algeria, and particularly in the region of Kabylia, the population has risen up against all the managers of society – whether they are modernized bureaucrats or Islamic fundamentalists – in order to take back their life. As in a “secret rendezvous between generations”, the insurgents have discovered, under the glowing embers of Time, a still living tradition, that of the village and neighborhood assemblies in which to discuss and decide in a direct and horizontal way. They have shown in this way, in practice, that the state is not only repressive, it is also **useless**. Since then, less than two percent of the inhabitants go to the polls to vote, forcing the Algerian government to reveal to the entire world what a gigantic lie representative democracy and its supposed consensus are. On their placards the rebels wrote, “To vote is to betray our memory.” The memory of brothers and sisters killed by the army, the memory of free villages that resist.

We cannot say such a thing, since the rebel ferocity of the people here is lost in the shadow of history. We can only state: “To vote is to betray our possibilities.” Because in the face of profiteers and bureaucrats, hired pens and anesthetized awareness, in the face of transgenic “well-being” and misery with a cell-phone, one **can** live differently.

The pleasure of direct action – this is what we need to discover very quickly. The pleasure of confronting our individual and collective problems in the first person, without delegation, without alibis, without the continuous search for scapegoats. Rather than voting and in exchange demanding the right to complain (about increasingly low wages or increasingly high rents, pensions that don't

a distorted relationship with nature and ‘normality’, the other side of illness.

In our opinion neither the positivist thesis that sees illness as being due to faulty functioning of the organism, nor the Marxist one that sees everything as being due to the misdeeds of capitalism is sufficient.

Things are a little more complicated than that.

Basically, we cannot say that there would no longer be such a thing as illness in a liberated society. Nor can we say that in that happy event illness would reduce itself to a simple weakening of some hypothetical force that is still to be discovered. We think that illness is part of the nature of man's state of living in society, i.e., it corresponds to a certain price to be paid for correcting a little of nature's optimal conditions in order to obtain the artificiality necessary to build even the freest of societies.

Certainly, the exponential growth of illness in a free society where artificiality between individuals would be reduced to the strictly indispensable, would not be comparable to that in a society based on exploitation, such as the one in which we are living now. It follows from this that the struggle against illness is an integral part of the class conflict. Not so much because illness is caused by capital – which would be a determinist, therefore unacceptable, statement – but because a freer society would be different. Even in its negativity it would be closer to life, to being human. So illness would be an expression of our humanity just as it is an expression of our terrifying inhumanity today. This is why we have never agreed with the somewhat simplistic thesis summed up in the phrase “make illness a weapon”, even though it is one that deserves respect, especially as far as mental illness is concerned. It is not really possible to propose to the patient a cure that is based exclusively on the struggle against the class enemy. Here the simplification would be absurd. Illness also means suffering, pain, confusion, uncertainty, doubt, solitude, and these negative elements do not limit themselves to the body, but also attack the consciousness and the will. To draw up programs



# Illness and Capital *by Alfredo M. Bonanno*

Illness, i.e., a faulty functioning of the organism, is not peculiar to man. Animals get ill, and even things in their own way present defects in functioning. The idea of illness as abnormality is the classic one that was developed by medical science.

The response to illness, mainly thanks to the positivist ideology which still dominates medicine today, is that of the cure, that is to say, an external intervention chosen from specific practices, aimed at restoring the conditions of a given idea of normality.

Yet it would be a mistake to think that the search for the causes of illness has always run parallel to this scientific need to restore normality. For centuries remedies did not go hand in hand with the study of causes, which at times were absolutely fantastical. Remedies had their own logic, especially when based on empirical knowledge of the forced of nature.

In more recent times a critique of the sectarianism of science, including medicine, has based itself on the idea of man's totality: an entity made up of various elements — intellectual, economic, social, cultural, political and so on. It is in this new perspective that the materialist and dialectical hypothesis of Marxism inserted itself. The variously described totality of the new, real man no longer divided up into the sectors that the old positivism had got us used to, was again encapsulated in a one-way determinism by the Marxists. The cause of illness was thus considered to be due exclusively to capitalism which, by alienating man through work, exposed him to

come or an environment that is more polluted and unlivable every day), let's start to decide for ourselves about our lives. Let's start to collectively take what we need, let's start to discuss face to face without mediators or professional politicians.

There are empty houses and public spaces, left in the past to speculation, and there are many of them. It is possible to occupy them for our own uses and bring them to life.

Living environments should be to the measure of living beings, not commodities. If the destruction of the Earth is an inevitable consequence of this society, this society is not, in fact, inevitable. Polluters and poisoners are not invincible. Overturning an upside-down world is possible.

They terrorize us with surveillance cameras, police and repression, or else with the extortion of work. But the real problem is our fear. We can learn courage. The masters and their servants are few, we are infinitely more. Rebellion is possible.

Those in power become more arrogant; they institute increasingly repressive measures while carrying on wars to impose their will overseas. Their power is a network spread across the social terrain. One fights against it every day in the streets, not at the polls every few years. Responding to the violence is possible.

The mass media falsify and slander the reasons for every revolt. But when the necessities. But when the exigencies are real, their smokescreen of silence and falsehood thins out and disappears. Communicating without filters is possible.

Our greatest enemy is resignation. But here no heroes will free us like in the TV movies. From amorous relationships to the education of children, from the job that we endure to the society that we desire, it is up to each one of us to choose, without waiting for the party, the masses, public opinion or the super-lotto. To each one of us, contemptuous of profit, the law, morality. Because yes, one can.

“I hate all those who, by ceding through fear and resignation, a part of their potential as human beings to oth-

ers, not only crush themselves, but also me and those I love, with the weight of their fearful complicity or with their idiotic inertia.”

— Albert Libertad, I Hate the Resigned

(Slightly revised from an article in Adesso #17)

tic faith including the ideology of collapse. It means that our practice of revolt starts from our own dream of the world we desire and our own understanding of how the present world stands in our way, an understanding that we sharpen through analysis and critique in order to better attack this world. Because if we start in this way, from ourselves and our most revolutionary desires, we will see the need to stretch out our hand, grasp every weapon that we can truly make our own and go to the attack against this civilization based on domination and exploitation. Because there is no guarantee that this monster will collapse on its own. Because even if it eventually does so, in the meantime we would be living in mediocrity and misery. Because only by learning to actively create our lives for ourselves, developing ways of living that are absolutely different from those that we have experienced up to now — something that can only be learned in revolt — will we be able to guarantee that the end of this civilization will not lead to even worse horrors. Because this is the meaning of taking responsibility for one’s own life here and now, this is the meaning of revolutionary responsibility.

ask ourselves if we want to base our practice on this nothing, if we want to wager our lives on this.

If we recognize history as the activity of people in the world, rather than as the use of the past or the future to justify the present, then it becomes clear that every break with the present, every new beginning, transforms all time. Thus our struggle happens now, and it is a struggle against the present. It is, in fact, a game in which we place our lives on the line, putting ourselves at stake, and this is the essence of revolutionary responsibility — taking responsibility for one's life here and now in open conflict with this society. In this perspective, the potential for an economic, social or ecological collapse is part of the challenge we face, part of what we are staking ourselves against. But since it is our lives, our selves, that we are staking, the way we choose to face life — our desires, our passions, our principles, our personal ethic, all that makes each of us unique — cannot simply be laid aside in order to “save the world” from a predicted collapse. (Nor can we simply hide from it.) The wager is precisely that we will overturn this social order that may be heading for collapse by living and fighting against it on our own terms, refusing to compromise. The moment we turn to petition, negotiation, litigation, legislation or even mediation (i.e., accepting representation of ourselves in the mass media), we have already lost the bet, because we have ceased to act on our own terms, we have allowed a “higher” value, a moral valorization of Humanity, of Life or of the Earth, to take precedence over our own lives, our own humanity that resides precisely in our individuality. It is precisely this moralism, based in an ideology of despair that leads us to sacrifice ourselves, our own dreams and our own principles, and thus transforms us from insurgents and revolutionaries into reformists, into voters, petitioners, litigators... pathetic beggars.

In speaking of revolutionary responsibility, I am speaking precisely of this willingness to place oneself on the line, to stake one's life on the possibility of a revolutionary rupture that we create. This perspective stands in absolute opposition to any form of apocalyp-

## Giuseppe Ciancabilla: a biographical note

Giuseppe Ciancabilla was born in 1872 in Rome and died at just 32 years old in a hospital in San Francisco, California.

At the age of 18, he went to Greece to join in the battle against Turkish oppression there. He acted as a correspondent for the Italian socialist paper, *Avanti!*, but rather than fighting with the Italian volunteers he joined a group of libertarian combatants from Cyprian *Amalcare* who sought to encourage a popular insurrection through partisan guerrilla war.

In October 1897, he met Malatesta to do interview for *Avanti!*. This meeting and the response of the PSI (Italian Socialist Party) leadership to the discussion led Ciancabilla to leave the socialist party in disgust and declare himself an anarchist. This “Declaration” appeared in Malatesta's paper, *L'Agitazione* on November 4, 1897.

The choice of becoming an anarchist forced Ciancabilla and his companion, Ersilia Cavedagni, to flee Italy. After a short time in Switzerland and Brussels, Ciancabilla moved to France where he collaborated with Jean Grave on the paper, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, though the editors felt the need to occasionally point out their differences with his perspectives.

In 1898, when the Italian authorities pointed him out as a “dangerous anarchist”, Ciancabilla was expelled from France. He returned to Switzerland where he attempted to bring together Italian revolutionary refugees. He was expelled from Switzerland for writing the article “A Strike of the file” in defense of Luigi Luccheni for the

anarchist-communist paper L'Agitatore that he had started himself in Neuchatel.

After a short time in England, he decided to move to the United States. Once in the US, he was called to Patterson, New Jersey to direct the anarchist paper *La Questione Sociale*. However, due to changes in his ideas, he quickly found himself in conflict with the editorial group of the paper who supported Malatesta's organizational ideas and methods. In August 1899, Malatesta came to the US and was entrusted with directing *La Questione Sociale*. This led Ciancabilla and other collaborators to leave that magazine and to start the journal *L'Aurora* in West Hoboken. Besides spreading anarchist ideas and propaganda in *L'Aurora*, Ciancabilla used it for translation including works by Grave and Kropotkin. His Italian translation of Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* even managed to make its way into Italy despite legal hardships.

The final period of Ciancabilla's life was spent between Chicago and San Francisco where he published the journal, *Protesta Umana*, a review of anarchist thought.

Ciancabilla was always explicit about being an anarchist-communist, but was equally explicit (like Galleani, another Italian anarchist immigrant active in the US at that time) about his critique of formal organization and his support for those who took individual action against the masters of this world such as Michele Angiolillo, Gaetano Bresci and Leon Czolgosz.

On September 15, 1904, he died, attended by his companion.

The following article briefly expresses his ideas on organization.

## Against organization

We cannot conceive that anarchists establish points to follow systematically as fixed dogmas. Because, even if a uniformity of views on the general lines of tactics to follow is assumed, these tactics

struggles is itself a compromise, an embrace of what is merely the latest, most fashionable version of third-worldism.

The escapist tendency sees in the predicted collapse liberation from civilization. Since this collapse is supposedly inevitable, there is no need to take specific action against the institutions of domination and exploitation that form this civilization; there is no need to strive for a break with the present world, for insurrection and revolution. Instead one can simply go off into the wilds and give oneself over to developing "primitive" skills in order to prepare oneself for the coming collapse and let the rest take care of itself. Of course, I support people learning any sort of skill that can enhance their capacities for self-determination and self-enjoyment. The problem with this perspective is not in choosing to learn the skills, but in giving up a practice aimed toward the revolutionary destruction of the present social order based on a faith in its inevitable collapse.

As I have already said: the apocalypse is a matter of faith, not a proven fact; the collapse of civilization is merely a prediction, one possibility among many, not a certainty. What we are facing now is an ongoing train of disasters that impoverish and devastate our lives and the earth. Assuming the inevitability of collapse is an easy way out. It permits one not to face the present reality, not to place oneself in conflict with the existence we are living here and now. If one sees civilization as the enemy, as the source of all of our problems, by assuming its inevitable collapse in the near future, one relieves oneself of any responsibility for attacking it and attempting to create a revolutionary rupture to bring about its destruction while opening new possibilities for living — a responsibility that would require one to hone one's critique so as to know where, when, why and how to effectively attack it.

A belief in an inevitable collapse not only legitimates defensive reformism and survivalist escapism, it actually makes them the most logical practice. But since this collapse is not present reality, but a mere prediction — which is to say nothing, or at least nothing more than a thought in some people's heads — , then we have to

Placing one's faith in an inevitable future, whether positive or negative, makes it very easy to make some sort of accommodation with the present. If Marx's belief in the inevitability of communism led him to justify industrialism and capitalist exploitation as necessary steps on the road to this end, the ideology of inevitable collapse ends up justifying a defensive practice in response to the devastations caused by the ruling order on the one hand, and an escapist practice which largely ignores the reality we presently face on the other.

The defensive practice that develops from this perspective springs from the recognition that if the trajectory of industrial civilization is left unchecked it's collapse would probably lead to such environmental devastation that life itself would be threatened. So the sort of action to be pursued is that which will protect the few remaining wild places and non-civilized people that currently exist and to limit the damages that the operation of the industrial/post-industrial technological systems can cause in order to lessen the devastation of the collapse. Such a logic of defense tends to push toward a reformist practice involving litigation, negotiation with the masters of this world, proposals for legislation and the acceptance of representation in the mass media in order to appeal to the masses. This tendency can be seen both in the radical environmental movement and in indigenist<sup>1</sup> movements. Of course, the defensive nature of the struggles of indigenous people is quite understandable, considering that as cultures, they really are facing their end. Nonetheless, the tendency of defensive struggle to fall into reformism is very clearly manifested here as indigenous struggles so often fall into the demand for rights, official recognition, property (in the form of land rights) and the like. And for anarchists who claim to want a revolutionary break with the present, uncritical support for these

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<sup>1</sup> I say "indigenist" as opposed to "indigenous" because I am referring at least as much to the support movements of non-indigenous radicals as to the movements of indigenous people themselves.

are carried out in a hundred different forms of applications, with a thousand varying particulars.

Therefore, we don't want tactical programs, and consequently we don't want organization. Having established the aim, the goal to which we hold, we leave every anarchist free to choose from the means that his sense, his education, his temperament, his fighting spirit suggest to him as best. We don't form fixed programs and we don't form small or great parties. But we come together spontaneously, and not with permanent criteria, according to momentary affinities for a specific purpose, and we constantly change these groups as soon as the purpose for which we had associated ceases to be, and other aims and needs arise and develop in us and push us to seek new collaborators, people who think as we do in the specific circumstance.

When any of us no longer preoccupies himself with creating a fictitious movement of individual sympathizers and those weak of conscience, but rather creates an active ferment of ideas that makes one think, like blows from a whip, he often hears his friends respond that for many years they have been accustomed to another method of struggle, or that he is an individualist, or a pure theoretician of anarchism.

It is not true that we are individualists if one tries to define this word in terms of isolating elements, shunning any association within the social community, and supposing that the individual could be sufficient to himself. But ourselves supporting the development of the free initiatives of the individual, where is the anarchist that does not want to be guilty of this kind of individualism? If the anarchist is one who aspires to emancipation from every form of moral and material authority, how could he not agree that the affirmation of one's individuality, free from all obligations and external authoritarian influence, is utterly benevolent, is the surest indication of anarchist consciousness? Nor are we pure theoreticians because we believe in the efficacy of the idea, more than in that if the individual. How are actions decided, if not through thought? Now,

producing and sustaining a movement of ideas is, for us, the most effective means for determining the flow of anarchist actions, both in practical struggle and in the struggle for the realization of the ideal.

We do not oppose the organizers. They will continue, if they like, in their tactic. If, as I think, it will not do any great good, it will not do any great harm either. But it seems to me that they have writhed throwing their cry of alarm and blacklisting us either as savages or as theoretical dreamers.

Giuseppe Ciancabilla

this belief look at the collapse as a great opportunity for reinventing primitive ways of living free of the institutions of civilization. A few even seem to take delight in the suffering and death that would inevitably accompany such a collapse, apparently forgetting that this suffering and death would not be likely to recognize distinctions between rulers and ruled, between domesticated and wild, between civilized and “primitive”. Furthermore, they seem to ignore the fact that those who have controlled power and resources up to now would certainly continue to try to do so as the world collapsed around them, most likely resorting to the same sort of techniques as warlords in Somalia or Afghanistan have used, but on a much larger scale with much more destructive weapons.

Some radical environmentalists seem to have a somewhat more realistic conception of what this collapse would mean. Recognizing that a collapse of civilization at his point would certainly be brought on to a large extent through a major ecological breakdown involving large-scale devastation of the fabric of life on earth, the apocalyptic vision tends to move them to despair, and thus to desperate action. The attempt to preserve the fabric of life as civilization goes down becomes the primary motive of their activity. It must be preserved at any cost — even that of our principles, even that of our dreams...

But the problem with apocalyptic thinking is that it is always an act of faith. It assumes the inevitability of the impending end, and makes its decisions on the basis of this belief. In making a prediction about the future the basis for action rather than the present reality that one confronts and one’s own desires about how one wants to live, such thinking gives the struggle against this world an ideological basis. Of course, such a basis has one advantage, it makes it much easier to make decisions regarding how to go about one’s struggle, because this ideological limiting of possibilities basically already makes these decisions for us. But this deserves a little more examination.

# Waiting For The Apocalypse: The Ideology of Collapse and the Avoidance of Revolutionary Responsibility

If the question is not that of how to make revolution,  
it becomes that of how to *avoid* it.

There can be little doubt that we are living in frightening times, times in which it is easier for those who can to simply bury their heads in the sand and go on as if everything is fine. Environmental degradation, social disintegration, increasing impoverishment in every area of life — the entire array of the consequences of a social order that is monstrously out of balance — can easily lead those who think about it to believe that an end of some sort is on the horizon. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that apocalyptic perspectives have arisen on many sides and are certainly no longer limited to religious fanatics. One of the versions of this apocalyptic ideology is that which foresees the collapse of civilization within the next few decades, brought on by ecological, social and/or economic breakdown. It is this particular form of apocalyptic thought that I want to deal with here, because it is in this form that one most often encounters it in anarchist circles.

Those who hold to any apocalyptic view may look upon the coming end with either hope or despair, and this is true of the ideology of collapse as well. Some of the anarcho-primitivists who adhere to

# On Sexual Poverty

A society based upon concentrated power and economic exchange impoverishes every area of life, even those that are most intimate. We hear a great deal of talk about women's liberation, gay liberation and even sexual liberation within anarchist circles. And analyses of male domination, patriarchy and hetero-sexism are not so hard to find, but the reality of sexual impoverishment seems to be largely ignored, questions of sexual expression being largely limited to those surrounding monogamy, non-monogamy, poly-amory and other such issues of the mechanics of loving relationships. This limitation is itself, in my opinion, a reflection of our sexual impoverishment — let's limit ourselves to speaking of such relational mechanics so that we can avoid the question of the quality of these relationships.

There are several factors that play into the sexual impoverishment we experience in this society. If we look into its origins, of course, the institutions of marriage and the family and the imposition of patriarchal social structures are significant, and their role cannot be ignored. But in the present at least here in the so-called West, the strength of these institutions has greatly diminished over the past several decades. Yet sexual impoverishment has not. If anything, it has become more intense and desperately felt.

The same process that has led to the weakening and gradual disintegration of the family is what now upholds sexual impoverishment: the process of commodification. The commodification of sexuality is, of course, as old as prostitution (and so nearly as old as civilization), but in the past five decades, advertising and the media have commodified the conception of sexuality. Advertisements of-

fer us charismatic sexiness, bound to lead to spontaneous passion in deodorant sticks, toothpaste dispensers, perfume bottles and cars. Movies and TV shows sell us images of the ease with which one can get beautiful people into one's bed. Of course, if one is gorgeous and charismatic oneself – and so the deodorants, perfumes, gyms, diets and hair gels sell. We are taught to desire plastic images of “beauty” that are unattainable because they are largely fictitious. This creation of unattainable, artificial desires serves the needs of capital perfectly, because it guarantees an ongoing subconscious dissatisfaction that can be played on to keep people buying in the desperate attempt to ease their longing.

The commodification of sexuality has led to a kind of “liberation” within the schema of market relationships. Not only does one frequently see sexual relations between unmarried people on the big screen, but increasingly homosexuality, bisexuality and even a bit of kinkiness are achieving some level of acceptability in society. Of course, in a way that suits the needs of the market. In fact, these practices are transformed into identities to which one more or less strictly conforms. Thus, they come to require much more than the practice of a particular sexual act. An entire “lifestyle” comes to be associated with them, involving conformity, predictability, specific places to go, specific products to buy. In this way, gay, lesbian, bi, leather, s/m and b/d subcultures develop which function as target markets outside of traditional family and generational contexts.

In fact, the commodification of sexuality places all forms of sexual practice in a context of products for sale at a price. In the sexual marketplace, everyone is trying to sell himself to the highest bidder while trying to purchase those who attract her at the lowest price. Thus, the association of sexuality with conquest, competition, struggles for power. Thus, the absurd games of playing hard to get or of trying to pressure the other into having sex. And thus, the possessiveness that so often develops in ongoing “love” relationships – after all, in the market regime, doesn't one own what one has purchased?

condition, which one must not attempt to harm. The slightest push in that direction is punishable, as is every uprising against a sacred thing by which human beings are to be charmed and chained.

So the prison forms a society, a community (as in a community of labor), but no intercourse, no mutuality, no union. On the contrary, any real union between individuals within the prison bears within it the dangerous seeds of a “plot”, which under favorable circumstances might bear fruit.

One does not enter the prison voluntarily, nor does one remain in it voluntarily, but rather one cherishes the egoistic desire for freedom. Thus, it quickly becomes manifest here that personal intercourse is in a hostile relationship to prison society and tends toward



# Society, Human Intercourse and Prison: A paraphrase of Stirner

Prison creates a society, a sort of community, and this society is not merely based on the sharing of a space. Prison is a specific sort of space defined in reference to its inhabitants, since it is only a prison because it is destined for prisoners, without whom it would be a mere building. What gives a common stamp to those who are brought together within its walls? Obviously the prison, since it is only by means of the prison that they are prisoners. What, then, determines the manner of life of the prison society? The prison! What determines the prisoners' intercourse? The prison too, perhaps? Certainly, they can enter into intercourse only as prisoners, only as far as the prison laws permit it; but that they themselves have intercourse, I with you, the prison cannot bring this to pass. On the contrary, it must have an eye to guarding against such egoistic, purely personal intercourse (and only in this form is it really intercourse between you and me). That we communally execute a job, run a machine, carry out any general task — the prison will indeed provide for this; but when I forget that I am a prisoner and engage in personal intercourse with you who likewise disregard it, this endangers the prison, and not only cannot be caused by it, but must not even be permitted. For this reason, the saintly and moral prison officials institute solitary confinement in order to cut off “demoralizing intercourse”. Imprisonment is the established and sacred

In this context, the sexual act itself tends to take on a more measured, quantifiable form in keeping with this commodification. Within a capitalist society it should be no surprise that the “liberation” of sexual frankness would predominantly mean an increasing discussion of the mechanics of sex. The joy of the sexual act is reduced not just to physical pleasure, but more specifically to the orgasm, and sexual discourse centers around the mechanics for most effectively achieving orgasm. I do not want to be misunderstood. An ecstatic orgasm is a marvelous thing. But centering a sexual encounter around achieving an orgasm leads one to lose touch with the joy of being lost in the other here and now. Rather than being an immersion into each other, sex centered around achieving orgasm becomes a task aimed at a future goal, a manipulation of certain mechanisms to achieve an end. As I see it, this transforms all sex into basically masturbatory activity — two people using each other to achieve a desired end, exchanging (in the most economic sense) pleasure without giving anything of oneself. In such calculated interactions, there is no place for spontaneity, passion beyond measure, or abandoning oneself in the other.

This is the social context of sexuality in which we currently live. Within this context there are several other factors that further reinforce the impoverishment of sexuality. Capitalism needs partial liberation movements of all sorts both to recuperate revolt and to spread the stultifying rule of the market into more and more aspects of life. Thus, capitalism needs feminism, racial and national liberation movements, gay liberation and, yes, sexual liberation. But capitalism never immediately sheds the old ways of domination and exploitation, and not just because it is a slow and cumbersome system. Partial liberation struggles retain their recuperative use precisely by continuing to have the old oppressions as a counterpart to prevent those involved in the liberation struggles from seeing the poverty of their “liberation” within the present social order. Thus, if puritanism and sexual oppression were truly eradicated within

capitalism, the poverty of the supposedly more feminist conscious, gay-friendly sex shops would be obvious.

And so puritanism continues and not just as an out-dated holdover from earlier times. This is manifested in the obvious ways, such as the continued pressure to get married (or at least establish an identity as a couple) and have a family. But it also manifests in ways most people would not notice, because they have never considered other possibilities. Adolescence is the time when sexual urges are strongest due to the changes in the body that are taking place. In a healthy society, it seems to me that adolescents would have every opportunity to explore their desires without fear or censure, but rather with openness and advice, if they want it, from adults. While the intense sexual desires of adolescents are clearly recognized (how much TV and movie humor is based on the intensity of this desire and the near impossibility of exploring it in a free and open way?) in this society, rather than creating means for these desires to be explored freely, this society censors them, calling for abstinence, leaving adolescents to either ignore their desires, limit themselves to masturbating or accept often hurried sex in high pressure situations and uncomfortable environments in order to avoid detection. It's hard not to wonder how any sort of healthy sexuality could develop from this.

Because the only sort of sexual "liberation" of use to capitalism is one that continues to rest in sexual scarcity, every tool for maintaining sexual repression in the midst of the fictitious liberation is used. Since the old religious justifications for sexual repression no longer hold much water for large portions of the populace, a material fear of sex now acts as a catalyst for a repressive sexual environment. This fear is promoted mainly on two fronts. First of all there is the fear of the sexual predator. Child molestation, sexual stalking and rape are very real occurrences. But the media exaggerates the reality with lurid accounts and speculation. The handling of these matters by the authorities and the media are clearly not aimed at dealing with the very real problems, but at promoting a

stitutions of the class enemy. The simpler the means used the more the potential exists for the practice of sabotage to spread across a social territory, as every small act becomes a point of reference that can be put to use by anyone.

Anarchists place value in the will to rebel against oppression and the autonomous initiative of individuals who are not content to sit and wait for the revolution to come like a gift from the sky. We do not agree with those who say that sabotage is useless or detracts from our struggle. We are not priests of the Protestant work ethic who maintain that everything must be "productive", that capitalism is part of a progressive historical evolution.

No, it is necessary to begin to destroy all the means of exploitation controlled by the enemy, and the decision to move in this direction cannot come from anyone but ourselves. We can find comrades with who we share a personal affinity in relation to revolutionary action, and we can even contribute to larger informal organizations used to coordinate the efforts of various autonomous groups, but ultimately, the will to resist must come from within each one of us.

As insurrectionary anarchists, we can't agree with those who think that it is possible to oppose capitalism with productive projects alone, that we can merely replace our enemies institutions with our own, all without attracting the attention of their police forces, the forces of political repression.

Our idea of anarchist communism contains within it many beautiful and positive values, but we want to fight for them, and not limit ourselves to simply advocating our views. In autonomous struggle opposed to the capitalist State we see not only a positive value, but also a material necessity.

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories

Vancouver, Canada

July 1, 2003

# An Anarchist Concept of Value

The insurrectionary anarchist struggle puts forward certain positive values. The freedom of the individual and the equality of the oppressed class could be described as the most basic of these, along with solidarity and mutual aid, which form the connecting link between individual freedom and class equality and make revolutionary struggle possible. Anarchists also value self-organization, creativity, joy and autonomous action, but none of these positive elements can be artificially isolated from the completely negative orientation anarchists have towards the class of exploiters and their system of domination. The interrelation of elements should be obvious, as should be the positive contribution to our struggle that the various assaults on the property of the exploiters and their guards have in terms of opening up social space in which we can act more freely.

We are not scientists of revolution incapable of seeing the subjective value of struggles that do not necessarily lead to victory for our entire class. We do not accept that there is a guaranteed formula, a political program that can carry us through the struggle from beginning to end without error, without adapting to changing circumstances.

Anarchists are simply individuals who desire freedom and equality and are consequently propelled to fight alongside the exploited masses, as accomplices rather than guides.

We are in favour of immediate, destructive attacks on the structures of the capitalist State, because we see these as indispensable elements of an insurrectionary social movement. It is very easy for an individual or group to initiate actions against the many visible in-

specific fear. In reality, the instances of non-sexual violence against children and women (and I am specifically referring to those acts of violence based on the fact that the victims are children or women) are many times more frequent than acts of sexual violence. But sex has been invested with a strong social value which gives acts of sexual violence a far more frightening image.<sup>1</sup> And the fear promoted in the media in relation to these acts helps to reinforce a general social attitude that sex is dangerous and needs to be repressed or at least publicly controlled. Secondly, there is the fear of STDs and particularly AIDS. In fact, by the early '80's the fear of STDs had largely ceased to function as a way of scaring people away from sex. Most STDs are fairly easily treated, and the more thoughtful people were already aware of the usefulness of condoms in preventing the spread of gonorrhoea, syphilis and a number of other diseases. Then AIDS was discovered. There is a great deal that can be said about AIDS, many questions that can be raised, a whole lot of shady business (in the most literal sense of the term) relating to this phenomenon, but in relation to my present subject, it provided a basis for using the fear of STDs once again to promote sexual abstinence or, at least, less spontaneous, less abandoned, more sterile sexual encounters.

In the midst of such an utterly distorted sexual environment, another factor develops that seems almost inevitable. A tendency grows to cling desperately to those with whom we have made some connection no matter how impoverished. The fear of being alone, without a lover, leads one to cling to a "lover" whom one has long since ceased to really love. Even when sex continues within such a relationship, it is likely to be purely mechanical and ritualistic, certainly not a moment of abandon in the other.

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<sup>1</sup> The extremely important matter of the ideology of childhood innocence – an ideology that only serves in keeping children in their place in this society – also relates to this. But that would require an article of its own just to begin to touch on the matter.

And of course, there are those who simply feel that they cannot maneuver through this sad, impoverished climate, this destitute environment of artificial and fear-ridden relationships, and so do not even try. It is not a lack of desire that compels their “abstinence”, but an unwillingness to sell themselves and a despair at the possibility of real loving sexual encounters. Often these are individuals who have, in the past, put themselves on the line in the search for intense, passionate erotic encounters and have found themselves rejected as a lesser commodity. They were wagering themselves, the others were buying and selling. And they have lost the will to keep wagering themselves.

In any case, we are, indeed, living in a society that impoverishes all it touches, and thus the sexual as well. Sexual liberation — in the real sense, that is our liberation to explore the fullness of physical erotic abandon in another (or others) — can never be fully realized within this society, because this society requires impoverished, commodified sexual encounters, just as it requires all interactions to be commodified, measured, calculated. So free sexual encounters, like every free encounter, can only exist against this society. But this is not a cause for despair (despair, after all, is only the reverse side of hope), but rather for subversive exploration. The realms of love are vast, and there are infinite paths to explore. The tendency among anarchists (at least in the US) to reduce questions of sexual liberation to the mechanics of relations (monogamy, non-monogamy, poly-amory, “promiscuity”, etc) needs to be gone beyond. Free sexual expression has room for all of this and more. In fact, sexual richness has nothing to do with either mechanics (whether of relationships or orgasms) or quantity (capitalism has long since proven that more and more effective crap still stinks like shit). Rather it lies in the recognition that sexual satisfaction is not just a question of pleasure as such, but specifically of that pleasure that springs from real encounter and recognition, the union of desires and bodies, and the harmony, pleasure and ecstasy that comes from this. In this light, it is clear that we need to pursue our sexual

encounters as we do all of our relationships, in total opposition to this society, not out of any sense of revolutionary duty, but because it is the only way possible to have full, rich, uninhibited sexual relations in which love ceases to be a desperate mutual dependence and instead becomes an expansive exploration of the unknown.