

Life as Totality



**Anarchic Confrontations
With Everyday Life**

Taken from sites.google.com/site/vagabondtheorist/

“These pages contain essays old and new relating to the question of what it means to live as an anarchist in conditions not of one’s choosing, that is to say as an individual in constant conflict with her or his surroundings. These essays are not intended to provide answers, but to raise questions. Since these writings have been written over a period of twenty years, they are certain to contradict each other at certain points. So much the better. I certainly don’t agree with everything here... I am alive, my ideas change, grow, hopefully develop...

Everything here is anti-copyright. If you like something, use it. Don’t ask permission. I would consider that an insult.”

Appendix was added by Black Banner Distro as a particularly inspiring piece of writing, that follows in a very similar thread to this collection of writings. Not from the original collection however.

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Introduction

I find certain current trends within anarchist and revolutionary circles disturbing. I am quite aware that these are dark and desperate times. And it is inevitable that this desperation will affect even those of us who do not accept the reigning reality. But what disturbs me is that one of the main effects on many anarchists seems to be the draining away of joy and poetry, of the capacity to dream, desire and act with courage. Even where these do not completely disappear, they often are relegated to another realm: after the revolution, when civilization collapses, or (more and more frequently nowadays) some spiritual realm where all alienation disappears.

I can remember when it seemed that most anarchists I encountered recognized revolt as erotic – a reality of love, poetic living, feasting and intoxication. This is what made our endeavors of exploring life as an outlaw or rebel (with no illusions that anyone could escape this world for long without attacking and destroying it) worthwhile. Hatred and rage did not dominate this practice of revolt. Rather, they were outgrowths of joy and the love of life, of the mad insistence on creating the world on our own terms while eradicating whatever stood in our way. We understood that it was not ideology that distinguished us from the left (since, in any case, we rejected ideology), but the passionate love we felt for our own lives and the joys we could grasp that formed the basis for our battle against this society. This is what inspired us to constantly create new ways to prevent this society from fully recuperating our lives either positively or negatively (as the image of the rebel, outlaw or militant).

Nowadays, it seems that almost everyone who hates this society is leftist, not in the sense of embracing leftist ideology (there is plenty of anti-leftist ideology around to play the same role), but in an attitude that embraces a hard, unthinking, joyless, ideological militancy. This attitude mistakes dogmatic rejection or verbal nit-picking for critique and sloppy, incoherent thinking for the refusal of ideology. It considers strategy to be more important than poetry, passion and desire in determining how to act, thus exposing its essentially militant/military mindset. Of course, it is necessary to learn to use strategy in the service of our desires and dreams of living freely and poetically in this world. But if we lose the poetry of life in dogma or strategy, our lives and rebellions become sad and ugly, and I could only see this as a defeat of everything for which I have been fighting. Thus, strategy can only be a tool for the realization of our own lives here and now. The essays that appear on this in this pamphlet examine what this might mean from a few different directions. I hope that they will provide a basis for discussion and debate that blossoms into a living practice for those who read them.

The Revolutionary Wager

“The world has to change now; if it doesn’t well all die as exiles in an inhuman world”

We are living in desperate times. The capacity to dream and desire appears to be depleted. Most people merely seem to resign themselves to what is. It is, therefore, not surprising that even some anarchists are turning to apocalyptic visions of “the end” rather than pursuing projects of revolutionary transformation – projects which require a capacity both to dream and desire and to look at the world as it is in terms of how to go about realizing those dreams and desires.

I have recently heard certain anarchists declare that revolutionary projects are “unrealistic” and that people should instead prepare for an inevitable collapse of civilization. The determinism inherent in this view may give those who hold it a kind of hope, but it is a sad hope, lacking joy. The joylessness of this perspective stems from the fact that those who hold it are placing their bet on an apocalyptic event that is beyond their control rather than on their own capacity to act and interact, to join together with others to create a rupture with the present. Some of those who hold to this perspective advocate acting to speed up the collapse, thus supporting a kind of violence against the civilized order. But in rejecting the possibility of a revolutionary project, they remove the acts of violence they advocate from any social context. And this is where the sadness of this perspective manifests. The rejection of the possibility of revolution is the rejection of the dream of consciously creating life together in a different manner (except maybe among a small group of friends). The advocates of this apocalyptic gospel no longer recognize the social wealth that exists in other human beings, a wealth that is beyond measure, beyond calculation, because it is precisely in the relationships we develop with other human beings that we create our own unique and boundless individuality. Having lost the social, human aspect, the attacks they conceive to speed up the collapse degenerate into mere revenge against this society or expressions of moral superiority. Calculating, militaristic thinking begins to infect their activity with conceptions of “acceptable loss” and comparative body counts.

But the reality of a world that seems to be perpetually on the edge of catastrophe is perceived more clearly by others, not in terms of apocalyptic hope, but rather of increasing fear that soon all may be lost. Fear and despair seem to be the dominant feelings of these times. This is no accident. Those who rule this world find their most useful weapon in fear and the paralysis of despair. But only in those places and times where the catastrophic explodes

forth in specific disasters – wars, epidemics, environmental devastation, slaughters, etc. – does this take the form of explicit terror. Far more often, at least here in the Western world, it takes the form of resignation and an underlying dread that eats away at the most sensitive minds. Those who cannot or will not embrace religion, patriotism, apocalyptic hope or any other ideology to gain the illusion of security can be driven to the edge of madness by this dread, making the horrors of this world personal. The sufferings in the Sudan or Iraq or Palestine find their reflection in the emotional suffering of people that I love. What I see collapsing around me is not the civilized social order, but the dreams, the courage and the minds of my friends.

But both hope in a collapse and despair in the face of the present catastrophic reality involve looking at the present world on its terms, not on our own. Those who hold to either perspective have already assumed their own incapacity to act effectively in the world to realize their own desires and dreams. They, therefore, look at the realities of the world not as challenges to be faced and overcome, but as inevitabilities that must be endured. What is missing is the reversal of perspective referred to by Vaneigem, the individual insurrection that is the first step toward social insurrection. To take this step, it is necessary to have the courage to wager on ourselves and our ability to act, on our own when necessary, and together with others whenever possible.

Those of us who desire the end to all forms of domination and exploitation have every reason to wager our lives on the possibility of social revolution – not as a cause above us, but as something desirable and necessary if we are ever to be able to grasp our lives as our own, as something that we create together with others in the way we desire. There are several levels on which the desirability and necessity of social revolution exist. First of all, the social relationships of domination and submission, of exploitation, dispossession and exclusion that are imposed on us leave their scars. Even if it were true that a collapse of civilization was inevitable, if a radical transformation of the ways we relate on the broad social level did not occur, we would simply begin to recreate the old hierarchies and institutions most likely in their ugliest forms. If anyone thinks otherwise, they should look at a few of the places where collapse has occurred on a regional level, such as the Balkans, Rwanda, Somalia or Chechnya. Furthermore, beginning to act towards social revolution in our lives means beginning to change the way we relate with each other and with the world here and now. Our project becomes the exploration of new ways of being in the world based on affinity and the interweaving of our desires, our dreams, our projects and our lives. And that in itself can make life much more enjoyable. In addition, there are places in the world – such as West Papua, Algeria and Latin America – where resistance and revolt are ongoing but where the interests of the West play a major role in keeping these revolts on

the defensive. We can talk all we want of solidarity, but if we are not rising up here, where we are, against the powers that condemn us to lives of obedience and that are destroying the ways of lives of people over there, this is just a lot of chatter. Real solidarity exists in the interweaving of our own revolt with that of those in revolt elsewhere, because the same institutions, the same powers, that impoverish our existence are also destroying the way of life of the indigenous people of West Papua, supporting the police terror in Algeria and promoting their own agenda of exploitation and control in Latin America, so our revolutionary battle for our own liberation is the most useful form of solidarity. And perhaps most importantly, staking our lives on the project of creating social revolution, means wagering on our own capacity to act. Thus, we actually can take some responsibility for the outcome of this wager.

Once a person has made the decision to take her life into her own hands against the ruling order and to begin a project aimed at a revolutionary break with the existence it imposes, he has already changed the way he relates to the world around him. This becomes evident in the way she views this reality. If we want to battle against the ruling order and begin to create a terrain of liberation, we have to understand the terrain of domination, the terrain of capital and the state, as well as that of resistance and revolt. We need to know what forces are at play in the field of social struggle. Without this knowledge, our ideas and dreams have no place to gain footing for actually doing battle with the ruling order, and it is easy to drift into ideology and become irrelevant. But we grasp this knowledge as a weapon to wield against the ruling order so that we can realize our dreams of a new world. Let's consider a bit more deeply what this means in order to avoid confusion.

Social revolution is the overturning of the social relationships of domination and exploitation in order to open the possibility for creating our lives together on our own terms. This is a destructive project – an attack against the institutions and structures of the ruling order aimed at their complete demolition. But it is also a project of social transformation. If the destructive project does not also carry this transformation within itself, then we will tend to reproduce the very relationships we are out to destroy in the way we carry out our activity. And attempts to transform social relationships that are not also aimed at the destruction of the present social order tend to fall into a reformist logic centered around identity politics and the struggle for equality within the institutional structures or else into pure subcultural escapism. So the destructive and transformative aspects of the project cannot be separated; they are in fact one.

So I feel that the revolutionary project requires the means by which we go about this project to carry our ends within them, so that we don't reproduce the social relationships that we are trying to destroy. I have heard one argument

against this that claims that we can never know the consequences of our actions with certainty. We cannot know that such means will bring about our ends. No determining law of cause and effect exists to guarantee this. This is true enough; we cannot know with certainty that any of our projects will succeed whatever method we may use. If we could, there would be no wager, just the smug certainty of those who know the true path. But a lack of certainty about the outcome of this method is no real argument against choosing to use means that carry our ends within them, because my dreams of a radically transformed world are not dreams for a far distant future where I will no longer exist. They are my desires for this moment, for my life here and now. And this is the most significant reason why my ends must exist within my means. It is the only way to guarantee that on some level I will begin to realize my dreams in my own life.

Social reality cannot be ignored; it must be destroyed. The destruction of class society, and of the race, gender and other identity roles it imposes, does not come about by simply ignoring class, race, gender, etc. Rather it is necessary to fiercely confront them with our dreams, to wrestle with them in terms of the world we desire. This is not a matter of dealing with “privilege” as that word is generally used these days among certain so-called anarchists, with its moralistic and self-sacrificial connotations, but of fighting actively against roles and identities that have been imposed on us in such a way as to make the interweaving of our struggle more difficult. This battle requires us to try to understand the different ways in which each of us has experienced dispossession, domination and exploitation. And this is a further reason for seeking to understand the realities that surround us.

Certainly, in order to be able to experiment with the transformation of social relationships, we need to steal back some space from the terrain of domination in order to create a terrain of liberation. In this sense, what some people have said about creating a “counterculture” makes some sense, if by counterculture they mean a way of living against the ruling order, a sustained attack against civilization. But in order to be such an attack, this counterculture cannot be a culture set apart in its own little world. Otherwise it is nothing but another form of escape, perhaps less stultifying than TV and video games and less harmful than alcoholism and heroin, but still of little use in the project of destroying the present social order and transforming social relationships. The struggle against this world requires that we find our accomplices wherever the dispossessed, the exploited, the excluded and those who are simply disgusted and enraged with life as it is are beginning to rebel. And this means refusing to isolate ourselves in our scenes and enclaves.

The world as it is today can seem overwhelming. The idea that revolution is “unrealistic” is not an illogical conclusion, but regardless of the fierceness of the rhetoric of those who assume this, it indicates a surrender to

the present reality. No matter how we choose to encounter the world, we are taking a gamble. There are no certainties, and for me this is part of the joy of life. It means that I can make choices on how I will act and that I can base those choices on my own desires. I desire a world in which the relationships between people are determined by those involved in terms of their needs, desires and aspirations. I desire a world in which every system of domination, every form of exploitation, all forms of rule and submission have ceased to exist. If I lay my wager against revolution, I am bound to lose. If instead I stake my life on immediately rebelling against the ruling order with the aim of social insurrection and revolutionary transformation, there is a possibility that I may win in the long run, and in the short run I will definitely win, because I will have made so much of my life my own against the ruling order that I will have actually lived, vibrantly in rage and joy.

Beyond Survival

"The search for joy is therefore an act of will, a firm refusal of the fixed conditions of capital and it's values".—Alfredo M.

Bonanno

Over the past few years, I have noticed that it has been becoming trickier to live my life and carry out my projects in the way that I desire while also managing to take care of my basic needs. And among my friends, I am one of the luckier ones. When I am strapped, I know that it will only last till the first of the next month. In fact, most of the people I know are struggling to get by, to pay the rent and bills, to take care of basic needs and have a bit of fun in the process.

This is no surprise. We all know that we live in a capitalist society, and in our daily lives the essence of that society manifests in the opposition between survival and the fullness of life. The process of alienation by which capitalism is maintained transforms the methods by which we meet our needs into tedious tasks stealing our lives away from us (or at best, as in my case, isolated scams that skim the excess off the state without in any way threatening it). In recent times, transformations in the functioning of capitalist social relationships along with a real deterioration in the economy have made precariousness the common experience of most of the exploited. Including ourselves. This has led to a situation in which a number of creative, intelligent people are being forced to eat away their time in search of the means to survive.

My own experience and the often even more nerve-racking experience of a number of close friends and comrades has been causing me to think a great deal about the need to develop ways of giving our lives in their potential fullness and our projects of revolt and enjoyment priority over survival. In other words, I've been asking myself, how do I and those with whom I share ideas, desires, life and enjoyment turn survival into a mere tool for creating our lives on our terms – obviously against the very logic of capitalism.

In confronting this question, for the most part, anarchists have continued to operate on a fragmented, atomized level. Scams, school, temporary jobs and so on are the ways we deal with survival. To some extent this is inevitable. We do live in this world, even if we also try to live against it. And the specific aspects of what we do to survive are less important than whether questions of survival continue to dominate our existence at the expense of enjoyment, revolt and the fullness of our lives and projects. And this is where I feel we need to make a serious effort to get beyond atomization and the fragmented ways of encountering life that this society imposes. I think it is worthwhile to look at experiences of people who have confronted this, whether

from a specific revolutionary understanding or simply from a lust for life.

North Beach, 1960:

In the introduction to *Dancing in the Streets*, Franklin Rosemont describes his experience in the bohemian culture of North Beach, San Francisco in 1960:

“Life in North Beach was the closest thing to marvelous anarchy it has ever been my pleasure to enjoy. Despite battles with landlords, harassment by tourists, and mounting police terror, the Beats and their allies old time hoboes, jazz musicians, oyster pirates, prostitutes, drug addicts, winos, homosexuals, bums and other outcasts maintained a vital community based on mutual aid, and in which being different was an asset rather than a liability. In this community made up of people of many different races and nationalities, the practice of equality and solidarity was second nature. Almost everyone was poor, but no one went hungry, and newcomers had no trouble finding places to stay. In North Beach, 1960, what mattered most was poetry, freedom, creativity and having a good time.”

This brief description expresses more the general feeling Franklin Rosemont had of his experience living North Beach at that time than how this reality worked itself out practically. But those of us who have experienced similar situations can imagine such details, and I feel that Rosemont’s evocative description brings out some significant points. In particular, the last sentence stands out: “In North Beach, 1960, what mattered most was poetry, freedom, creativity and having a good time.” In other words, among the people Rosemont hung out with in North Beach, their creative projects and the enjoyment of their lives were their active priorities, and so they simply did what was necessary to live these priorities, acting together to guarantee that the ground on which to build their creative projects would be there. In this case, most of the people involved were not revolutionaries or anarchists, but simply individuals who had no interest in fitting into the normal grind of existence in this society.

Os Cangaceiros:

All anarchists are familiar with the uprising that happened in France in 1968. One of the slogans that reflected the most radical elements of this revolt was "Never work, ever!", and there were many who took this slogan to heart in the creation of their lives after the uprising was suppressed. One group is particularly outstanding in that their choices reflect a clear awareness that work wasn't simply productive activity or the "job", but rather was an entire system of social relationships. Thus, the refusal of work couldn't simply mean work avoidance or the reduction of work to the bare minimum. It meant creating life in a different manner and attacking the system of social relationships that is work.

This group, which came together in Nice in 1968, was made up of "delinquents" already familiar with the world of crime who discovered a revolutionary perspective in the days of insurgence in France. When they first came together to share their capacities and resources for creating life on their own terms, they called themselves the Gravediggers of the Old World. This informal group of comrades traveled first around southern France, making connections taking part in struggles and doing what was necessary to provide the basis for their lives. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s they traveled throughout Europe, participating in revolts, including those in Italy in the mid to late 1970s, in Poland in 1980, in England, France and Belgium in the early 1980s. A statement they made in 1980 indicates the spirit they brought to their revolt:

"If we loot banks, it is because we have recognized money as the central cause of all our unhappiness. If we smash windows, its not because life is dear, but because commodities prevent us from living at all costs. If we break machines, it is not because of a wish to protect work, but to attack wage slavery. If we attack the police bastards, its not to get them out of our faculties, but to get them out of our lives. The spectacle wanted to make us appear dreadful. We intend to be much worse."

In pursuit of their ongoing project of revolt and the full enjoyment and experience of life, they used whatever means gave them greatest control over their own lives, means that were often illegal. They refused any sort of meagerness or pseudo-revolutionary asceticism, squatting, for example, in luxury buildings which they armored well against the police. Being of the underclass, they were able to easily develop networks of support that went beyond the limits of any radical connections they had. Their way of living

inevitably brought them into conflict with the law and in time started to focus a greater amount of their energy into attacks against the judicial and prison systems. This was about the mid-1980s. At this point they began to call themselves Os Cangaceiros (after a group of mystical outlaw insurgents who were active in Brazil at the beginning of the 20th century). They were active at this time in prison revolts, sabotage of prison construction, disruption of judicial activity, escapes and so on. Around 1990, they stole plans for the construction of new, advanced technology prisons, made thousands and thousands of copies of these plans and mailed them with analyses of the prison society to thousands of people. Unlike the previous example, these are people with a conscious revolutionary perspective, developed in the course of an uprising, who decided to go on living that perspective. This decision, rigorously embraced, moved them to discover the means for living their revolt, their projects and their pleasures on their own terms, defying the alienation imposed by capital.

My Experience in the Early 1990s:

From the time I first encountered anarchist and revolutionary ideas, it was clear to me that they couldn't simply be words tossed from one's mouth into the air. They had to affect how one lived. Thus, my decision to embrace such ideas was a decision to wrestle with how I would live. At this point, I have been wrestling with this for more than twenty-seven years. At various times, I have found others with whom to share this ongoing battle to create my life on my terms. What we created, how consciously we created it and how far it went in expressing our desires and dreams varied, but at no time did I simply give up my pursuit of a life of revolt and joy. Perhaps the most outstanding period of my life happened in the early 1990s here in Portland. In certain ways, what I experienced with specific friends and the networks we developed is reminiscent of Rosemont's description of North Beach in 1960. I moved to Portland at the end of 1991, where I met several people who were to be my closest companions and accomplices for the next few years, and a few of whom remain among my best friends to this day. While each of us had various ways of bringing in the money that we needed to get by, this aspect of our lives was always kept subordinate to our enjoyment, our revolt and our projects. Not everyone among our little group of friends was an anarchist, but everyone, at least for the time, had an irrepressible lust for life that couldn't help but express itself in rebellious way in this society. Our life together involved endless adventures: theft, travels, small attacks against various manifestations of the world we hated, public playful disruptions of daily life. I remember one May Day in which we wandered around downtown Portland through the business district playing

improvised noise on various instruments, handing out flyers inviting people to come join us for an afternoon picnic rather than going back to work. We had stolen a fairly good supply of food and together. Also these activities, a short-lived anarchist coffeehouse that we did in our house and our constant posting of poetic messages of revolt on telephone poles and other places helped us develop a network of connections that kept a fairly decent flow of all the material pleasures of life available. This network, which extended far outside specifically anarchist milieus, provided a good bit of the material basis for how we chose to live. If in North Beach, “what mattered most was poetry, freedom, creativity and having a good time”, for us it was rebellion, poetic living, creativity and having a good time. If some of us had a revolutionary perspective that was lacking in the North Beach scene Rosemont describes, at the same time we certainly did not have the clarity about our life projects that Os Cangaceiros had. We had amazing utopian dreams, but did not really conceive of our lives as totalities for us to create against the totality of this society. Our visions lacked projectuality except in the broadest sense (and that only among the few of us who were anarchist), and this limited the extent of our projects. Nonetheless, at this time in my life I experienced in Portland something similar to what Rosemont experienced in North Beach, a kind of semi-conscious utopian practice against this world which made life a delight and created some of my closest friendships.beer – quite a bit more than we ourselves needed. We had a delightful time and received quite a positive response (from smiles to “thumbs-up” gestures to encouraging comments), but I don’t recall anyone else quite having the courage to take the afternoon off and join our picnic. Still we had a delightful time, and this event is reflective of the sort of life we chose to live

And Us? Here? Now?

What do these examples have to say to us? Certainly, there is no use in trying to imitate any of these examples. Our times, our circumstances, our needs and our capacities are our own. But there are specific lessons that can be drawn from these examples. First and foremost, in each of these instances, those involved chose to put their projects and the enjoyment of their lives before survival, rejecting the blackmail that capitalism imposes. This transforms the means used for acquiring basic necessities into nothing more than tools for constructing our lives and projects. This is the practical meaning of a reversal of perspective with regards to this world. In order to achieve the capacity to do this, in each instance people acted together developing networks of mutual aid and complicity. Of course, the North Beach scene, based mostly on a fairly loose bohemian affinity, faded as the Beat scene disintegrated and many of those involved moved into the mainstream in different ways. The situation that

I lived in Portland also eventually disintegrated as some friends chose to drop into a more mainstream existence and the rest of us started exploring different ways toward our shared dreams of anarchy and the fullness of life. Although the last I heard of Os Cangaceiros was in the early 1990s, it is possible that they are still living on these same terms – after all, they had been living this way, on their own terms, for over twenty years. Certainly there are other individuals in Europe who have come together for much the same purpose, continuing to develop their ways of living against the ruling order. I think that what distinguishes Os Cangaceiros from the other situations is that they clearly recognized what they opposed as a totality of intertwining social relationships that had to be practically fought in its completeness and also clearly perceived their own lives as total projects to create in conscious rebellion against this world for the sheer joy and adventure of doing so.

And I think it is this perception of life not as a series of random, disconnected moments, but as a totality to be created on our own terms that provides the basis for turning the blackmail of this society on its head and subjugating survival to the fullness of life and revolt. Of course, we will be doing this in a context that on the global and the everyday life scale absolutely opposes this. But this only means we need to have that much more resoluteness in our decision to carry on this project. Here is where a conscious choice to act with specific others can be of great significance. With others whose aspirations, dreams and desires correspond with ours, possibilities expand exponentially. But only if we actually talk with each other about our dreams, our desires, our needs, the tools and skills we have to share, the projects we are trying to create. We are all aware that when we have a small project to do – say cooking a meal or building a cabin – it is necessary to consider the details of what we want to accomplish, figure out the tools and methods necessary to accomplish it, figure out the various hindrances that stand in our way and how to go about eradicating them. The same idea applies to the project of creating our lives as an unfragmented, total project against this society. And so, if we have some affinity in terms of our broader conceptions of a life free from the state and capital, in terms of our dreams and desires for self-created existence and in terms of the necessity for destroying the social reality that stands in the way of this, we need to talk about these dreams and desires, about the specific ideas for projects of revolt and enjoyment we have, about the tools and capabilities we have to share and teach other, about ways to develop informal networks of mutual aid so that no one among us is ever really forced to place survival above their projects or lives.

I know that these are particularly tough times for such defiance, that a number of us are just scraping by. But we are smart, strong, defiant individuals capable of great dreams and great enmity toward that which tries to steal our

dreams. This is something we all have to remember. A habit has developed in anarchist circles of thinking of ourselves as weak, as damaged, as hurt. I think this stems from bringing too much of the language of disease, therapy and healing into our social analysis – but that is a question that would need to be gone into more thoroughly elsewhere. The point I want to make here is that we need to start from the assumption that we can accomplish the things we desire, from the smallest projects to the ultimate destruction of the social order we hate and the creation of our lives on our own terms. Starting from this assumption, we need to begin to assess the specific problems we face with the aim of overcoming them – recognizing that as long as this society continues to exist this will be an ongoing project.

So let's discuss our dreams and our rebellious aspirations not on a purely abstract level, but in terms of how we can develop relationships of practical affinity, complicity and concrete solidarity in the project of creating total lives of revolt here and now. Those of us who are feeling the crunch of survival in particularly hard ways can share their dreams and their needs, and among us, we should be able to figure out ways to open possibilities for getting beyond this without falling into the usual limited atomized solutions.

If we remember that work is not simply the job but precisely the system of social relationships that forces us to give survival priority over life, joy, revolt and creativity, then it becomes clear that this reversal of perspective is a necessary basis for our revolt. The effort put into avoiding work without having an ongoing project of creating one's life as a whole itself stinks of work – here too survival still has priority. But if we have a clear life project and the specific means we use to get money and other necessities imposed by this society are only temporary tools for moving that life project forward. This already breaks down the logic of survival and work even if sometimes these specific means are jobs. But such a project is built precisely out of our relationships with the world and with each other. The individuals in the situations described above were able to place their enjoyment, their lives and their projects above survival, because they made the decision to create their lives together on their own terms, and rejecting the fragmentation imposed by capitalism, this included figuring out how to meet basic needs together without being dominated by survival. We have a lot to offer each other. Let's figure it out and find the ways to defy this blackmail together.

A Few Questions to Consider:

How does each of us conceive of our lives? How do we want to live both on grand social terms and in our immediate lives? Where do our various visions coincide? Where do they differ? Where can they enhance each other? Where do they actually conflict?

What stands in the way, on an immediately daily life level, of creating our lives on our own terms, of accomplishing our projects? In other words, where does the blackmail of survival have us by the throats? What ideas do we have for overcoming this? What knowledge, skills or means might some of us have to share for overcoming this?

We need to consider that creating life on one's own terms requires having the space and time for doing so, and capital does tend to dominate all space and time. So we need to ask as well, how do we take the space and time we need to carry out these projects of creating our lives on our terms and destroying the social order that stands in our way? How do we give priority to grasping whatever space and time we can for this purpose? What spaces and moments do we currently have access to and how can we expand them? How can we steal those spaces and times that survival in this society imposes on us and use for our own purposes, against this society?

I don't pretend to have answers, but this is a project i want to pursue, I game I want to play, because in any case my life is at stake, so I might as well try to wager it on my own terms. My hope is that others feel the same and that we can begin to explore what this means together.

Life as Totality

Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties anarchists face on a day to day level is that of finding reliable comrades with whom to carry out ongoing projects of revolt that are integral to their lives – projects that go beyond the customary formulas that can be found everywhere (Food Not Bombs, Critical Mass, collective businesses...). These formulaic projects develop easily because they require little thought. For the same reason (no real need to think) most anarchists seem to have little problem with spontaneous one-time night activities. But it is difficult to keep any sort of ongoing project in which a combined practical and theoretical effort is necessary going. Such projects demand an continuous assessment of what we are doing and why we are doing it in terms of our revolutionary desires, our relations with comrades and other people and the reality we are facing. They keep on calling our lives into question and provide no comfortable place to rest and say “I am content, I have it all together, I have no need to struggle with myself.” I think we all fear this.

For most anarchists, anarchy and revolution remain abstractions external to them, because their own lives remain external to them. They do not see their life as a totality and so they do not consider what they want to do with it on that level. So they don't ever feel the need to create practical projects as an outgrowth of a life of revolt involving ways of relating that reflect the world they desire. This is not simply a matter of personal failing on the part of individual anarchists. There are concrete social reasons why people usually fail to get beyond this point of thoughtless activity. The social reality in which we exist forms its own totality and imposes it on our lives. Recognizing this imposed totality in a direct way would place an ultimatum before us that few of us are ready to face, one that demands looking the horror of our present world in the face and choosing to oppose it in its totality. It is easier for us to break our lives down into separate incidents, events, spaces and moments in order to avoid facing the full significance of this imposed totality. But this totality is that of the state and the market, the intertwining rule of wealth and power. And it imposes itself precisely by breaking our lives down into separate pieces, unrelated moments, alienated fragments. So our tendency to protect ourselves in this way plays right into its hands. Separated in this way, the incidents, relationships, activities and moments of our lives have no real meaning for us as individuals. So this tendency toward fragmentation is something we need to battle in every moment.

But to fight it, we need to try to understand how it operates on a concrete level. It is the reality of our daily lives, the endless parade of meaningless interactions and activities in which we are forced to participate: working, paying rent, buying and selling, paying bills, dealing with the presence

of cops, bureaucrats, bosses, landlords, etc., etc. All of this together makes us dependent on the totality of the social order and at the same time transforms us into atoms that mainly seem to bump into each other randomly due to circumstances beyond our control in the meaningless, ceaseless movement of commerce. In the United States, an ideology has grown around this that absurdly goes by the name of “rugged individualism”. The absurdity is dual. First of all this ideology defines “individuality” precisely in terms of this atomized existence in which each one is nothing more than a cipher, equal to and separate from every one else in their nothingness. Secondly, these atomized beings that are the “individuals” of this ideology are made absolutely dependent by a social order that defines their lives as a competition for the same petty ends, thus guaranteeing their ongoing identity and separation. There is certainly nothing rugged in such abject dependence. The aspect of social fragmentation that this ideology seeks to justify – atomization – may play a major part in our inability to create real projects of affinity together that spring from our own lives, particularly if its ideological justification has penetrated into our own ways of conceiving individuality.

It seems to me that we still often perceive things in a fragmented and atomized manner. We look at work, the payment of rent, buying and selling, etc. as separate problems and come up with solutions such as work avoidance, squatting, shoplifting and dumpster diving, etc. (all fine things to do, mind you, but only in a context of the total conscious creation of our lives in revolt against this world). Since we perceive the problem in a fragmented manner, we look upon fragmented, often solitary, activities as solutions, and our practice remains one of getting by within this society. So there needs to be something deeper behind our projects, something that recognizes the totality of the enemy we face and the totality of what we desire on a concrete level. This begins with grasping our lives as a totality of our own. But what does this mean?

From Stirner, we get the clue that each of us must be our own basis, and from Vaneigem we get the further clue that this requires a “reversal of perspective”, in other words, turning around to look at the world from a new perspective – our own. But these clues remain useless if we continue to conceive of individuality in the way this society does, as something abstract and isolated, as some mystical “nature” within each of us, completely separated from the relationships that make up our lives. If we see individuality in this way, we will not be able to grasp the totality of our lives, because we will lose all the relationships, interactions and historical and social realities that weave into who we are and who we are becoming. The concept of individuality that this society imposes stands as a crystalline and pure object outside of all relationships, but real concrete individuality is, in fact, a relationship. I become who and what I am in relation to Esther, Dave, Tiger, Susannah, Mary, Ivy,

Anais, Membrane, Brendan, Brandon, Avram, Mandy, the woman at the coffee shop, the preacher in the church my parents made me attend, my parents themselves, the cops, the state, the economy, the technological apparatus, etc., etc. None of these relationships determines who I am, but all play a role in how I create who I am. A relationship is not a crystalline statue. It is an activity, a movement in course. And so this is also the nature of individuality. I do not want to be misunderstood – my individuality is not ever imperfect or partial. It is always whole, but that whole is a movement – a dance, if you will, with others – and is therefore never finished. Its end could only be in death.

Thus, I could say that my individuality is a dialectic between myself as a being who desires and acts and the environment through which I move (including all the personal and social relationships I am involved in directly or indirectly). Realizing this dialectic on a practical level – the reversal of perspective – means looking upon all these relationships either as enhancements of myself, thus worthy of encouraging and strengthening, or as obstacles in my way, which I will strive to remove from my life, destroying them if necessary. The totality of this society acts to bury the awareness of this dialectic. By attaching individuality to sacred (i.e., private or collectively “owned”) property (as an identity bought both figuratively through competition for prestige and literally as identifying merchandise), this society places it outside of us as human beings and so undermines our awareness of the dialectic between ourselves and the world around us. As sacred property, individuality is not our activity, but a thing outside of us which we must purchase, which means we must competitively strive for it. But as I indicated above, this competition atomizes and homogenizes us, thus completely undermining true individuality.

It might be easier to understand the difference between the conception of individuality as economic property and that of individuality as relational activity by looking at the trait of strength. In this society, strength is a kind of private property. It is the individual’s capacity for defense, for armoring her or himself, for standing alone against the world. As such, it is limited and measurable, and therefore easily depleted. This conception can create some twisted dynamics between individuals. People often seem quite willing to nurture the weakness of others, offering a kind of personal charity that maintains the other in their weak state and maintains the nurturer’s role as the strong provider. Of course, such relationships are two-way, and the process is largely unconscious. So there is no use in trying to place blame. Nonetheless, such relationships maintain the private ownership of strength for the one providing the “nurturing”. And if strength is indeed private property, if it is simply one’s capacity to withstand external attacks and to stand alone against the world, it makes sense to act this way. While one can indeed be another’s hero, using one’s own carefully guarded strength to protect them, one can never truly act as their comrade or accomplice, breaking down the boundaries between individual

strengths so that they can intertwine with and enhance each other. Since anarchists desire a different social reality, we need to develop a different conception of strength, one that is based on the refusal of atomization, on the discovery of the enjoyment and wealth that we can find in each other. This means recognizing that strength is not a commodity in limited supply for which we are competing, but is rather something that increases when shared. It is not a question of self-defense and standing alone against the world, but rather of our capacity to realize our desires within the world in relation with others. In this sense my strength is indeed my own, but not as private property with its boundaries; rather it is my individual capacity that perpetually challenges and expands itself. As such it is not weakened, but expanded when I combine it with that of others whose aims intersect with mine. Recognizing individuality as a relational, dialectic movement, rejecting the idea that strength – and similar traits such as love, freedom, etc. – is limited private property to be held in reserve and protected, it becomes clear that grasping one's life in its totality in order to fight against this society means grasping all the relationships that make up one's life. Of course, this is never a finished task. The social reality that surrounds us perpetually intrudes and imposes itself. So this is something we can only do in ongoing revolt against this society. But the ongoing battle to grasp one's life requires a high level of awareness. We need to examine each and every relationship we participate in, not moralistically, but to determine whether it is helping us practically to build the life we desire. Since we are not looking for "purer" ways to survive, but are rather striving to grasp our lives as a totality we create, it may be that the sorts of projects we decide to carry on against this society can be accomplished more readily if we have a steady residence – and in the present social context this may mean paying rent or buying a house. We may need money or specific tools to carry out our projects and may use a job, disability or other welfare bureaucracies to get these things. There is no use in lamenting or moralizing about this. What is important is to know precisely why we make the choices we do in terms of how we are desire to create our lives and our projects of revolt.

But this brings us back to the area of our relationships with each other. If the lives we wish to create are lives together, if we want to build comradeship, practical affinity and mutuality, then we need to communicate in a straightforward manner so that we can make intelligent choices. This goes against everything this society instills in us. Trained to view everyone as a rival, we build up unconscious defenses. Thus, we have a tendency to use manipulation rather than straightforward communication, to dance around each other rather than with each other. If supposed comrades and accomplices constantly dance around each other, unconsciously manipulating each other in order to get what they want, no one will ever be able to make intelligent

choices, since all of our choices will be founded on illusion. Yet this is how we are taught to relate – it is the basis of negotiation and compromise. But how can practical affinity, comradeship, complicity and mutuality ever come from this? We frequently have to deceive and lie to our enemy – the power structure and its lackeys – but since we are striving to create life together in a different way, we can't relate to each other like this. To build affinity and mutuality, we need to be clear with each other about our needs, desires, capacities, aspirations, dreams and what we are willing to offer each other in the mutual realization of these things. Lives, strengths, struggles and projects can only intertwine in a mutually beneficial way when everyone involved is straightforward about their aims and desires, and thus provides a real basis for affinity.

Revolution is not just a bunch of atomized ciphers throwing themselves against the walls of society; it is individuals, discovering themselves as such, coming together against a common enemy, finding ways to intertwine ongoing struggles. The history of insurrection shows this to be true even where there is no evidence that potential for this awareness existed before the uprising. Those of us with a conscious desire for a different world need to be willing to make an effort to relate differently now. This means developing practical relationships of affinity. Affinity is too often looked upon as something abstract: we have similar ideas, therefore we have affinity. But if we cannot transform these shared ideas into concrete projects, into a real intertwining of lives and struggles in a focused manner, then our supposed affinity is just another meaningless spook haunting our heads. Thus, we need to recognize our strength in each other, and put effort into each other for mutual strengthening, rather than offering charity to each other and nurturing weakness. To me, this is where Stirner's union of egoists and Kropotkin's mutual aid come together.

So if we want to grasp our lives in their totality to enjoy them fully and make them weapons against the totality of this society, we need to understand how to relate in ways that enhance each one's individuality. In this light we should consider a few things: What is practical affinity? Isn't it a real knowledge of each others' ideas, dreams, desires, capacities, aspirations and needs that permits us to come together on a projectual basis, intertwining our rebellions? And this requires us to talk with each other without hidden agendas. What is comradeship? Isn't it the willingness to have each others' backs in a practical way, to wager ourselves on our comrades, because they are our wealth, our joy in life? What is complicity? Isn't it the recognition of a specific intertwining of projects where it makes sense to join forces to accomplish a specific aim – the recognition on the immediate level of struggles and rebellions coming together? And what is mutuality? Isn't it a reciprocity that does not weigh or measure, in which all involved recognize each other as sources of strength, enjoyment, and

the only kind of wealth that matters – the fullness of life? Brought down to the practical level we need to ask ourselves: Are our relationships our own creation, or the product of unconscious habits instilled by this society? Are they really mutually strengthening and expanding? Are we creating and enhancing the wealth of life and joy in each other? Are we multiplying our ferocity against this authoritarian, money-based civilization by intertwining our lives and struggles? If not, we should question why we have any sort of relationship. Because the point is not that we owe something to each other. We don't. The idea of debt is part of the economic framework of this society. The point is that the best way to fully enjoy and grasp our lives and to fight against this society is to make every moment, every activity and every relationship significant in the creation of a unitary life to the extent that we are able. And until we destroy the society that imposes its reality on us at every moment, this will be a constant struggle and challenge, requiring a high level of awareness and mutual effort.

I would like to discuss all this more with people who are willing to put a concerted effort into overcoming the various ways of thinking and acting that spring from the fragmentation and atomization this society imposes, who are willing to put in the effort to become ongoing creators of their lives, relationships and struggles together, who are ready to pursue ongoing projects of revolt together, projects aimed immediately at attacking specific factors of this society that stand in our way here and now and that expose the nature of this society in its totality.

Fear of Dying

“You only become a slave when you’re afraid of dying”

Lately, in the anarchist circles in which I am involved, there has been a lot of talk about strategy and tactics, a lot of questioning of “What is to be done”. Of course, such conversations are important. But when they become repetitive, going around in circles to no avail, I have to wonder if this constant talk about “what is to be done” might not be a way to put off taking the risk of actually doing anything.

In Portland (Oregon, where I lived when I wrote this), these conversations usually seem to have an air of desperation, helplessness and confusion. The same things are said over and over again, and the most common refrain is: “None of us know what to do”. All rather tedious and not particularly enlightening. But I think this stems from the way these questions are raised.

For me, such questions are only of interest when posed on these terms: what do I desire, what do you desire, what actions can we take to get us there... It is, thus, not a matter of activism, of a moral duty to do something, but of taking responsibility for one’s own life. On these terms, the discussion has to move out of the purely abstract. The longer it remains abstract the more obvious the impoverishment of our practical imaginations becomes. But it is easy to complain about the failures or limits of these conversations. The important thing is to understand and get beyond all this.

Most of the discussions that I have heard on this subject do not pose the question in the terms I outlined above. Rather they seem to start at the largest expanse and try to work their way back to each of us as actors. An example of this can be found in those discussions that start by asking how social change actually takes place. This is such a broad and complex question that I doubt that it can ever be brought back down to the practical level of our daily lives, because “social change” covers far too much territory to provide focus for deciding what to do. But far more often, these discussions of strategy are opened with no clear framework whatsoever. The unsaid assumption is that since we are all anarchists we are starting the discussion from our shared anarchist values. In either case, I think that by starting from far too broad social and historical expanses to bring the discussion back down to ourselves, we are coming at the question in an ass-backwards way.

With this ass-backwards method, it isn’t surprising that almost every discussion ends up focusing on the enemy, its power, its real or imagined capacities for fucking us over. This isn’t the least bit useful. It means that we are basing our discussions on our fears, not our desires and dreams, and, thus, the discussions are not happening in freedom. Where freedom is lacking,

imagination cannot help but be impoverished.

The confusion that marks so many of these discussions shows how misty, how disembodied, our dreams and desires have become. They are not a fierce welling up of creative energies demanding that we focus on their realization. That would stimulate a practical imagination that could rally our many capacities in a projectual manner. These discussions show that our dreams and desires have instead become mere longings, what William Blake called “the ghost of desire”, not able to act, not able to project anything. Instead we hope that some answer will present itself and draw us out of our quandary.

Recent events make this fear-centered way of looking at the world understandable, but this approach has dominated much anarchist thinking about what to do since well before the latest round of repression. The entire logic of “security culture” starts from this sense of fear. I contrast this attitude with that of anarchists I am familiar with in other countries where they have been experiencing fierce repression for years. Of course, these anarchists carry out certain specific acts with great care, but apart from the specific context of these acts (about which they use basic common sense, not a set of “security culture” guidelines), they are quite open about who they are and what they think and desire. They refuse all specialization, and thus have no division of labor between those who express themselves publicly and those who take some anonymous action. Thus, they can openly participate in a wide variety of social struggles, making connections with a broad spectrum of people in the society in which they live. But here we are often even afraid to be open with each other. And many anarchists, while proclaiming a rejection of division of labor in the abstract, accept it as a necessary aspect of their practice.

In any case, these discussions of what to do keep coming back to the strength of our enemy and our own weakness. But how weak are we really? We are only “weak” to the extent that we continue to define strength on our enemy’s terms – terms in which “strength” and “weakness” are simply different degrees of the same thing. And that thing is defined in terms of the capacity to control. But we, as anarchists, aim for the destruction of all control, considered as an external imposition for maintaining social order. So on our enemy’s terms, we will always be weak. Due to our aims, we need to begin to think about strength on completely different terms. I think most anarchists would agree that freedom is not simply “a reduction of control” – that would imply that someone on a longer chain or in a bigger prison cell has more freedom than those with shorter chains or smaller cells. In the same way, we need to recognize that strength is not simply “less weakness”. It is rather something qualitatively different from weakness, something that can therefore exist within us side by side with the real weaknesses that all of us have. I think that the central aspect of this new conception of strength is the refusal to define oneself as a victim.

Most people with whom I feel any affinity are quite clear about refusing the blatant type of victimism that is inherent to political correctness and identity politics. But we too easily start reciting our own litanies of victimization – those that stem from a constant focus on our enemy that goes far beyond what is necessary for understanding what we face. The endless sighing over not knowing what to do is simply another way of proclaiming oneself a victim of circumstances and forces beyond one's control. It is an excuse for letting our weaknesses dominate us. As I see it, strength is choosing to act as the creator of one's life in spite of and against the ruling order and every other circumstance that may stand against this choice. But since life only exists in relationship, this project of creating one's life has to happen in relationship with others. In other words, one needs accomplices for this. Strength is increased in the strength of others. And this can be where it becomes quite frustrating. When everyone you know and care about seems to be focused on their inability to do anything in the face of the ruling juggernaut, where do you find accomplices?

Ultimately, I think that a paralyzing fear has taken hold of many anarchists here. I think that paralyzing fear is a form of the fear of dying or the fear of the unknown, which are arguably the same fear. The quote at the beginning of this essay comes from a film about slave rebellions in 18th century Brazil. But this negative correspondence between the fear of death and the capacity to act freely has been made often. On the most superficial level, I do not fear death. I am convinced that death is merely the end of the particular fluid “I” that I have lived, the end of “my” struggles. What is there to fear in that?

But there is a deeper level to all this, because I am not a crystallized “I” made once and for all, unchanging. I am an interweaving of desires, passions, dreams, ideas, relationships, activities, projects, experiences, experiments, etc. Since all of these things go into making my self, inevitably, I see them all as extensions of my self. Thus, we talk of “living on” in the products of these activities and relationships, finding a kind of “immortality” therein. And this opens the door to another, more subtle form of the fear of death: the fear that what we do will come to naught, will leave nothing behind it. This fear as surely robs us of our freedom as the fear of physical death, because it compels us to measure every act in terms of a supposedly objective conception of effectiveness that is supposed to guarantee some sort of success.

Of course, we desire “success”, in that we want a world in which every individual creates his life in free relationship with other individuals and the surrounding environment without any institutions to interfere in this process and impose standardized relationships. But we are living here and now and so must find an immediate joy in what we do that goes beyond any possibility for future “success”. So fear of death in the form of the fear of failure also needs to be overcome.

In the discussions of strategy, of “what to do”, in which I have been involved, I think this fear of failure has played a central role. Some of those involved in these discussions seem to be looking for guarantees, and no guarantees exist. There is a point where one simply has to decide to start acting as she sees fit, willing to make mistakes, willing to fail. This is when the practical freedom to act on one’s own terms begins. It is also when the discussion of strategy begins to make sense on a practical level, because one has taken up a concrete practice to which the discussion applies.

Of course, overcoming this fear and embracing practical freedom does not happen once and for all. Rather it is an ongoing struggle, an ongoing tension, lived in every moment. At each step, the fear of failure has to be overcome in order to take the next step. Life is won in each moment by willingly risking death, by willingly taking the chance of failing. In striving to avoid failure, we lose life. Of course, we want it to be simpler; we want to be able to grasp freedom once and for all and put an end to our struggling. But that is the christian and islamic dream of salvation, not the anarchist dream of self-created living.

To draw all this to a close, I will go back a bit. Discussions of strategy only begin to go anywhere if each of us starts from herself, his dreams, desires and aspirations, and the specific projects these have moved us to create, and expands out from there. If we continue to start from outside ourselves, whether from abstract conceptions of what constitutes social change, abstract anarchist ideals or the strengths and weaknesses of our enemy, we will continue to flounder, feeling paralyzed before the apparent vastness of what we want to do. Starting from ourselves, we can expand to fit our most radical ambitions by finding the tools and accomplices that can bring our dreams of a world that has never been together in concrete projects aimed at destroying what is and creating something never known before. But if we continue to start from the vastness outside of ourselves, we will collapse under the pressure.

On Projectuality

“Anarchism... is a way of conceiving life, and life... is not something definitive: it is a stake we must play day after day.

When we wake up in the morning and put our feet on the ground we must have a good reason for getting up. If we don't it makes no difference whether we are anarchists or not... And to have a good reason we must know what we want to do...”

—Alfredo M. Bonanno

Perhaps one of the most difficult concepts that I have tried to express in my projects is that of anarchist projectuality. The difficulty in expressing this concept does not merely stem from the fact that the word is unusual. Far more significant is the fact that the concept itself stands in total opposition to the way in which this social order trains us to exist.

In this society, we are taught to view life as something that happens to us, something that exists outside of us, into which we are thrown. We are not, however, told that this is the result of a process of dispossession, and so this alienation appears to be natural, an inevitable consequence of being alive. When life is perceived in this way, the vast majority of people simply deal with circumstances as they come along, for the most part simply accepting their lot, occasionally protesting specific situations, but in precisely those ways that acceptance of a pre-determined, alienated existence permits. A few people take a more managerial approach to this alienated existence. Rather than simply dealing with circumstances as they come, they seek to reform alienated existence along programmatic lines, creating blueprints for a modified existence, but one that is still determined in advance into which individuals must be fitted.

One can find examples of both of these tendencies within the anarchist movement. The first tendency can be seen in those anarchists who conceive of revolution as an event that will hopefully eventually happen to them when the masses arise, and who in the meantime face their life with a kind of pragmatic, circumstantial immediatism. A principled anarchist practice is considered “impossible” and is sacrificed to the amelioration of immediate conditions “by any means necessary” – including litigation, petition to the authorities, the promotion of legislation and so on. The second tendency manifests in such programmatic perspectives as platformism, libertarian municipalism and anarcho-syndicalism. These perspectives tend to reduce revolution to a question of how the economic, political and social institutions that control our

lives are to be managed. Reflecting the methods by which people cope with alienated existence, neither of these methods actually challenges such an existence.

Anarchist projectuality starts with the decision to reappropriate life here and now. It, therefore, immediately and forcefully exposes and challenges the process of dispossession that this society imposes and acts to destroy all the institutions of domination and exploitation. This decision is not based on whether this reappropriation is presently possibly or not, but on the recognition that it is the absolutely necessary first step for opening possibilities for the total transformation of existence. Thus when I speak of anarchist projectuality, I am speaking of a way of facing life and struggle in which the active refusal of alienated existence and the reappropriation of life are not future aims, but are one's present method for acting in the world.

Anarchist projectuality cannot exist as a program. Programs are based on the idea of social life as a thing separated from the individuals that make it up. They define how life is to be and strive to make individuals fit into this definition. For this reason, programs have little capacity for dealing with the realities of everyday life and tend to confront the circumstances of living in a ritualized and formalized manner. Anarchist projectuality exists instead as a consciously lived tension toward freedom, as an ongoing daily struggle to discover and create the ways to determine one's existence with others in uncompromising opposition to all domination and exploitation.

So anarchist projectuality does confront the immediate circumstances of an alienated daily existence, but refuses the circumstantial pragmatism of "by any means necessary", instead creating means that already carry the ends within themselves. To clarify what I mean, I will give a hypothetical example. Let's take the problem of the police. We all know that the police intrude upon the lives of all of the exploited. It is not a problem that can be ignored. And, of course, as anarchists, we want the destruction of the police system in its totality. A programmatic approach to this would tend to start from the idea that we must determine the essential useful tasks that police supposedly carry out (controlling or suppressing "anti-social" behavior, for example). Then we must try to create self-managed methods for carrying out these tasks without the police, rendering them unnecessary. A pragmatic, circumstantial approach would simply examine all the excesses and atrocities of the police and seek to find ways of ameliorating those atrocities – through lawsuits, the setting up of civilian police review boards, proposals for stricter legislative control of police activity, etc. Neither of these methodologies, in fact, questions policing as such. The programmatic methodology simply calls for policing to become the activity of society as a whole carried out in a self-managed manner, rather than the task of a specialized group. The pragmatic, circumstantial approach actually amounts to policing the police, and so increases the level of policing in society.

An anarchist projectual approach would start from the absolute rejection of policing as such. The problem with the police system is not that it is a system separate from the rest of society, nor that it falls into excesses and atrocities (as significant as these are). The problem with the police system is inherent to what it is: a system for controlling or suppressing “anti-social” behavior, i.e., for conforming individuals to the needs of society. Thus, the question in play is that of how to destroy the police system in its totality. This is the starting point for developing specific actions against police activity. Clear connections have to be made between every branch of the system of social control. We need to make connections between prison struggles and the struggles of the exploited where they live (including the necessity of illegality as a way of surviving with some dignity in this world). We need to clarify the connections between the police system, the legal system, the prison system, the war machine – in other words between every aspect of the system of control through which the power of capital and the state is maintained. This does not mean that every action and statement would have to explicitly express a full critique, but rather that this critique would be implicit in the methodology used. Thus, our methodology would be one of autonomous direct action and attack. The tools of policing surround us everywhere. The targets are not hard to find. Consider, for example, the proliferation of video cameras throughout the social terrain...

But this is simply an example to clarify matters. Anarchist projectuality is, in fact, a confrontation with existence “at daggers drawn” as one comrade so beautifully expressed it, a way of facing life. But since human life is a life with others, the reappropriation of life here and now must also mean the reappropriation of our life together. It means developing relations of affinity, finding the accomplices for carrying out our projects on our terms. And since the very point of projectuality is to free ourselves here and now from the passivity that this society imposes on us, we cannot simply wait for chance to bring these people into our paths. This point is particularly important in the present era, when public space is becoming increasingly monitored, privatized or placed under state control, and when people in such spaces tend to be immersed in the electronic universe of their cellphones and laptops, making chance meetings of any significance nearly impossible. This desire to find accomplices is what moves me to publish *Willful Disobedience*. But it calls for other projects as well. Taking back space – whether for an evening or on a more permanent basis – for meeting and discussion, creating situations where real knowledge of each other can be discovered and developed, is essential. And this cannot be restricted to those who call themselves anarchists. Our accomplices may be found anywhere among the exploited, where there are people fed up with their existence who have no faith left in the current social order. For this reason, discovering ways to appropriate public spaces for face-to-face

interactions is essential to the development of a projectual practice. But discussion in this case is not aimed essentially at discovering a “common ground” among all concerned. It is rather aimed at discovering specific affinities. Therefore, discussion must be a frank, clear expression of one’s projects and aims, one’s dreams and desires.

In short, anarchist projectuality is the practical recognition in one’s life that anarchy is not just an aim for the distant future, an ideal that we hope to experience in a far away utopia. Much more essentially, it is a way of confronting life and struggle, a way that puts us at odds with the world as it is. It is grasping our own lives as a weapon and as a stake to be played against the existence that has been imposed on us. When the intensity of our passion for freedom and our desire to make our lives our own pushes us to live in a different manner, all the tools and methods offered by this world cease to be appealing, because all that they can do is adjust the machine that controls our lives. When we make the choice to cease to be a cog, when we make the choice to break the machine rather than continuing to adjust it, passivity ceases and projectuality begins.

Paths to Self-Creation

Self as Relationship and Project

I have certainly found it useful, even necessary, to explore what is inside myself, to dig a maze of tunnels into my interior in order to discover what is there for creating my life and world. But it does no good to get lost inside myself. Then the very purpose for self-exploration is undermined, because I lose the most essential tools for that exploration. Inner exploration can only be meaningful when it is carried out hand-in-hand with concrete exploration of the external world with the explicit aim of creating one's life. I am talking here about practical activity such as building or finding shelter; getting food, clothing, tools and other necessities; destroying enemies and harmful elements that threaten my life; developing relationships of complicity, affinity and mutuality, love and friendship. In other words, learning how to bring together the tools, relationships, time and space necessary to create what I desire. My uniqueness lies in the fact that I am a particular web of relationships with everything that surrounds me. By grasping the various threads that make up this web and weaving them in specific ways, I become the creator of my life, and this is how I come to know myself. But precisely because this is a question of relationships with other unique beings striving to create their own lives, this is a project that is never completed, a continuing struggle to get beyond my present limits.

One of the necessary tools for this project is abstraction. This is the ability to draw broad, general ideas from specific situations and relationships, ideas that can then be applied to new situations and relationships. Without the ability to create abstract concepts (such as "food", "heat", "cold", "pain", etc.), we would confront the world at every moment as an infant, never learning to recognize what those things we interact with might mean to us and thus never even beginning the project of self-creation. But when self-exploration turns into a self-indulgent plunge into an interior separated from any concrete external projects, the necessary task of abstraction loses its link to the world and wanders into ethereal realms, perhaps of madness, perhaps of intellectual absurdity disguising itself as profundity. In my opinion, a great deal of present-day "critical theory", particularly the sort that comes out of academia, is precisely this sort of intellectual absurdity. Consider these two problems that are frequently brought up within academic circles:

How do we know what we know? Can we truly know anything?

Does the individual really exist? Is individuality a meaningful concept?

By leaving these questions in these general abstract forms (or giving

them a gloss of false concreteness by addressing them in terms of broad political categories – like the categories of identity politics or the idea of the West – that are themselves abstractions), they can be endlessly debated in a way guaranteed to offer nothing useful. The only people likely to find any interest in these discussions are those who like to lose themselves in theoretical labyrinths separated from the concrete realities of life.

But if we make these questions truly concrete, it changes things completely. For example, let's ask: "How do we know what we know about building a house? Can we truly know anything about building a house?" All of the sudden, everything is so clear. I come to know what I know about building a house by bringing together people who can teach and aid me, gathering tools and materials necessary for accomplishing the task, and doing it. Once I have successfully built a house, I can say that I truly know how to build a house.

It's a bit trickier to make the idea of individuality concrete. It isn't enough to merely rephrase the problem in this way: "Do I exist?" Because this "I" can be conceived of as a pure abstraction, completely separated from the world, a crystallized ideal standing above all relationship. This would leave us in the same quandary as the earlier wording. We would still be left in a labyrinth of pure abstraction without escape.

We can bring the problem of individuality into the concrete world precisely by talking in terms of our relationships with the world, in other words by asking questions like: "Am I picking up this hammer? Am I reading this book? Am I attacking this institution? Am I talking with my friend? Am I writing these words?" Made concrete in this way, the absurdity of the original question is exposed. Since existence is simply the interweaving relationships of individuals acting upon and with each other, of course individuals exist. The concept of existence and that of the individual are meaningless without each other. Since I pick up hammers, read books, attack institutions, talk with friends and write words, since I relate with and act upon the web of relationships that is existence, I exist. And since I do so in a way that is specific to the threads that weave together to form my life, I am a unique individual in relationship with other unique individuals.

Play Fiercely! Our Lives Are at Stake!

Anarchist Practice as a Game of Subversion

When I first encountered anarchist ideas in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was quite common to talk about play and the subversive game, thanks to the influence of the Situationist International and better aspects of the counterculture. There is a lot to be drawn from thinking of our practice on these terms. In particular, I think that looking at anarchist revolutionary practice as a subversive game is a fruitful way of understanding anarchist aims, principles and methodologies as a basis for developing our strategies and tactics.

The thing that has distinguished anarchism from other conceptions of radical transformation is that anarchists have generally considered their ideas to be something to live here and now as much as possible as well as goals to be realized on a global scale. While there have certainly been anarchists who have chosen to turn their perspective into mere politics, the idea of living anarchy immediately gives anarchism a scope that goes far beyond such meager visions, opening it to the whole of life.

This aspect of anarchism is what makes anarchist practice resemble a game. Let me explain. A game could be described as an attempt to achieve a specific aim using only those means that fit certain conditions accepted by those involved for the enjoyment they find in following these conditions, even though they may lower efficiency. The aim of anarchist practice would be to achieve a world free of all domination, without state, economy or the myriad of institutions through which our current existence is defined. I cannot claim to know what the most efficient way to get there would be. From an anarchist point of view, there has not yet been a successful revolution, so we have no models for efficiency. But those who desire this end, not out of a sense of duty as a moral cause, but rather as a reflection on a grand scale of what they want immediately, for their own lives, petty calculations of efficiency in achieving this end are hardly a priority. I know that I would rather attempt to achieve this end in a way that gives me the immediate joy of beginning to take back my life here and now in defiance of the social order I aim to destroy.

Here is where anarchist “principles” – the “rules” of the game – come in. The refusal to choose masters, promote laws, go to the negotiating table with the enemy, etc. are based on the desire to make our lives our own here and now, to play this game in a way that gives us joy immediately. So we choose these “rules” not out of a sense of moral duty nor because they are the most efficient way for achieving our goals, but rather for the joy we get from living on these terms.

In this light, we can also understand why in the area in which compromise is most forcefully imposed on us – the realm of survival in a world

based upon economic relationships, which always opposes the fullness of life – we will choose whatever methods are necessary to keep us alive. (How else could we play this game?) But we will do what necessity imposes on us in these situations (work, theft, scamming, etc.) as temporary measures for sustaining our capacity to steal back our lives and fight for the world we desire, maintaining our defiance in the face of this imposition. This is, in fact, one aspect of the subversive game in practice, twisting the impositions of this world against it.

Here, I feel it would be good to draw a distinction between the outlaw and the anarchist who is playing the game of subversion. Of course, every anarchist is to some extent an outlaw, since we all reject the idea that we should determine our activity on the basis of laws. But most outlaws are not playing the subversive game. Rather they are centered on the much more immediate game of outwitting the forces of order without seeking to destroy them. For the anarchist revolutionary outlaw, this immediate game is simply a small part of a much greater game. She is making a much bigger wager than that of the immediate “crime”. He is grasping his life now in order to use it to grasp the world.

So this game combines the goal of destroying the ruling order so that we can create a world free of all domination with the desire to grasp our lives here and now, creating them as far as possible on our own terms. This points to a methodology of practice, a series of means that reflect our immediate desire to live our lives on our own terms. This methodology can be summarized as follows: 1) direct action (acting on our own toward what we desire rather than delegating action to a representative); 2) autonomy (refusal to delegate decision-making to any organizational body; organization only as coordination of activities in specific projects and conflicts); 3) permanent conflict (ongoing battle toward our end without any compromise); 4) attack (no mediation, pacification or sacrifice; not limiting ourselves to mere defense or resistance, but aiming for the destruction of the enemy). This methodology reflects both the ultimate aim and the immediate desire of anarchist revolutionary practice.

But if we are to consider this practice as a game, it is necessary to understand what type of game this is. We are not dealing with a game in which two (or more) opponents are competing against each other in an effort to achieve the same goal. In such a game, there could be room for compromise and negotiation. On the contrary, the subversive game is a conflict between two absolutely opposed aims, the aim of dominating everything and the aim of putting an end to all domination. Ultimately, the only way this game could be won is through one side completely destroying the other. Thus, there is no place for compromise or negotiation, especially not for the anarchists who are clearly in a position of weakness where to “compromise” would, in fact, be to give up ground.

The aims, principles, methodology and understanding of the nature of the battle at hand describe the anarchist revolutionary game. As with any game, it is from this basis that we develop strategy and tactics. Without such a basis, talk of strategy and tactics is just so much babble. While tactics are something we can only talk about in the specific contexts of deciding what moves to make at specific points, it is possible to speak in a more general way about strategy.

Strategy is the question of how to go about reaching one's goals. This requires an awareness of a certain factors. First of all what is the context in which one is trying to achieve these goals? What relationship do the goals have with the context? What means are available for achieving these goals? Who might act as accomplices in this endeavor? These questions take on an interesting twist for anarchists, because our goal (the eradication of all domination) is not just something we want for a distant future. Not being good christians, we aren't interested in sacrificing ourselves for future generations. Rather, we want to experience this goal immediately in our lives and in our battle against the ruling order. So we need to examine these questions in terms of this dual aspect of our goal.

The question of context involves analyzing the broader global context, the nature of the ruling institutions, the broader tendencies that are developing and the potential points of weakness in the ruling order and the areas for potential rupture. It also involves examining the immediate context of our lives, our voluntary and involuntary relationships and encounters, the immediate terrains that we traverse, our immediate projects and so on.

The relationship between what we are striving for and the general context of this social order is one of total conflict. Because we are striving not only to destroy domination, but also to live immediately against it, we are enemies of this order. This conflict is deeply ingrained in our daily lives, in the variety of activities that are imposed on us by the rule of survival over life. So this conflict is central to determining our strategy.

Since part of our goal is to grasp our lives back here and now, our means need to embody this. In other words, any means that involve surrendering our grasp on our lives (such as voting) are already a failure. But this is where it becomes necessary to distinguish what activities constitute such a surrender (voting, litigation, petitioning, bargaining with the enemy) and which can be incorporated into the reappropriation of one's life and the attack against institutions of domination (for example, a temporary job, certain sorts of scams, etc., that give one access to certain resources, information and skills that are of use in one's subversive activity).

Our accomplices could be anyone, regardless of whether they have a conscious anarchist critique or not, who uses means in their specific battles against what immediately dominates and oppresses them that correspond to

our own – means through which they are actively grasping their lives and struggles as their own immediately. And our complicity would last only as long as they use such means, ending the moment that they give up their autonomy or begin to bargain with their rulers.

Having established this basis, here are a few areas for discussing strategy:

Survival vs. the fullness of life – Strategies for continually overturning the dominance of survival over our lives, for making our projects and desires determine how we deal with survival to the greatest extent possible – for example, when one needs to take a job, using it against the institution of work and the economy through theft, giving things away, sabotage, using it as a free school to pick up skills for one’s own projects, always seeing it as a temporary means to ends of one’s own and being prepared to quit as soon as one’s desire requires it.

Solidarity – There are two distinct aspects to this. 1) There are many flare-ups of social conflict that partially reflect the desire to take back life and destroy domination and that use a methodology like that described above, but without a conscious total critique on the part of the participants. How do we connect our conscious, ongoing conflict with the ruling order to these flare-ups of conflict in a way that fits with our aims, “principles” and methodology? Since evangelism and “moral leadership” conflict with these “principles” by turning us into pawns of a cause that we are trying to promote, we need to think in terms of complicity and straightforwardness. 2) Then there are the times when the enemy grabs some of our comrades and accomplices and locks them up. There is a habit in these situations of falling into a framework of support/social work/charity. In terms of our aims and desires, I think this is a huge mistake. Without denying the necessity in building defense funds and keeping communication open, our primary question is how to turn this situation into a way for attacking the ruling order. The anti-prison activities of the French group Os Cangaceiros give some food for thought here.

Small-scale, everyday ruptures – There are events that happen every day on a small scale that cause temporary breaks in the social routine. How can we use these subversively against this order, to expose the reality of this society and to open other possibilities? How can we create such ruptures in a way that undermines resignation and acceptance of normality?

Large scale ruptures – Disasters, riots, local and regional uprisings all cause ruptures that can reveal a great deal about the ruling order and that move people to self-activity, generosity and a temporary rejection of the moral order of this society. How can we take advantage of such situations in a timely manner? What can we do to help extend the awareness and the rejection of the moral order beyond the moment? How can we expose the various politicians and

bureaucrats of rupture – political parties, union leaders, militants and activists – without coming across as another one of that parasitical bunch?

So there is a vast and challenging game before us, one that I believe could make our lives into something marvelous. It is a game we have to play fiercely, because in this game our lives are the stake. There are no guarantees, no sure-fire methods for winning. But for each of us, as individuals, there is one sure-fire way to lose. That is to give in, to resign oneself to what the ruling order imposes. Who's ready to play?

Whither now?

Some Thoughts on Creating Anarchy

[I wrote this more than 15 years ago and would certainly not agree with all of it now, but I do think that it raises interesting questions for exploration despite its many flaws.]

"Any society that you build will have its limits. And outside the limits of any society the unruly and heroic tramps will wander with their wild and virgin thoughts...planning ever new and dreadful outbursts of rebellion." --Renzo Novatore

I feel that there is no possible society in which I would fit, that whatever society was like, I would be a rebel. At times, this fills me with the joy of the "unruly and heroic tramps" of whom Renzo Novatore speaks, but often it leaves me feeling quite lonely and isolated.

I live in a "society" now--in a situation in which social roles are used to reproduce social relationships. Would the way that we relate when we are free of character armor and social roles still be social relationships? I envision a world in which we can live our lives fully, as unique, wild beings, moving freely into and out of relations with each other as our desires move us, never creating the sorts of complex structures of formalized relationships that I understand as "society." It is only in such a world that I can imagine feeling at home. But I really don't know how to go about creating this world.

Many of my friends wouldn't agree with my perspective on society, but we all agree that we want to create ways of relating that are radically different from what the present authoritarian, capitalist society offers. We all seem to be uncertain about how we can destroy this society and learn to relate freely. Clearly, we need to examine what we consider our radical practice.

I have written articles and flyers. I have no illusions about the radical nature of these projects. They perpetuate certain types of alienated social relationships, and I am fully aware of this: But I write in hopes of inspiring something beyond the writing. I hope that what is unique in what I write will touch another unique individual, allowing us to break down the wall of written words and maybe meet and create projects together. This hasn't happened often though--usually, the social relationship of the printed word remains intact.

In the present situation, scamming and theft are ways of survival which can reflect a radical critique. They can involve an element of play and adventure lacking in regular jobs, but they are still basically ways of reproducing ourselves in this society and so are, in a sense, work. Still in a small way, theft helps to

undermine market relationships on an individual level, because you are taking something without paying for it. But the necessity for secrecy limits this element of radical critique. What is most radical about scamming and theft—as well as squatting, dumpster diving and gleaning—is that they drastically reduce our need to work and free our time for more worthwhile pursuits. But in themselves they are basically just survival tactics.

Vandalism and sabotage are attacks on property and, thus, on society. But, as most people use them now, they are limited attacks. They are largely just reactions to specific, particularly offensive acts of authority. The extent of the critique can be easily muted by its attachment to a particular issue—recuperating it for society. Still vandalism and sabotage are an active attack on society which may sometimes effectively fuck up some of the projects of Capital. But at their best they express only the destructive side of anarchic rebellion.

All of these activities are worthwhile as part of our rebellion against this society, but all are limited. None of them take us beyond the context of this society. Every one of these activities is, at least partially, created by society as a reaction against it. They don't free us from society or enhance what is unique to us. They only place us on the edge of society (which is certainly the most free and enjoyable place to be in society), and that is not good enough for those of us who want to live out our lives to the limits.

"Not at the margins of what is collapsing
Not at the margins of what is falling
But at the center of what is...rising"

Since we want to create new ways of relating, ways which grow out of our unique individuality, not social roles, we can't merely react to society—making it the center of our activity and ourselves merely its margins. Each of us needs to make what is unique to us—our own desires, passions, relations, and experiences—the center of our activity. This implies a radically different conception of revolution than that of the various communists and orthodox anarchists who center on "the masses." Neither working class, nor common human activity can create the revolution I'm talking about. The rebellion of the individual against the constraints of society—against the processes of domestication—is the basis from which the revolutionary project has to grow. When the acts of rebellion of a number of individuals coincide and can embrace each other, those individuals can consciously act together and in this are the seeds of a revolution that can free each of us as unique, wild, free-spirited individuals. But what does this mean on a practical level.

Making ourselves the center of our activity means relating to society and relating to each other in new ways. When we begin to live in terms of our

own desires and experiences, our own passions and relations, we find ourselves perpetually--if often subliminally--in conflict with society. Since society depends upon structure and order, and what is unique to us is chaotic and unpredictable, we have a useful advantage in this struggle. We can study society, learn something about how it functions and how it protects itself; but no amount of psychological study can give the force of order knowledge of our unique individuality. As long as we act from our own uniqueness with our knowledge of society--avoiding falling into social roles and predictable patterns--our actions will seem to come from nowhere, yet will wreak havoc on our enemy. Refusing to play social roles in the expected way, refusing to pretend that we accept having to pay for things or work for survival, refusing to follow rules of etiquette and protocol--this is a beginning. Spontaneous (or seemingly spontaneous) pranks and guerrilla theater--which cannot be attributed to clowns, theater troupes or other social entities--may expose the nature of an aspect of society and even create a situation in which the choice between free life and the mere existence offered by society can no longer be hidden. Acts of theft, vandalism and sabotage, springing from our desires rather than being merely a reaction to a particular social atrocity, will be more random and more frequent. Our violence against society will strike like lightning, unpredictably and with the intensity of our desire to live our lives to the full.

But to be able to fight intelligently for ourselves against society requires knowledge and skills. Society, by placing us into social roles, limits our knowledge and skills, so we need to share this information. Books and articles can help us to do this, but are open to public scrutiny--including that of the authorities. That makes our activity more predictable and us more vulnerable. So ways of sharing knowledge that grow from our actual relations as unique individuals need to be created.

This need to share skills coincides with our desire to live life fully, to be able to freely relate and to enjoy each other as unique, wild beings, making the exploration of new ways of relating to each other an immediate necessity--not something to be put off until "after the revolution." Each of us is unique and so unpredictable. Having been taught all of our lives to relate as social roles rather than as the unique beings that we are, we have to rely on our imaginations to create new ways of relating, not on any already-tried pattern--and could it be any other way when we don't want to create new social roles? So the ideas I am sharing are tentative, calling for explorations into unknown realms, inviting us to adventures that are to be entered only to the extent that they fulfill our desires and enhance us as unique individuals. There is nothing inherently revolutionary about these explorations. They become revolutionary only in conjunction with a conscious and active attack against society--a conscious and active recognition that our uniqueness and freedom as individuals is in conflict

with society and that we must destroy it to fully free ourselves.

I've thought a lot about how to explore new ways of relating over the past several years. These explorations would need to be based on the unique desires of each of the individuals involved and on their mutual trust for each other. At first my thoughts centered mainly on some sort of settled rural/wilderness living situation involving non-economized relating, projects of wilderness expansion and resistance to and sabotage of domestication and authority. The more I thought about this, the more it seemed that such a project would involve a compromise of my own real desires—and would most likely recreate society on a smaller scale with individuals playing social roles rather than relating on the basis of what they uniquely are.

When people come together on the basis of each of their unique desires and their trust for each other, their union is, by its nature, very transitory. Individuals will come and go as they please and participate in the way they please. This makes a settled living situation, at best, very temporary. Recently, I have been wandering. I would enjoy sharing this life with friends and lovers who wish to wander as well. We would be a wandering festival of rebellion and wonder. I say a festival, and not a tribe or a band, because the only constant would be the commitment of each individual involved to live their life to the full and fight against whatever prevents this, the individuals themselves constantly coming and going as they desire. Survival activities could include wild harvesting, theft, scams, sharing gifts with friends and accepting gifts from people who appreciate any street performance—public expressions of our creative playfulness—we do. We can share skills and knowledge with friends we visit, creating an informal network for spreading knowledge and skills among those we trust. Acts of vandalism and sabotage and other attacks against society will be easier since we will not be staying around—providing an added aspect of invisibility. In these wanderings, I would expect to spend a lot of time in wild places. I would want to explore these places and come to know them well. These wild places would be good locations to destroy this society. These gatherings would provide another means of sharing knowledge and skills as well as being a hell of a lot of fun.

As I said above, in and of themselves, these are not revolutionary ideas. Hobos, freaks, rainbow people and others have often been wanderers, but with no awareness of the war of society against the free-spirited individual. We are at war, but we aren't fighting for power. We don't need to build armies to overthrow the powers that be; we need to become wild, free-spirited, unique individuals whose violence springs from our desire to live life to the limits, and so can undermine power itself. Wandering festivals of free-spirited individuals can incorporate this destructive activity—very possibly much more easily than more organized and readily defined groups.

I've already said that these are tentative suggestions, ideas to be tried and tested. I'm tired of feeling isolated because I refuse to sacrifice myself to social roles. I want to explore new ways of relating. I'd love to hear other people's ideas for exploring ways of relating that get beyond social roles and enhance what is unique in each of us. But more than that, I want to actively explore these ideas in practice and share these explorations with friends and lovers.

Then we can cease to be merely on the margins of society and will each, as unique wild beings, become the center of an insurrectionary project that may destroy civilization and create a world in which we freely live, relate and create as our unique desires move us. We will become--to quote Renzo Novatore again-- "a shadow eclipsing any form of society which can exist under the sun."

Appendix: The ghost of freedom always comes with the knife between its teeth

Statement of the Surrealist Group of Athens on the wave of riots in December, 2008.

(this text was added by Black Banner Distro as a particularly inspiring piece of writing, that follows in a very similar thread to this collection of writings. Not from the original collection.)

The ghost of freedom always comes with the knife between its
teeth

Shooting in the flesh is the high point of social oppression
All the stones removed from pavements and thrown to cops' shields or shop-windows of the commodity's temples; all the flaming bottles drawing orbits under the night sky; all the barricades erected on the city's streets, separating our areas from theirs; all the bins full of rubbish of a consumerist society that the riot's flames transformed from nothing to something; all the fists raised over the moon; these are the weapons giving flesh and real power, not only to resistance, but freedom, too. It is this feeling of freedom that only deserves to bet on in these moments: the feeling of forgotten mornings of our childhood, when everything can happen because it is us, as creative human beings, that have awoken up, not the future productive human-machines of the subordinate, the trainee, the alienated worker, the private owner, the family man. It is the feeling of confronting the enemies of freedom – not fearing them anymore.

So, everyone who wants to continue minding their own business, as if nothing is happening, as if nothing has ever happened, has serious reasons to be disquieted. The ghost of freedom always comes with the knife between its teeth, with

the violent mood to break every chain that reduces life into a miserable repetition, useful for the dominant social relations to reproduce themselves. Since Saturday the 6th of December no city in this country functions normally: no shopping therapy, no free roads to reach our workplaces, no news about government's next recovery initiatives, no carefree zapping among lifestyle TV shows, no night drives around Syntagma square and so on. These nights and days do not belong to shop owners, TV commentators, ministers and cops. These nights and days belong to Alexis!

As surrealists, we have been out in the streets from the very first moment, together with thousands rebels and other people expressing their solidarity, because surrealism has been born by the street's breath and does not intend to abandon it. After the massive resistance to state murderers, street's breath is even warmer, even more hospitable and even more creative. Proposing a direction to this movement doesn't correspond to us. However, we accept full responsibility for the common struggle, because it is a struggle for freedom. Without being obliged to agree with every expression of such a massive phenomenon, without being partisans of blind anger or violence for its own shake, we consider this phenomenon's existence right.

Let's not let this flaming breath of poetry to just defuse or die!
Let's convert it into a certain utopia: the transformation of world and life!

No peace with cops and their bosses!

Everybody in the streets!

Whoever cannot understand the rage can just shut up!

"The thing that has distinguished anarchism from other conceptions of radical transformation is that anarchists have generally considered their ideas to be something to live here and now as much as possible as well as goals to be realized on a global scale. While there have certainly been anarchists who have chosen to turn their perspective into mere politics, the idea of living anarchy immediately gives anarchism a scope that goes far beyond such meager visions, opening it to the whole of life."



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