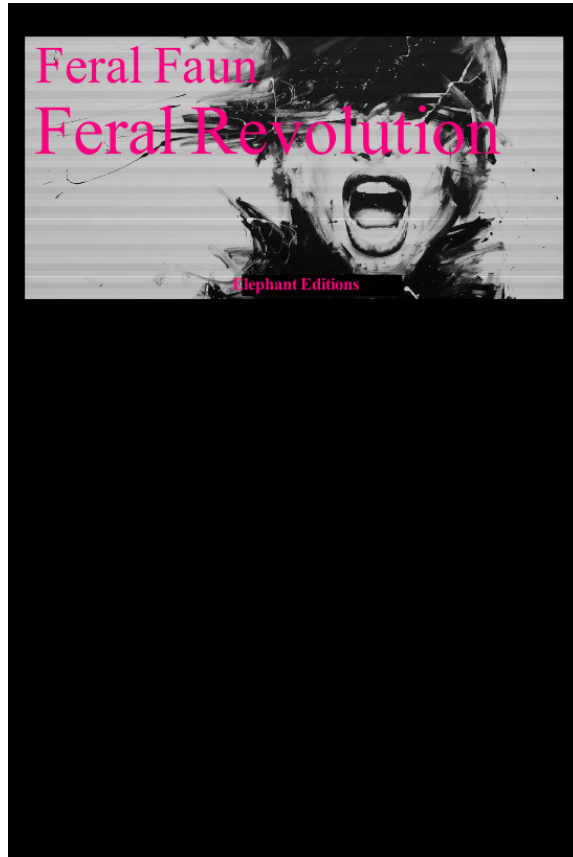


# Feral Revolution

Feral Faun



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# Introduction

This book has a lot to say, far more than might seem at first sight. But it requires a particular disposition on the part of the reader, a disposition to understand rather than to simply inform oneself.

In fact, there is not merely 'information' here, there are 'ideas', something that rarely happens in American (even 'radical') culture, and this is somewhat disturbing. How many of us are prepared to consider ideas? I don't know. Those who do not want to question their certainties will find confirmation of their beliefs in this book in another guise, ruining the author's solicitations to look at reality differently.

Anyone can spend years 'in the wilderness', Feral maintains, referring to the possibility of entering the reality of which the 'wilderness' marks the extreme limit. It is the moment of truth when we discover whether we are really capable of breaking our bonds with society, the umbilical cord that protects and domesticates us. That is why this book is revolutionary: because it does not interpret reality but tries to take us into reality just as the author himself has ventured, although for no measurable length of time.

It is not a question of clinging tightly to the vine that Feral has thrown down to us from his tree and diving into the fray. It is not a question of a wild attitude or something 'sayable' that can be set out in a formula, but of a totally different idea of reality. Tourists who travel around the world to 'wildly inaccessible' places merely take time off from their lives of accumulative delirium and let themselves go wild within certain well-defined limits. They are always well equipped, take a guide along with them, etc. In the face of this obscene spectacle it might seem that all one has to do to avoid 'doing the tourist' is to omit the safety measures and guide and leave one's baggage at home. Feral, I think, is saying that this is pointless because there is no sense in going to wild places if one carries on seeing them in the way we have been conditioned to. Nature itself can even contribute to domesticating us: 'Nature' domesticates—Feral writes—because it transforms wildness into a monolithic entity, a huge realm separate from civilisation. The same goes for any 'militant' ecologist conception we might decide to choose. Ecologists—even 'radical' ones—play right into this. Rather than go wild and destroy civilisation with the energy of their unchained desires, they try to 'save the wilderness'. This sheds a ray of light on some of the inconclusive debates that have been going on in our papers (and also those of power) for a long time now .

Of course, the first (not very shrewd) impression we might have on reading this book might be that we are face to face with a 'primitivist'. And many have had that impression when reading those of Feral's articles that we have published in our papers and reviews here in Italy. I wonder whether Feral himself with his passion for 'wildlife' (in the first place, man) is sure whether or not he is a 'primitivist'. Something of the sort certainly strikes you when he throws you that vine. The evil wilderness reveals its true essence to him and him alone: 'from my own experiences wandering in these places', making all the panoply of survival equipment unnecessary. It is as though someone, having had a different kind of experience, forgets that this originates within a specific logical itinerary, simply saying that for him things were different. This is not criticism, simply to show that at times authors seem to obstruct our understanding of their ideas. Deliberately? I don't know. This idea of the world as an absolute, whole entity is something we are reasonably well equipped to grasp on this side of the ocean. It comes as a shock to see it reach us from an American experience, not least from walks among the millenary redwoods. Indeed, one of the significant points of this book is that it has dug into the myth of wild American nature.

Now we are beginning to see that the vine which we caught hold of at the beginning of this introductory adventure does not belong to the specifically 'natural' world of exotic adventure that constantly summons us in our dreams, telling us to abandon the trials and tribulations of daily life. Feral's vine is a rediscovery of the significance of humanity as a whole.

This allows us to see the man-nature relationship differently. There can be no doubt that, in the beginning, nature was considered to be a living being, alive and separate from that weak, naked being, man. But it is not considered hostile until history begins to unfold alongside human beings' separation from nature as a result of technological conquest, aided by religion. The ancient Greek concepts *physis* and *logos* appear at the same time, marking this separation. They denote the transition from the old idea of mother nature to that of nature as something to be possessed and dominated. Man subsequently studied, catalogued, dissected and categorised this nature so as (in all appearances) to make it his kingdom to dominate and exploit.

The ideas expressed in this book all convey a 'vital energy' that has been numbed, often killed, by the domestication of civilisation. The real wild, not the caricature circulated by travel agencies in illustrated brochures, cannot be tolerated by civilised society. The latter must eliminate it in order to guarantee its own survival and preserve order. As Feral writes, 'Civilisation will not tolerate what is wild in its midst. But I never forgot the intensity that life could be. I never forgot the vital energy that had surged through me. My existence since I first began to notice that this vitality was being drained away has been a war between the needs of civilised survival and the need to break loose and experience the full intensity of life unbound'.

But what is this 'vital energy'? Feral does not tell us exactly, although evidence of it is to be found in many parts of this book. Like all leading concepts, it appears indirectly in considerations that would be meaningless without its logical premise. The violent response to the aggression and control constantly exercised by power is an attempt to free ourselves from the domesticating conditioning that civilisation has brought to every moment of our lives, and cannot simply be seen in terms of defence. That would be a losing battle. You might as well just accept the structures of power and find a niche to survive in. This rebellion—contrary to that of the pacifists who maintain that nonviolence is the best form of defence (not realising that the latter is simply the other side of the same coin as violence)—is an 'aggressive, dangerous, playful attack by free-spirited individuals against society'. What characterises the attack is its insurrectional nature. In the thesis developed here it is not a question of something that is clearly visible and transformed into codified behaviour with projects and programmes. It is more a question of the 'vital energy' mentioned above.

I don't know if Feral realises how radical the consequences of these ideas are. In the first place, how fruitful they will be to the readers who have the courage to penetrate his theses completely and not be influenced by first impressions of 'primitivism'. But if this path—or perhaps Heidegger's idea of a clearing in the woods would be more exact here—is to be traveled, there must be no doubt about the fact that the world is constantly making distinctions between what is transformable and what is produced by the logic of power. If this unity of the world where nature is not distinct from humanity, or the wilderness from the Japanese city with its advanced urban technology, has any significance at all, it is in this 'going beyond'. That is to say it is to be found at the very moment in which one's own personal tension and wild vital energy comes alive and sets to transforming the conditions of domestication. If we were to imagine this going beyond as one single, circumscribed event to take us to a condition forever free from domestication—as was the case with the Marxist thesis—the point of arrival would be no more than a higher level of domestication, one where we would not even be aware of being domesticated.

But let us not lose sight of our argument. Adventure, in order to be such, is always adventure in act. If it were simply adventure tout court it would end up being institutionalised and the wild, vital instinct would become limitless and with no measure of contrast, so we would be unable to dream or attack. When Feral says: 'All social relationships have their basis in the incompleteness produced by the repression of our passions and desires. Their basis is our need for each other, not our desire for each other,' that certainly doesn't mean to say that the objective is the abolition of society and the creation of a new human condition to take the place of the incompleteness that comes from the repression of our passions and desires today. The elimination of this repression is a process, a going beyond, it is not something one simply finds around the corner, the opposite of domestication. Even if things were to go according to Stirner's idea of the 'use of the other' rather than the 'need for the other', that could never become something finite. Anything I know to be finite is to be found in the graveyard, and even there more surprises than the wildest revolutionary fantasy might imagine possibly await us.

I quite agree that 'social roles are ways in which individuals are defined by the whole system of relationships that is society in order to reproduce the latter', and so 'society is thus the domestication of human beings—the transformation of potentially creative, playful, wild beings—who can relate freely in terms of their desires, into deformed beings using each other to try to meet desperate needs, but succeeding only at reproducing the need and the system of relationships based on it'. But, due to the principle of the man-nature unity that sees separation as something that is useful only to power, I believe that the elimination of this condition could never be completed once and for all.

This is an essential point as far as I can see. If we were to imagine a condition where the explosion of vital (wildly insurrectional) energy had become something permanent, that is to say, become a *fait accompli*, we would be doing no more than finishing off the job of domestication. In other words, we would simply have become more sophisticated domesticators.

This is what happened to the Marxist ideas that appeared in the wake of Hegel's theses: the proletariat were to bring about their own extinction and be victors in their struggle against the bourgeoisie. This would mark the end of class society and philosophy, i.e., of the ideas that had reflected this contradictory movement throughout the various phases of its historical development. Stirner was also a prisoner of this schema when he founded the union of egoists as the free condition of the future. This was to be realised from the (vital?) energy activated by one's own personal

insurrection, but again was to be realised once and for all. We can no longer have any faith in models that predict a clear future, not even one that would give space to the 'fullness of the passions'.

But perhaps I am exaggerating here. Perhaps Feral has nothing complete and finite in mind, and there are points in his book that seem to indicate this. When he writes, 'The playful violence of insurgence has no room for regret. Regret weakens the force of blows and makes us cautious and timid', he is talking of finishing with the past. In the joyous rebel violence of insurrection and individual liberation we cannot take a retrospective look at the already done: having no regrets cannot mean anything else. But anyone who has no regrets has no history either. History is a retrospective look at what one has done as opposed to what one might have done, and the difference is always a sorry list of mistakes to be avoided in future.

So, anyone who, rather than dedicate themselves to this necrophilic pastime prefers to cultivate their own life of destructive passion in the eternal present of revolt against everything that is aimed at regulating their life, can have no future either. The culture that suffocates us sees this lack of future as something negative, proposing a perspective in the logic of 'a little at a time' in its place, the method suggested by Popper in the scientific field. The present world is entirely based on such theories of accommodation. The fire only reaches a few who, like Feral, are burning their fingers to support the thesis of the oneness of the world and the fact that it is quite inseparable. That might make us wince, but it is the way things are and corresponds to our original thesis. If we eliminate all regulating ballast we have no reserves to put in the place of what we destroy. Otherwise it is not really a question of destruction. When Durruti said in the early months of the Spanish revolution that the workers could destroy everything because, having built it all once they could do so again, he was referring to a situation that has now disappeared for ever.

The same problem arises concerning certain passages in 'The Cops in Our Heads'. Here Feral points out: 'The attempt to make a moral principle of anarchy distorts its real significance. Anarchy describes a particular type of situation, one in which either authority does not exist or its power to control is denied. Such a situation guarantees nothing—not even the continued existence of that situation, but it does open up the possibility for each of us to start creating our lives for ourselves in terms of our own desires and passions rather than in terms of social roles and the demands of social order. Anarchy is not the goal of revolution; it is the situation that makes the only type of revolution that interests me possible—an uprising of individuals to create their lives for themselves and destroy what stands in their way. It is a situation free of any moral implications, presenting each of us with the amoral challenge to live our lives without constraints. Since the anarchic situation is amoral, the idea of an anarchist morality is highly suspect. Morality is a system of principles defining what constitutes right and wrong behaviour.'— Here I get clear confirmation of what I am trying to say, yet, at the same time I perceive a contradiction. Perhaps I am splitting hairs, but the question seems to me to be of no little significance. The confirmation is all in the movement that guarantees nothing, even in a situation based on the refusal of authority. But a situation enclosed in the refusal of authority would be contradictory. In fact, Feral sees the problem and says that anarchy is not and never could be the aim of the revolution, but is the situation (I would say the personal situation) that makes the revolution possible. And I agree, but this can only define itself as 'amoral' if it continues in the perspective of 'going beyond', never becoming something established. Otherwise this final 'whole' condition would require moral rules in order to organise itself and persist in time.

The cops in our heads, along with the domestication they reflect, represent the opposite pole to the concept of 'wild nature'. It is this separation from nature that makes civilisation possible, producing the techniques that change the latter into something artificial and enjoyable in small doses, when kept at a safe distance. Everything becomes clear in this framework and Feral dwells upon it in detail, excitingly at times.

Thus he writes, 'There can be no program or organisation for feral revolution, because wildness cannot spring from a program or organisation. Wildness springs from the freeing of our instincts and desires, from the spontaneous expression of our passions. Each of us has experienced the process of domestication, and this experience can give us the knowledge we need in order to undermine civilization and transform our lives'. And we cannot deny this. But only on condition that everything continues in the never-ending process of going beyond, in the movement of freedom that does not see what is freed as something other than oneself and one's desire to unleash this 'vital energy' that continues to flow from an inexhaustible source. Feral's acrobatic juxtaposition of ideas culminates in this endless transition, the tension that never solidifies, the barricades that never cease fighting, the violence that never quells. Well, as a soliloquy, it's not bad. It fascinates and redeems us from our daily chores. The individual rising up with the torch of freedom in one hand and hatchet in the other, as one unforgettable comrade once said, is the classic image of anarchist iconography. And many anarchists still dream of reaching this condition of privilege. Not the privilege of the elite, for goodness sake, but of someone who has held the truth in his hands and with superhuman strength is extirpating the world at its roots. And the others? Feral has not read Stirner so superficially as not see that the next step must be that of reaching others, a community of individual insurgents, a totality of individuals each developing his or her own personal insurrection.

But this condition cannot be reached through one specific experience. Nothing in the world of domestication can force us to decide in favour of this condition of privilege, this 'going beyond' in act.

Let me explain. If we decide to do something, this something must already be within our reach in some way. It is there in front of us, visible and comprehensible, even if it concerns the strangest and most remote utopian fantasy. If I decide to break the chains of domestication, I can only do so because I feel the chains and suffer the effects of domestication on my own skin. This historicist interpretation of revolt differs little from the innatist one that assigns the possibility of rebelling to one's own character, maintaining that some individuals are born with genes of rebellion whereas others are more acquiescent and accept the rules of civilisation. Basically, this—questionable if you like—genetic element does also exist within the individual. It is the element we are talking about, the one called upon to unleash rebellion.

Let us continue. No matter how we look at it, we see that the individual must act, i.e. become conscious that this something, whatever it is, is to be found in front of or within them, and admit that the two hypotheses (the historicist and the innatist) interrelate. The born rebel puts up with less than those who are not in conflict with domestication and chains. So we come back to the wholeness of man, within which distinctions do operate, but only up to a point. We deduce from this that individual insurrection is only possible when the two elements exist, meet and interact. And I think that Feral takes this for granted. But this cannot be compared to anything else. There are no rules to support this condition other than those that might come from further domestication following the breaking of the chains. In this case the rebel would have ended up conforming to the reality of his dreams, now solidified into something permanent.

If we exclude this hypothesis, as Feral does, all that remains is the reappearance of the enemy, recognising it and being moved to insurrection, to infinity. With all my admiration for what Feral says, it seems to me that this situation threatens to become a stalemate. By remaining on the barricades one risks losing sight of what one is actually doing. It is not true that freedom cannot be imagined, or that all one can think about freedom is incomplete, for example 'liberties', the definition of one's own limits and those of others. I know that all that is not true. I know that the fool is he who finds the grain of corn in a world where most people are pecking around blindly in the logic of power which has been embellished with a few adjustments. When his heart floods with hatred for the owners of the chains and the logic of domestication, this being who wants to rebel against all rules—because freedom is above all the absence of rules—has one aim and one alone. And the latter is not utility or domestication but to make the world of suffering caused by the chains and the stupidity that results from domestication disappear forever.

This aim, as clear as day, is the one about which nothing better can be thought, so includes all strategies and any logic of adjustment, including the single clash and partial conquests of freedom. And there can be no doubt that this reality, of which nothing better can be thought, can be thought, even if it is not physically tangible. It is not simply a question of the chains disappearing or the links of domestication being broken. It is something else, something that gets greater and more marvellous and cannot be obfuscated by the specificity of going beyond. It involves more (or should do), a continual going beyond that never stops, seeing the chains and domestication in their most intimate significance, not simply as the means to a better life as those in power would have it.

If freedom were just a dream, lack of future would be no more than a great black hole and everything would be reduced to either putting up with the chains and domestication as far as possible or to living one's own personal insurrection. Seen in these terms, and given that the capacity to choose between better and worse is determined by laws that are part of one's domestication, there would be no criteria for choice. One would go forward blindly, guided by the genetic lumen, not knowing whether to accept or rebel.

If we choose rebellion we do so because something exists in the future, not just in our genetic and historical past. And this something is not merely part of our intelligence, simply a thought. If that were so the other thought, the logic of acceptance and domestication, would be equally valid. In the best hypothesis in that case I would die of both hunger and thirst just like Buridan's ass, prostrated before the choice of a bucket of hay and a bucket of water.

But things are not like that. I choose because I consider both the breaking of the chains and the elimination of domestication to be acts that thrust me towards a different perspective, throwing me into the process of going beyond a condition that I loathe and which offends my good taste. If I define myself wild and a lover of the real wilderness (not that of the tourists), allowing a certain 'primitivism' to be understood between the lines without ever actually admitting it, that is nothing but a set of choices. Only those who have taste can choose. And taste, love and desire are expressions of that genetic-historical combination that continues to be what we are and impels us to go forward. When I think of freedom, unspecified freedom which has nothing better beyond it, it is my whole self that I put into this thought. I am not a dreamer talking about his visions, but an experimenter who goes into his visions and is prepared to risk his life for them.

Admission to such a condition of freedom cannot be gained through normal procedures of reason. It cannot be deduced from what we know through our daily experience (chains and domestication) but is born elsewhere in the genetic-historical interrelation that produces our most radical impulses, our wildest desires and dreams of eternal love that nothing can ever dim, and the taste for wild adventure. In a word, everything that Feral talks about and much more besides. If I were to limit myself to thinking about this coldly I would never be able to convince myself that it existed or that it was something worth involving myself in and risking the tranquillity of the chains which the culture of domestication renders more or less bearable. If I go beyond this level, (and how many millions of people never do!) it is because at some point I become unreasonable, throw all care to the winds, and act. But in practice it is impossible to put all one's projects, taste, desire and love aside. In fact, in throwing down his vine, this wild man who lives in a tree and wanders free among the American redwoods is throwing me an object of love. He is linking me to him with love in the hope of taking me with him to that tree of freedom, another wild man like himself. Because life in freedom would be a poor thing indeed if it were simply a territory of complete desolation with no relationships, therefore relations. Like everything that passes between human beings, the latter depend on taste, desire, love, pleasure, but also hatred, fear, anxiety, and much more besides.

I do not think that this vine would ever be capable of consolidating itself once and for all. I do not think that one can interpret the wild condition as merely 'vital energy' in act from Feral's writing. His freedom is what one cannot have anything better than. It is the totality of freedom, the completely free condition, without limits, impediments or order, not even of a moral or aesthetic character. Once taken into consideration, this totality can only be conceived as complete if one sees it as something in movement. Freedom is growth to infinity, otherwise I would have to admit that I, free at last, would end up dazed in a complete stupor: absolute freedom would become the absolute cancellation of man. Totality is therefore always in the course of development. It is in act, yet always totally present at the moment I think it. That is the totality I have in mind when I think of absolute freedom, which destroys limits and domestication. If I were to see it as something circumscribed I would be thinking of God, merely putting one word in place of another. And this absolute totality would upturn itself and become the concept of absolute tyranny, throwing me out of my involvement, obliging me to adore it as something other than myself.

So, if we agree with the idea of freedom as something both infinite and in act there is no reason why we cannot acknowledge different processes of approach within this totality and actively go beyond the conditions of submission dictated by chains and domestication. Is there anything contradictory in that? I don't think so.

Basically, this concern can be summed up in the decision to develop a project. So the question is: can the totality of my wild rebellion and freedom, precisely as Feral intends, be linked to a project? Or should the latter be considered something that needs to be destroyed along with the other creations of power because it belongs to the world of limits and rules? In other words, can a project be realised within the context of the wild insurrection that Feral is talking about? Or does this by its very nature refuse such a thing because it is a residue of domestication?

Allow me to develop these questions as I believe them to be of considerable importance.

If I negate the past, and this procures me the means for attack by essentialising my destructive strength; if I negate history—as we have said—I can have no future either. In itself this can only upset palates that have been ruined by Macdonald's hamburgers. But this absence of future is not simply a great black hole. It is an absence that I avert as a presence. Although a lack of something, it is not 'absurd'. That is to say, it is not something that I cannot understand, otherwise it would be a mystical kind of faith which might even have subversive connotations at times, but could never accept practical destruction.

So this void contains a great many things, and the more I go ahead in my rebellion the more freedom takes form and talks to me. It tells me of the dream of my life, because that is what is at stake here, not just one of the many games that I can play during my life. In severing all links with the past and rebelling against domestication, I am presenting myself bare to the future. This new bareness is all that I have and is also the whole of freedom, without any hidden parts or reserves. I feel freedom flare up in my veins, even for an instant in that room full of books under the severe expression of a revolutionary of times gone by. It is not a place fixed in time that I can retire to every now and then in my mind. It is my whole self, my totality, always. It is my love that cannot be dissected, a little here, a little there. It stays whole, always, a totality that continues to grow. We can only experience infinity if we erase from our minds the idea of something static such as the whole of everything that exists. And this totality would be sterile were we not able to stretch out a hand and widen its range at any moment. I, adventurer of the incredible, am capable of extending to infinity in the same way that I can live freedom and not allow myself to be guaranteed by it.

It is within this absolute tension that I place my project, not in vain distinctions that assign degrees or procedural levels to doing. I sketch out a path in the absolute, howl and jump for joy, and only here do I allude to this tiny portion of reality: a smile, a handshake, a walk among the fireflies in the evening shadows. And there is nothing I can do about

it if someone points to the moon but only sees their finger, the stages in the journey. These levels, the specific occasions, are all illusory. They dress up an idea that lives elsewhere. They are analyses, even subtle ones, of something that, seen in its individual parts, is nothing more than brute reality. The vital lymph of all that is elsewhere in the illusion that supports it. Reason can only weaken it, scientific seriousness only mask it.

It is the light of freedom in its 'wild' totality that illuminates the project and makes it perfectly useless to this world. How many see the project in quantitative terms and ask themselves what the point of it all is. But why make such an effort only to stop half way? Their intuition tells them to gaze at their finger, the moon is too far away and too difficult to comprehend. But tell me, in all sincerity, is that a good enough reason not to have a project?

I have many in my heart, and I cannot turn them into talking ghosts to make them become objects of fascination for others except by dressing them up in cast-off clothing: analyses, considerations of events, organisational conditions. These are at the root of the vigorous certainties of the world of the domesticated, but can also be interpreted differently by those who rebel. I do not think such efforts are an obstacle to rebellion. I do think they need to be seen for what they are: mere reflexes of totality which can only be expressed in the modest language of progressive experience.

And now I ask one last question: can the totality we carry in our hearts, the wild experience that Feral talks about, be said in any way other than by having recourse to language, which is always locked within progressive experience? After all, the pieces of writing we are presenting here are merely words. We need to encounter what these words betray rather than illuminate, elsewhere, in our hearts, at the cost of our lives. Otherwise they will lose their meaning and return to the circumscribed, miserable activity of talking for the sake of it. The same goes for the project: words, mere words, that it is up to us to read in another way.

Alfredo M. Bonanno  
Catania, April 18, 1999



# Feral Revolution

When I was a very young child, my life was filled with intense pleasure and a vital energy that caused me to feel what I experienced to the full. I was the center of this marvelous, playful existence and felt no need to rely on anything but my own living experience to fulfill me. I felt intensely, I experienced intensely, my life was a festival of passion and pleasure. My disappointments and sorrows were also intense. I was born a free, wild being in the midst of a society based upon domestication. There was no way that I could escape being domesticated myself. Civilization will not tolerate what is wild in its midst. But I never forgot the intensity that life could be. I never forgot the vital energy that had surged through me. My existence since I first began to notice that this vitality was being drained away has been a warfare between the needs of civilized survival and the need to break loose and experience the full intensity of life unbound.

I want to experience this vital energy again. I want to know the free-spirited wildness of my unrepressed desires realizing themselves in festive play. I want to smash down every wall that stands between me and the intense, passionate life of untamed freedom that I want. The sum of these walls is everything we call civilization, everything that comes between us and the direct, participatory experience of the wild world. Around us has grown a web of domination, a web of mediation that limits our experience, defining the boundaries of acceptable production and consumption. Domesticating authority takes many forms, some of which are difficult to recognize. Government, capital and religion are some of the more obvious faces of authority. But technology, work, language with its conceptual limits, the ingrained habits of etiquette and propriety—these too are domesticating authorities which transform us from wild, playful, unruly animals into tamed, bored, unhappy producers and consumers. These things work in us insidiously, limiting our imaginations, usurping our desires, suppressing our lived experience. And it is the world created by these authorities, the civilized world, in which we live. If my dream of a life filled with intense pleasure and wild adventure is to be realized, the world must be radically transformed, civilization must fall before expanding wilderness, authority must fall before the energy of our wild freedom. There must be for want of a better word—a revolution.

But a revolution that can break down civilization and restore the vital energy of untamed desire cannot be like any revolution of the past. All revolutions to date have centered around power, its use and redistribution. They have not sought to eradicate the social institutions that domesticate; at best they have only sought to eradicate the power relationships within those institutions. So revolutionaries of the past have aimed their attacks at the centers of power seeking to overthrow it. Focused on power, they were blind to the insidious forces of domination that encompass our daily existence—and so, when successful at overthrowing the powers that be, they ended up re-creating them. To avoid this, we need to focus not on power, but on our desire to go wild, to experience life to the full, to know intense pleasure and wild adventure. As we attempt to realize this desire, we confront the real forces of domination, the forces that we face every moment of every day. These forces have no single center that can be overthrown. They are a web that binds us. So rather than trying to overthrow the powers that be, we want to undermine domination as we confront it every day, helping the already collapsing civilization to break down more quickly—and as it falls, the centers of power will fall with it. Previous revolutionaries have only explored the well-mapped territories of power. I want to explore and adventure in the unmapped, and unmappable, territories of wild freedom. The revolution that can create the world I want has to be a feral revolution.

There can be no programs or organizations for feral revolution, because wildness cannot spring from a program or organization. Wildness springs from the freeing of our instincts and desires, from the spontaneous expression of our passions. Each of us has experienced the processes of domestication, and this experience can give us the knowledge we need to undermine civilization and transform our lives. Our distrust of our own experience is probably what keeps us from rebelling as freely and actively as we'd like. We're afraid of fucking up, we're afraid of our own ignorance. But this distrust and fear have been instilled in us by authority. It keeps us from really growing and learning. It makes us easy targets for any authority that is ready to fill us. To set up 'revolutionary' programs is to play on this fear and distrust, to reinforce the need to be told what to do. No attempt to go feral can be successful when based on such programs. We need to learn to trust and act upon our own feelings and experiences, if we are ever to be free.

So I offer no programs. What I will share is some thoughts on ways to explore. Since we all have been domesticated, part of the revolutionary process is a process of personal transformation. We have been conditioned not to trust

ourselves, not to feel completely, not to experience life intensely. We have been conditioned to accept the humiliation of work and pay as inescapable, to relate to things as resources to be used, to feel the need to prove ourselves by producing. We have been conditioned to expect disappointment, to see it as normal, not to question it. We have been conditioned to accept the tedium of civilized survival rather than breaking free and really living. We need to explore ways of breaking down this conditioning, of getting as free of our domestication as we can now. Let's try to get so free of this conditioning that it ceases to control us and becomes nothing more than a role we use when necessary for survival in the midst of civilization as we strive to undermine it.

In a very general way, we know what we want. We want to live as wild, free beings in a world of wild, free beings. The humiliation of having to follow rules, of having to sell our lives away to buy survival, of seeing our usurped desires transformed into abstractions and images in order to sell us commodities fills us with rage. How long will we put up with this misery? We want to make this world into a place where our desires can be immediately realized, not just sporadically, but normally. We want to re-eroticize our lives. We want to live not in a dead world of resources, but in a living world of free wild lovers. We need to start exploring the extent to which we are capable of living these dreams in the present without isolating ourselves. This will give us a clearer understanding of the domination of civilization over our lives, an understanding which will allow us to fight domestication more intensely and so expand the extent to which we can live wildly.

Attempting to live as wildly as possible now will also help break down our social conditioning. This will spark a wild prankishness in us which will take aim at all that would tame it, undermining civilization and creating new ways of living and sharing with each other. These explorations will expose the limits of civilization's domination and will show its inherent opposition to freedom. We will discover possibilities we have never before imagined—vast expanses of wild freedom. Projects, ranging from sabotage and pranks that expose or undermine the dominant society, to the expansion of wilderness, to festivals and orgies and general free sharing, can point to amazing possibilities.

Feral revolution is an adventure. It is the daring exploration of going wild. It takes us into unknown territories for which no maps exist. We can only come to know these territories if we dare to explore them actively. We must dare to destroy whatever destroys our wildness and to act on our instincts and desires. We must dare to trust in ourselves, our experiences, and our passions. Then we will not let ourselves be chained or penned in. We will not allow ourselves to be tamed. Our feral energy will rip civilization to shreds and create a life of wild freedom and intense pleasure.

# Nature as Spectacle

Nature has not always existed. It is not found in the depths of the forest, in the heart of the cougar or in the songs of the pygmies; it is found in the philosophies and image constructions of civilized human beings. Seemingly contradictory strands are woven together creating nature as an ideological construct that serves to domesticate us, to suppress and channel our expressions of wildness.

Civilization is monolithic and the civilized way of conceiving everything that is observed is also monolithic. When confronted with the myriad of beings all round, the civilized mind needs to categorize in order to feel that it is understanding (though, in fact, all it is understanding is how to make things useful to civilization). Nature is one of the most essential of civilized categories, one of the most useful in containing the wildness of human individuals and enforcing their self-identification as civilized, social beings.

Probably the earliest conception of nature was something similar to that found in the old testament of the Bible: the evil wilderness, a place of desolation inhabited by ferocious and poisonous beasts, malicious demons and the mad. This conception served a purpose especially important to early civilizations. It induced fear of what was wild, keeping most people in the city walls and giving those who did go out to explore a defensive posture, an attitude that they were in enemy territory. This concept, in this way, helped create the dichotomy between 'human' and 'nature' that keeps individuals from living wildly, that is, in terms of their desires.

But a totally negative conception of nature was bound to reach its limits of usefulness since it made civilization into an enclosed and besieged fortress, and to survive civilization has to expand, to be able to exploit more and more. 'Nature' became a basket of resources for civilization. A 'mother' to nurture 'humanity' and its civilisation. It was beautiful, worthy of worship, contemplation, study... and exploitation. It was not evil... but it was chaotic, capricious and unreliable. Fortunately for civilization, 'human nature' had evolved, rational and needing to order things, to bring them under control. Wild places were necessary so that people could study and contemplate 'nature' in its untouched state, but precisely so that civilized human beings could come to understand and control 'natural' processes in order to use them to expand civilization. So the 'evil wilderness' is overshadowed by a 'nature' or 'wilderness' that has positive value for civilization.

The concept of nature creates systems of social value and morality. Because of the apparently contradictory strands that have gone into the development of 'nature', these systems also may appear contradictory, but they all achieve the same end: our domestication. Those who tell us to 'act civilized' and those who tell us to 'act natural' are really telling us the same thing: 'Live in accordance with external values, not in accordance with your desires.' The morality of naturalness has been no less vicious than any other morality. People have been imprisoned, tortured and even killed for committing 'unnatural acts'—and still are. 'Nature', too, is an ugly and demanding god.

From its beginnings, nature has been an image created by authority to reinforce its power. It is no surprise that in modern society, where image dominates reality and often seems to create it, 'nature' comes into its own as a means of keeping us domesticated. 'Nature' shows on TV, Sierra Club calendars, 'wilderness' outfitters, 'natural' foods and fibers, the 'environmental' president and 'radical ecology' all conspire to create 'nature' and our 'proper' relationship to it. The image evoked retains aspects of the 'evil wilderness' of early civilization in a subliminal form. 'Nature' shows always include scenes of predation and the directors of these shows have been said to use electric prods in attempts to goad animals into fights. The warnings given to would-be 'wilderness' explorers about dangerous animals and plants and the amount of products created by 'wilderness' outfitters for dealing with these things is quite excessive from my own experiences wandering in wild places. We are given the image of life outside of civilization as a struggle for survival.

But the society of the spectacle needs the 'evil wilderness' to be subliminal in order to use it efficiently. The dominant image of 'nature' is that it is a resource and a thing of beauty to be contemplated and studied. 'Wilderness' is a place to which we can retreat for a short time, if properly outfitted, to escape from the humdrum of daily life, to relax and meditate or to find excitement and adventure. And, of course, 'nature' remains the 'mother' who supplies our needs, the resource from which civilization creates itself.

In commodity culture, 'nature' recuperates the desire for wild adventure, for life free from domestication, by selling us its image. The subliminal concept of the 'evil wilderness' gives venturing into the woods a tang of risk that appeals

to the adventurous and rebellious. It also reinforces the idea that we don't really belong there, thus selling us the numerous products deemed necessary for incursions into wild places. The positive concept of nature makes us feel that we must experience wild places (not realizing that the concepts that we've had fed into us will create what we experience at least as much as our actual surroundings). In this way, civilization successfully recuperates even those areas it seems not to touch directly, transforming them into 'nature', into 'wilderness', into aspects of the spectacle which keep us domesticated.

'Nature' domesticates because it transforms wildness into a monolithic entity, a huge realm separate from civilization. Expressions of wildness in the midst of civilization are labelled as immaturity, madness, delinquency, crime or immorality, allowing them to be dismissed, locked away, censured or punished while still maintaining that what is 'natural' is good. When 'wildness' becomes a realm outside of us rather than an expression of our own individual free-spiritedness then there can be experts in 'wildness' who will teach us the 'correct' ways of 'connecting' with it. On the west coast, there are all sorts of spiritual teachers making a mint selling a 'wildness' to yuppies which in no way threatens their corporate dreams, their Porsches or their condos. 'Wilderness' is a very profitable industry these days.

Ecologists—even 'radical' ecologists—play right into this. Rather than trying to go wild and destroy civilization with the energy of their unchained desires, they try to 'save wilderness'. In practice, this means begging or trying to manipulate the authorities into stopping the more harmful activities of certain industries and turning pockets of relatively undamaged woods, deserts and mountains into protected 'Wilderness Areas'. This only reinforces the concept of wildness as a monolithic entity, 'wilderness' or 'nature', and the commodification inherent in this concept. The very basis of the concept of a 'Wilderness Area' is the separation of 'wildness' and 'humanity'. So it is no surprise that one of the brands of 'radical' ecological ideology has created the conflict between 'biocentrism' and 'anthropocentrism'—as though we should be anything other than egocentric.

Even those 'radical ecologists' who claim to want to reintegrate people into 'nature' are fooling themselves. Their vision of (as one of them put it) a 'wild, symbiotic whole' is just the monolithic concept created by civilization worded in a quasi-mystical way. 'Wildness' continues to be a monolithic entity for these ecological mystics, a being greater than us, a god to whom we must submit. But submission is domestication. Submission is what keeps civilization going. The name of the ideology which enforces submission matters little—let it be 'nature', let it be the 'wild, symbiotic whole'. The result will still be the continuation of domestication.

When wildness is seen as having nothing to do with any monolithic concept, including 'nature' or 'wilderness', when it is seen as the potential free spiritedness in individuals that could manifest at any moment, only then does it become a threat to civilization. Any of us could spend years in 'the wilderness', but if we continued to see what surrounded us through the lens of civilization, if we continued to see the myriads of beings monolithically as 'nature', as 'wilderness', as the 'wild, symbiotic whole', we'd still be civilized; we would not be wild. But if, in the midst of the city, we at any moment actively refuse our domestication, refuse to be dominated by the social roles that are forced upon us and instead live in terms of our passions, desires and whims, if we become the unique and unpredictable beings that lie hidden beneath the roles, we are, for that moment, wild. Playing fiercely among the ruins of a decaying civilization (but don't be fooled, even in decay it is a dangerous enemy and capable of staggering on for a long time), we can do our damndest to bring it tumbling down. And free-spirited rebels will reject the survivalism of ecology as just another attempt by civilization to suppress free life, and will strive to live the chaotic, ever-changing dance of freely relating, unique individuals in opposition both to civilization and to civilization's attempt to contain wild, free-spirited living: 'Nature'.

# Radical Theory: A Wrecking Ball for Ivory Towers

It seems to have become a given among many anti-authoritarians that radical theory is an academic pursuit. On the one hand, there are the ideological activists who accuse anyone who attempts to critically analyze society or their own activities in a way that goes beyond the latest hip anarchist sloganeering of being armchair intellectuals or academics. On the other hand, there are those who supplement the income of their academic/intellectual professions by writing tracts criticizing society, the left or even their own professions, but in such abstract and insubstantial terms as to be meaningless in relation to their own lives. These intellectual 'radicals' and anti-intellectual activists remain equally enslaved to society's discourse. Radical theory is elsewhere.

Radical theory springs from the energy of insurgent desire first as a basic recognition that the social context in which we find ourselves impoverishes our lives. Because we have been educated not to think, but rather to have thoughts, it is very easy to fall from this basic recognition into accepting one or another 'radical' ideology, mouthing the appropriate slogans and participating in the mindless activism (better called reactivism) which jumps and dances for every cause and issue, but never attacks society at its root. I've heard 'class war' anarchists (many of them from upper middle class backgrounds) justify such stupidity by declaring any attempts at more precise and critical thinking to be an expression of classist privilege—even when those making the attempts are high school dropout lumpen. But there is nothing radical about stupidity or 'thinking' in slogans even when they're anarchist slogans.

Radical theory is the attempt to understand the complex system of relationships which is society, how it reproduces itself and the individual as a part of itself, and how one can begin to undermine its control and take back one's life in order to become a self-creative individual. It has no place in either the ivory tower of the academy or that of mindless ideological (re)activism. It is rather an integral part of an active insurgency against society.

Having recognized that society impoverishes our lives, it is a very small step to realize that the simplistic sloganeering that is frequently passed off as radical thought is part of this impoverishment. It belittles us as individuals by substituting itself for thinking and imagination. 'Smash authority!' is a wonderful sentiment, but that's all it is. It tells us nothing about the nature of authority, our relationship to it, its trajectories and tendencies or how we can go about destroying it. This is why those for whom this slogan is an adequate analysis of authority continue to repeat the same futile and insipid actions over and over again as signs of their resistance to authority, actions which have long since proven only to reinforce authority by creating easily confined rituals of pseudo-opposition which keep rebellion domesticated.

The small step which opens the possibility of thinking beyond slogans is an about-face, a reversal of perspective. If society impoverishes our lives, if it offers nothing worth living, then there is no reason for any of us to let this absurd system of relationships into which we have been integrated continue to determine how we view the world either by acceptance of its perspective or by reaction to it. Instead our attempts to create our lives as fully and intensely as possible, which will bring us into conflict with society, can be the basis for an ongoing analysis of society and our relationship to it that challenges and enhances our thinking and imaginations and stimulates an active insurgency against authority as it exists in the interactions that create our daily lives. This analysis can not be a static set of ideas and principles, because it is an integral part of a dialectic of thinking and living as an insurgent, self-creating individual. As such, it is an integral part of action, not a separate specialization. Written expressions of this analysis (which should not be mistaken for the analysis itself) require the development of a language that is very precise and very fluid, very pointed and very playful. I am very far from attaining this, but am trying to develop it. The language of the situationists (particularly Debord and Vaneigem in his SI days) was aiming for this. But those who prefer slogans to intensive analysis frequently accuse those attempting to develop such a language of 'intellectualism', yet only by developing such a language can the expression of theory be wrested from intellectual specialists and made into an integral part of an active insurgency.

Radical theory is an aspect of a way of living which smashes all ivory towers. It exposes the theories that spill from the academic ivory towers as lifeless shams. It exposes the actions of the ideologues of activism as mindless reaction. To put it another way, theorists who aren't living an insurgent life say nothing that's worth saying, and activists who refuse to think critically do nothing worth doing. Radical theory is thinking becoming sensually integrated into an

insurgent life and learning, however slowly, to express itself with precision and fluidity. When developed it cuts like a well-honed knife.

# Social Transformation—Or the Abolition of Society

*Society...1) a group of persons who have the same customs, beliefs, etc. or live under a common government and who are thought of as forming a single community...3) all people here thought of as forming a community in which each person is partly dependent on all the rest.*

Webster's New World Dictionary

Nothing we 'know' can be assumed to be true—none of our conceptions of the world are sacred and we would do well to question them all. Many anarchists talk about creating a 'new' or 'free' society. But few question the idea of society itself. The conception of society is amorphous—and so more difficult to deal with than particular aspects of it like government, religion, capitalism or technology. It is so ingrained in us that questioning it feels like questioning our very nature—which makes it all the more necessary to question it. Freeing ourselves from the character armor that represses our desires and passions may very well demand, not merely the transformation of society, but its abolition.

The dictionary definitions above show society to be a single entity made up of individuals who are in a condition of (at least potential) dependency upon each other—which is to say, who are not complete in themselves. I see society as a system of relationships between beings who are acting (or being treated) as social roles in order to reproduce the system and themselves as social individuals.

The dependency of social individuals is not the same as the biological dependency of infants. Biological dependency ends once the child achieves adequate mobility and hand-and-eye coordination (in about five years). But in those five years, the social relationships of the family repress children's desires, instill fear of the world into them and so submerge the potential for full, free, creative individuality beneath the layers of armoring which are the social individual, beneath the psychic dependency which makes us cling desperately to each other while we despise each other. All social relationships have their basis in the incompleteness produced by the repression of our passions and desires. Their basis is our need for each other, not our desire for each other. We are using each other. So every relationship is an employer/employee relationship, which is why they seem always, to one extent or another, to become adversarial—whether through joking put-downs, bickering or full-fledged fighting. How can we help but despise those we use and hate those who use us?

Society cannot exist apart from social roles—this is why the family and education in some form are essential parts of society. The social individual doesn't play only one social role—but melds together many roles which create the character armor which is mistaken for 'individuality'.

Social roles are ways in which individuals are defined by the whole system of relationships that is society in order to reproduce society. They make individuals useful to society by making them predictable, by defining their activities in terms of the needs of society. Social roles are work—in the broad sense of activity that reproduces the production/consumption cycle. Society is thus the domestication of human beings—the transformation of potentially creative, playful, wild beings who can relate freely in terms of their desires into deformed beings using each other to try to meet desperate needs, but succeeding only at reproducing the need and the system of relationships based on it.

*A pox on all captivity, even should it be in the interest of the universal good, even in Montesquieu's garden of precious stones.* André Breton

Free-spirited individuals have no interest in seriously relating as social roles. Predictable, predetermined relationships bore us and we have no desire to continue to reproduce them. It is true that they offer some security, stability and (luke-)warmth... but at such expense! Rather, we want freedom to relate in terms of our unrepressed desires, the opening of all possibilities, the raging fire of our passions unbound. And such a life lies outside any system of predictable, predetermined relationships.

Society offers safety, but it does so by eradicating the risk that is essential to free play and adventure. It offers us survival—in exchange for our lives. For the survival it offers us is survival as social individuals—as beings who are composites of social roles, alienated from their passions and desires—involved in social relationships to which we are addicted, but which never satisfy.

A world of free relating among unrepressed individuals would be a world free of society. All interactions would be determined immediately. All by the individuals involved, in terms of their desires—not by the necessities of a social

system. We would tend to amaze, delight, enrage each other, to evoke real passion rather than mere boredom, complacency, disgust, or security. Every encounter would have a potential for marvelous adventure which cannot fully exist where most relating is in the form of social relationships. So rather than remain captive in this 'garden of precious stones' called society, I choose to struggle to abolish society—and that has several implications as to how I understand 'revolution' (for want of a better term).

To struggle to transform society is always a struggle for power, because its goal is to gain control over the system of relationships that is society (a goal which I see as unrealistic since this system is now mostly beyond anyone's control). As such, it cannot be an individual struggle. It requires mass or class activity. Individuals have to define themselves as social beings in this struggle, suppressing any individual desires which do not fit in to the 'greater' goal of social transformation.

The struggle to abolish society is a struggle to abolish power. It is essentially the struggle of individuals to live free of social roles and rules, to live out their desires passionately, to live out all the most marvelous things they can imagine. Group projects and struggles are part of this, but they grow from the ways in which the desires of the individuals can enhance each other, and will dissolve when they begin to stifle the individuals. The path of this struggle cannot be mapped out because its basis is the confrontation between the desires of the free-spirited individual and the demands of society. But analyses of the ways in which society molds us and of the failures and successes of past rebellions are possible.

The tactics used against society are as many as the individuals involved, but all share the aim of undermining social control and conditioning, and freeing the individual's desires and passions. The unpredictability of humor and playfulness are essential, evoking a Dionysian chaos. Playing with social roles in ways that undermine their usefulness to society, that turn them on their head, making toys of them is a worthy practice. But most importantly, let us confront society with ourselves, with our unique desires and passions, with the attitude that we are not going to give in to it, or center our activities around it, but are going to live on our own terms.

Society is not a neutral force. Social relationships only exist by the suppression of the real desires and passions of individuals, by the repression of all that makes free relating possible. Society is domestication, the transformation of individuals into use value and of free play into work. Free relating among individuals who refuse and resist their domestication undermines all society, and opens all possibilities. And to those who feel that they can achieve freedom through a merely social revolution, I end with these words of Renzo Navatore:

*You are waiting for the revolution? Let it be! My own began a long time ago! When you will be ready... I won't mind going along with you for a while. But when you'll stop, I shall continue on my insane and triumphant way toward the great and sublime conquest of the nothing!*



# The Ideology of Victimization

In New Orleans, just outside the French Quarter, there's a bit of stenciled graffiti on a fence that reads: 'Men Rape'. I used to pass by this nearly every day. The first time I saw this, it pissed me off because I knew the graffitist would define me as a 'man' and I have never desired to rape anyone. Nor have any of my bepenised friends. But, as I encounter this spray-painted dogma every day, the reasons for my anger changed. I recognized this dogma as a litany for the feminist version of the ideology of victimization—an ideology which promotes fear, individual weakness (and subsequently dependence on ideologically based support groups and paternalistic protection from the authorities) and a blindness to all realities and interpretations of experience that do not conform to one's view of oneself as a victim.

I don't deny that there is some reality behind the ideology of victimization. No ideology could work if it had no basis whatsoever in reality. As Bob Black has said, 'We are all adult children of parents.' We have all spent our entire lives in a society which is based on the repression and exploitation of our desires, our passions, and our individuality, but it is surely absurd to embrace defeat by defining ourselves in terms of our victimization.

As a means of social control, social institutions reinforce the feeling of victimization in each of us while focusing these feelings in directions that reinforce dependence on social institutions. The media bombards us with tales of crime, political and corporate corruption, racial and gender strife, scarcity and war. While these tales often have a basis in reality, they are presented quite clearly to reinforce fear. But many of us doubt the media, and so are served up a whole slew of 'radical' ideologies—all containing a grain of real perception, but all blind to whatever does not fit into their ideological structure. Each one of these ideologies reinforces the ideology of victimization and focuses the energy of individuals away from an examination of society in its totality and of their role in reproducing it. Both the media and all versions of ideological radicalism reinforce the idea that we are victimized by that which is 'outside', by the Other, and that social structures—the family, the cops, the law, therapy and support groups, education, 'radical' organizations or anything else that can reinforce a sense of dependence—are there to protect us. If society did not produce these mechanisms—including the structures of false, ideological, partial opposition—to protect itself, we might just examine society in its totality and come to recognize its dependence upon our activity to reproduce it. Then, every chance we get, we might refuse our roles as dependent/victim of society. But the emotions, attitudes, and modes of thought evoked by the ideology of victimization make such a reversal of perspective very difficult.

In accepting the ideology of victimization in any form, we choose to live in fear. The person who painted the 'Men Rape' graffiti was most likely a feminist, a woman who saw her act as a radical defiance of patriarchal oppression. But such proclamations, in fact, merely add to a climate of fear that already exists. Instead of giving women, as individuals a feeling of strength, it reinforces the idea that women are essentially victims, and women who read this graffiti, even if they consciously reject the dogma behind it, probably walk the streets more fearfully. The ideology of victimization that permeates so much feminist discourse can also be found in some form in gay liberation, racial/national liberation, class war and damn near every other 'radical' ideology. Fear of an actual, immediate, readily identified threat to an individual can motivate intelligent action to eradicate the threat, but the fear created by the ideology of victimization is a fear of forces both too large and too abstract for the individual to deal with. It ends up becoming a climate of fear, suspicion and paranoia which makes the mediations which are the network of social control seem necessary and even good.

It is this seemingly overwhelming climate of fear that creates the sense of weakness, the sense of essential victimhood, in individuals. While it is true that various ideological 'liberationists' often bluster with militant rage, it rarely gets beyond that to the point of really threatening anything. Instead, they 'demand' (read 'militantly beg') that those they define as their oppressors grant them their 'liberation'. An example of this occurred at the 1989 'Without Borders' anarchist gathering in San Francisco. There is no question that at most workshops I went to, men tended to talk more than women. But no one was stopping women from speaking, and I didn't notice any lack of respect being shown for women who did speak. Yet, at the public microphone in the courtyard of the building where the gathering was held, a speech was made in which it was proclaimed that 'men' were dominating the discussions and keeping 'women' from speaking. The orator 'demanded' (again, read 'militantly begged') that men make sure that they gave women space to speak. In other words, the speaker was begging the oppressor, according to her ideology, to grant the 'rights' of

the oppressed—an attitude which, by implication, accepts the role of man as oppressor and woman as victim. There were workshops where certain individuals did dominate the discussions, but a person who is acting from the strength of their individuality will deal with such a situation by immediately confronting it as it occurs and will deal with the people involved as individuals. The need to put such situations into an ideological context and to treat the individuals involved as social roles, turning the real, immediate experience into abstract categories, is a sign that one has chosen to be weak, to be a victim. And embracing weakness puts one in the absurd position of having to beg one's oppressor to grant one's liberation—guaranteeing that one will never be free to be anything but a victim.

Like all ideologies, the varieties of the ideology of victimization are forms of false consciousness. Accepting the social role of the victim—in whatever one of its many forms—is choosing to not even create one's life for oneself or to explore one's real relationships to the social structures. All of the partial liberation movements—feminism, gay liberation, racial liberation, workers movements and so on—define individuals in terms of their social roles. Because of this, these movements not only do not include a reversal of perspectives which breaks down social roles and allows individuals to create a praxis built on their own passions and desires; they actually work against such a reversal of perspective. The 'liberation' offered by these movements is not the freedom of individuals to create the lives they desire in an atmosphere of free conviviality, but is rather 'liberation' of a social role to which the individual remains subject. But the essence of these social roles within the framework of these 'liberation' ideologies is victimhood. So the litanies of wrongs suffered must be sung over and over to guarantee that the 'victims' never forget that is what they are. These 'radical' liberation movements help to guarantee that the climate of fear never disappears, and that individuals continue to see themselves as weak and to see their strength as lying in the social roles which are, in fact, the source of their victimization. In this way, these movements and ideologies act to prevent the possibility of a potent revolt against all authority and all social roles.

True revolt is never safe. Those who choose to define themselves in terms of their role as victim do not dare to try total revolt, because it would threaten the safety of their roles. But, as Nietzsche said: 'The secret of the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is to live dangerously!' Only a conscious rejection of the ideology of victimization, a refusal to live in fear and weakness, and an acceptance of the strength of our own passions and desires, of ourselves as individuals who are greater than, and so capable of living beyond, all social roles, can provide a basis for total rebellion against society. Such a rebellion is certainly fuelled, in part, by rage, but not the strident, resentful, frustrated rage of the victim which motivates feminists, racial liberationists, gay liberationists and the like to 'demand' their 'rights' from the authorities. Rather it is the rage of our desires unchained, the return of the repressed in full force and undisguised. But more essentially, total revolt is fuelled by a spirit of free play and of joy in adventure—by a desire to explore every possibility for intense life which society tries to deny us. For all of us who want to live fully and without constraint, the time is past when we can tolerate living like shy mice inside the walls. Every form of the ideology of victimization moves us to live as shy mice. Instead, let's be crazed and laughing monsters, joyfully tearing down the walls of society and creating lives of wonder and amazement for ourselves.

A world of wonder—one in which we bring forth the amazing monsters of our imaginations—will be a world in which terror exists... But not terror as we know it in the world of order.

Terrorism is an activity of the forces of order, of those who have or desire to have power. It is the use of fear to force people into line—to compel them to conform. It has no interest in ecstatic terror, only in the subliminal terror of every day life—a terror which as it frightens us also bores us, because it is the substance of daily life in commodity hell.

But in the realms of the 'mind' that have become unconscious, our repressed passions and desires live—and these are amazing monsters. At times, these monsters, when brought to light, will fill us with terror—but they are not terrorists—they do not try to compel us to obey. The terror they evoke is ecstatic terror—terror that breaks us out of the normal flow and opens us to the marvelous. This terror is brought on by the opening up of all possibilities, the breaking forth of the total abandon of free play, the birth of anarchy. If we flee from this terror, we return to our cages and the boring, rational terror of authority. Instead, we need to abandon our selves to the ecstatic terror, the convulsive beauty of delirious anarchy, to immerse ourselves in it, to bring ourselves through it and make it OURS. Then the amazing monsters we've so long repressed will freely dance within us. We will be the most energetic, ecstatic and lusty outlaws. The authorities may call us mad-lunatic terrorists—but the terror we unleash will be a terror that sets free—our insane monsters daring to break all cages—and too bad if the creatures inside cringe back in fear!—That will not stop our wild and joyful rampage—our ecstatic war against all the forces of order. The chaos of our desires—the passion to open all possibilities and live life to the full—will break forth in the light of day—a brilliant shadow eclipsing all the forces of order.

# Insurgent Ferocity: The Playful Violence of Rebellion

*We don't just talk about violence; it is our element, our everyday fate...the conditions we are forced to live in...*  
Os Cangaceiros

Social control is impossible without violence. Society produces systems of rationalized violence to socialize individuals—to make them into useful resources for society. While some of these systems, such as the military, the police and the penal system can still be viewed separately due to the blatant harshness of their violence, for the most part these systems have become so interconnected and so pervasive that they act as a single totality—the totality which is the society in which we live.

This systematic violence exists mostly as a constant underlying threat—a subtle, even boring, everyday terrorism which induces a fear of stepping out of line. The signs and orders from ‘superiors’ which threaten us with punishment or poverty, the armed, uniformed thugs who are there to “protect and serve” (huh!?!), the barrage of headlines about wars, torture, serial killers and street gangs, all immerse us in an atmosphere of subtle, underlying, rationalized social violence which causes us to fear and repress our own violent passions.

In light of the systematic social violence that surrounds us, it's no surprise that people are fooled into viewing all violence as a single, monolithic entity rather than as specific acts or ways of relating. The system of violence produced by society does become a monolith, a monolith which acts to perpetuate itself.

In reaction to this monolithic system of violence, the ‘pathology of pacifism’ develops. Unable to see beyond social categories, the pacifist creates a false dichotomy, limiting the question of violence to the ethical/intellectual choice between an acceptance of violence as a monolithic system or the total rejection of violence. But this choice exists only in the realm of worthless abstractions, because in the world in which we actually live, pacifism and systematic violence depend on each other. Pacifism is an ideology which demands total social peace as its ultimate goal. But total social peace would require the complete suppression of the individual passions that create individual incidences of violence—and that would require total social control. Total social control is only possible through the use of the constant threat of the police, prison, therapy, social censure, scarcity or war. So the pacifist ideal requires a monolithic system of violence and reflects the social contradiction inherent in the necessity that authority strive to maintain peace in order to maintain a smoothly running social system, but can only do so by maintaining a rationalized system of violence.

The rationalized system of violence not only perpetuates itself, but also evokes responses, often in the form of blind lashings out by enraged individuals, which the system then manipulates into justifications for its own continued existence, and occasionally in the form of consciously rebellious violence. But one of the most significant by-products of the system of violence stems from its need to suppress individual, passionate violence. The passionate violence that is suppressed turns in on the one feeling it, becoming the slow-killing, underlying violence of stress and anxiety. It is evident in the millions of little pinpricks of humiliation that pass between people on the streets and in the public places of every city—looks of disgust and hostility between strangers, and the verbal battles of wits exchanging guilt and blame between supposed friends. This is the subtlest and most total form of rationalized violence; everyone conforms out of fear of each others' disgust. This is the subtle form of violence practiced by pacifists.

*I do not dream of a gentle revolution. My passion runs to the violence of supersession, the ferocity of a life that renounces nothing.*  
R. Vaneigem

Those of us who are fighting for the freedom to create our lives for ourselves need to reject both sides of the choice society offers between pacifism and systematic violence, because this choice is an attempt to socialize our rebellion. Instead we can create our own options, developing a playful and passionate chaos of action and relating which may express itself at times with intense and ferocious violence, at times with the gentlest tenderness, or in whatever way our passions and our whims move us in the particular moment. Both the rejection of violence and the systemization of violence are an attack on our passions and uniqueness.

Violence is an aspect of animal interaction and observation of violence among animals belies several generalizations. Violence among animals does not fit into the formula of social Darwinism; there is no perpetual war of all against all. Rather at specific moments under particular circumstances, individual acts of violence flare up and then fade when the moments pass. There is no systematic violence in the wild, but, instead, momentary expressions of specific passions. This exposes one of the major fallacies of pacifist ideology. Violence, in itself, does not perpetuate violence. The social system of rationalized violence, of which pacifism is an integral part, perpetuates itself as a system

Against the system of violence, a non-systematized, passionate, playful violence is the appropriate response. Violent play is very common among animals and children. Chasing, wrestling and pouncing upon a playmate, breaking, smashing and tearing apart things are all aspects of play that is free of rules. The conscious insurgent plays this way as well, but with real targets and with the intention of causing real damage. The targets of this ferocious play in the present society would mainly be institutions, commodities, social roles and cultural icons, but the human representatives of these institutions can also be targets—especially where they present an immediate threat to anyone’s freedom to create their life as they desire.

Rebellion has never been merely a matter of self-defense. In itself, self-defense is probably best achieved by accepting the status quo or its reform. Rebellion is the aggressive, dangerous, playful attack by free-spirited individuals against society. Refusing a system of violence, refusing an organized militarized form of armed struggle, allows the violence of insurgents to retain a high level of invisibility. It cannot be readily understood by the authorities and brought under their control. Its insurgent nature may even go undetected by the authorities as it eats away at the foundations of social control. From the rationalized perspective of authority, this playful violence will often appear utterly random, but actually is in harmony with the desires of the insurgent. This playful violence of rebellion kills *inadvertently as (one) strides out happily without looking back* .

The playful violence of insurgence has no room for regret. Regret weakens the force of blows and makes us cautious and timid. But regret only comes in when violence is dealt with as a moral question, and for insurgents who are fighting for the freedom to live their desires, morality is just another aspect of social control. Wherever rebel violence has manifested playfully, regret seems absurd. In riots (other than police riots) and spontaneous uprisings—as well as in small-scale vandalism—a festive attitude seems to be evident. There is an intense joy, even euphoria, in the release of the violent passions that have been pent up for so long. Bashing in the skull of society as we experience it on a daily basis is an intense pleasure, and one to be savored, not repudiated in shame, guilt or regret. Some may object that such an attitude could cause our violence to get out of hand, but an excess of insurgent violence is not something we need to fear. As we break down our repression and begin to free our passions, certainly our gestures, our actions and our entire way of being are bound to become increasingly expansive and all we do we will seem to do to excess. Our generosity will seem excessive and our violence will seem excessive. Unrepressed, expansive individuals squander in all things. Riots and insurrections have failed to get beyond temporary release, not because of excess, but because people hold themselves back. People have not trusted their passions. They have feared the expansiveness, the squandering excess of their own dreams and desires. So they have given up or turned their fight over to the new authorities, new systematizers of violence. But how can insurgent violence ever be truly excessive when there is no institution of social control, no aspect of authority, no icon of culture that should not be smashed to powder—and that gleefully?

If what we want is a world in which each of us can create our own lives free of constraints, relating with each other as we desire rather than in accordance with socially defined roles, we have to recognize that, at times, violence will flare and that there is nothing wrong with that. Fullness of the passions includes full and expansive expressions of hatred and rage—and these are violent emotions. Though this violence can be used tactically it will not be systematic. Though it can be intelligent, it will not be rationalized. And under no circumstances is it self-perpetuating, because it is individual and temporary, spending itself fully in its free, passionate expression. Neither moralistic nonviolence nor the systematic violence of military struggle can break down authority since both require some form of authority.

Only the expansive and passionate violence of insurgent individuals playing alone or with each other has any chance of destroying this society...

Forward everyone!  
And with arms and hearts,  
Speech and pen,  
Dagger and rifle,  
Irony and blasphemy,  
Theft, poisoning and fire,  
Let us make...war on society.

Déjacque

# The Quest for the Spiritual—A Basis for a Radical Analysis of Religion

This civilized, technological, commodity culture in which we live is a wasteland. For most people, most of the time, life is dull and empty, lacking vibrancy, adventure, passion and ecstasy. It's no surprise that many people search beyond the realm of their normal daily existence for something more. It is in this light that we need to understand the quest for the spiritual.

Of course, many, if not most, religious people are not really questing for anything. Religion provides them with dogmas, easy answers which allow them to stop thinking, feeling or acting for themselves. I feel nothing but disgust for their mindless, dogmatic spirituality and will deal no further with it. It is rather with sincere spiritual questing that I wish to deal.

I was raised a fundamentalist Christian, so I have a first-hand experience of one of the most repressive forms of religion. A few—though very few—fundamentalists are truly questing for something more. I was one of these. I questioned, I probed, I sought for the intense depth of passion that this religion promised but that its practitioners rarely manifested. I decided to study for the ministry, not because I wanted to be a minister, but because I hoped to gain a greater understanding of the spiritual. During my studies, I left my fundamentalism behind, embracing a Christian mysticism which combined aspects of Pentecostalism, Tolstoyan anarcho-pacifism and nonviolent millenarian revolutionism.

In order to better live this 'radical Christianity', I dropped out of college and wandered around the country visiting 'radical Christian' communes. I finally settled in a commune in Washington, D.C., because they really seemed to be doing something. Within a few months, my attempts to live my faith came to a head. I was putting all my strength and energy into actively expressing the 'radical' self-sacrifice that I believed would transform the world into the kingdom of god. Twelve hours a day, I worked on a project designed to help poor ghetto-dwellers create a housing cooperative in which they would collectively own and control their housing. My energy gave out. When I called on god to help me, he wasn't there to answer. When I was most dedicated to him, the god I had trusted all my life failed me. As a result, I had a nervous breakdown and went through several months of severe depression. What finally brought me out of it was recognizing that there was no god, there was no reason to expend myself in absurd self-sacrifice and my energy would be best used in creating my own life.

My rejection of Christianity and god first took the form of a crass mechanistic materialism, but someone who had so passionately pursued the spiritual could never be satisfied with a dead mechanistic view of reality. So I dissected Christianity—my two and a half years of theological studies was useful in this—and compared and contrasted other religions. I already knew that Christianity was dualistic, dividing reality into spirit and matter. I discovered that this dualism was common to all religions with the possible exceptions of some forms of Taoism and Buddhism. I also discovered something quite insidious about the flesh/spirit dichotomy. Religion proclaims the realm of spirit to be the realm of freedom, of creativity, of beauty, of ecstasy, of joy, of wonder, of life itself. In contrast, the realm of matter is the realm of dead mechanical activity, of grossness, of work, of slavery, of suffering, of sorrow. The earth, the creatures on it, even our own bodies were impediments to our spiritual growth, or at best, tools to be exploited. What a perfect ideological justification for the exploitative activities of civilization.

But I don't believe religion necessarily developed purely as a way of justifying exploitation. Much more likely is that as exploitation immiserated the lives of people, the ecstatic joy of wild existence and of the flesh unrepressed became fainter and fainter memories until at last they seemed to be not of this world at all. This world was the world of travail (from the Latin root word which gives all the Romance languages their word for work) and sorrow. Joy and ecstasy had to be of another realm—the realm of spirit. Early religion is wildly orgiastic, clearly reflecting the lost way of life for which people longed. But by separating this wild abandon into the realm of spirit, which is in reality just a realm of abstract ideas with no concrete existence, religion made itself the handmaiden of civilized, domesticated culture. So it is no surprise that in time shamans evolved into priests who were functionaries of the State.

Religion—which started as an attempt, clearly flawed, to regain the ecstasy of unconstrained pleasure—as the handmaiden of authority had to take a different stance toward pleasure. For the most part, religion has declared pleasure to be gross, evil, or a distraction from 'higher' spiritual pursuits. Present pleasure was to be repressed for a future paradise.

A few schools of religious thought took a different tactic. Since pleasure could so clearly induce ecstasy, these schools said that it was fine to practice these activities as long as it was done in the right way, at the right time, for purely spiritual purposes. The spontaneous, playful expressions of pleasure were strongly discouraged as they distracted from the spiritual expressions of these practices. The Puritanism and productivist orientation to pleasure in some tantric and sex-magickal texts is astounding. In these spiritual practices, pleasure is subverted from its natural course in which it would create a world of free play and is transformed into spiritual work.

The rejection of religion in recent centuries has mainly taken the form of crass, mechanistic materialism. But this is not truly a rejection of religion. This form of materialism still accepts the matter/spirit dichotomy—but then proclaims that spirit does not exist. Thus, freedom, creativity, beauty, ecstasy, life as something more than mere mechanical existence are utterly eradicated from the world. Mechanistic materialism is the ideology of religion updated to fit the needs of industrial capitalism. For industrial capitalism requires not only a deadened, dispirited earth, but deadened, dispirited human beings who can be made into cogs in a vast machine.

But there have been other rebellions against religious ideology. I am most familiar with those that arose in Christian Europe. In their most radical expressions, the Free Spirits, the Adamites and the Ranters utterly rejected the flesh/spirit dichotomy, claimed paradise for the earth in the present, claimed divinity for themselves as physical beings and rejected the concept of sin and absolute morality. At their best, they were radically anti-religious. They used religious language in a way that turned religion on its head and undermined its basis. It seems that these anti-religious radicals weren't aware of the full implications of what they were doing, and because of that their rebellion was recuperated where it wasn't simply wiped out.

Industrial capitalism and its attendant ideology, mechanistic materialism, have drained the life and beauty from our experience of the world. We have been taught to distrust our own experience and to accept as 'knowledge' the word of authority as found in textbooks, heard in lectures or poured into us by television or other media. And the picture of reality we are spoon-fed is so joyless, so lacking in passion, that if there is any feeling left in us, we must have something more. Because religion has usurped the passion from the world, its language is quite often passionate, ecstatic, even erotic. It certainly sounds like the place to look for the depth of feeling and wild creativity for which we long. In my own explorations, I experimented with mystical practices and magical ritual. And both within the context of these experiments and outside of that context in wilderness areas, I have had experiences which don't fit into the framework of a mechanistic materialist world view. Certainly, religion could provide a framework for those experiences.

But, ultimately, religion fails to meet 'spiritual' needs. It fails because it declares those needs to be spiritual—of a nonworldly realm—and so cannot deal with their roots. For it is civilization with its need to exploit the earth, and most especially industrial civilization for which even humans must become mere cogs in a huge machine, that drains our lives of beauty, of creativity, of passion, of ecstasy. William Blake said, 'If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear as it is: infinite'. And I know our senses can be doors to vast worlds of wonder. I have experienced as much. But our senses have been bound to the needs of production and consumption, and so made incapable of experiencing the vibrant life that is the physical world on a moment-to-moment basis.

Religion claims to give us back the freedom, the creativity, the passionate fullness of life that was stolen from us, but, in fact, is part of the conspiracy to keep this fullness from us. In relegating creativity, passion, freedom and ecstasy to the realm of the spiritual, religion safely takes them out of the realm of daily life and puts them in their 'proper' place where they cannot become a threat to civilization—the realm of ritual and ceremony. My own experiments with magic and mystical practice taught me something interesting. When I looked back on my experiences without putting them in any sort of ideological context—and without religious metaphors to obscure what was really going on, I realized that every one of these experiences was a physical, bodily, sensual experience, not an experience in some sort of 'spiritual' realm. But it was an experience of the senses free of their ideological, civilized chains. I was momentarily experiencing the world as a wild being, without mediation. It's interesting to note that the metaphor that I have found most useful in describing these experiences is the lycanthropic metaphor—I felt that I had turned into some non-human creature. Civilization has become so much a part of our definition of the human, that our minds seem to view experiences of uncivilized sensuality as experiences of inhuman sensuality. When religion defines these experiences, it destroys their sensuality and wildness, denies their bodily nature, and so civilizes them. Eventually, they fade. Religion ceases to be orgiastic and turns dogmatic—and to those with any perception it becomes clear that religion is incapable of fulfilling its promise.

The revolutionary project must certainly include the end of religion—but not in the form of a simplistic acceptance of mechanistic materialism. Rather, we must seek to awaken our senses to the fullness of life that is the material world. We must oppose both religion and mechanistic materialism with a vibrant, passionate, living materialism. We must

storm the citadel of religion and reclaim the freedom, the creativity, the passion and the wonder that religion has stolen from our earth and our lives. In order to do this we will have to understand what needs and desires religion speaks to and how it fails to fulfill them. I have attempted to express some of my own explorations so that we can carry on the project of creating ourselves as free, wild beings. The project of transforming the world into a realm of sensual joy and pleasure by destroying the civilization that has stolen the fullness of life from us.



# The Cops in Our Heads—Some thoughts on anarchy and morality

In my travels over the past several months I have talked with many anarchists who conceive of anarchy as a moral principle. Some go so far as to speak of anarchy as though it were a deity to whom they had given themselves—reinforcing my feeling that those who really want to experience anarchy may need to divorce themselves from anarchism.

The most frequent of the moral conceptions of anarchy I heard defined anarchy as a principled refusal to use force to impose one's will on others. This conception has implications which I cannot accept. It implies that domination is mainly a matter of personal moral decisions rather than of social roles and relationships, that all of us are equally in a position to exercise domination and that we need to exercise self-discipline to prevent ourselves from doing so. If domination is a matter of social roles and social relationships, this moral principle is utterly absurd, being nothing more than a way of separating the politically correct (the elect) from the politically incorrect (the damned). This definition of anarchy places anarchic rebels in a position of even greater weakness in an already lopsided struggle against authority. All forms of violence against people or property, general strikes, theft and even such tame activities as civil disobedience constitute a use of force to impose one's will. To refuse to use force to impose one's will is to become totally passive—to become a slave. This conception of anarchy makes it a rule to control our lives, and that is an oxymoron.

The attempt to make a moral principle of anarchy distorts its real significance. Anarchy describes a particular type of situation, one in which either authority does not exist or its power to control is negated. Such a situation guarantees nothing—not even the continued existence of that situation, but it does open up the possibility for each of us to start creating our lives for ourselves in terms of our own desires and passions rather than in terms of social roles and the demands of social order. Anarchy is not the goal of revolution; it is the situation which makes the only type of revolution that interests me possible—an uprising of individuals to create their lives for themselves and destroy what stands in their way. It is a situation free of any moral implications, presenting to each of us the amoral challenge to live our lives without constraints.

Since the anarchic situation is amoral, the idea of an anarchist morality is highly suspect. Morality is a system of principles defining what constitutes right and wrong behavior. It implies some absolute outside of individuals by which they are to define themselves, a commonality of all people that makes certain principles applicable to everyone.

I don't wish to deal with the concept of the 'commonality of all people' in this article. My present point is that whatever morality is based upon, it always stands outside of and above the living individual. Whether the basis of morality is god, patriotism, common humanity, production needs, natural law, 'the Earth', anarchy, or even 'the individual' as a principle, it is always an abstract ideal that rules over us. Morality is a form of authority and will be undermined by an anarchic situation as much as any other authority if that situation is to last.

Morality and judgment go hand in hand. Criticism—even harsh, cruel criticism—is essential to honing our rebellious analysis and practice, but judgment needs to be utterly eradicated. Judgment categorizes people as guilty or not guilty—and guilt is one of the most powerful weapons of repression. When we judge and condemn ourselves or anyone else, we are suppressing rebellion—that is the purpose of guilt. (This does not mean that we "shouldn't" hate or wish to kill anyone—it would be absurd to create an "amoral" morality, but our hatred needs to be recognized as a personal passion and not defined in moral terms). Radical critique grows from the real experiences, activities, passions and desires of individuals and aims at liberating rebelliousness. Judgment springs from principles and ideals that stand above us; it aims at enslaving us to those ideals. Where anarchic situations have risen, judgment has often temporarily disappeared, freeing people of guilt—as in certain riots where people of all sorts looted together in a spirit of joy in spite of having been taught all of their lives to respect property. Morality requires guilt; freedom requires the elimination of guilt.

A dadaist once said, 'Being governed by morals... has made it impossible for us to be anything other than passive toward the policeman; this is the source of our slavery'. Certainly, morality is a source of passivity. I have heard of several situations in which fairly large-scale anarchic situations started to develop and have experienced minor ones, but in each of these situations, the energy dissipated and most participants returned to the non-lives they'd lived before the uprisings. These events show that, in spite of the extent to which social control permeates all of our waking (and

much of our sleeping) lives, we can break out. But the cops in our heads—the morality, guilt and fear—have to be dealt with. Every moral system, no matter what claims it makes to the contrary, places limits on the possibilities available to us, constraints upon our desires; and these limits are not based on our actual capabilities, but on abstract ideas that keep us from exploring the full extent of our capabilities. When anarchic situations have arisen in the past, the cops in peoples' heads—the ingrained fear, morality and guilt—have frightened people, keeping them tame enough to retreat back into the safety of their cages, and the anarchic situation disappeared.

This is significant because anarchic situations don't just pop out of nowhere—they spring from the activities of people frustrated with their lives. It is possible for each of us at any moment to create such a situation. Often this would be tactically foolish, but the possibility is there. Yet we all seem to wait patiently for anarchic situations to drop from the sky—and when they do explode forth, we can't keep them going. Even those of us who have consciously rejected morality find ourselves hesitating, stopping to examine each action, fearing the cops even when there are no external cops around. Morality, guilt and fear of condemnation act as cops in our heads, destroying our spontaneity, our wildness, our ability to live our lives to the full.

The cops in our heads will continue to suppress our rebelliousness until we learn to take risks. I don't mean that we have to be stupid—jail is not an anarchic or liberatory situation, but without risk, there is no adventure, no life. Self-motivated activity—activity that springs from our passions and desires, not from attempts to conform to certain principles and ideals or to blend in to any group (including 'anarchists')—is what can create a situation of anarchy, what can open up a world of possibilities limited only by our capabilities. To learn to freely express our passions—a skill learned only by doing it—is essential. When we feel disgust, anger, joy, desire, sadness, love, hatred, we need to express them. It isn't easy. More often than not I find myself falling into the appropriate social role in situations where I want to express something different. I'll go into a store feeling disgust for the whole process of economic relationships, and yet politely thank the clerk for putting me through just that process. Were I doing this consciously, as a cover for shoplifting, it would be fun, using my wits to get what I want; but it is an ingrained social response—a cop in my head. I am improving, but I have a hell of a long way to go. Increasingly, I try to act on my whims, my spontaneous urges without caring about what others think of me. This is a self-motivated activity—the activity that springs from our passions and desires, from our suppressed imaginations, our unique creativity. Sure, following our subjectivity this way, living our lives for ourselves, can lead us to make mistakes, but never mistakes comparable to the mistake of accepting the zombie existence that obedience to authority, morality, rules or higher powers creates. Life without risks, without the possibility of mistakes, is no life at all. Only by taking the risk of defying all authority and living for ourselves will we ever live life to the full.

I want no constraints on my life; I want the opening of all possibilities so that I can create my life for myself—at every moment. This means breaking down all social roles and destroying all morality. When an anarchist or any other radical starts preaching their moral principles at me—whether non-coercion, deep ecology, communism, militantism or even ideologically-required 'pleasure'—I hear a cop or a priest, and I have no desire to deal with people as cops or priests, except to defy them. I am struggling to create a situation in which I can live freely, being all that I desire to be, in a world of free individuals with whom I can relate in terms of our desires without constraints. I have enough cops in my head—as well as those out in the streets—to deal with without having to deal with the cops of 'anarchist' or radical morality as well. Anarchy and morality are opposed to each other, and any effective opposition to authority will need to oppose morality and eradicate the cops in our heads.

# Drifting Away from the Sacred—Thoughts inspired by reading Peter Lamborn Wilson's *The Sacred Drift*.

My feelings when I read Peter Lamborn Wilson are that he wishes to live very much as I do, yet he looks to the realm of spirituality as a means to achieve this. To me, it is evident that this is another false path to autonomous self-creation—precisely because it is a path...and one that has been tried so often—its failure should be self-evident.

The surrealists called for divergence from all known paths, yet their project proved to be absurd because they sought the marvelous in a passive way outside any 'spiritual' context. Nineteenth century materialism made the mistake of killing god without reclaiming what god had stolen from human beings and from the world. This left a wasteland. The surrealist attempt to use a kind of materialistic mysticism to reclaim this was bound to fail, in part because of its passivity and in part because of its reliance on the Freudian 'unconscious' as the realm from which the marvelous would spring.

The 'unconscious' realm, like the 'spiritual' realm, is a social creation which relegates aspects of our lives which would be best left open and accessible to a 'hidden', 'other' realm...But Freud never even considered claiming what had been relegated to the 'spiritual' for the 'unconscious'. When Jung did so, he did it merely by equating the 'spiritual' with his highly questionable construct, the 'collective unconscious'—thus, reclaiming nothing.

The surrealists had no use for Jung's extension of religion's existence. But they also never recognized the banality of the Freudian unconscious—the marvelous is not there except on rare occasions by accident. The marvelous will only become an everyday reality when we reclaim for our everyday lives that aspect of living that has been relegated to non-quotidian realms... This reclamation involves the active creation of marvelous, passionate intensities—not mere passive waiting.

It is the individual's capability for active, conscious, impassioned creation which was usurped to create the realm of the 'spiritual' and was, thus, relegated to virtual non-existence. With the creation of gods all creative power was taken from the individual and invested in these invented beings—and their earthly representatives. The marvelous was turned into a gift from elsewhere.

The development of god coincides with the development of social control. God is, in fact, very much like society: neither one exists in itself—god exists only in the belief of the religious, and society exists only in the activities of social individuals. Yet god and society enforce the activities which continue their reproduction. The difference is that god exists only in the realm of belief—of ideas—whereas society exists in the realm of material interactions and so creates relationships which coerce even those who oppose social control into reproducing social control.

Capitalism has exposed the material basis of social interactions at the same time as it has created material social mechanisms to motivate people to continue social reproduction. In other words, god and the spiritual are no longer necessary mystifications to enforce social reproduction. But the social mechanisms created by capitalism do not and cannot transform individuals into the conscious, autonomous creators of their own lives and interactions. Rather individuals are transformed into cogs in the mechanisms. God and spirituality remain as a solace (Marx's 'opiate'), an escape and a facet of one's social identity (i.e., an ideological commodity). Stealing back the creative energy from the 'spiritual realm' now is equivalent to taking back the power to consciously create one's life and interactions from society. But it is essential that we not forget that this war against society includes an attack upon the citadel of spirituality. Recent revivals of mysticism, paganism and shamanism among certain radicals may be misguided attempts at reclaiming their lives, but they appear to me to be a retreat into a fantasy realm in the face of seemingly overwhelming social forces. These revivals indicate the continued lack of confidence of those involved in their ability to create their own lives, their own moments, their own interactions. It may also indicate a fear of the unknown—a preference for models, for paths, for systems of guidance—because in a world of autonomous creators, of unique, free individuals, there are no guarantees; nothing is certain; all of the maps, definitions and paradigms disintegrate... Such a world is a world of terror and of wonder. For the courageous, mostly the latter.

# The Anarchist Subculture

It's easy to claim that there is no anarchist movement in North America. This claim frees one from having to examine the nature of that movement and what one's role is in it. But a network of publications, bookstores, anarchist households, squats, gatherings and correspondence connecting those with anti-capitalist, anti-statist perspectives most certainly does exist. It has crystallized into a subculture with its mores, rituals and symbols of 'rebellion'. But can a subculture create free individuals capable of making the lives they desire? The anarchist subculture certainly hasn't. I hope to explore in this article.

The anarchist subculture certainly does encompass apparently rebellious activity, historical exploration, social analysis (theory), creative play and explorations into self-liberation. But these do not exist as an integrated praxis aimed at understanding society and opening possibilities for us to create our lives for ourselves, but rather as social roles, occasionally overlapping, but mostly separate which function mainly to maintain themselves and the subculture which creates them and which they, in turn, create.

Politically correct militants dominate radical action in this subculture. They deny the need for social analysis. After all, the issues have already been laid out by left liberals—feminism, gay lib, anti-racism, animal lib, ecology, socialism, opposition to war—add a dash of anti-statism and, by god, it's anarchism! Well, ain't it? To guarantee that no one can doubt their anarchist credentials, anarchist militants will be sure to shout the loudest at demonstrations, burn a few flags and be prepared to battle cops, fascists and RCPers whenever possible. What they won't do is analyze their activities or their role as militants to see if they are really in any way undermining society or if they are merely playing its loyal opposition, reinforcing it by reinforcing their own role within its spectacle. Their refusal of analysis has allowed many of them to delude themselves into believing that they are part of a mass movement of rebellion which must be converted to anarchism. But no such mass movement exists on this continent, and the activities of the militants are mainly letting off steam in rituals of opposition that only reinforce their place in the anarchist subculture.

Anarchist historians are mostly professors, publishers and bookstore operators, interested in keeping information about anarchist history available. Most of these people are well-meaning, but they fail to apply critical analysis to their histories. The vast majority of anarchist historical material seems to serve a myth-making purpose, creating heroes, martyrs and models to imitate. But all of these models have failed in creating more than temporary anarchic situations. This should, at the very least, lead to a questioning of how and why they failed that goes beyond the simplistic claim that they were crushed by the authorities. The lack of such analyses has rendered anarchist history largely useless to present struggles against authority, turning it instead into the same thing for the anarchist subculture that mainstream history is for society at large, a myth that upholds the present order of things.

Certain anti-authoritarian theorists have intellectually attacked the most basic underpinnings of society in ways that reveal their role in our domestication. The theorists' examination of these things has even led some of them to drop the label 'anarchist', though their rejection of authority and connection to the subculture through their writings and friendships continues their role within it. And for all the depth of their intellectual exploration, a certain level of work refusal, shoplifting and minor vandalism seems to be the sum of their practice. Because they do not explore practical ways of expressing rebellion against the totality of domination revealed by their critiques, these critiques lose their edge as radical theory and seem more like philosophy. No longer being a tool for active rebellion, their thought instead becomes a means of defining the intellectual edge of anarchic thought, a means by which to determine whether an idea is radical enough. In this way, the role of the intellectual is perpetuated in the anarchist subculture.

Creative play has also been specialized within the subculture. Forgetting the critique which calls for the supersession of art through spontaneous, creative, free play by everyone, mail artists, performance artists and 'anti-artists' claim this category as their own, destroying spontaneity and freedom, and valorizing the activity as art. Many of the activities of these people—festivals, wild poetry readings, improvisational noise jam sessions and interactive theater—can be a lot of fun and are worth participating in on that level, but, placed within the framework of art, their subversive bite is dulled. In valorizing creativity, these artists have made it more important to 'be creative' than to have fun, and have reduced their critique to the level of whether something can be utilized in creating art. The creative process is recuperated into a form of productive labor making works of art. Play is transformed into performance. Acts of dé-tournement become spectacles in mail-art shows. Subversion is recuperated by society as art. Ignoring the fact that art

is a social and cultural category, anarchic artists claim that art opposes culture, but their activities create for them the role of cultural workers within the anarchist subculture.

When the situationists said that revolutionary praxis needed to become therapeutic, they had no idea that certain North American anarchists would find ways to wed this and a few other half-digested situationist ideas to new age psychotherapies—but, gee, those Yanks (and Canadians) sure are inventive, ain't they? New age therapies came into the anarchist subculture largely through feminist, gay lib and related movements. The reason given for practicing these therapies is self-discovery and self-liberation. But all psychotherapies—including those of humanist and 'third force' psychologists—were developed to integrate people into society. When feminists, gay liberationists and similar groups began using therapeutic techniques, it helped integrate individuals into a common framework from which they would view the world and act on it. Anarcho-therapists have adapted such practices as meditation, play therapy, support groups and separate spaces. Meditation is really just a form of escape, without the physical damages of drinking or drugs. It eases the stresses of daily life, keeping them from becoming too much to bear. It can, thus, be useful, but it is not self-liberating. Play as therapy, like play as art, loses its subversive edge. Its parameters defined, it becomes a safe release, a letting off of steam, rather than a true breaking out with all the risks that involves. It does not present a challenge to authority or the work ethic, because it is play safely ensconced in the framework of productive usefulness and brings out the chaotic energy that could otherwise challenge authority within a safely ordered framework. Support group therapy is a particular insidious form of self-deception. A group of people get together to talk about a common problem, burden or oppression they supposedly share. This practice immediately removes the problem from the realm of daily life, of individual relationships and particular circumstances, into the realm of 'our common oppression' where it can be fit into an ideological framework. Support groups are formed with a particular purpose (otherwise why form them?) which will shape the workings of the group, bias the conclusions drawn and mold the participants into the framework of the group ideology. The creation of separate spaces (women's only, gay only, etc.) reinforces the worst tendencies of support group therapy, by guaranteeing that no outside element can penetrate. Anarchists blithely ignore the authoritarian and proprietarian implications of this practice and its inherent bigotry, excusing them because it is the practice of an oppressed group. All of these therapeutic forms separate people from their daily life experience and place them in a separate 'therapeutic' realm where they can be readily integrated into a particular social and ideological framework. In the case of anarcho-therapists, it is the framework of the anarchist subculture and the role they play in it.

Most of the people I've met in the anarchist subculture are sincere people. They truly want to rebel against authority and destroy it. But they are products of society, trained to distrust themselves and their desires and to fear the unknown. Finding a subculture in place with roles to which they can adapt themselves, it is much easier to fall into the role or roles with which they feel most comfortable, secure in the knowledge that they are part of the rebel milieu, than to truly take the leap in the dark of living for themselves against society. And these "anarchist" roles plug into a social structure and a way of relating to the world at large that are equally essential to the anarchist subculture and which also need to be examined.

*Would it not be an anachronism to cultivate the taste for harbors, certitudes, systems?*

The structure of the anarchist subculture is largely centered around publishing projects, bookstores, collective living situations and radical activism. These projects and the methods of running them that reproduce the subculture create the methods of anarchist 'outreach'. What they create in many ways resembles an evangelical religious sect.

Most of the projects that make up the structure of the anarchist subculture are run collectively using a process of consensus decision-making. A few are the projects of single individuals occasionally helped out by friends. (On the fringe of the subculture are numerous flyer projects almost all of which are individual projects.) I am putting off a thorough critique of consensus for a later article. For now, let it suffice to point out that the process of consensus does require the subjection of the individual will to the will of the group as a whole and the subjection of the immediate to the mediation of meetings and decision-making processes. It has an inherently conservative bent, because it creates policies that can only be changed if everyone agrees to it. It is an invisible authority to which individuals are subject, which limits the extent to which they question the project in which they are involved or the anarchist subculture.

A large number of anarchists live on their own or with lovers. But many see a collective living arrangement as better, sometimes for as simple a reason as easing everyone's financial burdens (the reason which involves the fewest illusions), but more often to create a living support group situation, to participate more easily in a common project or to 'put theory into practice'. Having already dealt with support groups, I will only add that living together in a support group will tend to exaggerate all of the insulatory and ideological aspects of support group therapy. A collective

living situation can certainly ease some aspects of sharing a common project, from the financial to the trick of getting people together to discuss the project. It can also increase the chances of the project becoming insulatory, feeding on itself, losing necessary critical input. But it is those who claim to be 'putting theory into practice' in these living situations who are practicing the highest level of self-deception. Group living situations could possibly be a basis for exploring new ways of relating, but the semi-permanence of such situations tends toward the creation of social roles and structures, and new explorations are not what the households I know of are pursuing. The separation between theory and practice implied by the phrase 'putting theory into practice' is evident in the relative sameness of these living situations. Most anarchists believe that there are certain principles that should govern the way people interrelate. In their living collectives, land trusts and squats, they attempt to live by their principles. Their living situations are not theoretico-practical explorations into new ways of relating, but rather, the submission of individuals to a preconceived social structure. These principles are not put to the test in these situations, because the anarchist household is an insulatory situation, a kind of alternative reality in the midst of the world. With the exception of anarchist squats—which do, at least, present a challenge to the authority of the landlords and property—these households relate to the world of external authorities in the same way everyone else does: paying their rent (or property tax) and bills, and working or collecting welfare.

These households do little, if anything, toward undermining society, but they offer a structure for people to live in that maintains their feeling of rebelliousness and the subculture which gives them a safe place to express this feeling.

The various publishing projects (including periodicals) and bookstores are the main sources of history, theory and information for the anarchist subculture. To some extent, these projects have to plug into the capitalist system and so rarely pretend to be inherently revolutionary. When they are group projects, they are usually run by consensus on the absurd assumption that there is something anarchistic about having to sit through long, boring meetings to work out the details of running a small business or producing a magazine or book. But the aspect of these projects that really bothers me is that they tend to become means of defining the framework of thought in the anarchist subculture rather than a provocation to discuss and explore the nature of alienation and domination and how to go about destroying them. To a large extent this lack of provocation is inherent in what is published. Most anarchist publications whether books or periodicals, are uncritical reprints of old anarchist writings, uncritical histories, rehashing of leftist opinions with a bit of anti-statism thrown in or uncritical modernizations of outdated anarchist ideas. Such writings reinforce certain standards and models of what it means to be an anarchist without questioning those models. Even those writings which do present a challenge rarely seem to evoke the sort of intelligent, critical discussion that could be part of a stimulating radical praxis. Rather, they are also often taken as a source of standards, models, ways of defining the parameters of revolt. This stems, in part, from the nature of the printed word, which seems to have a permanence about it that is not compatible with the fluid, living nature of thought or discussion. Most readers have trouble seeing through the printed word to the fluidity of thought behind it. So they react as though dealing with something sacred—either worshipping it or desecrating it. Neither reaction pleases me, because both signify that the ideas have been reified, have become commodities in the marketplace of ideas—an image reinforced by the fact that these ideas are mostly to be found for sale in bookstores. Another aspect of anarchist publication is propaganda. This is the advertising side of anarchism—the proof that it is largely just a commodity in the marketplace of ideas. Most anarchist propaganda is an attempt to create an image of anarchism that is attractive to whomever the propaganda is aimed at. Thus, much of this literature seems to be aimed at easing people's minds, at proving that anarchy isn't so extreme, that it doesn't challenge people; it reassures them, showing them that they can continue to have secure, structured lives even after the anarchist revolution. Since most anarchist literature, including this sort, is bought or stolen by anarchists, I wonder if it isn't really an attempt at self-reassurance, and reinforcement of the defining models of the subculture. The structures which make anti-authoritarian literature available could provide a network for challenging discussions aimed at creating and maintaining a truly rebellious praxis, but instead it creates a framework of models and structures for people to follow—the 'anarchist principles' to which so many blindly cling—which reinforce the anarchist subculture.

Radical activism is another aspect of the public image of the anarchist subculture, particularly the militant wing. It largely involves participation in leftist demonstrations, though occasionally anarchists will organize their own demonstration on a particular issue. One motive behind much of this activism is to win people over to anarchism. To accomplish this, anarchists must separate themselves as a definable entity and make themselves attractive to those they are trying to convert. At present, most activism seems to be trying to attract youth and, particularly, punk youth. So anarchists tend to be especially loud and rowdy at demonstrations, portraying an image of defiance and showing that anarchists mean 'serious business'. Since other groups, like the R.C.P., also get rowdy and defiant, anarchist militants have to make the distinction clear by loudly denouncing these groups and even getting into fights with them—ya kinda have to wonder about these anarchist militants, if their actions are so similar to Maoist hacks, that they consciously

put out an effort to distinguish themselves. But evangelism isn't the only reason anarchists participate in these rituals of opposition. Many participate because it is the appropriate anarchist thing to do. In their minds, 'anarchist' is a role that involves a specific social activity. It is a subspecies of leftist that is rowdier and a bit more violent than most. This allows them to separate anarchy and rebellion from their daily lives. Questions like, 'Does this activity help destroy domination, undermine the spectacle and create free life?' are irrelevant since anarchism is defined by participation in militant activities, not by rebellion against everything that stands in the way of our freedom to create for ourselves the lives we desire. As long as one is active in demonstrations in the right way, one is a good anarchist, upholding the image and maintaining the anarchist subculture.

Though some of these structures—especially those dealing with publication—have potential for being part of a truly anarchic challenge to society, the anarchist subculture diverts their energy to maintain and reproduce itself. The subculture offers us 'harbors, certitude, systems', tending to make us cautious, leading us to embrace the known rather than face the adventure of challenging the unknown. So anarchists and antiauthoritarians, thinking themselves rebels, are, in fact, the ones who define the limits of revolt and so recuperate it. The anarchist subculture has undermined anarchy, turned it into another commodity on the ideological marketplace and so made it into another category of society.

*The point is precisely to step aside, to diverge, absolutely, from the rule; to leap from the arena with hysterical verve; to elude forever the traps set along the way...Long live the Impossible!*

To leave a critique of the anarchist subculture at examination of some of its more important roles and structures is to miss its most important fault—that it is a subculture. Subcultures constitute a particular sort of social phenomenon with particular traits. If those traits were conducive to rebellion, if they moved people to act for themselves, then it might be possible to reform the anarchist subculture, but those traits, in fact, tend in the opposite direction. There have been so many rebel subcultures, so many bohemias, all of them recuperated. This clearly indicates that there is something inherent in subcultures that keeps them from presenting a real challenge to the society of which they are a part. Let me try to examine why.

In order for a subculture to exist, its parameters must be defined in a way that distinguishes it from other groups in society. Because a subculture is not an official or legal entity, these parameters need not be in any official or readily definable form. Most often they are underlying, inherent in the nature of the subculture, consisting of shared values, shared ideals, shared customs and shared systems of relating. This means that participation in a subculture requires a certain level of conformity. This does not rule out disagreements about the interpretation of those parameters—such disagreements can be very intense, since those involved will see themselves as upholders of the real values of the group. But the real threat to any subculture is the individual who refuses parameters. Such a one is dangerous, amoral, a threat to all. What the parameters of a subculture really amount to is its system of morality. It provides a way for the subculture to see itself as superior to society in general. It, thus, creates a method for relating to others through guilt and self-righteousness, two of authority's favorite weapons. The existence and maintenance of a subculture thus requires an internalized authority to maintain itself.

The creation of parameters will lead to an intolerance towards those perceived as irretrievably outside the parameters—especially if they are competitors on some level (e.g. the R.C. P., S.W.P., and the like, to anarchists), but it also leads toward a toleration of everyone perceived as part of one's subculture. Due to different interpretations of the parameters of the subculture, arguments and fights, sometimes even vicious ones, are possible, but there is still a certain unity that is recognized and tends to keep disagreements within a certain framework. Such tolerance is necessary to maintain the subculture. It also has the effect of reducing everything to a level of mundane mediocrity. Extremes are permitted only to the extent that they can be devitalized, that they can be kept from presenting any real challenge to the subculture. Communication is destroyed, because the passion is taken out of it—except for a very stylized passion in conformity with the needs of the subculture. Tact, caution and politeness are the order of the day in order to maintain the "unity within diversity" of the subculture. Conflicts tend to become ritualized and predictable. In the anarchist subculture in particular, there are rarely any face-to-face, honest and passionate conflicts. Instead face-to-face interactions have the gloss of the politeness and subcultural ritual, of tolerance, and so are, as often as not, boring. Learning to relate through ritual, through tact, through social masks, has left us ignorant of how to relate freely. But without these rituals of toleration, a subculture cannot maintain itself, because like society at large, a subculture requires conformity, social harmony and the suppression of individual passions for its continued existence.

In relating to people outside, subcultures tend to opt for either a sort of separatism—minimalizing contact with the outside world—or evangelism—seeking to win people over to the perspective of the subculture. Since the anarchist

subculture is decidedly evangelistic, it is this that I'll deal with. All evangelistic groups, from the Baptists to the R.C.P., from the Moonies to the anarchist subculture, are so because they are convinced that they have the answers to the essential problems of the world. Convincing others of this, becomes a major motive behind the actions of those within such subcultures. They act and speak so as to present an image of self-assurance, as well as a kind of solidarity with those whom they wish to win over. Individuals within such subcultures do not live for themselves but for the ideal, the answer that they are so certain will cure all. They live, or try to live, up to a certain image, and so are conformists.

The basics of the anarchist subculture is an idealization of anarchy. Based on models from the past—the Spanish Revolution, Enrico Malatesta, Makhno, etc.—and visions of the future, anarchy is made into an ideal future society which will answer all the essential questions about human relations. It becomes a gospel to which to win people, a god to which one can sacrifice oneself. It defines the parameters of thought and action for the anarchist subculture, creating a certain sameness in the way anarchists live, play and express themselves. Idealized, anarchy loses all connection to present lived reality and becomes a means of enforcing conformity, tolerance and propriety, guaranteeing the maintenance of the anarchist subculture.

Because of the nature of subcultures, the anarchist subculture can only exist by removing anarchy and rebellion from the terrain of our present day lives and turning them into ideals with corresponding social roles. It will praise 'spontaneity' while defining its content and, thereby, suppressing it. Free expression of passions and desires are not encouraged, in fact, quite often the opposite. Within its own framework, the anarchist subculture is quite conservative, its own maintenance being its top priority. Every new exploration and experimentation is a threat to its existence and must be quickly defined, limited and recuperated by it. This explains both the absurd, defensive reactions of certain anarchists to more daring theoretical explorations, as well as the tendency for these explorations to remain in a realm of separated theory, of theory without practice. A subculture is a place for security, for safety, for finding social roles and systems of relationships by which one can define one's self, not a place for free exploration and encountering the unknown.

The anarchist subculture, then, cannot be an expression of lived anarchy and rebellion, but can only be society's way of defining, limiting and recuperating them. As children of society, we are all well-versed in distrusting ourselves, in fearing the unknown, in preferring security to freedom. It is no surprise that we so easily fall into activities that create and maintain a subculture. But it's long past time that we admit that this is just our way of fitting in to the society we claim to hate, of creating a niche for ourselves in its structure. For this subculture is not a real challenge to society, it is merely a loyal opposition whose rules—like all rules—are just a subset of the rules of society.

So the time has come to throw caution to the wind, to diverge absolutely, as the surrealists say, from all rules, to leap from the arena of the anarchist subculture—or to tear the arena down. Always there will be those demanding to know what we'll put in its place, but the point is precisely to put nothing in its place. The problem, the weakness of those of us who've claimed to oppose authority, has been our need to have an authority inside our heads, an answer, a way to keep ourselves in line. We have not trusted ourselves, and so at those moments when anarchy has actually broken forth, when authority has temporarily broken down opening all possibilities, we have not dared to explore the unknown, to live our desires and passions. Instead we have channelled our rebellion into systems and methodologies which turn it from rebellion into the mere image of rebellion, but which keep us safe from ever having to confront our real passions and desires.

The refusal of authority, the refusal of all constraints, must include the refusal of the anarchist subculture, for it is a form of authority. With this support gone, we are left with nothing—but ourselves. As transient, ever-changing, passionate individuals, we each become the only basis for creating our lives and opposing society as it strives to force our lives into its mold. Rebellion ceases to be a role and instead becomes our moment-by-moment refusal to let our lives be stolen from us. Anarchy ceases to be an ideal and becomes the havoc we wreak on authority, which undermines it and opens possibilities, new realms of exploration for us. To realize this, we have to cease to think as victims and begin to act as creators. The negative paranoia that permeates the way we relate to the world needs to be rejected so that we can accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of society as we confront it in our daily lives and can intelligently undermine it. A positive paranoia—a recognition that society and the hell it puts us through are aberrations and that the world is full of wonder and beauty, that within it all of our deepest desires and more can be easily realized—needs to be cultivated. Then we will dare to face the unknown, to relate to each other freely and passionately, avoiding mere toleration and accepting honest conflict. We will dare to oppose society from the strength of our own desires, dreams and lust for life. We'll refuse easy answers, systems and security for the prisons they are, preferring the freedom found in ecstatically exploring the unknown, the adventure of discovery of the world of wonder that authority tries to deny us. What has been denied us, we must take, and we take it not by conforming to a subculture, but by plunging head



first into the unknown, by taking the risk of leaving behind all that has suppressed us no matter how comfortable, and rebelling totally against society.

*Everything is always and automatically to be risked absolutely. One knows, at least, that the thread one finds in the labyrinth must lead elsewhere.*

# The Cybernet of Domination

*The dictatorship of the instrument is the worst kind of dictatorship.*

Alfredo M. Bonanno

There is a revolution going on. By this I do not mean an insurrection, an uprising of individuals against authority (though this revolution has managed to recuperate some anti-authoritarian tendencies towards its ends). I mean a substantial, qualitative change in the modes of social reproduction. The domination of industrial capital over these processes is being replaced by the domination of cybernetic capital. As with all such revolutions, this will not be a smooth, easy, peaceful transition. The old ruling order and the new ruling order are in conflict. The strength of reactionary elements in American politics over the past several years shows the tenacity with which the old order is trying to maintain its dominance. But increasingly that dominance is purely political, and the cybernetic new order dominates the economy. Some of my technophilic anarchist friends have told me that I 'need to face up to the realities of the cybernetic age'. To me, this means examining the nature of domination in the cybernetic age and relentlessly attacking. All that I've observed indicates that cybernetic science and technology are essential aspects of this domination.

Cybernetics innovators tend to be young (as compared to most of the political leaders of the 'old order') and consider themselves rebels of sorts, at the cutting edge. The anarcho-technophiles I have met are quite sincerely rebellious and consider themselves to be opposing all authority. But most of the cybernetic rebellion—including a fair amount of the 'anarchist' cybernetic rebellion—seems like a rebellion of entrepreneurs, a rebellion to liberate a mode of production/reproduction not to liberate individuals. Since these cybernetic innovators are the human agents of a qualitative change in the nature of capitalism, it is no surprise that they choose to play a role similar to that of earlier capitalist revolutionaries. Most of the cybernetics freaks I know are too poor and too sincerely anarchic to ever become part of a new ruling class. But cybernetic innovators with money are creating just such a ruling class—though, as I will attempt to show below, this 'class' might more accurately be perceived as a system of relationships in which the technology itself rules and the human 'ruling class' of cyber technicians and scientists only serves the instrument, the machine. The rebellion of the cybernetic innovators is, from its birth, purely a coup d'état. There is nothing truly liberating about it.

As banal as it is, it seems to need constant repeating: we live in a society in which the image dominates reality, in which most people see the image as reality. This makes it very easy for the cybernetic order to recuperate rebellion, because this new order not only has a far better grasp of image-making technologies than does the old order; increasingly, it is becoming those technologies. A comparison of the old order—which still is the main source of domination in most of our lives—and the new order—which is perfecting the tools of domination, but at the expense of the old order—would be worthwhile here.

The old order is that of industrial/financial capital. But it is more than this—it is also the order of the nation-State and of real political power. Authority is blatantly centralized and openly hierarchical—no one else can pretend they are not being ruled. This is blatant because essential power in this order actually resides in human beings in their roles as part of the social structure. The political mode of this order is representational democracy or one of its variants, such as fascism, socialist dictatorship and other forms of dictatorship. The domination of civilization over all non-human-made existence is openly accepted as a positive and necessary thing. Commands and voting on a choice between various commands are the methods for getting things done. Punishment is the way of dealing with aberrations from the social norms (though even the old order frequently uses the language of therapy to describe its punishments). In other words, the old order is quite open about its authoritarian nature.

At present, in much of the world (quite noticeably in the US), the technology of the new order is still mostly controlled by the old order, which is incapable of using it efficiently, because it can't be understood in the old order's terms. The social potential of cybernetics is, thus, best discovered by reading and listening to the cyber-mavericks. If their visions were pure sci-fi fantasies, I'd ignore them, but the socio-political structures to fit their visions are being actively promoted and created by various quasi-libertarian 'radical' groups and individuals (e.g. the Greens, libertarian municipalists, social ecologists, Robert Anton Wilson, Timothy Leary...).

In the new order, the dominant form of capital is cybernetic/informational capital. This does not mean the end of industrial, financial and mercantile capitalism, but rather their subjection to the cybernetic mode of social reproduction. This new mode allows for some changes in social structures that, on the surface, appear almost anarchic—changes such as those promoted by Murray Bookchin, the Greens, R.A. Wilson and other libertarians of the left and right. These changes are not only possible, but are probably necessary to some extent for the efficient reproduction of cybernetic society. Decentralization is a major rallying cry of many cybernetic radicals. This apparently anarchic goal is, in fact, not the least bit anti-authoritarian in the context of cybernetic capitalism. Cybernetic technology not only allows, but promotes, a decentralization of authority. Industrial capitalism began the process by which authority would come to exist increasingly in the very physical machinery which reproduces society. Cybernetic technology is perfecting this process to the extent of even bringing technologies of social control into the realms of leisure—the home computer, video games and the like. All of these apparently individual bits of cybertech—which have permeated workplaces, schools, game arcades and, at least in the US, homes of nearly anyone who's not too poor to get a personal computer—are part of a potentially unified, global network. This network is becoming the center of authority and power. It includes both the material technology of cybernetic machines and the social technology of cybernetic systemic structures. Those who are too poor to buy the material machinery are encompassed in the network by its making them dependent on social programs that are part of this network—this dependence stemming from a lack of access they have to knowledge which would allow them to create their lives for themselves. The decentralization offered by cybernetics can even extend to industry, fitting in well with the visions of certain techno-anarchists. Some corporations are already experimenting with having some of their production done in the form of cottage industry. What can't be done this way could probably be so automated that only a few technicians would be needed in a factory as trouble-shooters. (I've seen a huge factory which seemed to have only four workers.) So cybernetics allows for the apparent decentralization of production. But, of course, production itself remains unquestioned. This is because cybernetic 'decentralization' is not the least bit anti-authoritarian; it merely centers authority in a socio-technological network that has no spatial or material center, because the network is itself the center and it is (almost) everywhere. And it can easily intrude into all of our lives.

Along with apparent decentralization, cybernetic technology offers the possibility of apparent 'direct' democracy. This is what seems to attract those anarchists and libertarian leftists who drool over this technology. Everyone who 'owns' a computer is, at least politically, connected to everyone else who 'owns' a computer. It would be no surprise if some form of personal computer becomes available to even the poorer people in the more advanced areas of capitalist domination since this would more fully integrate them into the cybernet. If everyone in a particular nation had a computer, they could be easily convinced that they could make the real decisions that effect their lives—that they could vote 'directly' through their computers on all significant issues. That this constitutes as complete a separation between decision and action as may be possible is conveniently forgotten, as is the fact that the cybernetic system itself cannot be questioned significantly in this way since this system itself controls what can and cannot be questioned by the very nature of its technology. Cybernetic language is a high-tech newspeak. The 'direct' democracy it offers is only that which can reproduce cybernetic society. It does not eliminate representation; it can merely center it in technology rather than in elected human beings. But like all representations, this technology will act as a ruler.

The ideology behind cybernetic technology is systems analysis. Systems analysis seeks to understand all interactions in terms of systems or networks of relationships in which each thing affects all other things. It attempts to scientifically (i.e. mathematically) understand these systems of relationships in order to better control them. Thus, the concept of 'process', as opposed to chains of command, becomes increasingly important in cybernetic society. 'Process'—a radical buzzword for 'politically correct' ways of communicating and relating—fits in very well with systems analysis because it is an attempt to formalize decision-making relationships without making anyone involved feel that they are being coerced. 'Correct' process is potentially the way for the cybernet to integrate everyone as completely as possible into itself. Process militates against non-participation, tending to make non-participation appear as victimization rather than as a freely made choice. The ideology behind 'correct' process assumes that the individual is merely a part of the process of the system of relationships that is the group (on the micro-level) or society (on the macro-level). Process is systems analysis applied to group and social projects. It is the domination of the ideology of the cybernet in our interactions. Process is used regularly mostly in radical, ecological, feminist and similar groups. But many corporations are integrating process—consensus, facilitation and the like—with old order chains of command in experiments designed to make employees feel that they are more truly part of the corporation. Ultimately, the 'process' created by predominantly middle class 'radical' groups provides a system for controlling rebellious tendencies which fits perfectly into the framework of cybernetic control.

If a part of the cybernetic process is not functioning correctly, you don't punish it; you try to fix it. In the context of cybernetic society, punishment of criminals and deviants comes to appear increasingly inhuman and absurd. Efficient

social control requires everyone to be as fully integrated into the social system as possible, and punishment does nothing to integrate the punished—more often than not it does the opposite. So the most ‘progressive’ elements in society create therapeutic approaches for dealing with social deviance. At present, criminals are still mostly punished though the language of therapy is used even in this context. Non-criminal deviance (e.g. ‘excessive’ alcohol use, ‘inappropriate’ sexual behavior, acting up in school, ‘madness’) tends to be labeled a disease and ‘treated’. The proliferation of 12-step groups and new-age therapies is just a part of this phenomenon. Many of these groups very blatantly teach that you cannot do anything about your alleged problems by yourself; you have to become part of an interdependent group of fellow-victims, helping each other to recover—forever and ever and ever—and become productive members of society. Occasionally, even criminals—particularly people convicted of DUI or minor drug offenses—are given a choice between punishment or forced therapy. A therapeutic approach to social deviance appears very humane—enough so that many anarchists have integrated aspects of therapeutic ideology into their perspectives—but this is deceptive. The purpose of therapy is to reintegrate social deviants into the social machine as well-oiled cogs.

The science of ecology is the application of systems analysis to biology. It creates conception of the wilds as integrated systems to be used in an integrated manner by society. Even ‘deep ecologists’ only reject the integration of civilized social systems and wild ‘ecosystems’, because they feel that civilized social systems have strayed too far from the ‘natural’ systems to be capable of integrating (making some sort of social apocalypse inevitable), not because they reject the idea that undomesticated relating and interaction can be systematized. While most corporations continue on apace destroying the environment, it is quite hip now to talk ecology, and the most progressive corporations even try to act ecologically. After all, it is to their ultimate benefit. How can you possibly expand capital if you destroy the resources necessary for such expansion? So cybernetic capitalism tends toward an ecological practice as a means of domesticating the wilds without destroying them, of integrating them into the social system of the cybernet.

Of course, these are all just tendencies which the development and increasing power of cybernetic capital seem to be pushing towards. The old order of industrial capital is still quite strong, dominating in the political arena, and so still quite significant as a mode of social domination. But an intelligent insurgency needs to understand domination in its totality, needs to be able to recognize its new faces, so that insurgents aren’t duped into embracing a new form of domination as liberation. Most of the individuals I know who have embraced some version of ecotopian, cybernetic, green anarchism seem to be quite sincere in their desire to live free of all constraints. But they seem to ignore some very basic aspects of cybernetics. As science, cybernetics is the study of systems of control. Practically, it is the production of such systems, technologically and socially—the production of integrated systems of social control. Some of the most common words of cybernetic language make this obvious. ‘Data’ comes from a Greek word which means ‘That which is given’—that is an axiom, that which you are told, without proof, and are simply not to question. Information originally meant, literally ‘in formation’ in Latin. The cybernet offers no liberation whatsoever, merely the illusion of liberation to keep rebels ‘in formation’. It undermines individual experience and the trust of individuals in their own experience by creating realms of pseudo-experience, that is, of ‘the given’, of information which has no connection to anything outside the cybernet. Individuals, increasingly, rely only on what they are told by the cybernet, and so become dependent upon cybernetic society. In this way, the cybernet becomes the most truly totalitarian system yet—precisely by ‘decentralizing’ and using the integrative methods of process and therapy which make individuals the agents of their own domestication in a situation in which no one trusts themselves, but all are dependent on the cybernet.

There is one flaw in this system. It disenfranchises those who do not want or cannot afford to have cybernetic technology in their home. Even when home computers do become available to the very poor, many may have no interest in even learning how to use them. It is further quite doubtful that the fully enfranchised—the technicians and scientists who know how to produce and fully use these technologies—will be interested in bringing every one up to their level of knowledge about the cybernet. So, the disenfranchised—especially the voluntarily disenfranchised—will tend to become increasingly more so, until they are nearly completely outside the cybernet. While inside the cybernet the tendency is toward total control, outside the cybernet the tendency would be toward the total breakdown of social control. Ultimately, in such a situation, insurgent rebellion would only be possible outside the net.

At present, this situation is being forestalled as the new cybernetic order and the old order have an uneasy truce. The old order needs the informational technologies which create and are created by the new order. And the new order is not yet powerful enough to dispense with some of the harsher means of social control produced by the old order. The new order has also found ways of integrating some of the more progressive elements of the old order, such as multinational organizations, into itself. It is also quite possible that the cybernet will find continued uses for cops, prisons and the like within its systemic network of social control. Or the uneasy truce may go on indefinitely. Since the real relations between people do not, in fact, fit the formulas of the cybernet and its systems analysts, there is no

way of predicting what might happen. My own desire is for an insurrection that will blow all systems of social control to bits.

But cybernetic technology is becoming the dominant mode of post-industrial capital. It is a mode in which capital, technology, authority and society become so totally integrated that they are truly one. Rebellion, in this context, means rebellion against the cybernet and rebellion against society in its totality or it means nothing. This is what it means for the insurgent to face up to the reality of cybernetic technology. The insurgent individual can no longer do anything less than rebel against the totality of society—including all of those ‘radical’ perspectives which are nothing more than the cutting edge of the real ‘new world order’.

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