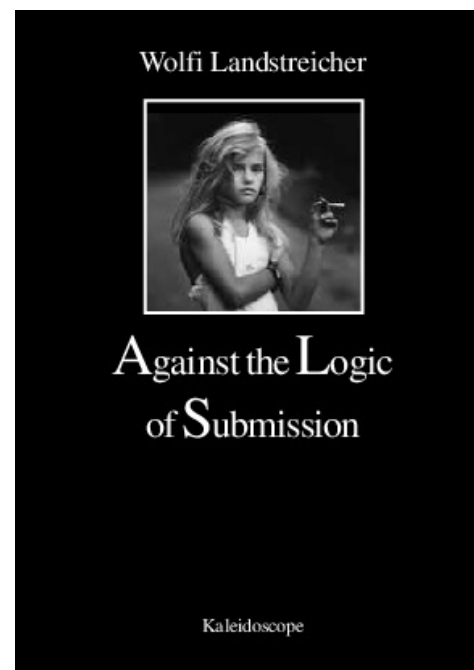


Against the Logic of Submission

Wolfi Landstreicher



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project than real conflicts from which individual intelligence and creative imagination may flower brilliant. The compromise from which false unities develop is itself a sign of the submission of the insurrectional project to the political.

Unities brought about through compromise are, in fact, the very opposite of affinity since they spring from a suppression of knowledge of oneself and of the other. This is why they require the creation of formal decision-making processes that hold the seeds of a bureaucratic methodology. Where there is real knowledge of the others with whom one is carrying out a project, formal consensus is not necessary. The awareness each has of the others' individuality creates a basis where decision and action need not be separate. This is a new form of sociality that can be brought into existence here and now in struggle against the order of domination, a form of sociality grounded in the full enjoyment of the singularity of each individual, of the marvelous difference that each of us carries within ourselves.

On the basis of these relationships of affinity, real projects that reflect the desires and aims of the individuals involved, rather than simply a feeling that one must do something, can develop. Whether the project is a squat, a sharing of free food, an act of sabotage, a pirate radio station, a periodical, a demonstration, or an attack against one of the institutions of domination, it will not be entered into as a political obligation, but as a part of the life one is striving to create, as a flowering of one's self-determined existence. And it is then and only then that its subversive and insurrectional potential blossoms. If joy and wonder, and a beautiful, indomitable existence are what we want, we need to try to achieve this here and now in rebellious defiance against all domination, eradicating the logic of submission from our lives, our relationships and our revolutionary struggle — for the destruction of politics and the creation of life without measure.

tended to challenge nothing. Arguably, this is not analysis at all, but an excuse for avoiding real analysis, and with it concrete revolt.

But the road of political ideology and programs is no more useful to the project of subversion. Because this project is the transformation of existence in a way that destroys all domination and exploitation, it is inherently *anti-political*. Freedom, conceived politically, is either an empty slogan aimed at winning the approval of the ruled (that American “freedom” for which Bush is fighting by bombing Afghanistan and signing increasingly repressive laws into effect) or merely one end of a continuum with domination. Freedom and domination become quantitative — matters of degree — and the former is increased by decreasing the latter. It is precisely this sort of thinking that caused Kropotkin to support the Allies in the first world war and that provides the basis for every reformist project. But if freedom is not merely a question of degrees of domination — if bigger cages and longer chains do not mean greater freedom, but merely the appearance of greater mobility within the context of continuing enslavement to the rulers of this order — then all the political programs and ideologies become useless to our project. Instead it is precisely to ourselves and our desires that we must turn — our desires for a qualitatively different existence. And the point of departure for the transformation we seek becomes our lives and relationships. It is here that we begin to undermine the logic of submission with the aim of destroying all domination. Then, our analyses of the world are aimed at achieving an understanding of how to carry out our own struggle in the world and to find points of solidarity (where we see our struggle in that of others) to spread the struggle against domination, not at creating an interpretation of the world in terms of an ideology. And our analyses of our activities are aimed at determining how useful they really are for achieving our aspirations, not at conforming our actions to any program.

If our aim is the transformation of existence, then the development of relations of affinity is not just a tactical maneuver. It is the attempt to develop relationships of freedom within the context of struggle. Relationships of freedom develop through a deep and ever increasing knowledge of the other — a knowledge of their ideas, their aspirations, their desires, their capacities, their inclinations. It is a knowledge of similarities, yes, but more significantly, it is a knowledge of differences, because it is at the point of difference that real practical knowledge begins, the knowledge of whether and how one can carry out projects and create life with another. It is for this reason that among ourselves — as in our relationship to that which we are struggling against — it is necessary to avoid the practice of compromise and the constant search for common ground. These practices are, after all, the heart and soul of the democratic form of domination that currently rules in the world, and thus are expressions of the logic of submission that we need to eradicate from our relationships. False unities are by far a greater detriment to the development of an insurrectional

Introduction

Submission to domination is enforced not solely, nor even most significantly, through blatant repression, but rather through subtle manipulations worked into the fabric of everyday social relationships. These manipulations — ingrained in the social fabric not because domination is everywhere and nowhere, but because the institutions of domination create rules, laws, mores and customs that enforce such manipulations — create a logic of submission, an often unconscious tendency to justify resignation and subservience in one’s everyday relations in the world. For this reason, it is necessary for those who are serious about developing an anarchist insurrectional project to confront this tendency wherever it appears — in their lives, their relationships and the ideas and practices of the struggles in which they participate. Such a confrontation is not a matter of therapy, which itself partakes of the logic of submission, but of defiant refusal. It requires a subversion of the existent, a development of different ways of relating to ourselves, each other, the world and our struggles, ways that clearly reflect our determination to refuse all domination and to reappropriate our lives here and now. I am talking here of a real revolution of everyday life as the necessary basis for a social revolution against this civilization founded on domination and exploitation. The following essays appeared in *Willful Disobedience* as the series “Against the Logic of Submission”. By no means do they exhaust the question, but I think they provide a basis for discussion as to how we can create ourselves, our relationships and our struggle as our own in defiance of all domination.

Against the Logic of Submission

A distinguishing factor of the anarchist idea of revolution is the importance of the individual in bringing this about. Although collectivist ideology has dulled this realization even in most anarchist circles, it still manifests in such choices as abstention from voting and military service. But for those seeking to develop an insurrectional practice, this realization needs to go much further than a few abstentions.

No revolutionary anarchist denies the necessity of a large-scale uprising of the exploited to destroy the state, capital and every institution of power and privilege. But revolution is not a gift that falls from the sky or is granted by an abstract History. Actions of individuals help to build the circumstance which can make uprisings occur and can push them in the direction of generalized revolt.

This means that rather than waiting around for the revolution like certain marxists, trying to read historical signs so that one will be ready, it makes more

sense that we anarchists consider ourselves to be in revolt at every moment of our lives and attack this social order without worrying about whether “the time is ripe”. Individual acts of revolt which are easily repeated and imitated provide the basis for the development of forms of mass action in which the individual is not lost and delegation is absent — that is to say insurrectionary action that could destroy the present reality and open the possibility for creating a world in which every individual is able grasp all that they need to fully realize themselves.

But equally important is the anarchist recognition of the primacy of the actual, living individual (as opposed to the collectivized cog and to the abstract concept of the individual) is the recognition that we need to become a certain sort of being, a being capable of acting on our own terms to realize our own desires and dreams in the face of the most fierce and powerful enemy: this entire civilization — the state, capital, the technological system...

To live as a rebel, as a self-willed anarchist revolutionary, requires a great deal of will, determination and spirit in the face of dizzying odds. Thus, one essential aspect of developing an insurrectional practice is the transformation of oneself into such a spirited, willful being. Such a transformation does not take place through therapy but through attacking the social order both in its manifestations in the world and *in oneself and one's relationships*. An uncompromising cruelty may prove essential to this task, because there are so many chains to be broken, so many limits to be destroyed. As one comrade has said, the individual quest is “the appropriation of everything that has been subtracted from him through family, school, institutions, roles, in order to find his specificity, totality, universality, lost... in the process of domestication and the construction of symbolic culture.” So the point is to make the decision to take one's life back in its totality, a decision that requires just the sort of ferocity that will be necessary to demolish this society. And such a decision will transform all one's relationships, demanding a clarity that will leave no room for submission to the demands of social protocol, disrespectful tolerance or pity for those who fear the energy of unchanneled desire more than its suppression. In making this decision (and the decision is only truly made as one acts to realize it), one is completely rejecting the logic of submission that dominates most relationships.

A Projectual Life

An understanding of how the decision to live in revolt against the present reality relates to desire, relationships, love and friendship requires an understanding of how such a decision transforms those who make it. The logic of submission — the logic that the social order seeks to impose on the exploited — is a logic of passivity, of resignation to the mediocre existence offered by

sands of reasons for resigning oneself to the domination of survival over life. So without a conscious project of revolt and transformation on this level, all attempts to change the world remain basically cosmetic — putting band-aids on gangrenous ulcers.

Without an intentional projectuality toward freedom and revolt here and now a myriad of potentially worthy projects — the occupation of abandoned spaces, the sharing of free food, the publication of a bimonthly anarchist periodical, sabotage, pirate radio stations, demonstrations, attacks against the institutions of domination — lose their meaning, becoming merely more hustle and bustle in a confused and confusing world. It is the conscious decision to reappropriate life in defiance of the present reality that can give these activities a revolutionary significance, because this is what provides the link between the various activities that make up an insurgent life.

Making such a decision challenges us to figure out how to realize it practically, and such a realization is not just a matter of involving ourselves in a variety of projects of action. It also, and more essentially, means creating one's life as a tension toward freedom, thus providing a context for the actions we take, a basis for analysis. Furthermore, such a decision takes our revolt beyond the political. The conscious desire for total freedom requires a transformation of ourselves and our relationships in the context of revolutionary struggle. It becomes necessary not merely to rush into this, that and the other activity, but to grasp and learn to use all of those tools that we can take as our own and use against the current existence based on domination, in particular, analyses of the world and our activity in it, relationships of affinity and an indomitable spirit. It also becomes necessary to recognize and resolutely avoid those tools of social change offered by the current order that can only reinforce the logic of domination and submission — delegation, negotiation, petition, evangelism, the creation of media images of ourselves, and so on. These latter tools precisely reinforce hierarchy, separation and dependence on the power structure — which is the reason why they are offered to us for use in our struggles. When one resorts to these tools, revolt and freedom degenerate into a mere political program.

Analysis that does not arise from one's desire to reappropriate life here and now tends to reinforce domination, because it either remains baseless or turns to an ideology or political program as its base. A great deal of what passes for social analysis today falls into the former realm. Having no base from which they make their critique, those who follow this path tend to fall into a ceaseless round of deconstruction that ultimately concludes that domination is everywhere and nowhere, that freedom is impossible and that, therefore, we should just make the best of it either through conformity or the staged oppositional games of groups like *tute bianche* (the famous “white overalls”) which are in-

belief in the unprovable and hope in or fear of the so-called supernatural being enforced and skepticism being treated as a cold and passionless refusal of wonder. It is to the benefit of the ruling order for those it exploits to be ignorant, with a limited and decreasing capacity to communicate with each other about anything of significance or to analyze their situation, the social relationships in which they find themselves and the events going on in the world. The process of stupefaction affects memory, language and the capacity to understand relationships between people, things and events on a deep level, and this process penetrates into those areas considered intellectual as well. The inability of post-modern theorists to comprehend any totality can easily be traced to this deformation of intelligence.

It is not enough to oppose the deformed rationality imposed by this society; we must also oppose the stupefaction and irrationality imposed by the ruling class on the rest of us. This struggle requires the reappropriation of our capacity to think, to reason, to analyze our circumstances and to communicate their complexities. It also requires that we integrate this capacity with the totality of our lives, our passions, our desires and our dreams.

The philosophers of ancient Greece lied. And the ideologues who produce the ideas that support domination and exploitation have continued to tell the same lie: that the opposite of intelligence is passion. This lie has played an essential role in the maintenance of domination. It has created a deformed intelligence that depends on quantitative, economic rationality, and it has diminished the capacity of most of the exploited and excluded to understand their condition and fight intelligently against it. But, in fact, the opposite of passion is not intelligence, but indifference, and the opposite of intelligence is not passion, but stupidity.

Because I sincerely want to end all domination and exploitation and to begin opening the possibilities for creating a world where there are neither exploited or exploiters, slaves or masters, I choose to grasp all of my intelligence passionately, using every mental weapon — along with the physical ones — to attack the present social order. I make no apologies for this, nor will I cater to those who out of laziness or ideological conception of the intellectual limits of the exploited classes refuse to use their intelligence. It is not just a revolutionary anarchist project that is at stake in this struggle; it is my completeness as an individual and the fullness of life that I desire.

The Subversion of Existence

The desire to change the world remains merely an abstract ideal or a political program unless it becomes the will to transform one's own existence. The logic of submission imposes itself on the level of daily life offering thou-

this order. According to this logic, life is something that happens to us, that we simply "make the best of", a perspective that defeats us before we've begun to struggle.

But some of us burn with an energy that goads us towards something else, something different. In our burning we suffer anguish from every humiliation that the present world imposes on us. We cannot resign, accept our place and content ourselves with just getting by. Moved to decisive action by our passion, against all the odds we come to view life differently — or more precisely, to live differently.

A social reality exists. It is smothering the planet with commodities and control, imposing a pathetic and miserable existence of enslavement to authority and the market everywhere. Starting from a refusal of this imposed existence, a decision to rise up against it, we are faced with the necessity of creating our lives as our own, of projecting them. We are posing ourselves a most difficult task: the transformation of ourselves, of our relationships and of existence itself. These transformations are not separate; they constitute a single task — a life projectuality that aims toward the destruction of the social order — that is to say an insurrectional anarchist projectuality.

At present, so many of us are so careful, so apologetic, ready to distance ourselves from even our most radical and defiant acts. This indicates that we have not yet understood what it means to live our lives projectually. Our actions are still tentative, not full of ourselves, but stepped into lightly with a readiness to withdraw at the least sign risk or danger. Contrarily, the development of an anarchist projectuality requires that one immerse oneself into what one does without holding back, without hedging one's bets. Not that this immersion is ever a finished project. It is a thing in motion, a tension that must be perpetually lived, perpetually grappled with. But it has been proven over and over and over again that hedging one's bets as surely brings defeat as surrender. Having taken this responsibility for our lives, there is no room for half measures. The point is to live without measure. Longer chains are chains nonetheless.

One reads in Nietzsche of *amor fati*. The very opposite of the fatal resignation demanded by the logic of submission, *amor fati* is that love of fate as a worthy adversary that moves one to courageous action. It springs from the willful self-confidence that develops in those who put all of their substance into what they do, say or feel. Here regrets melt away as one learns to act as one wills; mistakes, failures and defeats are not devastations, but situations from which to learn and move on in the perpetual tension toward the destruction of all limits.

In society's eyes, any refusal of its order is a crime, but this immersion into life moves insurgence beyond the level of crime. At this point, the insurgent has ceased to merely react to the codes, rules and laws of society and has come to determine her actions on his own terms without regard for the social order.

Beyond tolerance and everyday politeness, finished with tact and diplomacy, She is not given to speaking abstractly about anything that relates to his life and interactions, but rather gives weight to every word. This comes from a refusal to skim the surface of things, a desire rather to immerse oneself into the projects and relations one has chosen to create or involve oneself in, to draw them fully into oneself, because these are the things with which one creates one's life.

Like revolution, love, friendship and the wide variety of other possible relationships are not events one waits for, things that merely happen. When one recognizes herself as having agency, as being an individual capable of acting and creating, these cease to be wishes, ghostly longings aching in the depth of one's gut; they become possibilities toward which one moves consciously, projectually, with one's will. That burning energy that goads one to revolt is desire — desire that has broken free from the channel that reduced it to mere longing. This same desire that moves one to create her life as a projectuality toward insurrection, anarchy, freedom and joy also provokes the realization that such a projectuality is best built on shared projects. Liberated desire is an expansive energy — an opening of possibilities — and wants to share projects and actions, joys and pleasures, love and revolt. An insurrection of one may indeed be possible. I would even argue that it is the necessary first step toward a shared insurrectional project. But an insurrection of two, three, many increases courage and enjoyment and opens a myriad of passionnal possibilities.

Obviously, the various modes of relating that this society puts into place for us to fall into cannot fulfill this desire. Tepid “love” partnerships, “friendships” based on the camaraderie of mutual humiliation and disrespectful tolerance and the daily encounters of no substance that maintain the banality of survival — these are all based on the logic of submission, on merely accepting the mediocrity this reality we must destroy offers. They have nothing to do with projectual desire for the other.

The relations that the decision to live projectually as a revolutionary and an anarchist moves one to seek are relations of affinity, of passion, of intensity, varieties of living relations that help one to build life as desire moves her. They are relations with clearly defined others who have affinity with one's way of living and being. Such relations must be created in a fluid and vital way as dynamic, changeable and expansive as affinity and passion themselves are. Such an expansive opening of possibilities has no place within the logic of submission, and that in itself makes it a worthy project for anarchists to pursue.

a good part of his nights reading philosophy, history, radical theory and so on, in order to grasp these tools that the ruling class would deny to him. It was this thirst to grasp the tools of the mind that brought him to his anarchist perspective. In the late 19th century in Florida, cigar-makers forced their bosses to hire readers to read to them as they worked. These readers read the works of Bakunin, Marx and other radical theorists to the workers who would then discuss what was read. And in the early 20th century, radical hoboes and their friends would set up “hobo colleges” where a wide variety of speakers would give talks on social questions, philosophy, revolutionary theory and practice, even science or history, and the hoboes would discuss the questions. In each of these instances, we see the refusal of the exploited to let the tools of intelligence to be taken away from them. And as I see it, this is precisely the nature of a real struggle against intellectualism. It is not a glorification of ignorance, but a defiant refusal to be dispossessed of one's capacity to learn, think and understand.

The degradation of intelligence that creates intellectualism corresponds to a degradation of the capacity to reason which manifests in the development of rationalism. Rationalism is the ideology that claims that knowledge comes from reason *alone*. Thus, reason is separated from experience, from passion and so from life. The theoretical formulation of this separation can be traced all the way back to the philosophy of ancient Greece. Already, in this ancient commercial empire, the philosophers were proclaiming the necessity of subjugating desires and passions to a cold, dispassionate reason. Of course, this cold reason promoted moderation — in other words, *the acceptance of what is*.

Since that time (and probably far earlier since there were well-developed states and empires in Persia, China and India when Greece still consisted of warring city-states), rationalism has played a major role in enforcing domination. Since the rise of the capitalist social order, the process of rationalization has been spreading into all of society throughout the globe. It is therefore understandable that some anarchists would come to oppose rationality.

But that is a mere reaction. On closer examination, it becomes clear that the rationalization imposed by those in power is of a specific sort. It is the quantitative rationality of the economy, the rationality of identity and measurement, the rationality that simultaneously equates and atomizes all things and beings, recognizing no relationships except those of the market. And just as intellectualism is a deformation of intelligence, this quantitative rationality is a deformation of reason, because it is reason separated from life, a reason based on reification.

While those who rule impose this deformed rationality on social relationships, they promote irrationality among those they exploit. In the newspapers and tabloids, on television, in video and computer games, in the movies,...throughout the mass media, we can see religion, superstition,

face, it is ridiculous to refuse a weapon that can be used without compromising autonomy on the basis of ideological conceptions.

The rise of the civilization we live in with its institutions of domination is based on the division of labor, the process by which the activities necessary for living are transformed into specialized roles for the reproduction of society. Such specialization serves to undermine autonomy and reinforce authority because it takes certain tools — certain aspects of a *complete* individual — from the vast majority and places them in the hands of a few so-called experts.

One of the most fundamental specializations is that which created the role of the intellectual, the specialist in the use of intelligence. But the intellectual is not so much defined by intelligence as by *education*. In this era of industrial/high technological capitalism, the ruling class has little use for the full development and exercise of intelligence. Rather it requires expertise, the separation of knowledge into narrow realms connected only by their submission to the logic of the ruling order — the logic of profit and power. Thus, the “intelligence” of the intellectual is a deformed, fragmented intelligence with almost no capability of making connections, understanding relationships or comprehending (let alone challenging) totalities.

The specialization that creates the intellectual is in fact part of the process of stupefaction that the ruling order imposes on those who are ruled. For the intellectual, knowledge is not the qualitative capacity to understand, analyze and reason about one’s own experience or to make use of the strivings of others to achieve such an understanding. The knowledge of intellectuals is completely disconnected from wisdom, which is considered a quaint anachronism. Rather, it is the capacity for remembering unconnected facts, bits of information, that has come to be seen as “knowledge”. Only such a degradation of the conception of intelligence could allow people to talk of the possibility of “artificial intelligence” in relation to those information storage and retrieval units that we call computers.

If we understand that intellectualism is the degradation of intelligence, then we can recognize that the struggle against intellectualism does not consist of the refusal of the capacities of the mind, but rather of the refusal of a deforming specialization. Historically, radical movements have given many examples of this struggle in practice. Renzo Novatore was the son of a peasant who only attended school for six months. Yet he studied the works of Nietzsche, Stirner, Marx, Hegel, ancient philosophers, historians and poets, all of the anarchist writers and those involved in the various newly arising art and literature movements of his time. He was an active participant in anarchist debates on theory and practice as well as debates in radical art movements. And he did all of this in the context of an intense, active insurrectional practice. In a similar vein, Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who started working as an apprentice in early adolescence often for long hours, describes in his brief autobiography how he would spend

Free Love

Because revolutionary anarchists of all types have recognized the freedom of every individual to determine how they will live on their own terms to be a central aim of anti-authoritarian revolution, we have spoken more often and with more courage of the transformation of personal life that must be part of any real revolution. Thus, questions of love and erotic desire have been openly discussed in anarchist circles from very early on. Anarchists were among the first advocates of free love recognizing in marriage and the absurd sexual restrictions imposed by religious morality ways in which submission to authority was imposed. Women such as Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre recognized in puritanical morality one of the greatest enemies to the liberation of women in particular as well as humanity in general.

But the free love advocated by anarchists should not be confused with the tawdry hedonism advocated by Playboy and other promoters of commodified sexual liberation. This latter is merely a reaction to Puritanism from within the present social context. Its continued adherence to the logic of submission is evident in its commodification and objectification of sex, its dismissive attitude toward passionate love — because it can’t be quantified and priced — and its tendency to judge people based on sexual willingness, performance and conquest. Love and erotic desire freed from the logic of submission clearly lies elsewhere.

The struggle against the logic of submission begins with the struggle of individuals to create the lives and relations they desire. In this context, free love means precisely the freedom of each individual’s erotic desires from the social and moral restrictions that channel them into a few specific forms useful to society so that each may create the way she loves as he sees fit in relation to those she may love. Such a liberation opens the way for an apparently infinite variety of possible loving and erotic relations. Most people would only want to explore a few of these, but the point of such liberation is not that one must explore as many forms of erotic desire as possible, but that one has the possibility to really choose and create ways of loving that bring him joy, that expand her life and goad him to an ever increasing intensity of living and of revolt.

One of the most significant obstacles presently facing us in this area is pity for weakness and neurosis. There are individuals who know clearly what they desire in each potential loving encounter, people who can act and respond with a projectual clarity that only those who have made their passions and desires their own can have. But when these individuals act on their desires, if another who is less sure of themselves is unnerved or has their feelings hurt, they are expected to change their behavior to accommodate the weakness of this other person. Thus the strong-willed individual who has grasped the substance of free love and begun to live it often finds herself suppressed or ostracized by his own supposed comrades. If our aims are indeed liberation and the destruction

of the logic of submission in all areas of life, then we cannot give in to this. The point is to transform ourselves into strong, daring, self-willed, passionate rebels — and, thus, also into strong, daring, self-willed, passionate lovers — and this requires acting without guilt, regret or pity. This self-transformation is an essential aspect of the revolutionary transformation of the world, and we cannot let it get side-tracked by a pity that degrades both the one who pities and the one who is pitied. Compassion — that feeling with another because one recognizes one's own condition in theirs — can be a beautiful and revolutionary feeling, but pity — which looks down at another's misery and offers charity and self-sacrifice, is worthless for creating a world of strong individuals who can live and love as they choose.

But an even greater impediment to a real practice of free love and the open exploration of the varieties of possible relationships is that most people (even most anarchists) have so little greed for, and therefore so little generosity with, passion, intensity of feeling, love, joy, hatred, anguish — all the flaming pangs of real living. To truly allow the expansiveness of passionate intensity to flower and to pursue it where the twisting vine of desire takes it — this exploration requires will, strength and courage...but mainly it requires breaking out of the economic view of passions and emotions. It is only in the realm of economy — of goods for sale — that greed and generosity contradict each other. In the realm of uncommodified feelings, passions, desires, ideas, thoughts and dreams, greed and generosity go hand-in-hand. The more one wants of these things, the more expansive one must be in sharing them. The more generous one is with them, the more one will have. It is the nature of these things to be expansive, to seek to broaden all horizons, to take more and more of reality into themselves and transform it.

But this expansiveness is not indiscriminate. Love and erotic desire can manifest expansively in many different ways, and individuals choose the ways and the individuals with whom they wish to explore them. It makes no sense, however, to make these decisions based on an imagined dearth of something that is, in fact, potentially beyond measure. Rather such decisions are best based on desire for those to whom one chooses to relate and the potential one perceives in them to make the fires of passion burn ever more brightly.

The mechanics of erotic desire — homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, monogamy, non-monogamy, etc. — are not the substance of free love. It can manifest in all of these forms and more. Its substance is found in those who choose to expand themselves, to goad themselves to expand their passions, dreams desires and thoughts. Free love, like revolution, acts to recreate reality in its own image, the image of a great and dangerous utopia. Thus it seeks to turn reality on its head. This is no easy path. It has no place for our weaknesses, no time for neurotic self-pity or meagerness. For love in its most impassioned and unconstrained forms is as cruel as revolution. How could it be otherwise

surdity of the institutions that are its basis. Thus, the destruction of racism and sexism must start with the explicitly revolutionary project of destroying the institutional frameworks which are the current basis for the constructs of race and gender. Such a project is not one of therapy, but of revolt. It will not be accomplished by shy, tiptoeing mice — nor by inquisitors — but by self-confident, indomitable rebels.

I won't go into the absurdity of such terms as classism or statism here because that is not my purpose. My purpose is to point out that, though revolutionary struggle may, indeed, have the "therapeutic" effect of breaking down social constraints and thus opening the mind to new ways of thinking and feeling that make one more intelligent and passionate, this is precisely because it is not therapy, which focuses on one's weakness, but a self-determined project of revolt springing from one's strength.

Freedom belongs to the individual — this is a basic anarchist principle — and as such resides in individual responsibility to oneself and in free association with others. Thus, there can be no obligations, no debts, only choices of how to act. The therapeutic approach to social problems is the very opposite of this.. Basing itself in the idea that we are crippled rather than chained, inherently weak rather than held down, it imposes an obligatory interdependence, a mutuality of incapacity, rather than a sharing of strengths and capabilities. In this, it parallels the official way of dealing with these problems. And no wonder. It is the nature of weakness to submit. If we all assume our own weakness, our perpetual internal infection by these various social diseases, then we will continue to nurture a submissive way of interacting with the world, ever ready to admit guilt, to apologize, to back down from what we've said or done. This is the very opposite of responsibility, which acts consciously with the assurance of one's projectual approach to life, ready to take the consequences of one's choices — the outlaw worthy of her transgressions.

In the face of ten thousand years of institutional oppression, ten thousand years in which a ruling class and the structures that support its power have determined the conditions of our existence, what we need is not therapy, but strong-willed revolt aimed at developing a revolutionary project that can destroy this society and its institutions.

Neither Intellectualism Nor Stupidity

In the struggle against domination and exploitation, each individual needs to take up every tool that she can make her own, every weapon that he can use autonomously to attack this society and take back her life. Of course, which tools particular individuals can use in this way will vary depending on their circumstances, desires, capacities and aspirations, but considering the odds we

By accepting the idea (promoted heavily by progressive education and publicity) that the structures of oppression are essentially mindsets inside of ourselves, we become focused on our own presumed weakness, on how crippled we supposedly are. Our time is eaten up by attempts at self-healing that never come to an end, because we have become so focused on ourselves and our inability to walk that we fail to notice the chain on our leg. This endless cycle of self-analysis is not only tedious and self-indulgent; it is also utterly useless in creating a revolutionary project, because it gets in the way of social analysis and it transforms us into less capable individuals.

The therapeutic approach to social oppression ends up focusing on a myriad of “isms” with which we are infected: racism, sexism, classism, statism, authoritarianism, ablism, agism, etc., etc. Because the first two give very real and clear expression of the difference between psychoanalysis and social analysis, between the approach of therapy and that of revolt, I will examine them briefly. Viewing racism and sexism as essentially unconscious mindsets and the behavior these produce, the nature of which we are not always aware, we are drawn onto a practice of constant self-examination, constant self-doubt, which effectively disables us, particularly in our ability to interact with the other. Racism and sexism become something nebulous, a pervasive virus which infects everyone. If one has the bad fortune of being “white” and “male” (even if one consciously rejects all the social constraints and definitions behind such labels), then he is required to accept the judgment of “non-whites” and “females” about the significance, the “real” unconscious motivations of his actions. To do otherwise would constitute arrogance, a lack of consideration and an exercise of “privilege”. The only outcome I can see from such a way of dealing with these matters (and it is certainly the only outcome I have ever seen) is the creation of a bunch of shy, yet inquisitorial mice tip-toeing around each other for fear of being judged, and just as incapable of attacking the foundations of this society as they are of relating to each other.

If, on the other hand, we view racism and sexism as expressions of the social ideological constructs of race and gender which have specific institutional foundations, a very different approach applies. The concept of race as it is currently understood here in North America has its origins in the institutions of black slavery and the genocide against the indigenous people of this continent. Once established by these institutions, it became rooted into all of the power structures on one level or another due to its usefulness to the ruling class, and was trickled down to the exploited classes as a means of separating them and keeping them fighting among themselves. Sexism has its origins in the institutions of property, marriage and the family. It is here that patriarchy and male dominance have their seat. Within this framework, gender is created as a social construct, and as with race, it is the continuing usefulness of this construct to the ruling class that has kept it in place in spite of the increasingly obvious ab-

when its goal is the same: the transformation of every aspect of life and the destruction of all that prevents it?

Passionate Friendship

We live in a world in which the majority of encounters and interactions involve work and commodity exchange. In other words, the dominant forms of relating are economic, based on the domination of survival over life. In such a world, it is no surprise that the concept of friendship no longer has much value. Today, neither the daily interactions of one’s “communities” (these strange, disconnected “communities” of family, school, work) nor the chance encounters (at the market, on the bus, at some public event) have much chance of sparking a real and intense interest in another, an impassioned curiosity to discover who they are what we might be able to create with them. The common thread that runs through these not so varied interactions and encounters is that they originate in the operations of domination and exploitation, in the social order that immiserates our lives and to which most people grudgingly submit.

The sorts of relationships most likely to spring from such a situation are those that reflect the humiliation and social impoverishment inherent in it. Based on the necessity to escape the isolation of a crowded, but atomized society, a generalized “friendliness” that is slightly more than mere politeness (since it permits harmless, light mockery and safe, substanceless flirtation) develops. On the basis of this generalized “friendliness”, it is possible to meet some individuals with whom to commiserate more closely — people with whom to share a beer at the pub, go to football games or rock shows or rent a movie... And these are one’s friends.

It really is no wonder then that what is called friendship today so often seems to be nothing more than the camaraderie of mutual humiliation and disrespectful toleration. When all we really have in common is our shared exploitation and enslavement to commodity consumption and our differences mainly lie in our social identities, themselves largely defined by our jobs, the commodities we buy and our uses to those who rule us, there is really very little to spark pride, joy, wonder and passion in our so-called friendships. If the deep loneliness of massified, commodified society draws us to others, what little our impoverished beings have to offer each other soon leads to resentment. Thus, interactions between friends at this time seem to be mostly dominated by comic mockery and various forms of one-upmanship. While such forms of play may indeed be amusing as part of a strong relationship based on real mutual pleasure, when it becomes the main way of relating, surely something is lacking.

Some of us refuse to accept the impositions of exploitation and domination. We strive to create our own lives and in the process create relationships

that escape the logic of submission to proletarianization and commodity consumption. By our own will, we redefine our commonalities and our differences, clarifying them through the alchemy of struggle and revolt, basing them on our own passions and desires. This makes the form that friendship tends to take in this society completely unpalatable: to simply tolerate another out of loneliness and call this one friend — how pathetic! Starting from that sense of pride that moved us to rebel, that point of selfish dignity that will not tolerate further humiliation, we seek to build our friendships upon the greatness we discover in each other — joy, passion, wonder sparked both by what we share in common and by how we differ. Why should we expect less of friendship than we do of erotic love? Why do we expect so little of both? Rebellion sparks fire in the hearts of those who rise up, and this fire calls for relationships that burn: loves, friendships, and, yes, even hatreds that reflect the intensity of rebellion. The greatest insult we can give another human being is to merely tolerate them, so let us pursue friendships with the same intensity with which we pursue love, blurring the boundaries between them, creating our own fierce and beautiful ways of relating free of that logic of submission to mediocrity imposed by the state and capital.

Hatred

Having made the decision to refuse to simply live as this society demands, to submit to the existence it imposes on us, we have put ourselves into a position of being in permanent conflict with the social order. This conflict will manifest in many different situations, evoking the intense passions of the strong-willed. Just as we demand of our loves and our friendships a fullness and intensity that this society seeks to suppress, we want to bring all of ourselves to our conflicts as well, particularly our conflict with this society aimed at its destruction, so that we struggle with all the strength necessary to accomplishing our aim. It is in this light, as anarchists, that we would best understand the place of hatred.

The present social order seeks to rationalize everything. It finds passion dangerous and destructive since such intensity of feeling is, after all, opposed to the cold logic of power and profit. There is no place in this society for passionate reason or the reasonable focusing of passion. When the efficient functioning of the machine is the highest social value, both passion and living, human reason are detrimental to society. Cold rationality based on a mechanistic view of reality is necessary for upholding such a value.

In this light, the campaigns against “hate” promoted not only by every progressive and reformist, but also by the institutions of power which are the basis of the social inequalities (when I refer to equality and inequality in this article, I am not referring to “equality of rights” which is a legal abstraction, but to the

logic of paranoia and fear, the logic of suspicion with its measured words and deeds, is the logic of submission — if not to the present order of domination, then to a morality that diminishes our lives and guarantees that we will not have the courage to face the unknown, to face the world in which we would find ourselves if the present order were destroyed. Instead, let’s embrace the passionate reason of desire that defies all domination. This reason is absolutely serious in its desire to destroy all that diminishes life, confining it to that which can be measured. And because it is so serious, it laughs.

Revolt, Not Therapy

When the situationist idea that revolution would be therapeutic found its way into the English language, it opened a Pandora’s box of misunderstanding. It seems clear to me that the situationists were pointing out that a real revolutionary rupture would break down the social constraints which underlie so much of what is considered “mental illness” and “emotional disturbance”, freeing people to discover their own meanings and methods of thinking and feeling. But many have understood this concept differently, taking it to mean that revolution is to be something like an encounter group, a counseling session or psychological “self-help” activity. Ceaseless self-examination, embarrassing confessionalism, the gamut of support groups, safe spaces, and the like come to be understood as “revolutionary” activity. And many so-called revolutionaries, in conformity to such a practice, tend to become the emotionally crippled neurotics that they assume they are, searching for a revolutionary healing that will never come, because this assumed role is inherently self-perpetuating and, thus perpetuates the society that produces it. What is missing from this therapeutic conception of revolution is revolt.

The destruction of the social order with the aim of liberating ourselves from all domination and exploitation, from every constraint on the full development of our singularity, certainly requires an analysis of how our lives, our passions, our desires and dreams have been alienated from us, how our minds have been constrained to reason in certain ways, how we have been trained to follow the logic of submission. But such an analysis must be a social analysis, not a psychoanalysis. It must be an examination of the social institutions, roles and relationships that shape the conditions under which we are forced to exist.

Consider this analogy. If a person has broken her leg, of course, she must try to set it, get a cast or splint and find a crutch. But if the reason why he is having trouble walking is that someone has put a ball and chain on his leg, then her first priority is to cut off that chain and then to guarantee that it won’t happen again by destroying the source of the chain.

us who truly desire such an expansive existence want to express it in all of our actions.

In this light, the call for the development of a “*security culture*” seems strange to me. When I first heard the term, my immediate thought was: “That is precisely the sort of culture we live in!” The cops and cameras on every corner and in every shop, the increasing numbers of identification cards and of interactions requiring their use, the various weapons systems put in place for national security, and on and on — the culture of security surrounds us, and it is the same as the culture of repression. Certainly, as anarchists this is not what we want.

Many of the practical suggestions made by the proponents of security culture are basic good sense for one who is taking action against the institutions of domination. It is obvious that one shouldn’t leave evidence or speak to the police, that one should take the due precautions to avoid arrest — a situation that would certainly not enhance one’s struggle for a full free life. But it makes no sense to speak of a security *culture*. The caution necessary to avoid arrest does not reflect the sort of life and relationships we want to build. At least I hope not.

When anarchists begin to see security as their top priority — as a “culture” that they must develop — paranoia comes to dominate relationships. Anarchist conferences are set up with levels of bureaucracy and (let’s call things what they are) policing that too closely parallels what we are trying to destroy. Suspicion replaces comradeship and solidarity. If someone doesn’t look or dress right, he finds herself ostracized, excluded from involvement. Something vital has been lost here — the reason for our struggle. It has vanished behind the hard armor of militancy, and we have come to be the mirror image of our enemy.

The anarchist struggle slips into this joyless, paranoid rigidity when it is not carried out as an attempt to create life differently, joyfully, intensely, but is rather treated as a cause to which one is to sacrifice oneself. One’s struggle then becomes *moral*, not a question of desire, but of right and wrong, good and evil, conceived as absolute and knowable. Here is the source of much of the rigidity, much of the paranoia and much of the unwarranted sense of self-importance that one finds much too often in anarchist circles. We are the righteous warriors surrounded on all sides by the forces of evil. We must protect ourselves from any possibility of contamination. And the character armor hardens undermining the joyful spirit that provides the courage necessary for the destruction of the world of domination.

This destruction, this demolition of the social prison that surrounds us would bring us face-to-face with the unknown. If we confront it with fear and suspicion, we will build the new prisons ourselves. Some already are, in their minds and in their projects. This is why our projects of attack must originate in and be carried out with joy and an expansive generosity of spirit. The

concrete differences in access to that which is necessary in order to determine the conditions of one’s life) that incorporate bigotry into the very structure of this society, make sense on several levels. By focusing the attempts to battle bigotry onto the passions of individuals, the structures of domination blind many well-meaning people to the bigotry that has been built into the institutions of this society, that is a necessary aspect of its method of exploitation. Thus, the method for fighting bigotry takes a two-fold path: trying to change the hearts of racist, sexist and homophobic individuals and promoting legislation against an undesirable passion. Not only is the necessity for a revolution to destroy a social order founded on institutional bigotry and structural inequality forgotten; the state and the various institutions through which it exercises power are strengthened so that they can suppress “hate”. Furthermore, though bigotry in a rationalized form is useful to the efficient functioning of the social machine, an individual passion of too much intensity, even when funneled into the channels of bigotry, presents a threat to the efficient functioning of the social order. It is unpredictable, a potential point for the breakdown of control. Thus, it must necessarily be suppressed and only permitted to express itself in the channels that have been carefully constructed by the rulers of this society. But one of the aspects of this emphasis on “hate” — an individual passion — rather than on institutional inequalities that is most useful to the state is that it permits those in power — and their media lapdogs — to equate the irrational and bigoted hatred of white supremacists and gay-bashers with the reasonable hatred that the exploited who have risen in revolt feel for the masters of this society and their lackeys. Thus, the suppression of hatred serves the interest of social control and upholds the institutions of power and, hence, the institutional inequality necessary to its functioning.

Those of us who desire the destruction of power, the end of exploitation and domination, cannot let ourselves succumb to the rationalizations of the progressives, which only serve the interests of the rulers of the present. Having chosen to refuse our exploitation and domination, to take our lives as our own in struggle against the miserable reality that has been imposed on us, we inevitably confront an array of individuals, institutions and structures that stand in our way, actively opposing us — the state, capital, the rulers of this order and their loyal guard dogs, the various systems and institutions of control and exploitation. These are our enemies and it is only reasonable that we would hate them. It is the hatred of the slave for the master — or, more accurately, the hatred of the escaped slave for the laws, the cops, the “good citizens”, the courts and the institutions that seek to hunt her down and return him to the master. And as with the passions of our loves and friendships, this passionate hatred is also to be cultivated and made our own, its energy focused and directed into the development of our projects of revolt and destruction.

Desiring to be the creators of our own lives and relations, to live in a world in which all that imprisons our desires and suppresses our dreams has disappeared, we have an immense task before us: the destruction of the present social order. Hatred of the enemy — of the ruling order and all who willfully uphold it — is a tempestuous passion that can provide an energy for this task that we would do well to embrace. Anarchist insurrectionaries have a way of viewing life and a revolutionary project through which to focus this energy, so as to aim it with intelligence and strength. The logic of submission demands the suppression of all passions and their channeling into sentimentalized consumerism or rationalized ideologies of bigotry. The intelligence of revolt embraces all passions, finding in them not only mighty weapons for the battle against this order, but also the wonder and joy of a life lived to the full.

Realism

“Be realistic: Demand the Impossible!”

This famous slogan, which graced the walls of Paris in May 1968, was truly revolutionary in its time, turning every common sense conception of realism on its head. Now artificial, virtual “realities” have come to dominate social relations. Life is not so much lived as watched, and anything can be seen with the new technologies. Considering this, it is no surprise that a slogan once so challenging to an entire social order has now become an advertising slogan. In the realm of the virtual, everything is possible for a price. Everything, that is, except a world without prices, a world of actual, self-determined, face-to-face relationships in which one chooses one’s activities for oneself and concretely acts upon reality within the world.

The circuses that we are offered with our bread present us with spectacles like none ever seen before. Exotic places, strange creatures with magical powers, fantastic explosions, battles and miracles, all these are offered for our entertainment, keeping us glued to the spectator’s seat, our activity limited to occasionally flicking a button — not unlike the primary activity in increasing numbers of jobs. So “the impossible” this society offers us is nothing more than spectacular special effects on a screen, the drug of virtuality numbing us to the misery of the reality that surrounds us, in which possibilities for really living are closing down.

If we are to escape this miserable existence, our revolt must be precisely against social reality in its totality. Realism within this context becomes acceptance. Today when one speaks sincerely of revolution — of striving to overturn the present reality in order to open the possibility of concrete, self-determined human activity and individual freedom — one is being unrealistic, even utopian. But can anything less put an end to the present misery?

Security Culture and Expansive Living

Life today is far too small. Forced into roles and relationships that reproduce the current social order, it focuses on the petty, on that which can be measured, priced, bought and sold. The meager existence of shopkeepers and security guards has been imposed everywhere, and real life, expansive life, life with no limits other than our own capacities exists only in revolt against this society. So those of us who want an expansive existence, life lived to the full, are moved to take action, to attack the institutions that compel us to live such petty lives.

Moved to take back our lives and make them wellsprings of the marvelous, we inevitably encounter repression. Everyday, hidden mechanisms of repression operate to prevent revolt, to guarantee the submission that maintains the social order. The necessities of survival, the underlying awareness of always being watched, the barrage of prohibitions that meet the eyes on signs or in the person of a cop, the very structure of the social environments in which we move, these are enough to keep most people in line, eyes to the ground, minds empty of all except the petty worries of the day. But when one has had enough of this impoverished existence and decides that there must be more, that she cannot tolerate another day in which life is diminished even more, the repression ceases to be so subtle. The spark of revolt has to be suppressed; the maintenance of the social order requires it.

The expansion of life cannot occur in hiding — that would simply be a change of cells within the social prison. But because this expansion, this tension toward freedom, moves us to attack this social order, to take action that is outside and frequently against its written and implied laws, we are forced to deal with the question of how to evade the uniformed guard dogs of the ruling class. So we cannot ignore the question of security.

I have always considered the question of security a simple one, a matter of practical intelligence that anyone should be capable of figuring out. By developing relations of affinity, one decides with whom one can act. There is no need to say a word about an action to anyone who is not involved in it. This is basic and should go without saying for anyone who decides to action against domination. But such practical intelligence has no need to enshroud itself in an atmosphere of suspicion and secretiveness where every word and every thought must be watched, in which even the *words* of defiance are considered too great a risk. If our practice takes us there, we have already lost.

In the context of illegal activity, security is essential. But even in this context, it is not the top priority. Our top priority is always the creation of the lives and relationships we desire, the opening of the possibility for the fullness of existence that the system of domination and exploitation cannot allow. Those of

elusive gender solidarity. The fact that many radical feminists have turned to cops, courts and other state programs for protection on the practical level (thus imitating mainstream feminism) only serves to underline the illusory nature of the “sisterhood” they proclaim. Though there have been attempts to move beyond these limits within the context of feminism, this specialization has been its defining quality for three decades. In the forms in which it has been practiced, it has failed to present a revolutionary challenge to either gender or domination. The anarchist project of total liberation calls us to move beyond these limits to the point of attacking gender itself with the aim of becoming complete beings defined not as a conglomeration of social identities, but as unique, whole individuals.

It is both clichéd and mistaken to claim that men and women have been equally oppressed by their gender roles. The male gender role does allow a greater leeway for the assertion of one’s will. So just as the liberation of women from their gender role is not a matter of becoming more masculine but rather of moving beyond their femininity, so for men the point is not to be more feminine but to move beyond their masculinity. The point is to discover that core of uniqueness that is in each of us that is beyond all social roles and to make that the point from which we act, live and think in the world, in the sexual realm as in all others. Gender separates sexuality from the wholeness of our being, attaching specific traits to it that serve the maintenance of the present social order. Thus sexual energy, which could have amazing revolutionary potential, is channeled into the reproduction of relations of domination and submission, of dependence and desperation. The sexual misery that this has produced and its commercial exploitation surround us. The inadequacy of calling for people to “embrace both their masculinity and femininity” lies in the lack of analysis of the extent to which both of these concepts are social inventions serving the purposes of power. Thus, to change the nature of gender roles, to increase their number or modify their form, is useless from a revolutionary perspective, being nothing more than mechanically adjusting the form of the conduits that channel our sexual energy. Instead, we need to reappropriate our sexual energy in order to reintegrate into the totality of our being in order to become so expansive and powerful as to burst every conduit and flood the plain of existence with our indomitable being. This is not a therapeutic task, but rather one of defiant revolt — one that springs from a strong will and a refusal to back down. If our desire is to destroy all domination, then it is necessary that we move beyond everything that holds us back, beyond feminism, yes, and beyond gender, because this is where we find the ability to create our indomitable individuality that rises up against all domination without hesitation. If we wish to destroy the logic of submission, this must be our minimum goal.

Increasingly, in the face of the juggernaut that is civilization, our present social reality, I hear many radicals say, “It’s necessary to be realistic; I’ll just do what I can in my own life.” This is not the declaration of a strong individuality making itself the center of a revolt against the world of domination and alienation, but rather an admission of resignation, a retreat into merely tending one’s own garden as the monster lumbers on. The “positive” projects developed in the name of this sort of realism are nothing more than alternative ways of surviving within the present society. They not only fail to threaten the world of capital and the state; they actually ease the pressure on those in power by providing voluntary social services under the guise of creating “counter-institutions”. Using the present reality as the place from which they view the world, those who cannot help but see the revolutionary destruction of this reality in which we live as impossible and, therefore, a dangerous goal, so they resign themselves to maintaining an alternative within the present reality.

A more activist form of realism also exists. It is found in a perspective that ignores the totality of the present reality, choosing instead to see only its parts. Thus, the reality of alienation, domination and exploitation is broken down into categories of oppression which are viewed separately such as racism, sexism, environmental destruction and so on. Although such categorization can indeed be useful for understanding the specifics of how the present social order functions, it usually tends instead to keep people from observing the whole, allowing the leftist project of developing specializations in specific forms of oppression to move forward, developing ideological methods for explaining these oppressions. This ideological approach separates theory from practise leading to a further breakdown into issues upon which to act: equal wages for women, acceptance of gays into the military or the Boy Scouts, protection of a particular wetlands or patch of forest, on and on goes the endless round of demands. Once things are broken down to this level, where any analysis of this society as a whole has disappeared, one is once again viewing things from a place within the present reality. For the activist realist, also known as the leftist, efficacy is the primary value. Whatever works is good. Thus emphasis is placed on litigation, legislation, petition to the authorities, negotiation with those who rule us, because these get results — at least if the result one wants is merely the amelioration of one particular problem or the assimilation of a particular group or cause into the present order. But such methods are not effective at all from a revolutionary anarchist perspective, because they are grounded in acceptance of the present reality, in the perspective that this is what is and so we must use it. And that is the perspective of the logic of submission. A reversal of perspective is necessary to free ourselves from this logic.

Such a reversal of perspective requires finding a different place from which to perceive the world, a different position from which to act. Rather than starting from the world as it is, one may choose to start from the will to grasp

her life as his own. This decision immediately places one into conflict with the present reality, because here the conditions of existence and, thus, the choices of how one can live have already been determined by the ruling order. This has come about because a few people manage to take control of the conditions of everybody's existence — precisely, in exchange for bread and circuses, survival graced with a bit of entertainment. Thus, individual revolt needs to arm itself with an analysis of class that expands its critique, awakening a revolutionary perspective. When one also begins to understand the institutional and technological means through which the ruling class maintains, enforces and expands this control, this perspective takes on a social and luddite dimension.

The logic of submission tells us to be realistic, to limit ourselves to the ever-narrowing possibilities that the present reality offers. But when this reality is, in fact, marching toward death — toward the permanent eclipse of the human spirit and the destruction of the living environment — is it truly realistic to “be realistic”? If one loves life, if one wants to expand and flourish, it is absolutely necessary to free desire from the channels to constrain it, to let it flood our minds and hearts with passion that sparks the wildest dreams. Then one must grasp these dreams and from them hone a weapon with which to attack this reality, a passionate rebellious reason capable of formulating projects aimed at the destruction of that which exists and the realization of our most marvelous desires. For those of us who want to make our lives our own, anything less would be unrealistic.

Beyond Feminism, Beyond Gender

In order to create a revolution that can put an end to all domination, it is necessary to put an end to the tendency we all have to submit. This requires that we view the roles that this society imposes on us with a cruel and penetrating eye seeking out their weak points with the aim of breaking through their limits and moving beyond them.

Sexuality is an essential expression of individual desire and passion, of the flame that can ignite both love and revolt. Thus, it can be an important force of the individual's will that can raise her beyond the mass as a unique and indomitable being. Gender, on the other hand, is a conduit built by the social order to constrain this sexual energy, to confine and limit it, directing toward the reproduction of this order of domination and submission. Thus, it is an obstruction to an attempt to freely determine how one will live and relate. Nonetheless, up to now, men have been granted more leeway in asserting their will within these roles than women, a reasonable explanation for why more anarchists, revolutionaries and outlaws have been men than women. Women who have been

strong, rebellious individuals have been so precisely because they have moved beyond their femininity.

It is unfortunate that the women's liberation movement that reemerged in the 1960's did not succeed in developing a deep analysis of the nature of domination in its totality and of the role played by gender in its reproduction. A movement that had started from a desire to be free of gender roles in order to be full, self-determined individuals was transformed into a specialization just like most partial struggles of the time. This guaranteed that a total analysis would not be possible within this context.

This specialization is the feminism of the present era that began developing out of the women's liberation movement in the late '60's. It does not aim so much at the liberation of individual women from the limits of their gender roles as at the liberation of “woman” as a social category. Within mainstream politics, this project consists of gaining rights, recognition and protection for woman as a recognized social category under the law. In theory, radical feminism moves beyond mere legalities with the aim of liberating woman as a social category from male domination. Since male domination is not adequately explored as an aspect of total domination, even by anarcho-feminists, the rhetoric of radical feminism frequently takes on a style similar to that of national liberation struggles. But in spite of the differences in style and rhetoric, the practice of mainstream and radical feminism often coincide. This is not by chance.

The specialization of radical feminism actually lies in the cataloguing of wrongs suffered by woman at the hands of man. If this catalogue was ever completed, the specialization would no longer be necessary and it would be time to move beyond this listing of wrongs suffered to an actual attempt to analyze the nature of women's oppression in this society and take real, thought-out action to end it. So the maintenance of this specialization requires that feminists expand this catalogue to infinity, even to the point of explaining the oppressive actions of women in positions of power as expressions of patriarchal power, thus freeing these women from responsibility for their actions. Any serious analysis of the complex relations of domination as it actually exists is laid aside in favor of an ideology in which man dominates and woman is the victim of this domination. But the creation of one's identity on the basis of one's oppression, on the victimization one has suffered, does not provide strength or independence. Instead it creates a need for protection and security that eclipses the desire for freedom and self-determination. In the theoretical and psychological realm, an abstract, universal “sisterhood” may meet this need, but in order to provide a basis for this sisterhood, the “feminine mystique”, which was exposed in the 1960's as a cultural construct supporting male domination, is revived in the form of women's spirituality, goddess religion and a variety of other feminist ideologies. The attempt to liberate woman as a social category reaches its apotheosis in the re-creation of the feminine gender role in the name of an