



# ***WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE***

***Selections from Volume 1***

**Anarchist theory and analysis**

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: The Nature of This Project.....	2
WILD DESTRUCTION..... <i>Die Lunte</i> .....	3
DEMOCRACY: Choosing to Serve.....	4
WITHOUT ASKING PERMISSION.....	5
THE MILITANT ELECTRIC CHAIR..... <i>D. M.</i> .....	6
GROUPS OF TWO OR THREE..... <i>Die Lunte</i> .....	9
SO YOU DON'T VOTE.....	10
THE ENDLESS DIALOGUE.....	11
AGAINST AMNESIA (fragments)..... <i>(d)anger</i> .....	14
A EULOGY TO OPINION..... <i>Canenero</i> .....	16
STEAL BACK YOUR LIFE.....	18
THE WILD DOGS HOWL.....	19
PIRATES AND MERCHANTS..... <i>Canenero</i> .....	21
BELIEF: the enemy of thinking.....	22
AGAINST CHARITY.....	24
THE DREAM..... <i>L'Argonauta</i> .....	26
PLAY FIERCELY: Thoughts on Growing Up.....	28
TRAINING IN FUTILITY.....	30
FEAR OF CONFLICT.....	32
THEIR OWN GAME.....	34
BUT THE FORESTS STILL FALL.....	36
MEDICAL SCIENCE: A Lingering Disease.....	38
TECHNOLOGY: A Limit to Creativity.....	39
I'LL MAKE MY OWN PARADISE.....	42

## **INTRODUCTION: THE NATURE OF THIS PROJECT**

Willful Disobedience is intended to express ideas that are part of my life projectuality. It is an explicitly anarchic project in the sense that it opposes to every form of authority the self-determination of individuals who refuse all domination; it is insurrectionary in its recognition that authority must be attacked and destroyed as an essential part of the project of creating our lives for ourselves based upon our desires. That means that this project is not a forum for democratic dialogue in which all ideas are equal and therefore equally valid...The understanding of anarchic insurgence underlying this project is as follows:

Within the present social context our lives as individuals have been made alien to us, because society creates interactions and activities for us which are not based on the singularity of our unconstrained dreams and desires, but only serve the continuing reproduction of society by channeling the energy of desire into that reproduction through a variety of institutions and systems which integrate to form civilized society: the state, capital, work, technology, religion, education, ideology, law...Opposition to this begins when we as individuals rise up in willful disobedience and recognize the necessity of attacking and destroying all institutions of domination, not as a cause, but for ourselves, because we want to create our own games...

*Wolfi Landstreicher*

dividual, of creativity, of singularity. Its aim is total social control through a totally controlled environment – every desire properly channeled and directed toward the commodity that represents its fulfillment; every passion decently constrained, labeled and sentimentalized; every conflict well managed and brought to a compromise that guarantees continued mediocrity; every action transformed into the clockwork reactions of a finely tuned machine. The technological system transforms the world in such a totalitarian manner not simply because it is in the hands of a ruling class, but because this is the purpose for which it was developed from the beginning: not merely the transformation of the environment, but its total control. From the time agriculture arose, technology has been cybernetic – that is, the totalitarian attempt to create system of automatic control.

I have no interest in being a cog in a huge machine, nor in any transformations made by such a machine, transformations that are only making the world increasingly the same, a homogenized mass. I want to create my own life, my own interactions and my own projects. This inevitably brings me into conflict with civilization and its technological machine, and, in fact, with every form of society. For only in the destruction of these gigantic, passionless, constraining monsters can my uniqueness, my fundamental singularity flourish in all of its beauty and wonder, so that I can fully appreciate and revel in the marvelous differences of every being I encounter.

But if we destroy the social constraints on our creativity only to replace them with the moral ones of the deep ecologists who wallow in humanistic self-hatred in the name of their biocentric ideology, we are fools. Why should I deny myself the wonder of a world of individuals reveling in their differences, coming together and separating, loving and fighting with passion, making playgrounds and gardens – little paradises that transform and grow and fade away into nothingness – alone or in union with others as each desires? Occasionally I have caught a glimpse of this world in projects shared with friends. Wilderness, garden, playground, festival? In this social world that strives to deny me all, I refuse such a foolish choice, because I want to have them all, and I will fight with all my might against every social system and every moral constraint which stands in the way of my desire to create a life of wonder for myself in this world.

## I'LL MAKE MY OWN PARADISE

Wilderness or playground? There are those who insist that one must choose one or the other. They equate human creativity with technological development using the same sloppy reasoning that equates the bow and arrow of the pygmy with computers and factories. Such shallow thinkers are best ignored, but the nature of human creativity is not.

I completely reject the concepts of “human nature” or “species being”. The former is a religious concept best left in the dustbin of history with gods, ghosts and fairies. The latter is an attempt to make the former “scientific”, which fails miserably once one realizes that “species” is purely an invention of convenience for the purpose of biological classification. To transform this abstraction into an entity that stands above you and me and of which we are merely a part is absurd mysticism. So when I speak of human creativity, I mean specifically the creativity of each individual as such, the ability of each individual to project the life and interactions she desires and, thus, to transform his environment as it gives her pleasure. In other words, creativity is that within each of us which expresses our uniqueness, our fundamental difference from every other being.

Creativity, this expression of individual uniqueness, requires a world full of other unique beings and of things with specific properties with which the creator can play and interact to transform her environment. But these things also place natural limits on creativity. No matter how much I may wish to do so, I cannot flap my wings and fly like a bird or take a two hour stroll on the bottom of the ocean unprotected or slice a stone with a blade of grass except in dreams. But the natural limits on my creativity still leave a wide, seemingly infinite, range of possibilities open to me. It is the social limits that are placed upon my creativity that are truly constricting. These limits, which are what define culture, actually constrain my capabilities. My arms, naturally limited in strength, are now also chained; my eyes, with vision already fuzzy, must look through a blindfold as well; my voice, with its tiny range and volume, must now strive to sing through a gag. My power to create has been usurped by society and transformed into productive labor and commodity consumption, and I am made into a cog in the social machine.

There is no question that civilization is a transformation of the environment and technology is the tool by which this particular transformation is realized. But it is a transformation at the expense of the in-

## WILD DESTRUCTION

The burning fuse—a quiet hiss in this world in which everything is talked to death and nothing is done.

Individualities who rise out of the mass and define what we will do with our lives and why for ourselves.

Self-determination which can break out of the circle of delegation and rules.

Passion that takes pleasure in the virtue of wild destruction, announcing the battle against all oppression and authority.

Uncertainty and the lust for adventure against dogma and guarantee. A dream of freedom for people and animals.

Sustaining free spirits in permanent insurrection against control, war, racism, cages and religion.

Death to the symbols, the gods, the compulsion of survival, the flags and hierarchies.

Unity only as the individual desires, not in a preexistence group or collective reality.

—from *Die Lunte*

## **DEMOCRACY: CHOOSING TO SERVE**

The more participatory a social system is, the more total its control is because the individual identifies herself with his role within the system. In other words, a democratic structure is the most efficient way yet developed to integrate individuals into a social system, to make them feel that they are essentially a part of a social machine. Partial rebellions, in the form of “radical “issues, which use democratic methods or demand more justice, equality or participation in democratic processes become lubricant for the machinery of social control.

Those who rebel against the social context in its totality as they confront it in their lives are called hooligans, delinquents, enemies of “the People”. They cannot be tolerated in a democratic system (not even the consensus process systems of certain so-called radical and anarchist groups) because their actions undermine the ideological basis of such systems, by showing that individual freedom grows out of self-determined activity, not any sort of decision-making process. Radical groups will merely expel such troublemakers, but within the larger social context, they must be punished, rehabilitated or destroyed if caught.

Democracy is never anarchic, no matter how direct. Democratic decisions are not the decisions/actions of free individuals. They are merely choices made between the options offered by the social context, choices separated from the actions of individuals and used to control those actions, to subject them to the will of the group, the society. So to choose to participate in democratic processes is to choose to serve, to be a slave to a will outside of oneself. No free-spirited individual would accept the will of the majority or the group consensus as a way of determining how to live anymore than she would accept the will of a dictator or the central committee. I do not merely want a say in how society creates my life. I want my life to be by my own to create as I desire.

puter games, flicking a button or moving a joy-stick in pseudo-interaction with a passively ingested image. None of these passive consumers of entertainment technology are creating their own pleasures, their own interactions, their own lives. None are a threat to authority.

Technology and the civilized environment (urban, suburban and rural) have only one relationship to the creativity of the individual: that of suppressing it. They force it into extremely narrow and confining channels which only allow for the continuing reproduction of society as an ever more controlling and limiting system. In other words, the present society has declared war on unique individuals and their creativity. Within this context, our creative expression must be largely destructive – tearing down the walls, the dams, the channels that constrain us. Destroying the system of social control, including the monstrous technological system and its urban environment which define the non-lives that most people live, is essential to our self-creation, to making our lives our own.

The origin of civilization remains a realm of speculation, but its spread is within the realm of recorded history. In light of the restrictions it places on human interactions, it should come as no surprise that historical evidence indicates that it has always only spread by the use of force against the resistance of non-civilized people and that it resorted to genocide when this resistance was too strong. Even in areas where civilization had already been established, there have always been individual resisters – vagabonds treated with distrust by both peasants and city dwellers and often on the receiving end of the violence by which the law is enforced.

But against this resistance, civilization, nonetheless, spread. In the fields and in the cities, technology developed and, with it, social control. Architecture developed to create the majestic, fear-inspiring temples to authority as well as the nondescript cubicles that house the lower classes. Economic exchange became too complex to go on without the lubricant of money and with this development, the classes of the rich and the poor were established. The impoverished class provided people who could be coerced into laboring for the wealthy. And what is their labor? The further development of the technology that enforces social control. Technology cannot be separated from work, nor is it without reason that each step “forward” in the development of technology has meant an increase in the amount of work necessary for social survival. As Nietzsche said, “Work is the best police”, and technology is this cop’s muscle.

Technology quite literally controls the activities of people in their daily lives. Any factory worker could tell the precise movements one is expected to make so many times each hour on the production line and how nonconformity to these motions can fuck up production. Computers and other office machines also require very specific, restricted motions of the people they use. And the technological methods of Taylorism are even applied to service work, as ten days of hectic wage slavery at Wendy’s and several years in janitorial and dishwashing jobs taught me. None of this technology decreases labor. It just reinforces the role of the work as a passive cog in the social machine.

Even the recreational use of technology – television, computer games, recorded music and so on – is a form of social control. Without even dealing with the social history of these means of entertainment as products of work, one can easily see their role in controlling the activities of people. Through these machines, millions of people take in the ideas and images fed to them, maybe, in the case of com-

## WITHOUT ASKING PERMISSION

The social system that surrounds us is immense, a network of institutions and relationships of authority and control that encompasses the globe. It usurps the lives of individuals, forcing them into interactions and activities that serve only to reproduce society. Yet this vast social system only exists through the continuing habitual obedience of those whom it exploits.

While some wait for the masses or the exploited class to rise up, I recognize that masses and classes are themselves social relationships against which I rise up. For it is *my* life as a unique individual with singular desires and dreams that has been usurped from me and made alien in interactions and activities not of my own creation. Everywhere there are laws and rules, rights and duties, documents, licenses and permits... Then there are those of us who never again want to ask permission.

Knowing that the reproduction of society depends upon our obedience, I choose a life of willful disobedience. By this, I do not mean that I will make sure that every action I take will break a rule or law—that is as much enslavement to authority as obedience. Rather I mean that with all the strength I have, I will create my life and my activities as my own without any regard for authority... or regarding it only as my enemy. I do all I can to prevent my life from being usurped by work, by the economy, by survival. Of course, as I go about making my living activities and interactions my own, all the structures of social control move to suppress this spark of life that is my singularity. And so I mercilessly attack this society that steals my life from me with the intent of destroying it.

For those of us who will have our lives as our own without ever asking permission, willful disobedience must become an insurrection of unique individuals intent on razing society to the ground.

## THE MILITANT ELECTRIC CHAIR

by  
D. M.

(from the German anarchist paper, *Die Lunte*)

“One person is too few, two people are good, three people are many, more than four people seem to me to be the masses.” Personally, I had a different opinion for a long time. I always thought that many people accomplished more than few and that it probably also looked better to those outside when there were as many people as possible at a gathering. One day, however, I came to understand that quantity without quality makes no sense. It became clear to me that it simply isn’t adequate to march through the streets with people who—in the best of cases—mean well, but who cannot break the tension with their own ideas and the joy of struggle. Eventually, I began to ask myself why these people were in the scene. The longer I observed these people, the more convinced I became that they would feel more comfortable in a therapy center. Since I did not want to take on the role of judge or psycho-trash remover, I began to consider how I could avoid this situation without, thus, having to give up my passion for the struggle.

It was a long and hard road; naturally it is easier to remain in a larger family where one may be given the impression that she is safer from the cruel society. The wishful thinking is the same and the scene offers one a feeling of security. My hope, however, was not to find a substitute family, but rather to find people like me who feel the impulse and the need to fight against this system, to destroy it in order to be able to live together in a new society. After a long, agonizing search, I came to know some of these “militant” people. Their sort inspired me at first, but I very quickly realized that these people would also feel much more at ease if they were in a therapy center. Often the alleged militancy was just a pretext to put down those who ventured to express their own ideas rather than following the head militant like a herd of sheep. The idea of militancy itself already disturbed me. I didn’t want to have anything to do with the militant outlook and that’s why I decided to say farewell to the militant family. I am still surprised when I receive a pamphlet that, with an excess of superficiality, speaks of “our Palestinian comrades.” My comrades, or rather my friends, are the people with whom I start a project and at

## TECHNOLOGY: A Limit to Creativity

Technology is a social system. In other words, it is a system of relationships that determines the interactions of human beings with each other and with their environment in such a way as to perpetuate the system. The development of agriculture is often equated with the rise of civilization because it is the first verifiable technological system to develop. Of course it did not develop alone. At the same time, the state, property, religion, economic exchange, cities, laws – an entire network of integrated systems and institutions developed. Taken together, these are what I mean by civilization and the integral relationship between these institutions must be understood if we are to fight authority intelligently.

Within non-civilized societies, the cultural limits placed on creative expression are often very rigid (there is no use in venerating these societies), but they are also very few. There are still vast areas open for unconstrained individual creativity, vast areas for interactions with the surrounding world that are one’s own, that are sources of wonder rather than repetition of the same old habitual shit. The limits probably remain so few in these societies, because social control is personal and direct, existing, for example, in kinship relationships and sexual taboos. Little thought is given in these societies to social control of the surrounding environment.

With the rise of civilization, the nature of social control underwent a qualitative change. It became impersonal and, to a large extent, indirect – controlling and shaping individuals by controlling and shaping the environment in which they exist. While the more direct forms of this impersonal social control are the work of the state, religion, laws and education, all openly authoritarian institutions, indirect social control is the work of such subtle authorities as technology, economy and the urban environment.

Agriculture and the city both create a strict connection to a specific piece of land. Agriculture requires a specific, scheduled and socially organized interaction with this piece of land. The city takes environmental control still further, creating an artificial environment for the social purposes of defense, commerce, religion and government. Its structure enforces conformity to these purposes. The activities of individuals in such an environment are restricted to specific spaces and to specific sorts of motions and interactions.

tion that would destroy the social order that creates these specializations called for. Better to retreat into the safe realms of microbiology and genetics where the rule of expertise, which grants us that mediocre absence of acute symptoms that is passed off as health if we accept dependence upon it, is maintained.

But what do these experts actually offer us? Cancer and AIDS – today’s main devourers of medical research dollars – receive treatment that is as hit-or-miss as that given for so-called mental illness. This parallel is particularly interesting in reference to AIDS which may well be as much a social construction as mental illness – it is possible that a variety of different immune deficiency disorders, some of which have been known for a long time, others of which are the results of new toxins in the environment, are diagnosed as AIDS if the person with the disease fits into certain social categories that are defined as “high risk”. This possibility takes on a sinister hue when one considers that most immune deficiency disorders are curable, but a person diagnosed with AIDS will not be treated for these, because the experts have already declared that this person is presently incurable.

So the medical establishment monkeys around with our lives and our health to reinforce its power and our dependence... as cold, as heartless, as inhuman as the totality of science and the society that spawned it. Often used as an argument for maintaining the technological system, medicine is, in fact, a prime example of a gigantic, inhuman system run amok which those of us who desire self-determination and the possibility of real face-to-face interaction need to destroy. It may be true that medical science has lengthened the duration of existence for those who can afford its technical expertise, but its mechanical knowledge of the body has also provided the basis for torture techniques, holocausts and genocidal weapons. And it has added nothing to real vitality. A vital, living knowledge of ourselves as physical beings provides a much better basis for good health and the enjoyment of life.

least attempt to carry it through. There are plenty of people in the world who have every reason to revolt, but this does not, by a long shot, mean that I consider them as my comrades. When I come to know someone, I may find that it is not even possible to drink a beer with them, let alone open a revolutionary discussion. Of course, the group dynamic that is based chiefly on quantity belongs to the militant scene as well: meetings that go on for hours, groundless discussions, grand slogans with nothing behind them. A sad picture.

One day it dawned on me that when there was discord in my circle of friends, I was quick to strike the friends involved from my address book. So I transferred this to the scene as well and thus became aware for the first time of how one gets trapped in the scene. As a comrade, one can be as human as the thing allows; what matters is that one is a militant. That it is a matter of militant nosiness is gladly overlooked. And because it pursues this nosiness to such a degree, truly unpleasant and unmanageable situations arise in which individuals are condemned without any possibility of defense and executed on the militant electric chair. Yet, this is all done in the name of a dubious anarchism. No one seriously questions how this all came to be, so nothing changes.

More and more people are in committed groups, so it becomes increasingly difficult to respect and enact the wishes and radical actions of the single individual. And the group mentality is limited by this: discussing for hours makes no real sense since there will never be agreement between everyone. And so it comes to this: everyone returns home frustrated and everything remains as it was.

So why not tackle the question differently. It might work if each individual only came to terms with those who really had the same conceptions of the struggle or at least the conceptions closest to one’s own. This way, all psycho-discussion, all debate about that about which we can do nothing, disappears and we can finally get down to what matters. It is easier to find one or two people who think similarly to me than to join together with twenty people who have nothing more in common than that if they are from Munich they drink Augustiner beer and if they are from Berlin they drink the Berliner wheat beer. Why discuss every time whether to have a demonstration or not? Those who want to have them should carry them through. Those who are against them can do something else. Why must everyone take the same view? The same applies to actions. It then becomes possible to think through to the second or third action without depending on ten other people! Many small actions also produce a large outcome.

But as long as the aim is to have enough people ready in order to carry out a large action, there will always be problems in the early stages with the result that generally nothing happens.

Basically, it should be obvious to anarchists that each individual must be responsible for her own actions. Furthermore, this means that every form of delegation must be destroyed. As I see it, direct action is essential to anarchy. But this should mean not only material destruction, but mainly the changes in people's heads. In a free society there could be neither cops nor judges nor prisons. And so everyone would be dependent upon themselves to determine how they would act in the case of a dispute. When it comes to a harsh quarrel (anarchy does not mean that one allows every insolence to occur). The individuals involved should decide between themselves how things will be settled.

The group dynamic, however, leads directly toward delegation. Two people argue, five interfere, four spread rumors and three demand more control and discipline in the group. This is the correct thing to do according to the logic of the state, but not at all in the anarchistic sense. Self-determination and the destruction of delegation also imply that only those comrades who are really personally involved in a situation will concern themselves with it. Many people from the scene have problems and continually attempt to draw others into them. They expect a response and support from us which means that they are not capable of managing their lives themselves. This devil's circle should be broken and destroyed. A person who understands this concept (and then carries it out) also comprehends why it is simple superficial to speak of "our comrades" who fight a struggle that often leads to prison or even death. I would personally consider it arrogant if I were in the clink for life and I was sent a pamphlet in which I was represented as a comrade of some group which has an aim different from mine, and, besides, does nothing more than march along in peaceful demonstrations. As a counter-argument, the militant circle will immediately tell me something about international solidarity. In this case, we should all ask ourselves what is meant by solidarity. When a squat is evicted and other individuals squat two more houses in the same way as an act of solidarity, this can be called true solidarity. However, if this solidarity is only expressed in a pamphlet, I would, at best, describe it as commentary and, in the worst cases, as a form of sympathy card. Solidarity can only take place as direct action, the rest is a side issue.

## **MEDICAL SCIENCE: A Lingerin Disease**

Science is not a neutral method of knowledge, and those sciences that deal with practical matters are the most suspect. In recent years, medical and genetic sciences have turned their energies toward trying to deny the social and environmental factors in disease. Diseases in which social and environmental factors – including personal habits – have long been recognized as major causes are now being attributed to genetic disorders or to bacteria or viruses that occur naturally in our bodies, but that have suddenly gone "out of control". These supposed explanations amount to a claim that it is our own bodies that are the enemies of our health, not the increasingly polluted, alienated and artificial environment that surrounds us.

Of course, such an idea is blatantly absurd, contradicting the most basic of biological understandings. An organism that tends inherently to make itself ill will not survive. So it makes no sense biologically to look for causes of disease within our own physiological or genetic structure. Let us also consider the fact that the genetic and viral hypotheses regarding cancer have failed miserably in producing a cure for cancer, just as the hypothesis – always stated as if it were a proven fact – that the so-called HIV causes AIDS has done nothing to bring us closer to a cure for that disease. Nor do these hypotheses offer any worthwhile methods for preventing these diseases. They do, however, provide a means for justifying years of funding for medical research that generally results in nothing more than a steady income for the researchers and huge profits for the corporations involved.

But there is another aspect to disease hypotheses based on genetics and microbiology. When social, environmental and lifestyle factors are recognized as major sources of disease, the expertise of those trained in medical science becomes far less important in the treatment of disease – in fact, quite possibly useless as anything other than an emergency stop-gap. Lifestyle factors can be taken care of by individuals themselves once they are aware of the situation. But more frightening to the people whose supposed expertise is threatened by such independence are the implications found in a recognition of the social and environmental factors involved in causing disease. When such factors are admitted, it means that the present social order so impoverishes our lives that it even takes a toll on our bodies. That is to say, the present social order is killing us. No medical expert or genetic scientist can offer a solution to this problem. Rather, a revolu-

## BUT THE FORESTS STILL FALL

In an action that was typically self-sacrificial, Earth First! activists in Virginia's George Washington National Forest mildly annoyed lumber companies for a little over twelve hours and gave law enforcement officers some work. Two men laid down at a narrow point in forest service road #227 and each secured an arm in a 30-inch pipe cemented and buried in the road. After a little over 12 hours, these two men were released from the road and were instead in the custody of the cops. The two martyrs called the action successful even though the logging continued the next day and they had to face legal action. One spokesperson said, "We did not want the forests to fall without witness to their importance." But once EF! had born witness, I guess it didn't matter any more if the forest fell.

Against the juggernaut of capital and its destructive rampage, those blindered by their single issue offer only moral witness and self-sacrifice. Blind to the total picture, these activists praise the law enforcement officers, saying of their leader, "he gets our respect as a cop." For those who wonder what the totality is, it is the fact that the existence of cops and the destruction of forests are integral parts of a single system of social relationships that must be attacked in its entirety.

Katuah EF! can continue their futile martyrdom and their praise of pigs...

...But the forests still fall.

## GROUPS OF TWO OR THREE

(from *Die Lunte*)

The north side of Paris consists of a large area of social housing. The old industrial area has gradually been compressed into the east side; in between, on the northeast side, the mansions and villas of the rich spread out.

The police guard the industrial works and of the east side and the houses of the northeast. But they rarely dare to venture into the north side. There the night is dangerous. When the police do venture into the north side, it is at great risk and those who do so are not squeamish. If a youth does not stop when ordered to, a cop shoots, or if the youth is on foot, he will simply be run over by a patrol car.

Something happened, centered in the city quarter of Noisy-le-Grand. Hundreds of people took to the streets, and not just young people but adults as well, and not just blacks. It was reported as several confrontations between the police and the people in revolt and a few burning cars. Then it was claimed that the situation had normalized.

But in the days that followed, completely different characteristics developed: people did not appear in the open on the street corners to demonstrate, but joined in the complicity of the night. They formed into groups of two or three people, hundreds of small groups for systematic attack. A high school was completely destroyed. Three occupational schools blazed. Hundreds of parked cars functioned as chains of light. A bank was attacked and destroyed with molotov cocktails. In the city center there were hardly any shop display windows that were not destroyed or plundered. Fire extinguishers were demolished. Gas and water pipes were sabotaged and garbage cans were set ablaze.

—*the authors: vanished in the night*

## SO YOU DON'T VOTE

It goes without saying, anarchists don't vote. After all, we don't want to delegate our lives, we want to live them directly. Wouldn't contradict our anarchist principles to vote?

But what does it mean to be an anarchist? How many use this label as they continue to go to work every day in order to pay the rent and the bills, keep their car on the road and feed their family—as nuclear as the power that feeds their stereos, TVs and computers? Or maybe they are sitting in the halls of academia, earning multiple degrees—finding a place in the hierarchy of the intelligentsia... but they do not vote. Then there are those who think they have dropped out of society by choosing to be its bottom rung—living off its handouts and trash and scamming just enough to buy the latest sub-cultural commodities and the next cheap 40-ouncer of beer. None of these people vote; they must be anarchists.

Certainly, to be an anarchist in this society is to know a life full of contradictions. There are no easy answers on how best to live a life in perpetual conflict with authority. But to be an anarchist—if this is to mean anything—is not a matter of beliefs, causes or ideals. It is the decision to refuse to let one's life be determined by any authority, to refuse the alienation imposed by society, to the full extent to which one is capable.

Those who call themselves anarchists, but continue to live in subservience might just as well vote. Those who call themselves anarchists, but continue to climb the ladder to academic success might just as well vote. Even those who have chosen to embrace the bottom rung of this society, living off its trash and charities, might as well vote if this is how they define their revolt. Because all of these choices are simply choices of the place one will take within this society rather than the choice to oppose it. As humiliating as it may be to choose one's masters, if one is going to live as a slave, one may as well try to choose the gentles, most generous, least demanding master possible. But can those who choose to live as slaves rightly be called anarchists?

Abstention from voting—this particular refusal—only has meaning as an aspect of the creation of life that refuses *all* delegation and that attempts to destroy all authority and open the fullest possibilities to self-created living.

to the safe little backroom orgies and the street theater/performance art pieces that all too often seem to be the sum total of “insurgent” games played by anarchists, this game seems much more challenging both to the institutions of society and for the players. It requires real courage and wits. The sorts of activities pursued by most anarchists to “challenge” the institutions of society indicate an underlying belief that these institutions are predominantly mental constructs that merely have to be argued away or symbolically exorcised. In tagging, the physical reality of these institutions is squarely faced and recognized as an essential aspect of what must be attacked. Not that the psychological aspect of these institutions is unreal, but it is an outgrowth of the physical basis of power. The energy, the courage, the adventurous spirit and the practical imagination of taggers would be useful tools for insurgents, for those who willfully want to defy and destroy society in its totality. The combination of conscious insurgence with the playful spirit of tagging could lead to more adventurous and daring games, games of defiant attack on ever-greater levels.

## THEIR OWN GAME

It is easy to belittle taggers—those who choose to spray-paint initials or nicknames on walls to show that they've been there. Certainly, they could leave a message, an insurgent slogan, an explicit expression of rage or rebellion. Wouldn't that be more worthwhile? I used to be among those who made such complaints about taggers, putting them down for the lack of content in their graffiti. But one day, as I was walking through the city where I lived, I began to notice the places where taggers would leave their marks. I realized that although most taggers are not, by any means, insurgent anarchists, there are aspects of their activity that challenge some of the fundamental aspects of this society, and do so in a playful and adventurous way. They are playing their own game.

One of the most basic institutions of this society is exclusive property. Every space is the legally protected property of a particular person, institution or collectivity. When individuals use spaces that are not legally theirs for their own purposes without asking the legal owners permission, it is considered a crime. This is what taggers do.

Tagging can be seen as an unconscious challenge to officially recognized property rights, to the law and to cops. So as not to delude ourselves though, it is necessary to be aware that some tagging is done by gangs who are seeking to establish their power and to claim a certain space as their exclusive property within the subcultural context of gang society. There is nothing the least bit insurgent, even in a latent, unconscious sense, in this gang usage of tagging. It is merely a subcultural reflection of the dominant culture's values. However the majority of taggers either play solo or in tag teams which are not street gangs, but exist solely for the game of tagging.

And what a game! Late in the night, these adventurous vandals climb twelve-foot fences topped with razor wire. They scale vertical walls without ladders. They venture into subway tunnels and up on to billboards. All of this while having to keep an eye out for the cops and other upholders of the law and property rights. It is certainly a game of wits, strategy and creative imagination. It involves an energetic, practical defiance of the law and property rights. And it is a game that is played purely for the pleasure that is found in the risk of such practical defiance.

Those of us who have a consciously insurgent perspective, who know that we want to destroy this society and its institutions might do better to learn from these games rather than belittle them. Compared

## THE ENDLESS DIALOGUE

There are those for whom ideas are merely opinions—maybe ideals for a distant future—to be endlessly debated and argued, always respected—even venerated—but always kept separate from life. Then there are those for whom ideas are an integral part of their life projectuality, of the creation of a self-determined way of living. These latter, anarchic in attitude even if they don't use the label anarchist, appear to the former as dogmatists.

Within this society the ideal of democracy reigns. It creates an ideology of dialogue in which the exchange of opinions is venerated for its own sake. Ideas become independent entities separate from the individuals who express them, and in this way become the commodity, opinion. As such, these ideas become sacred, not so much in themselves (that is in their content) as in the context in which they are expressed. It is not what one says that matters, but the fact that one can say it. The context of this exchange of opinions is democracy which presents itself at the same time as merely one idea among many and as the space where the confrontation between all ideas can occur. When one criticizes democracy, it is not seen as a criticism of a determined and concrete vision of life, but as a refusal of the exchange of opinions. Moreover this critique is recuperated by democracy as further evidence of tolerance—that is, the democratic way—and the dialogue it allows. It is one's right to critique—and, like all rights, it is without the power of those who grant it.

And so the endless dialogue begins—this game where life slips away as everything is talked to death. The first rule of this game is that individuals must disappear—their lives, their passions, their projects all forgotten—so that their *opinion* appears with all the sterile purity of merchandise on display in the ideological marketplace. When ideas are drained of their content, when they are merely opinions, disconnected from the real lives of individuals, then the clash of ideas dissolves into the community of opinion where even the cop and the anarchist may respect each other's opinion.

But then there are those who won't play by the rules: for example, the one who considers the cop her enemy even if the cop claims to be an anarchist himself. For this individual it is no longer a matter of

opinion—the endless dialogue is over. For in dialogue, each one must have their say, and anyone who contests this is undemocratic.

But anarchists—if by this one means those who choose to create their lives as their own in opposition to every authority—do not consider choice and self-determination to be mere opinions. They are not interested in the *right* to express their opinions—a mere confirmation of the democratic method of the spectacle—but rather in the rupture of the rules that keep the endless dialogue yammering on and on. Anarchy is not democratic so such anarchists are considered dogmatists.

Even within the context of the anarchist milieu, the bullshit about dialogue and democracy, fairness and respect weighs down any potential for unconstrained lives, self-determined projectuality, unmodified desires and dreams. At anarchist gatherings and in the letters sections of the anarchist press, the endless dialogue winds along its useless path to nowhere. Rarely do the ideas expressed reflect the lives of those expressing them. No, it is to be the friendly exchange of opinions—a glorious expression of the fact that though we may do nothing, we can say anything. And so the same debates rage eternally and tedium reigns along with a sense of futility. Finally, one who has become fed up with this tiresome Ouroboros calls bullshit bullshit, puts an end to her part in this endless debate; instead of politely saying, “This is my opinion, what’s yours?” he cries, “I will project my life in this way; if you’re heading the same way, feel free to join me for a while. If not, fuck off!” This one is called dogmatic, absolutist, even moralistic (though her life defies every morality) simply for choosing to live his own life. The totalitarian nature of the endless dialogue becomes evident as attempts to determine one’s life for oneself are suppressed by the demands for respectful dialogue and toleration.

Most so-called anarchists in the United States are little more than debaters. Their activity is not a life project, but an imitation of leftist activism with the additional slogan: “Smash the state!” Thus, their “anarchism” is merely an opinion to be discussed, an opinion that could be readily shared by university professors, union bureaucrats, even judges—since it has no real connection to life choices. If I call myself an anarchist, it is because I choose to live as best I can a life in opposition to all authority, a life that rebels because I desire an expansiveness of existence that cannot be ruled. My ideas are not merely opinions, but an integral part of my life projectuality, of my struggle for a passionate self-determined existence. So of what use to me is this endless dialogue, this mercantile display of opinion, with

merely anti-state leftists, they are convinced that only a united front can destroy this society which perpetually forces us into unities not of our choosing, and that we must, therefore, overcome our differences and join together to support the “common cause”. But when we give ourselves to the “common cause”, we are forced to accept the lowest common denominator of understanding and struggle. The unities that are created in this way are false unities which thrive only by suppressing the unique desires and passions of the individuals involved, transforming them into a mass. Such unities are no different from the forming of labor that keeps a factory functioning or the unity of social consensus which keeps the authorities in power and people in line. Mass unity, because it is based on the reduction of the individual to a unit in a generality, can never be a basis for the destruction of authority, only for its support in one form or another. Since we want to destroy authority, we must start from a different basis.

For me, that basis is myself—my life with all of its passions and dreams, its desires, projects and encounters. From this basis, I make “common cause” with no one, but may frequently encounter individuals with whom I have an affinity. It may well be that your desires and passions, your dreams and projects coincide with mine. Accompanied by an insistence upon realizing these in opposition to every form of authority, such affinity is a basis for a genuine unity between singular, insurgent individuals which lasts only as long as these individuals desire. Certainly, the desire for the destruction of authority and society can move us to strive for an insurrectional unity that becomes large-scale, but never as a mass movement; instead it would need to be a coinciding of affinities between individuals who insist on making their lives their own. This sort of insurrection cannot come about through a reduction of our ideas to a lowest common denominator with which everyone can agree, but only through the recognition of the singularity of each individual, a recognition which embraces the actual conflicts that exist between individuals, regardless of how ferocious they may be, as part of the amazing wealth of interactions that the world has to offer us once we rid ourselves of the social system which has stolen our lives and our interactions from us.

## FEAR OF CONFLICT

*“Truly it is not a failing in you that you stiffen yourself against me and assert your distinctness or peculiarity: you need not give way or renounce yourself”—Max Stirner*

Whenever more than a few anarchists get together, there are arguments. This is no surprise, since the word “anarchist” is used to describe a broad range of often contradictory ideas and practices. The only common denominator is the desire to be rid of authority, and anarchists do not even agree on what authority is, let alone the question of what methods are appropriate for eliminating it. These questions raise many others, and so arguments are inevitable.

The arguments do not bother me. What bothers me is the focus on trying to come to an agreement. It is assumed that “because we are all anarchists”, we must all really want the same thing; our apparent conflicts must merely be misunderstandings which we can talk out, finding a common ground. When someone refuses to talk things out and insists on maintaining their distinctness, they are considered dogmatic. This insistence on finding a common ground may be one of the most significant sources of the endless dialogue that so frequently takes place of acting to create our lives on our own terms. This attempt to find a common ground involves a denial of very real conflicts.

One strategy frequently used to deny conflict is to claim that an argument is merely a disagreement over words and their meanings. As if the words one uses and how one chooses to use them have no connection to one’s ideas, dreams and desires. I am convinced that there are very few arguments that are *merely* about words and their meanings. These few could be easily resolved if the individuals involved would clearly and precisely explain what they mean. When individuals cannot even come to an agreement about what words to use and how to use them, it indicates that their dreams, desires and ways of thinking are so far apart that even within a single language, they cannot find a common tongue. The attempt to reduce such an immense chasm to mere semantics is an attempt to deny a very real conflict and the singularity of the individuals involved.

The denial of conflict and of the singularity of individuals may reflect a fetish for unity that stems from residual leftism or collectivism. Unity has always been highly valued by the left. Since most anarchists, despite their attempts to separate themselves from the left, are

its consequent demands for toleration and compromise? No, I don’t want to know your opinions—I want to know if possibly, for a while, we can enhance each others lives, project together, support each other’s struggles against authority—with the ability to easily go our own separate ways when this is no longer possible, or simply when we desire to do so. For me, the endless dialogue has ended and my life has begun.

## AGAINST AMNESIA (fragments)

by  
(d)anger

There are those moments when life seems entirely impossible. All the crazy dreams of rebellion disappear. The desire to revolt against the society of the civilized is lost to futility, the open but empty hand. All the late-night laughter-filled conversations, the meanderings and wanderings of those intoxicated with adventure, begin to seem naïve and empty. One comes to the conclusion that one is accomplishing nothing: destruction and creation seem equally without attraction. One abandons one's own imagination and returns to the old trap of fear. The existential idiot occupies one's head.

Here is the point where the misery of this society completes itself. This society strengthens itself by continually forcing the individual to disappear; the individual disappears when the individual gives in to the misery of this society. One begins to accept the limitations imposed by this society as one's own. To experience comes to mean to repeat oneself. One begins to feel one has nothing to offer in defiance, nothing to give: every gesture becomes a blank stare. Passion is pacified. Desire is rationalized away. The forbidden remains forbidden.

This supreme moment of misery marks nothing less than the triumph of amnesia. Such a complete abandonment of life's adventures is the surrender of one who has forgotten all previous rebellion and all desire to revolt. Memory has ceased to be a pleasure; the misery of the moment stretches backwards forever. Amnesia is essential to civilizing human beings: when one forgets the possibilities (the richness of past present and future) one is domesticated, one disappears.

Amnesia is the colonization of memory. One is forced to forget everything rebellious about one's life. The colonized mind is less likely to imagine a total revolt against this society if all traces of earlier revolts are suppressed. Everything from simple negative gestures to the hand in the cookie jar to late night crimes make memory precious to the individual; as soon as these breaches are forgotten the present becomes less and less pregnant: the stem of the flower is cut before the flower blooms. One is in despair over the absence of freedom simply because the residue of past freedoms have been purged from one's memory.

When asked how one knows that freedom is possible, the rebel responds with examples of past freedoms. The rebel remembers the

In an attempt to appear "militant", the Ruckus Society has labeled the nonviolent civil disobedience that they promote as "direct action". If the purpose of these actions is simply to create a media spectacle, then I suppose they could rightly be called "direct action"—because that is all they directly create. But these activists claim that they are trying to prevent the destruction of wild places and to save the environment. How does climbing a building in a city and putting up a banner do this? What is direct in this action, if their goal is what they claim it is?

For years, there have been those who have, indeed, taken direct action against the destroyers of wildness. Their action has included sabotage and destruction of the machinery and property of the corporations and institutions that are eating away at the wild places and at our lives. They have certainly been disobedient, but never civil and never accepting of the nonviolent code of martyrdom which embraces arrest. The authorities and their media have labeled this form of truly direct action as "terrorism" in an attempt to equate the individuals involved in these actions with the power-hungry cadres of political organizations who blow up subway stations or taverns full of people to promote their political agenda. It seems that the Ruckus Society may have bought into this false equation of the authorities. Certainly, their claims that symbolic, media-oriented, nonviolent civil disobedience is "direct action" can be a way to misdirect some more insurgent individuals into ineffective activity and to isolate those who take genuine direct action, making them out to be dangerous, divisive elements. Yet anyone who observes the actual results of nonviolent civil disobedience knows that every one of its "victories" has been a compromise in which the authorities simply put off the exploitation of one area, because they have others on hand to exploit. Even these minor concessions have usually only been "won" because there was a covert violent struggle going on at the same time as the public, nonviolent pseudo-struggle. Those of us who recognize that the destruction of wildness, both in the world and in ourselves, will continue as long as authority, capital, in fact, the totality of civilization continue to exist, know us well that training in nonviolent civil disobedience is training in futility.

## TRAINING IN FUTILITY

Nonviolence training programs have existed for many years in the United States. In the past, this method of channeling resistance against the powers that be into polite, moral, inoffensive forms has mostly centered around training activists in “managing” (i.e., repressing) their anger in the face of police and other defenders of the status quo and offering passive “resistance” when they are arrested. The unspoken assumption is that it is not authority itself that is the problem, but merely its misuse, and that the authorities could be “morally persuaded” to do “the right thing”.

Over time, the concept of nonviolence has gone through some changes. On the one hand, even verbal expressions of anger have been labeled as “violence” by the repressive idiots who promote the ideology of nonviolence. On the other hand, acts of civil disobedience have had to become physically strenuous to compete for attention in the media circus, thus requiring more specific training.

So in 1995, the Ruckus Society began raining people at “Action Camps” across the country in skills necessary for the more strenuous forms of non-violent civil disobedience. The present-day activists are taught how to tie strong knots and pull themselves up scaffoldings six stories high by rope—and of course, how to create a good media image in the process. What is the purpose of this strenuous training? To give these activists the abilities climb up the fronts of tall buildings or suspension bridges to hang banners with slogans. Supposedly these slogans, combined with the willingness of these extremely civil dissidents to accept arrest for their cause will “educate” people about the issue at hand and so “effect change”.

Of course, one must consider the sort of people these training camps tend to attract. There was one such camp held in Malibu, one of the wealthiest places in the United States, at the time I started writing this. The camp was free—and so, technically open to participation by anyone—but, as one would expect with such a carefully chosen location, the actual participants were predominantly middle to upper-middle class professionals, such as Michelle Sybert, an environmental lawyer from Beverly Hills. Actor Woody Harrelson has also participated in these Action Camps. In fact, it seems that most, if not all, of the participants in these camps are people who have a significant stake in maintaining the present social order. They have no desire to destroy authority; they merely want to curb what they view as some of its aberrant excesses.

events, movements and moments of one’s past that mark breaks with the dominant order. One knows that freedom is possible, because one has experienced freedom: the taste of paradise is in our mouths. To forget this is fatal. Amnesia can be combated by constantly digging back into our memories, by constantly becoming more and more aware of our mistakes and victories. No, we must not dwell in the past, we must be cruel with our pasts (and those who would keep us there), and yet we must be greedy with our pasts (and wary of those who would paint those pasts with the blackness of misery and impossibilities). The rebel must return to their own past with a bouquet of flowers in one hand and knife in the other.

## A EULOGY TO OPINION

(translated from *Canenero*)

Opinion is a vast merchandise, possessed and used by everyone. Its production involves a wide slice of the economy, and its consumption takes up much of people's time. Its main characteristic is clarity.

We hasten to point out that there is no such thing as an unclear opinion. Everything is either yes or no. Different levels of thought or doubt, contradiction and painful confessions of uncertainty are strange to it. Hence the great strength that opinion gives to those who use it and consume it in making decisions, or impose it on the decisions of others.

In a world that is moving at high speed toward positive/negative binary logic, from red button to black, this reduction is an important factor in the development of civil cohabitation itself. What would become of our future if we were to continue to support ourselves on the unresolved cruelty of doubt? How could we be used? How could we produce?

Clarity emerges when the possibility of real choice is reduced. Only those with clear ideas know what to do. But ideas are never clear, so there are those on the scene who clarify them for us, by supplying simple comprehensible instruments: not arguments but quizzes, not studies but alternative binaries. Simply day and night, no sunset or dawn. Thus they solicit us to pronounce ourselves in favor of this or that. They do not show us the various facets of the problem, merely a highly simplified construction. It is a simple affair to pronounce ourselves in favor of a yes or no, but this simplicity hides complexity instead of attempting to understand and explain it. No complexity, correctly comprehended, can in fact be explained if except by reference to other complexities. There is no such thing as a solution to be encountered. Joys of the intellect and of the heart are cancelled by binary propositions, and are substituted with the utility of "correct" decisions.

And since no one is stupid enough to believe that the world rests on two logical binaries, positive and negative, since there is surely a place for understanding, a place where ideas again take over and knowledge regains lost ground, the desire arises to delegate this all to others, to those who, by suggesting simple solutions to us, seem to hold the answers to the elaboration of complexity as something that has taken place elsewhere, so they represent themselves as witness and depositories of science.

anarchist insurgents need to develop much fiercer, riskier games – games of violent attack against this system of control.

I have been chided many times for associating play with violence and destruction, occasionally by "serious revolutionaries" who tell me that the war against the power structures is no game, but more often by the proponents of anarcho-infantilism who tell me that there is nothing playful about violence. What all of these chiders have in common is that they do not understand how serious play can be. If the game one is playing is that of creating and projecting one's life for oneself, then one will take one's play quite seriously. It is not mere recreation in this case, but one's very life. This game inevitably brings one into conflict with society. One can respond to this in a merely defensive manner, but this leaves one in a stalemate with retreat becoming inevitable.

When one's passion for intense living, one's joy in the game of creating one's own life and interactions is great enough, then mere defense will not do. Attack, violent attack, becomes an essential part of the game, a part in which one can take great pleasure. Here one encounters an adventure that challenges one's capabilities, develops one's imagination as a practical weapon, takes one beyond the realm of survival's hedged bets into the world of genuine risk that is life. Can the laughter of joy exist anywhere else than in such a world, where the pleasure we take in fireworks increases a hundred-fold when we know that the fireworks are blowing up a police station, a bank, a factory or a church? For me, growing up can only mean the process of creating more intense and expansive games – of creating our lives for ourselves. As long as authority exists, this means games of violent attack against all of the institutions of society, aiming at the total destruction of these institutions. Anything less will keep us trapped in the infantile adulthood this society imposes. I desire much more.

## **PLAY FIERCELY: *Thoughts on Growing Up***

To become an adult in this society is to be mutilated. The processes of family conditioning and education subtly (and often not so subtly) terrorize children, reducing their capacity for self-determination and transforming them into beings useful to society. A well-adjusted, “mature” adult is one who accepts the humiliations that work-and-pay society constantly heaps upon them with equanimity. It is absurd to call the process that creates such a shriveled, mutilated being “growing up.”

There are some of us who recognize the necessity of destroying work if we are to destroy authority. We recognize that entirely new ways of living and interacting need to be created, ways best understood as free play. Unfortunately, some of the anarchists within this milieu cannot see beyond the fact that the adult as we know it is a social mutilation and tend to idealize childhood in such a way that they embrace an artificial infantilism, donning masks of childishness to prove they’ve escaped this mutilation. In so doing, they limit the games they can play, particularly those games aimed at the destruction of this society.

At the age of forty, I am still able to take pleasure in playing such “children’s” games as hide-and-peek or tag. Certainly, if growing up is not to be the belittling process of becoming a societal adult, none of the pleasures or games of our younger days should be given up. Rather they should be refined and expanded, opening up ever-greater possibilities for creating marvelous lives and destroying this society.

The games invented by those anarchists who have trapped themselves in their artificial infantilism are not this sort of expansive play, or not nearly enough so. Becoming “mud people” in the business district of a city, playing clown at a shopping center, parading noise orchestras through banks and other businesses is great fun and can even be a wee bit subversive. But those who consider these games a significant challenge to the social system are deluding themselves. People working in offices, factories, banks and shops do not need to be taught that there are better things to do with their time than work. Most are quite aware of this. But a global system of social control compels people to participate in its reproduction in order to guarantee themselves a certain level of survival. As long as the domination of this system seems to be inevitable and eternal, most people will adjust themselves and even feel a resigned contentment with their “lot”. So

So the circle closes. The simplifiers present themselves as those who guarantee the validity of the opinions asked, and their correct continual production in binary form. They seem to be wary of the fact that, once it has destroyed all capacity to understand the intricate tissue that underlies it, the complex unfoldings of the problems of conscience, the frenetic action of symbols and meanings, references and institutions, opinion, this manipulation of clarity, destroys the connective tissues of differences, annihilates them in the binary universe of codification where reality only seems to have two possible solutions, the light on or the light off. The model sums up reality, cancels the nuances of the latter and displays it in pre-wrapped formulas ready for consumption. Life projects no longer exist, rather symbols take the place of desires and duplicate dreams, making them dreams twice over.

The unlimited quantity of information we potentially dispose of does not allow us to go beyond the sphere of opinion. In the same way that most of the goods in a market where all the possible and useless varieties of the same product does not mean wealth and abundance but merely mercantile waste, an increase in information does not produce a qualitative growth in opinion, it does not produce any real capacity to decide what is true and what is false, good or bad, beautiful or ugly. All it does is reduce one of these aspects to a systematic representation of a dominant model.

In reality, there is no good on the one side or bad on the other, but a whole range of conditions, cases, situations, theories and practices which only a capacity to understand can grasp, a capacity to use the intellect with the necessary presence of sensibility and intuition. Culture is not a mass of information, but a living and often contradictory system, through which we gain knowledge of the world and ourselves, a process which is at times painful and hardly ever satisfying, with which we realize these relationships which constitute our life and our capacity to live.

By canceling all of these nuances, we again find ourselves with a statistical curve in our hands, an illusory course of events produced by a mathematical model, not fractured and overwhelming reality,

Opinion provides us with certainty on the one hand, but on the other it impoverishes us and deprives us of the capacity to struggle, because we end up convinced that the world is more simple than it is. All that is in the interest of those who control us. A mass of satisfied subjects convinced that science is on their side. That is what they need in order to realize the projects of domination in the future.

## STEAL BACK YOUR LIFE

Economy—the domination of survival over life—is essential for the maintenance of all other forms of domination. Without the threat of scarcity, it would be difficult to coerce people into obedience to the daily routine of work and pay. We were born into an economized world. The social institution of property has made scarcity a daily threat. Property, whether private or communal, separates the individual from the world, creating a situation in which, rather than simply taking what one wants or needs, one is supposed to ask permission, a permission generally only granted in the form of economic exchange. In this way, different levels of poverty are guaranteed to everyone, even the rich, because under the rule of social property what one is not permitted to have far exceeds what one is permitted to have. The domination of survival over life is maintained.

Those of us who desire to create our lives as our own recognize that this domination, so essential to the maintenance of society, is an enemy we must attack and destroy. With this understanding, theft and squatting can take on significance as part of an insurgent life project. Welfare scamming, eating at charity feeds, dumpster diving and begging may allow one to survive without a regular job, but they do not in any way attack the economy; they are within the economy. Theft and squatting are also often merely survival tactics. Squatters who demand the “right to a home” or try to legalize their squats, thieves who work their “jobs” like any other worker, only in order to accumulate more worthless commodities—these people have no interest in destroying the economy...they merely want a fair share of its goods. But those who squat and steal as part of an insurgent life do so in defiance of the logic of economic property. Refusing to accept the scarcity imposed by this logic or to bow to the demands of a world they did not create, such insurgents take what they desire without asking anyone’s permission whenever the possibility arises. In this defiance of society’s economic rule, one takes back the abundance of the world as one’s own—and this is an act of insurrection. In order to maintain social control, the lives of individuals have to be stolen away. In their place, we received economic survival, the tedious existence of work and pay. We cannot buy our lives back, nor can we beg them back. Our lives will only be our own when we steal them back—and that means taking what we want without asking permission.

more. Hostility spread like wild fire, finally becoming a harsh war of competition.

There was only one exception, in perpetual conflict with the workers: it was the unemployed, everyone who, out of a lack of enthusiasm or due to circumstances beyond their control, had no work. The dimensions of the struggle were appalling: workers sold heroin to the unemployed in an attempt to exterminate them. In return, the unemployed set fire to the workers’ cars so that they could not drive to and from the work place.

One night, however, a large black cloud descended upon the metropolis and the people stayed in their apartments, because they could see nothing outside. The next day the thick fog was still there and the desperate workers did not know how they would get to their jobs. A few stubbornly tried to go on the street, but as fate would have it, they ran face first into the electric poles on the street corners. Thickheaded workers ran their cars into trees. There were countless accidents, injuries and deaths that day. The frightened people barricaded themselves in their apartments. Forced to stay at home, they began to enjoy the small pleasures of life without the compulsion of work. The people became happier and laughed; they talked with each other and helped each other out. Something new and wonderful happened to the people. They became more and more human and less and less workers. Gradually the addiction to work disappeared.

Finally the huge black cloud disappeared and the factories opened their doors again. But nobody returned. The days passed by, but not a trace of the workers. The bosses were shaken and depressed as they saw their unproductive machines and began to kill themselves one after another. Detox centers were built for workers, and the most stubborn work addicts who tried to return to their machines and produce had their hands sewn into their pockets.

With such good will all the workers were healthy again. The unemployed were no longer a threat to anyone and ceased to be treated as outsiders. The bosses and capitalists who had survived the suicide phenomenon took their place. The factories were burnt down, and with them, the banks, the malls, the official press, all the political and social institutions that had guaranteed the exploitation of some people by others.

This is the only new society worth conceiving.

To hell with work and exploitation...

—“*L’Argonauta*”

## THE DREAM

Unreal, surrealistic, utopian, in any case it is a dream. In the universe of dreams nothing is codified, preprogrammed or placed in rational order. Will they remain dreams or will these dreams become reality? We trust the infinite possibilities of chance.

### The first and only episode

In a certain metropolis, there were thousands of machines, huge colossi of the mechanical and electrical facilities. Each particular machine had a special function. One produced toothbrushes, another paper with which to wipe one's ass, the next produced polyester chairs. All of these machines produced 20, 50, 100 times as much as was actually necessary for the inhabitants of the metropolis.

Where the hell this excess production went, no one knew. Dubious figures known by the name "Worker" settled around this technological monster. They also had a special role in production. They were responsible for assuring that the entire technological apparatus functioned and had to monitor the end product. This was the universe of the factory. In this universe, the workers used up eight hours of their wretched and insipid existence each day. But the workers were sick. They suffered from a strange disease that was particularly dangerous, even deadly. The disease in question was the morbid syndrome, *Paroxysmus Affection Productionismus*. The medical specialists couldn't diagnose the source. Some believed it was a question of an occupational deformation; others thought that it was a spiritual deformation. Indeed, the workers did not wish to leave their machines after eight hours of work, even though their bosses ordered them to go home. The workers protested in various ways. Some chained themselves to their machines, others suffered attacks of depression, still others threatened to kill themselves if they were not allowed to keep working. Often the bosses had to call the guardians of order to make the work hungry workers leave the factories.

The PAP syndrome complicated the lives of the workers in strange ways. The most frequent symptom of the disease was that the worker had a compulsion to identify with the products they produced. Those who operated the machines that made toothbrushes were convinced that they were toothbrushes. Others identified with toilet paper and continually tried to lick the asses of their bosses clean while they were in the factory. Workers competed with each other to produce

## THE WILD DOGS HOWL

A story is told of Diogenes, probably the best known of the ancient Greek cynics: It is said that one day, as he was sunning himself in the bathtub he called home, Alexander the "great" came to speak with him. This emperor of many nations said, "I am Alexander, prince of Macedonia and the world. I have heard you are a great philosopher. Do you have any words of wisdom for me?" Annoyed at such a petty disturbance of his calm, Diogenes answered, "Yes, you're standing in my sun. Get out of the way." Though this story is most likely fictional, it reflects the scorn in which cynics held all authority and their boldness in expressing this scorn. These self-proclaimed "dogs" (wild dogs, of course) rejected hierarchy, social restraints and the alleged need for laws and greeted these with sarcastic mockery.

How utterly different this ancient cynicism was from what now goes by that name. Several years ago, a radical group in England called the Pleasure Tendency published a pamphlet entitled "Theses Against Cynicism". In this pamphlet, they criticize an attitude of hip detachment, of shallow, sarcastic despair - and particularly the penetration of this attitude into anti-authoritarian and revolutionary circles.

The proponents of this present-day "cynicism" are everywhere. The hip, sarcastic comedy of Saturday Night Live or the Comedy Channel presents no real challenge to the ruling powers. In fact, this smirking know-it-all-ism is the yuppie attitude *par excellence*. It has nothing to do with a real understanding of what's going on, but is rather a justification for conformity. "Yes, we know what the politicians and corporate executives are up to. We know it's all a dirty game. But there's nothing we can do about it, so we're gonna get our piece of the action". There's nothing we can do about it - that is the message of this modern cynicism—not disdain for authority, but disdain for those who still dare to challenge it rather than joining in its game with a knowing smirk.

This attitude has entered the circles of so-called revolutionaries and anarchists through the back door of post-modern philosophy in which ironic hyper-conformity is presented as a viable revolutionary strategy. With a straight face (or just the trace of a smirk), the most radical of the post-modern philosophers tell us that we need only push the logic of capitalism to its own "schizophrenic" extreme and it will break down on its own. For these present-day "radical" cynics, attempts to attack and destroy this society are foolish and ineffective, and attempts to create one's own life in opposition to this society is

attachment to an out-dated individualism. Of course, these mostly French philosophers are rarely read. Like mainstream “cynicism”, post-modern “cynicism” needs its hip popularizers—and they certainly have appeared. Sarcastically tearing down every significant insurgent idea or activity of the past century while promoting pathetic liberal eclecticism and ridiculous art or mystical movements as “revolutionary” or “iconoclastic”, these alternative yuppies—who often claim to reject individuality—mainly just to promote themselves and their own pathetic projects. One needs only to notice Steward Home’s Mona Lisa smirk to realize he is just Jay Leno with a shaved head and a pair of Docs.

Perhaps the worst effect of the post-modern penetration into anarchist circles is its reinforcement of a tendency to reject theory. Any attempts to understand society in its totality in order to fight it more effectively are either called dogmatic or are seen as proof that those who make such attempts are hopelessly naive with no understanding of the complexity of “post-modern” post-industrial society. Of course, the “understanding” these oh-so-wise(-ass) anti-theorists have is simply their faith in the impossibility of analysis, a faith which allows them to continue their ritual of piecemeal activism which has long since proven ineffective for anything other than occasionally pushing the social system into making changes necessary for its own continued reproduction. Those who continue to make insurgent theory are accused by the self-proclaimed activists of sitting in ivory towers, regardless of how much this insurgence is put into practice.

When one considers the original Greek cynics, one is averse to using the same term for their modern namesakes. Yet the present-day “cynics” are much more like the dogs we are familiar with—pathetic, dependent, domesticated pets. Like well-trained puppies, they rarely make it past the front yard gate before they run back cowering to the safety of their master’s house; then they learn to bark and snarl at the wild dogs who dare to live outside the fence and, in exchange for a milkbone, lick the hands that keep them on the leash. I would rather be among the wild dogs howling out my scorn for every master, prepared to bite any hand that tries to tame. I reject the sarcastic despair that passes as cynicism today, in order to grasp as a weapon the untamed cynicism which dares to tell authority, “You’re standing in my sun. Get out of the way!”

actually wants and can eat when one wants it. The numbness we develop to such humiliation—the numbness that is made evident by the ease with which certain anarchists will opt to eat at charity feeds every day in order to avoid paying for food, as though there were no other options—shows the extent to which our society is permeated with such humiliating interactions. Still one would think that anarchists would refuse such interactions insofar as lies within their power to do so and would seek to create interactions of a different sort in order to destroy the humiliation imposed by society. Instead many create programs that reinforce this humiliation.

But what of the empathy one may feel for another who is suffering from a poverty one knows all too well; what of the desire to share food with others? Programs like FNB do not generally express empathy, they express pity. Doling out food is not sharing; it is an impersonal, hierarchical relationship between social role “donor” and social role “beneficiary”. Lack of imagination has led anarchists to deal with the question of hunger (which is an abstract question for most of them) in much the same way as Christians and liberals, creating institutions which parallel those which already exist. As is to be expected, when anarchists attempt to do an inherently authoritarian task, they do a piss-poor job... Why not leave charity work to those who have no illusions about it? Anarchists would do better to find ways of sharing individually if they feel so moved, ways which encourage self-determination rather than dependence and affinity rather than pity.

There is nothing anarchist about FNB. Even the name is a demand being made to the authorities. This is why its organizers so frequently use civil disobedience—it is an attempt to appeal to the consciences of those in power, to get them to feed and house the poor. There is nothing in this program that encourages self-determination. There is nothing that would encourage the beneficiaries to refuse that role and begin to take what they want and need without following the rules. FNB, like every other charity, encourages its beneficiaries to remain passive recipients rather than becoming active creators of their own lives. Charity must be recognized for what it is: another aspect of the institutionalized humiliation inherent in our economized existence, which must be destroyed so that we can truly live.

## AGAINST CHARITY

In many cities in the United States, anarchists have organized “Food Not Bombs” feeds. The organizers of these projects will explain that food should be free, that no one should ever have to go hungry. Certainly, a fine sentiment...and one to which these anarchists respond in much the same way as Christians, hippies or left liberals—by starting a charity.

We will be told, however, that “Food Not Bombs” (FNB) is different. The decision-making process used by the organizers is non-hierarchical. They receive no government or corporate grants. In many cities, they serve their meals as an act of civil disobedience, risking arrest. Obviously, FNB is not a large-scale charitable bureaucracy; in fact, it is often a very slipshod effort... but it is a charity—and that is never questioned by its anarchist organizers\*.

Charities are a necessary part of any economic social system. The scarcity imposed by the economy creates a situation in which some people are unable to meet even their most basic needs through the normal channels. Even in nations with highly developed social welfare programs, there are those who fall through the cracks in the system. Charities take up the slack where the state’s welfare programs can’t or won’t help. Groups like FNB are, thus, a voluntary workforce helping to preserve the social order by reinforcing the dependence of the dispossessed on programs not of their own creation.

No matter how non-hierarchical the decision-making process used by the organizers may be, the charitable relationship is always authoritarian. The beneficiaries of a charity are at the mercy of the organizers of the program and so are not free to act on their own terms in this relationship. This can be seen in the humiliating way in which one must receive charity. Charity feeds like FNB require the beneficiaries to arrive at a time not of their choosing in order to stand in line to receive food not of their choosing in quantities doled out by some volunteer who wants to make sure that everyone gets a fair share. Of course, it’s better than going hungry, but the humiliation is at least as great as that of waiting in line at the grocery store to pay for food one

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\* FNB is not, in fact, anarchist in origin, but rather an activist project. However, most currently existing FNB feeds are operated by anarchists. A few also operate more as a meal shared among friends and acquaintances than as a charity, but almost all tend to remain dependent upon the charity of businesses to supply them with food.

## PIRATES AND MERCHANTS

(translated from *Canenero*)

Symbol of a freedom acquired and maintained in a savage way, though not without rules and norms, pirates once sailed on the sea and robbed the large galleons of their treasures. Maybe the style was not all too refined, but what is fascinating about them is the determination with which they took all that they desired without any lengthy negotiations.

Today, all those who allow themselves to copy books, films discs and music cassettes—armed with photocopiers, video cameras, cassette recorders, computers and talent—without asking anyone’s permission are called pirates. There are many of these present-day pirates, very many, too many if one considers the counter-campaign that has been started: television announcements, persecution of the black market, announcements by the ASCAP, BMI, FCC and similar organizations screaming against it in the name of respect for culture. A respect, one discovers, that is only to be found again in the payment of the copyright.

It is well known that people always want what they cannot have. Everyone demands her right, most commonly be begging from the state, and each feels in his own way that she is missing something.

The scandal about which the copyright is concerned is not so much the ruined beauty of a piece of art or disrespect for the artist. This scandal cannot be kept secret any longer: all that is missing for some people is the certainty of seeing their bank account grow.

## BELIEF: the enemy of thinking

It is not uncommon in american anarchist circles to hear someone say, “I believe in fairies”, “I believe in magic”, “I believe in ghosts” or the like. Only rarely do these believers claim a direct experience of the phenomena they claim to believe in. Much more often it is a friend, a relative or that standard favorite, “someone I met” who supposedly had the experience. When there is a direct experience, a little bit of questioning usually reveals that the actual experience has, at best, a very tenuous connection to the belief it is used to support. Yet if one dares to point this out, one may be accused of denying the believer’s experience and of being a cold-hearted rationalist.

Neo-paganism and mysticism have penetrated deeply into the american anarchist scene, undermining a healthy skepticism that seems so essential to the battle against authority. We were all well trained to *believe*—to accept various ideas as true without examination and to interpret our experiences based on these beliefs. Since we were taught how to believe, not how to think, when we reject the beliefs of the mainstream, it is much easier to embrace an alternative belief system than to begin the struggle of learning to think for ourselves. When this rejection includes a critique of civilization, one can even justify the embrace of mystical beliefs as a return to the animism or earth religion attributed to non-civilized people. But some of us have no interest in belief systems. Since we want to think for ourselves, and such thinking has nothing in common with belief of any sort.

Probably one of the reasons american anarchists shy away from skepticism—other than that belief is easier—is that scientific rationalists have claimed to be skeptics while pushing a plainly authoritarian belief system. Magazines such as *the Skeptical Inquirer* have done much of worth in debunking new age bullshit, mystical claims and even such socially significant beliefs as the “satanic abuse” myth, but they have failed to turn the same mystical eye on the mainstream beliefs of established science. For a long time, science has been able to hide behind the fact that it uses some fairly reliable methods in its activities. Certainly, observation and experimentation are essential tools in the development of ways of thinking that are one’s own. But science does not apply these methods freely to the exploration of self-determined living, but uses them in a system of beliefs. Stephen Jay

Gould is a firm believer in science; he is also unusually honest about it. In one of his books, I found a discussion of the basis of science. He states clearly that the basis of science is not, as is popularly thought, the so-called “scientific method” ( i.e., empirical observation and experimentation), but rather the *belief* that there are universal laws by which nature has consistently operated. Gould points out that the empirical method only becomes science when applied within the context of this belief. The scientific rationalists are glad to apply their skepticism to belief in fairies or magic, but won’t even consider applying it to the belief in scientific laws. In this, they are acting like the christian who scoffs at hinduism. Anarchists are wise to reject this rigid and authoritarian worldview.

But when the rejection of scientific rationalism becomes the embrace of gullibility, authority has been successful in its training. The ruling order is far less interested in what we believe than in guaranteeing that we continue to *believe* rather than beginning to *think*, beginning to try to understand the world we encounter outside of any of the belief systems we’ve been given to view it through. As long as we are focused on muons or fairies, quasars or goddesses, thermodynamics or astral-projection, we won’t be asking any of the essential questions, because we’ll already have answers, answers that we’ve come to believe in, answers that transform nothing. The hard road of doubt, which cannot (tolerate) the easy answers of either the scientist or the mystic, is the only road that begins from the individual’s desire for self-determination. Real thinking is based in hard and probing questions the first of which are: why is my life so far from what I desire, and how do I transform it? When one leaps too quickly to an answer based upon belief, one has lost one’s life and embraced slavery.

Skepticism is an essential tool for all who want to destroy authority. In order to learn how to explore, experiment and probe—that is, to *think* for oneself—one must refuse to *believe*. Of course, it is a struggle, often painful, without the comfort of easy answers; but it is also the adventure of discovering the world for oneself, of creating a life that, for its own pleasure, acts to destroy all authority and every social constraint. So if you speak to me of your beliefs, expect to be doubted, questioned, probed and mocked, because that within you which still needs to believe is that within you that still needs a master.