Various Authors
Willful Disobedience Volume 4, number 1
2003

Retrieved on September 1, 2009 from www.geocities.com

en.anarchistlibraries.net

Willful Disobedience Volume 4, number 1

Various Authors

2003

Indianapolis, Indiana (January 23, 2003) — Offices of the Coast Guard and Army Recruitment were trashed. The walls were spray-painted with "Fuck Your War" and about ten large office windows were broken. Two government vehicles were spray-painted and the windows broken.

El Paso, Texas (January 29, 2003) — A protest by about one thousand high school students over the length of classes turned into a riot. The students walked out in protest in the morning. They attacked school security guards and cops with rocks and bottles. The police used tear gas against the crowd.

stronger. There were no injuries. On December 10, a group calling itself "Brigade XX July" claimed responsibility for the attack. July 20 is the day Carlo Giuliani was murdered.

Athens, Greece (December 14, 2002) — A car mechanic shot at Athens Mayor-elect Dora Bakoyianni in the back seat of her car at the foot of the Acropolis yesterday afternoon, but the conservative MP was saved from serious injury by an unconscious move to rummage through her handbag.

Athens, Greece (January 11, 2003) — A gunman made off with 17,000 euros yesterday after robbing a bank in the Athenian district of Halandri. The unidentified robber fled on a motorcycle which, police later confirmed, had been stolen from the same area last week.

Northern Italy (January 17, 2003) — Sixty ATMs in dozens of locations throughout northern Italy were vandalized. Messages claiming the attacks appeared sometimes at the sites of the attacks, sometimes in anonymous messages to the Digos (special political police). The flyers claiming the attacks spoke of the repressive nature of prisons, solidarity with the people arrested in relation to the Genoa G8 demonstrations and various other matters. The actions are attributed to individuals of "the extreme area of the anarchist archipelago, that of the insurrectionalists".

Oakland, CA (January 19, 2003) — Celebrations by fans of the Oakland Raiders turned into riots when police tried to quiet the partying. People attacked cops with stones and bottles, broke windows and attacked vehicles, including several cop cars.

Contents

Chronicles of Revolt

Eastern England (October 23, 2002) — Prisoners rioted at Lincoln Prison, 135 miles northeast of London, smashing windows and setting fires before being subdued by hundreds of police and prison guards.

Lancaster, CA (November 5, 2002) — Inmates at the state prison attacked two guards — the second such incident in the past three months. Correctional officers Nicole Hawthorne and Henry Romo were attacked by two cellmates early in the day while escorting prisoners to breakfast, a prison spokesman said.

Red Bluff, CA (November 19, 2002) — A cop was shot and killed while putting gas in his car. Andrew McCrea, 23, claimed the shooting, saying he did it in protest of growing police state tactics and "corporate irresponsibility". He was arrested in New Hampshire.

Amsterdam, Netherlands (December 4, 2002) — Two bombs were found in outlets of the IKEA home goods chain, and two police explosives experts were wounded when one of the devices detonated as they tried to disarm it. All ten stores in the Netherlands belonging to the Swedish-based company were closed while police searched for more explosives.

Genoa, Italy (December 9, 2002) — In the middle of the night (after the garden was closed), two bombs exploded in the public garden next to the police station in Genoa. The first was weak and the second much

of the state. The bullets that strike are also given by the Italian government and Italian industries, Eni in the lead. The weapons that are used against your demonstrations are often of Italian manufacture.

"COMRADES, YOU ARE NOT ALONE. MAY YOUR REVOLT EXPLODE EVERYWHERE.

"Some friends of the Aarch"

A Few Words: *On Projectuality*

> "Anarchism… is a way of conceiving life, and life… is not something definitive: it is a stake we must play day after day. When we wake up in the morning and put our feet on the ground we must have a good reason for getting up. If we don't it makes no difference whether we are anarchists or not… And to have a good reason we must know what we want to do…" — Alfredo M. Bonanno

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

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

lines, creating blueprints for a modified existence, but one that is still determined in advance into which individuals must be fitted.

One can find examples of both of these tendencies within the anarchist movement. The first tendency can be seen in those anarchists who conceive of revolution as an event that will hopefully eventually happen to them when the masses arise, and who in the meantime face their life with a kind of pragmatic, circumstantial immediatism. A principled anarchist practice is considered "impossible" and is sacrificed to the amelioration of immediate conditions "by any means necessary" — including litigation, petition to the authorities, the promotion of legislation and so on. The second tendency manifests in such programmatic perspectives as platformism, libertarian municipalism and anarcho-syndicalism. These perspectives tend to reduce revolution to a question of how the economic, political and social institutions that control our lives are to be managed. Reflecting the methods by which people cope with alienated existence, neither of these methods actually challenges such an existence.

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

Anarchist projectuality cannot exist as a program. Programs are based on the idea of social life as a thing separated from the individuals that make it up. They define how life is to be and strive to make individuals fit into this definition. For this reason, programs

it means for a region with a few million inhabitants, like Kabylia, where the police are barricaded in their barracks, 'quarantined' by the insurgent population; in which elections are deserted in mass, the ballot boxes ond the offices of political parties set on fire; in which the city halls are deserted and boarded up.

"The politicians who sit in the parliament with zero votes obtained have revealed the lie of representative democracy and the arrogance of a power that is increasingly mafia-like to all. You have managed to shatter the plans of anyone who tried to give your struggle a regionalist or particularist image.

"The universal content of your demands — such as that of the immediate and non-negotiable withdrawal of the police — can no longer be hidden.

"The autonomy of your movement, organized horizontally in the aarch (village assemblies), can only unite all the leaders of Algerian society and their accomplices in other countries against you. A revolt without leaders and without parties won't even find favor among the professionals of international solidarity who are deprived, in this case, of charismatic figures or subcommandantes to idealize. Up to now, you have only been able to count on yourselves. And the repression presses hard, with hundreds of deaths, thousands of injuries, people disabled for life, so many missing, the torture and arrest of many delegates of the aarch and many demonstrators. With prisoners on hunger strike and many insurgents forced to go underground.

"Now the radicality of what you have already done finds other accomplices in the world, in order to break the information embargo and the murderous violence

and with specific guidelines to prevent the possibility of recuperation by parties, unions, politicians or other unscrupulous individuals, and these guidelines have been actively reinforced by those in struggle. The movement has remained equally opposed to all of the contenders for power: the military, the government, Islamic fundamentalists, the left and the unions. It managed to keep police "quarantined" to their barracks for long periods of time. It carried out two election boycotts. Once it even forced the government to release arrested comrades. And it carried out the daily tasks of an ongoing insurrectionary struggle. All through autonomous direct action. Now it is undergoing intense repression, and solidarity is needed,

Here is a statement of solidarity issued by some Italian comrades at the end of November:

> "Insurgent Algerians,
>
> "The struggle that you have been carrying forward against all society's rulers since April 2001 is an example for us and for all the exploited. Your uninterrupted rebellion has shown that the terrorism of the state and the integralist groups, allied for a decade in the slaughter of the poor to the benefit of the rich, has not lessened your ferocity. You have understood that faced with the infectious disease of military dictatorship and the plague of Islamic fundamentalism, the only choice is open revolt. In the union of two capitalisms, the liberal one that privatizes and fires people in mass and the socialist-bureaucratic one that tortures and kills, you have responded with the unity of a generalized struggle.
>
> "We imagine what it means for a state and its police to find themselves facing a mass of rebels whose posters warn: 'You cannot kill us, we are already dead' as occurred in June 2001.But we can barely imagine what

have little capacity for dealing with the realities of everyday life and tend to confront the circumstances of living in a ritualized and formalized manner. Anarchist projectuality exists instead as a consciously lived tension toward freedom, as an ongoing daily struggle to discover and create the ways to determine one's existence with others in uncompromising opposition to all domination and exploitation.

So anarchist projectuality does confront the immediate circumstances of an alienated daily existence, but refuses the circumstantial pragmatism of "by any means necessary", instead creating means that already carry the ends within themselves. To clarify what I mean, I will give a hypothetical example. Let's take the problem of the police. We all know that the police intrude upon the lives of all of the exploited. It is not a problem that can be ignored. And, of course, as anarchists, we want the destruction of the police system in its totality. A programmatic approach to this would tend to start from the idea that we must determine the essential useful tasks that police supposedly carry out (controlling or suppressing "anti-social" behavior, for example). Then we must try to create self-managed methods for carrying out these tasks without the police, rendering them unnecessary. A pragmatic, circumstantial approach would simply examine all the excesses and atrocities of the police and seek to find ways of ameliorating those atrocities — through lawsuits, the setting up of civilian police review boards, proposals for stricter legislative control of police activity, etc. Neither of these methodologies, in fact, questions policing as such. The programmatic methodology simply calls for policing to become the activity of society as a whole carried out in a self-managed manner, rather than the task of a specialized group. The pragmatic, circumstantial approach actually amounts to policing the police, and so increases the level of policing in society. An anarchist projectual approach would start from the absolute rejection of policing as such. The problem with the police system is not that it is a system separate from the rest of society, nor that it falls into excesses

and atrocities (as significant as these are). The problem with the police system is inherent to what it is: a system for controlling or suppressing "anti-social" behavior, i.e., for conforming individuals to the needs of society. Thus, the question in play is that of how to destroy the police system in its totality. This is the starting point for developing specific actions against police activity. Clear connections have to be made between every branch of the system of social control. We need to make connections between prison struggles and the struggles of the exploited where they live (including the necessity of illegality as a way of surviving with some dignity in this world). We need to clarify the connections between the police system, the legal system, the prison system, the war machine — in other words between every aspect of the system of control through which the power of capital and the state is maintained. This does not mean that every action and statement would have to explicitly express a full critique, but rather that this critique would be implicit in the methodology used. Thus, our methodology would be one of autonomous direct action and attack. The tools of policing surround us everywhere. The targets are not hard to find. Consider, for example, the proliferation of video cameras throughout the social terrain…

But this is simply an example to clarify matters. Anarchist projectuality is, in fact, a confrontation with existence "at daggers drawn" as one comrade so beautifully expressed it, a way of facing life. But since human life is a life with others, the reappropriation of life here and now must also mean the reappropriation of our life together. It means developing relations of affinity, finding the accomplices for carrying out our projects on our terms. And since the very point of projectuality is to free ourselves here and now from the passivity that this society imposes on us, we cannot simply wait for chance to bring these people into our paths. This point is particularly important in the present era, when public space is becoming increasingly monitored, privatized or placed under state control, making chance meetings of any significance increasingly

exchange for the provisional release of those arrested. Instead the prisoners issued a communiqué conforming their confidence in the coordination and their unwillingness to negotiate the demands of their Platform or their release and that of all the other prisoners.

By August, violent conflicts and an ultimatum issued by the movement forced Bouteflika to pardon all the arrested delegates of the aarch. Upon release, the delegates declared that the struggle would continue.

In October another election was called. The movement met it with a general strike and demonstrations. There were conflicts with the police everywhere. Once again, about half of the eligible Algerians boycotted the elections. In Kabylia, in spite of the participation of the FFS in the elections, 90% of those eligible refused to participate in the elections, and in the rest of Algeria 50% of those eligible did not vote.

Toward the end of October, the authorities cracked down. Police raided various halls where assemblies and coordination groups met and hundreds of insurgents and delegates were arrested. Some of the imprisoned insurgents began a hunger strike in late November. This expanded in December so that insurgents in prisons in Bugia, Tizi Ouzou and Bouira were hunger-striking. Thirteen of the thirty-nine who started the hunger strike were still fasting after forty-two days. They were placed in isolation to prevent them from "infecting" the other prisoners with their spirit of revolt. Throughout the hunger strike there were a number of demonstrations in support of the prisoners, but many were severely repressed. The prisoners ended their hunger strike on January 13 at the request of comrades and family. It is hard to know where this will go from here. Repression has been intense, and it seems the many people grow weary, but the problems that provoked the uprising remain.

This insurrection is of great interest to anarchists. There have been no leaders, no parties, no charismatic spokespeople and no hierarchical or representative organizations of any sort behind it. It has been self-organized by those in struggle in a horizontal way

uments. At the beginning of March it called for a boycott of the elections throughout Algeria.

Bouteflika tried to appease the rebels by offering compromises which were refused and by moving police forces out of two major cities, But he followed this with mass arrests of delegates of the aarch. On March 25, security forces attacked a theater in Tizi Ouzou that was being used as the office of the citizen coordination and 21 delegates were arrested. After police searches many other delegates went into hiding. Soon conflicts broke out. The government issued 400 arrest warrants against delegates, leading to further demonstrations. Conflicts continued throughout April.

Despite government repression, the anti-electoral campaign of the aarch went forward in May with calls to action, marches and the destruction of ballot boxes. Students demanding the release of prisoners greeted president Bouteflika with a rain of stones when he went to the university of Algiers on May 20. The next day the students occupied the university demanding the release of their comrades.

On May 30, election day, the entire region of Kabylia had less than a 2% voter turn-out. People showed their preference for direct action by barricading the streets, occupying the offices of the prefectures and the municipalities, and strewing the public ways with the remains of burned ballot boxes. A general strike paralyzed the region. There were conflicts with the police and election offices were attacked and destroyed. In the whole of Algeria, voter turnout was less than 50%, showing that the refusal of elections had spread beyond the borders of Kabylia.

All through June, rebellion and social conflict continued through out Algeria. On June 19, the government again tried to derail the movement, authorizing movement prisoners to meet to discuss a proposal of a government emissary arranged through the mediation of two supposed delegates. The movement disowned these delegates, and the prisoners refused this government ruse to pressure the movement into negotiation over the Platform of El Kseur in

impossible. This desire to find accomplices is what moves me to publish Willful Disobedience. But it calls for other projects as well. Taking back space — whether for an evening or on a more permanent basis — for meeting and discussion, creating situations where real knowledge of each other can be discovered and developed, is essential. And this cannot be restricted to those who call themselves anarchists. Our accomplices may be found anywhere among the exploited, where there are people fed up with their existence who have no faith left in the current social order. For this reason, discovering ways to appropriate public spaces for face-to-face interactions is essential to the development of a projectual practice. But discussion in this case is not aimed essentially at discovering a "common ground" among all concerned. It is rather aimed at discovering specific affinities. Therefore, discussion must be a frank, clear expression of one's projects and aims, one's dreams and desires.

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

The Rising of the Barbarians: A Non-Primitivist Revolt Against Civilization

If we examine much of the current debate in anarchist circles surrounding civilization, technology, progress, green anarchy versus red anarchy and so on, we are left with the impression that criticism of civilization has only recently arisen within anarchist and revolutionary thinking. But this impression is false, and harmful for those of us with a revolutionary anti-civilization perspective.

In fact, a revolutionary questioning of civilization, of technology and of progress can be found throughout the history of modern revolutionary thinking. Charles Fourier posed his utopian socialist "Harmony" against the disharmony of "Civilization". A number of the most radical of the Romantics (Blake, Byron and Shelly among others) were distinctly distrustful of industrialism and its utilitarian reason.

But we can bring things closer to home by looking at anarchists of the 19th century. Certainly Bakunin had no problem with industrial technology. Though he didn't share Marx's almost mystical faith in the capacity of industrial development to create the technical basis for global communism, he also did not see anything inherently dominating in the structure of industrial systems. In fact, his concept of workers taking over the organization of society through their own economic and industrial organizations was to eventually become the basis of anarcho-syndicalism. (This development, however, is based on a misunderstanding, since Bakunin

Platform of El-Kseur to president Bouteflika. A massive array of counter-insurgency detachments was used to block the demonstrators. These demands mainly deal with relief of the immediate effects of government repression against the uprising (end of judicial action against insurgents, release of prisoners, etc.), but also include the demand for the immediate departure of all police brigades from the region. The ban of this demonstration provoked further conflicts between insurgents and the forces of order. On October 11, the inter-regional coordination (of the aarch and other self-organized assemblies and committees) decided that they would no longer submit the demands of their Platform to any state representative, that the demands were absolutely non-negotiable and that anyone who chose to accept dialogue with the government would be banished from the movement. Disobedience was total: taxes and utility bills are not paid, calls to military service are ignored, the upcoming elections are refused.

On December 6, some self-styled "delegates" claiming to represent the aarch planned to meet with the head of government. In protest a general strike was called in Kabylia. Sit-ins blockading police barracks turned into violent conflicts throughout the region, some of which lasted for three days. Offices of the gas company, of taxes and of the National Organization of the Mujaheedin were burned in Amizour. In El Kseur, there were looting raids On a court and a judge's house.

The struggle continued throughout December and January with protests and road blockades. It intensified when a delegation from the aarch was arrested in front of the UN office in Algiers on February 7, 2002. On February 12, a general strike was called throughout Kabylia to protest the reappearance of police on the streets. The entire region was shut down. People assembled in front of the police barracks and there were conflicts.

At the end of February, president Bouteflika announced that there would be elections on May 30. The movement responded by confiscating and burning ballot boxes and administrative doc-

By mid-June, the rebellion had spread beyond the borders of Kabylia, and in Kabylia state control had been nearly completely routed. Offices of the national police were thoroughly devastated, and the police themselves were shunned. Because no one in the region would sell them food and other needs, the government was forced to ship in supplies to them by helicopter and heavily armed convoys.

At the end of June, the coordination of the aarch refused to meet with a government representative, clearly expressing the attitude of the insurgents. In mid-July the coordination of Tizi Ouzou adopted the "code of honor" which required delegates to pledge themselves "not to carry forward any activities or affairs that aim to create direct or indirect links to power and its collaborators", "not to use the movement for partisan ends nor to drag it into electoral competitions or any other possibility for the conquest of power", "not to accept any political appointments in the institutions of power" among other things. This pledge was put to the test almost immediately when unionists and partisans of the left tried to infiltrate the movement for their own ends. The failure of this opportunistic attempt to hijack the movement was made evident during a general strike on July 26, when demonstrators chanted: "Out with the traitors! Out with the unions!"

Huge demonstrations continued. In mid-August, the insurgents banned all officials from the Soummam valley. This was not just due to a government celebration that was to occur there, but also because government officials had begun to contact certain unidentified delegates of the coordination who supported the idea of negotiation. Rather than weakening the struggle this government ploy led the insurgents to ban all government officials from Kabylia. The minister of the Mujaheedin had to cancel a trip to Tizi Ouzou, and the minister of the interior was greeted with a rain of stones when he came to install a new prefect.

At the beginning of October, the government banned a demonstration that was intended to present a list of demands called the

quite clearly stated that this organization was not something that could be developed on an ideological basis outside of the direct struggle of the workers, but rather that it was something that the workers would develop for themselves in the course of their struggles. He therefore did not suggest any specific form for it.) Nonetheless, Bakunin's appeals to the "unleashing of the wicked passions" of the oppressed and exploited were seen by many of the more reasonable revolutionaries of the time as a barbaric call for the destruction of civilization. And Bakunin himself did call for "the annihilation of bourgeois civilization" along with "the destruction of all States" and the "free and spontaneous organization from below upward, by means of free associations". But Bakunin's French contemporary, Ernest Coeurderoy, was less conditional in his rejection of civilization. He says simply: "In civilization, I vegetate; I am neither happy, nor free; why then should I desire this homicidal order to be conserved? There is no longer anything to conserve of that which the earth suffers." And he, along with Dejacque and other anarchist revolutionaries of that time, appeals to the barbaric spirit of destruction to bring an end to the civilization of domination.

Of course, the majority of anarchists at that time, as in our own, did not question civilization, technology or progress. Kropotkin's vision of communized "Factories, Fields and Workshops" or Josiah Warren's "True Civilization" inevitably have more appeal to those who are not prepared to face the unknown than the anarchist critiques of industrialism and civilization that often offer no clear vision of what will be after the revolutionary destruction of the civilization that they hate.

The early 20th century, and particularly the great massacre known as World War 1, brought a major overturning of values. Faith in the bourgeois ideal of progress was thoroughly eroded and the questioning of civilization itself was a significant aspect of a number of radical movements including dadaism, Russian anarcho-futurism and early surrealism. If most of the better known anarchists (such as Malatesta, Emma Goldman, Mahkno and so on) con-

tinued to see the possibility of a liberated industrial civilization, other lesser known anarchists saw a different vision. Thus, around 1919, Bruno Filippi wrote:

> I envy the savages. And I will cry to them in a loud voice: "Save yourselves, civilization is coming."
>
> Of course: our dear civilization of which we are so proud. We have abandoned the free and happy life of the forest for this horrendous moral and material slavery. And we are maniacs, neurasthenics, suicides.
>
> Why should I care that civilization has given humanity wings to fly so that it can bomb cities, why should I care if I know every star in the sky or every river on earth?
>
> [...]
>
> Today, the starry vault is a leaden veil that we vainly endeavor to pass through; today it is no longer unknown, it is distrusted.
>
> [...] I don't give a damn for their progress; I want to live and enjoy.

Now, I want to be clear. I am not bringing all of this up in order to prove that the present-day anti-civilization current has a legitimate anarchist heritage. If its critique of the reality we face is accurate, why should we care whether it fits into some framework of anarchist orthodoxy? But Bakunin and Coeurderoy, Malatesta and Filippi, all of the anarchists of the past who lived in struggle against domination, as they understood it were not trying to create any ideological orthodoxy. They were participating in the process of creating a revolutionary anarchist theory and practice that would be an ongoing process. This process has included critiques of civilization, critiques of progress and critiques of technology (and often in the past these critiques were not connected, so that, for example,

Insurrection in Algeria

An uprising began in Algeria in April, 2001. Riots began after police murdered a high school boy on April 18 in Beni-Douala, an area of Tizi Ouzou in the region of Kabylia about 70 miles east of Algiers. Riots and demonstrations quickly spread to other villages in the region. Rioters attacked police stations and troop detachments with stones, molotov cocktails and burning tires, and set fire to police vehicles, government offices and courts. Government attempts to quell the uprising failed. From the beginning, the rebels showed an unwillingness to negotiate and refused all representation. By the end of April, targets of collective rage broadened to include tax offices, all sorts of government offices and the offices of political parties. Rebels blockaded the main roads and looted government buildings and other property of the rulers. The entire region of Kabylia was in open insurrection. The state sent in its guard dogs to repress the revolt, leading to open conflicts with deaths and injuries on both sides.

By the end of the first week of May, the insurgent movement began to organize itself in village and neighborhood assemblies (the aarch) that coordinated their activities through a system of delegates who would be bound to a very interesting "code of honor" a few months later. The only political movement that might have had a chance of recuperating the revolt, the Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) very quickly showed its true colors by offering to aid the president of Algeria, Bouteflika, in organizing a "democratic transition".

The coordination of aarch has been organizing demonstrations, general strikes, actions against the police and the elections.

In Orwell's Novel

In Orwell's novel, 1984, when Winston Smith sits down at the desk to begin the diary that he has secretly acquired, the simple possession of which is in itself a crime, he is mortified by the discovery that he doesn't have anything to say, and that starting means re-creating language and its meaning. It means challenging everything that exists. It means managing to describe the horror that permeates life with the aim of overcoming it.

We also experience this drama. We feel the loss of words, words rendered lifeless by the continual muttering of ideology and advertising.

Words that pass over our rage. Words that are forgotten, that die out, that are manufactured as commodities or as agents of order. Words that might incite clouded minds to revolt and tear down the foundations of the edifice that has darkened our lives and hidden the sky.

We also feel rage at the inadequacy of words, at the way in which they seem to hide the things that we hold essential for human life, at the way in which they conspire against us, at how they unite in the cacophonic dam of the existence that oppresses us. How monstrous words can be, as obligations, as prohibitions, as the wall of repression that imprisons us. Perhaps what freedom means and necessitates cannot be described with words.

L'arrembaggio

Bakunin could call for "the annihilation of bourgeois civilization" and still embrace its technological outgrowth, industrialism, and Marcus Graham could call for the destruction of "the machine" in favor of an unmechanized civilization). We are living in different times. The words of Bakunin or Coeurderoy, of Malatesta or Renzo Novatore, or of any of the anarchist writers of the past cannot be taken as a program or a doctrine to be followed. Rather they form an arsenal to be looted. And among the weapons in that arsenal are barbaric battering rams that can be used against the walls of civilization, of the myth of progress, of the long-since disproven myth that technology can save us from our woes.

We are living in a world in which technology has certainly gone out of control. As catastrophe follows catastrophe, so-called "human" landscapes become increasingly controlled and mechanized, and human beings increasingly conformed to their roles as cogs in the social machine. Historically the thread that has gone through all that is best in the anarchist movement has not been a faith in civilization or technology or progress, but rather the desire for every individual to be free to create her or his life as he or she sees fit in free association others, in other words, the desire for the individual and collective reappropriation of life. And this desire is still what motivates anarchist struggle. At this point it is clear to me that the technological system is an integral part of the network of domination. It has been developed to serve the interests of the rulers of this world. One of the primary purposes of large-scale technological systems is the maintenance and expansion of social control, and this requires a technological system that is largely self-maintaining, needing only minimal human intervention. Thus, a juggernaut is created. The recognition that progress had no inherent connection to human liberation was already recognized by many revolutionaries by the end of World War 1. Certainly the history of the 20th century should have reinforced this understanding. We look out now on a physically, socially and psychically devastated world, the result of all that has been called progress. The exploited and dispos-

sessed of this world can no longer seriously desire to get a piece of this putrefying pie, nor to take it over and "self-manage" it. The reappropriation of life must have a different meaning in the present world. In light of the social transformations of the past few decades, it seems to me that any serious revolutionary anarchist movement would have to call industrialism and civilization itself into question precisely because anything less may not provide us with the necessary tools for taking back our lives as our own.

But my anti-civilization perspective is not a primitivist perspective. While it may indeed be inspiring to look at the apparently anarchic and communistic aspects of some "primitive" cultures, I do not base my critique on a comparison between these cultures and the current reality, but rather on the way in which all of the various institutions that comprise civilization act together to take my life from me and turn it into a tool for social reproduction, and how they transform social life into a productive process serving only to maintain the rulers and their social order. Thus, it is essentially a revolutionary perspective, and this is why I will always make use of anything in that arsenal which is the history of revolutionary theory and practice that can enhance my struggle. "Primitive" people have often lived in anarchic and communistic ways, but they do not have a history of revolutionary struggle from which we can loot weapons for our current struggle. Having said this, however, I do recognize those anarcho-primitivists who continue to recognize the necessity of revolution and class struggle as my comrades and potential accomplices.

Revolutionary struggle against the civilization of control and profit that surrounds us will not be the reasonable attempt to take over means of production. The dispossessed of this world seem to understand that this is no longer an option for liberation (if it ever was). If most are not clear about precisely who or what is the enemy, most do understand that they have nothing to say to those in power, because they no longer share a common language. We who have been dispossessed by this world now know that we can expect

constantly, and its control can only be maintained by force and through fear.

From the perspective of the rulers of this world, we are, indeed, all criminals (at least potentially), all monsters threatening their tranquil sleep, because we are all potentially capable of seeing through the veil of the law and choosing to ignore it and take back the moments of our lives whenever we can on our own terms. Thus, law, itself, (and the social order of property and power which require it) makes us equal precisely by criminalizing us. It is, therefore, the logical outcome of law and the social order that produces it that imprisonment and policing would become universal, hand in hand with the development of the global supermarket.

In this light, it should be clear that there is no use in making laws more just. There is no use in seeking to monitor the police. There is no use in trying to reform this system, because every reform will inevitably play back into the system, increasing the number of laws, increasing the level of monitoring and policing, making the world even more like a prison. There is only one way to respond to this situation, if we would have our lives as our own. To attack this society in order to destroy it.

a situation could only come to exist where inequality of the most significant kind exists — the inequality of access to the means for creating one's life on one's own terms. For those with the upper hand, this state of social inequality has the dual name of property and power. For those on the bottom, its name is poverty and subjection. Law is the lie that transforms this inequality into an equality that serves the masters of society.

In a situation in which everyone had full and equal access to all that they need to fulfill themselves and create their lives on their own terms, a wealth of individual differences would flourish. A vast array of dreams and desires would express themselves creating an apparently infinite spectrum of passions, loves and hatreds, conflicts and affinities. This equality in which neither property nor power would exist would thus express the frightening and beautiful non-hierarchical inequality of individuality.

Contrarily, where the inequality of access to the means for creating one's life exists — i.e., where the vast majority of people have been dispossessed of their own lives — everyone becomes equal, because everyone becomes nothing. This is true even of those with property and power, because their status in society is not based one who they are, but on what they have. The property and the power (which always resides in a role and not in an individual) are all that have worth in this society. Equality before the law serves the rulers, precisely because its aim is to preserve the order in which they rule. Equality before the law disguises social inequality precisely behind that which maintains it.

But, of course, law does not maintain the social order as words. The word of the law would be meaningless without physical force behind it. And that physical force exists in the systems of enforcement and punishment: the police, judicial and prison systems. Equality before the law is, in fact, a very thin veneer for hiding the inequality of access to the conditions of existence, the means for creating our lives on our terms. Reality breaks through this veneer

nothing from it. If we dream of another world, we cannot express that dream, because this world does not provide the words for it. And most likely many no longer dream. They just feel rage at the continuing degradation of their existence. So this revolution will, indeed, be the release of the "wicked passions" of which Bakunin spoke, the destructive passions that are the only door to a free existence. It will be the coming of the barbarians predicted by Dejacque and Coeurderoy. But it is precisely when people know that they no longer have anything to say to their rulers, that they may learn how to talk with each other. It is precisely when people know that the possibilities of this world can offer them nothing that they may learn how to dream the impossible. This network of institutions that dominate our life, this civilization, has turned our world into a toxic prison. There is so much to be destroyed so that a free existence may be created. The time of the barbarians is at hand.

> […] May the barbarians break loose. May they sharpen their swords, may they brandish their battleaxes, may they strike their enemies without pity. May hatred take the place of tolerance, may fury take the place of resignation, may outrage take the place of respect. May the barbarian hordes go to the assault, autonomously, in the way that they determine. And may no parliament, no credit institution, no supermarket, no barracks, no factory ever grow again after their passage. In the face of the concrete that rises to strike the sky and the pollution that fouls it, one can well say with Dejacque that "It is not the darkness that the Barbarians will bring to the world this time, it is the light."
> — Crisso/Odoteo

Thoughts on the City: Progress never destroys as thoroughly as when it builds.

The necessity for space is eminently political. The places in which we live condition the ways in which we live, and, inversely, our relationships and activities modify the spaces of our lives. It's a question of daily experience, and yet we seem incapable of drawing the tiniest result from it. One only needs to take a walk through any city to understand the nature of the poverty of our way of life. Almost all urban space responds to two needs: profit and social control. They are places of consumption organized according to the increasingly strict rules of a market in continuous expansion: the security market. The model is that of the commercial center, a collective privatized space, watched by the people and instruments provided by the appropriate agencies. In the commercial centers, an increasingly "personalized" sociality is built around the consumer and his family; now, one can eat, play with children, read, etc. in these neon places. But if one enters without any money, one discovers that it is a terrifying illusion of life.

The same thing happens, more or less, in the metropolises. Where can one meet for discussion, where can one sit without the obligation to consume, where can one drink, where can one sleep, if one has no money? For an immigrant, for a poor person, for a woman, a night in the city can be long. The moderates, comfortable in their houses, don't know the nocturnal world of the street, the dark side of the neon, when the police wake you up on the

The rule of fear is such that the social order even solicits our aid in our own policing. Parents register their toddlers' fingerprints with police agencies connected with the FBI. A Florida-based company called Applied Digital Solutions (ADS) has created the "VeriChip" that can hold personal, medical and other information and is intended to be implanted under the skin. Their idea is to promote its voluntary use by people, of course, for their own protection. It may soon be connected to the network of the Global Positioning System (GPS) Satellite so that anyone with the implant could be monitored constantly.[1] In addition there are dozens of programs that encourage snitching — a factor that is also reminiscent of prisons where the authorities seek out and reward snitches. Of course other prisoners have a rather different attitude toward these scum.

But all of this is purely descriptive, a picture of the social prison that is being built around us. A real understanding of this situation that we can use to fight against this process requires a deeper analysis. In fact, prison and policing rest on the idea that there are crimes, and this idea rests on the law. Law is portrayed as an objective reality by which the actions of the citizens of a state can be judged. Law, in fact, creates a kind of equality. Anatole France expressed this ironically by pointing out that before the law, beggars and kings alike were forbidden from stealing bread and sleeping under bridges. From this, it is clear that before the law we all become equal, simply because we all become ciphers, non-entities without individual feelings, relationships, desires and needs.

The objective of law is to regulate society. The necessity for the regulation of a society implies that it is not meeting the needs or fulfilling the desires of everyone within it. It rather exists as an imposition on a greater part of those who make it up. Of course, such

[1] There is a technology device currently in widespread use that can also help police in tracking someone down. I am speaking of the cellular phone. Although it apparently cannot lead the police directly to on individual, with the right technology they can discover someone's general vicinity. This helped cops make an arrest in St. Louis last November.

Why Do We All Live In Prison?
Prison, Law and Social Control

There is a place in this society where one is perpetually under surveillance, where every movement is monitored and controlled, where everyone is under suspicion except the police and their bosses, where all are assumed to be criminals. I am speaking, of course, of prison…

But at an ever-quickening pace, this description is coming to fit more and more public spaces. Shopping malls and the business districts of major cities are under video surveillance. Armed guards patrol schools, libraries, hospitals and museums. One is subject to search at airports and bus stations. Police helicopters fly over cities and even forests in search of crime. The methodology of imprisonment, which is one with the methodology of the police, is gradually being imposed over the entire social landscape.

This process is being imposed through fear, and the authorities justify it to us in terms of our need for protection — from criminals, from terrorists, from drugs and violence. But who are these criminals and terrorists, who are these monsters that threaten us every moment of our fear-filled lives? A moment's careful consideration is enough to answer this question. In the eyes of the rulers of this world, we are the criminals and terrorists, we are the monsters — at least potentially. After all, we are the ones they are policing and monitoring. We are the ones who are watched on the video cameras and searched at the bus stations. One can only wonder if it is the fact that this is so glaringly obvious that makes people blind to it.

benches, when everything seems foreign and hostile to you. When the middle classes are enclosed in their bunkers, cities reveal their true faces as inhuman monsters.

Cities increasingly come to resemble fortresses, and houses, security cells. Social war, the war between the rich and the poor, the governors and the governed, is institutionalized in urban space. The poor are deported to the outskirts in order to leave the centers to the offices and banks (or to the tourists). The entrances of the cities and a great many "sensitive" areas are watched by apparatuses that get more sophisticated every day. The lack of access to determined levels of consumption — levels defined and controlled by a fixed computer network in which the data of banking, insurance, medical scholastic and police systems are woven together — determines, in the negative, the new dangerous classes, who are confined in very precise urban zones. The characteristics of the new world order are reflected in metropolitan control. The borders between countries and continents correspond to the boundaries between neighborhoods or to the magnetic cards for access to specific private buildings or, as in the United States, to certain residential areas. International police operations recall the war against crime or, more recently, the politics of "zero tolerance" through which all forms of deviance are criminalized. While throughout the world the poor are arrested by the millions, the cities assume the form of immense prisons. Don't the yellow lines that consumers have to follow in certain London commercial centers remind you of those on which some French prisoners have to walk? Isn't it possible to catch a glimpse of the checkpoints in the Palestinian territories in the militarization of Genoa during the G8 summit? Proposals for a nightly curfew for adolescents have been approved in cities just two steps away from ours (in France for example). The houses of correction reopen, a kind of penal colony for youth; assembling in the inner courtyards of the popular condominiums (the only space for collective life in many sleeping quarters) is banned. Already, in most European cities, the homeless are forbidden access to the city

center, and beggars are fined, like in the Middle Ages. One may propose (like the Nazis of yesterday and the mayor of Milan today) the creation of suitable centers for the unemployed and their families, modeled after the lagers for undocumented immigrants. Metallic grids are built between rich (and white) neighborhoods and poor (and… non-white) neighborhoods. Social apartheid is advancing, from the United States to Europe, from the south to the north of the world. When one in three blacks between the ages of 20 and 35 get locked up in cells (as occurs in the United States, where two million people have been imprisoned in twenty years), the proposal for closing the city centers to immigrants here can pass almost unobserved by us. And many may even applaud the glorious marine military when it sinks the boats of the undocumented foreigners. In an interweaving of classist exclusion and racial segregation, the society in which we live increasingly looks like a gigantic accumulation of ghettoes.

Once again the link between the forms of life and the places of life is close. The increasing precariousness of broad layers of society proceeds at the same pace as the isolation of individuals, with the disappearance of meeting spaces (and therefore of struggle) and , at the bottom, the reserves in which most of the poor are left to rot. From this social condition, two typically totalitarian phenomena are born: the war between the exploited, which reproduces without filters the ruthless competition and social climbing upon which capitalist relationships are built, and the demand for order and security, produced and sponsored by a propaganda that is perpetually hammered home. With the end of the "cold war", the Enemy has been moved, both politically and through the media, into the interior of the "free world" itself. The collapse of the Berlin Wall corresponds to the construction of the barriers between Mexico and the United States or to the development of electronic barriers for the protection of the citadels inhabited by the ruling classes. The criminalization of the poor is openly described as a "war of low intensity", where the enemy, "the exotic terrorist", here becomes the

are absolutely other, ways that we can experiment now, but only in our struggle to destroy this world, because only in this struggle can we snatch the time and space we need for such experiments. And in speaking of a world that is absolutely other, there is little one can say. When asked, "But if we destroy work, how will we eat?", all one can say is, "We will figure that out as we go along." And, of course, that is not satisfying for those who want easy answers. But if our desire is to make our lives our own, and if this requires a world that is absolutely other than the social world in which we live, we cannot expect to have the words for that world. Where would we find them here, where even the primitivists must resort to economic comparisons and an accounting of hours of work to valorize their utopia? As we destroy the old world and experiment with new ways to live, the words will come, if they are desired. Their shadows are sometimes visible in poetry, but if we realize our lives poetically, will we even still desire the words?

who know where all the dumpsters, all the free feeds, all the easy shoplifting stores, etc. are, but who have no concept of what to do with their lives beyond surviving on the streets. The individual with a clear idea of her project who, for example, chooses to take a job temporarily at a printers in order to learn the skills and steal as much material as she needs to start her own anarchist publishing projecting — quitting the job as soon as his projectual tasks are accomplished — is acting far more pointedly against the world of work than the individual who spends his days wandering from dumpster to dumpster, thinking only of how he's avoided a job.

Work is a social relationship or, more precisely, part of a network of social relationships based upon domination and exploitation. The destruction of work (as opposed to its mere avoidance), therefore, cannot be accomplished by a single individual. One who tried would still find herself trapped within the world of work, forced to deal with its realities and the choices it imposes. Nor can work be destroyed separately from the complete destruction of the system of social relationships of which it is a part. Thus, the attack against work starts from our struggle to reapproriate our lives. But this struggle encounters the walls of the prison that surrounds us everywhere, and so must become the struggle to destroy an entire social world, because only in a world that is absolutely other, what some have called a "world turned upside-down", will our lives ever truly be our own. Now we can snatch moments and spaces — and indeed this is necessary in order to give us the time to reflect upon what we, as individuals, really want to do with our lives. But the task remains before us of breaking down the prison walls.

In fact, the anarchist insurrectionary project, whether thought of in terms of work, the state, the family, the economy, property, technology, religion, law or any other institutions of domination, remains the same. The world of domination is one. The institutions form a network, and one cannot escape through the cracks. We must destroy the net and adventure into the unknown, having made the decision to find ways to relate and create our exist that

illegal foreigner, the drug addict, the prostitute. The isolated citizen, tossed about between work and consumption through those anonymous spaces that are the ways and means of transport, swallows terrifying images of treacherous young people, slackers, cutthroats — and an imprecise and unconscious feeling of fear takes possession of individual and collective life.

Our apparently peaceful cities increasingly show us the marks of this planetary tendency to government through fear, if we learn how to look for them.

If politics is defined as the art of command, as a specialized activity that is the monopoly of bureaucrats and functionaries, then the cities in which we live are the political organization of space. Within them, every common sphere for discussion and decisions regarding common problems is vanishing. Indeed, the urban structure is projected intentionally toward separating individuals in order to keep them in isolation and lost in the mass at the same time. Anti-political action is necessary, a revolt against urban planning as police science and practice; it is the uprising that creates new spaces for encounter and communication. This is why we say that the question of space is an eminently political question.

A full life is a life that is able to skillfully mix the pleasure of solitude and the pleasure of encounter. A wise intermingling of villages and countryside, of plazas and free expanses could render the art of building and dwelling magnificent. If, with a utopian leap, we project ourselves outside of industrialism and forced urbanization, in short outside of the long history of removal on which the current technological society is built, we can imagine small communities based on face-to-face relationships that are linked together, without hierarchies between human beings or domination over nature. The journey would cease to be a standardized transport between weariness and boredom and would become an adventure free of clocks. Fountains and sheltered places would welcome passers-by. Wild nature could once again become a place of discovery and stillness, of tremors and escape from humanity. Villages could be

born from forests without violence in order to then return to being countryside and forest. We can't even imagine how animals and plants would change when they no longer feel threatened by human beings. Only an alienated humanity could conceive of accumulation, profit and power as the basis for life on Earth. While the world of commodities is in liquidation, threatened by the implosion of all human contact and by ecological catastrophe, while young people slaughter each other and adults muddle through on psycho-pharmaceuticals, exactly what is at stake becomes clearer: subverting social relationships means creating new spaces for life and vice versa. In this sense, a "vast operation of urgent demolition" awaits us.

Mass industrial society destroys solitude and the pleasure of meeting at the same time. We are increasingly constrained to be together, due to forced displacements, standardized time, mass-produced desires. And yet we are increasingly isolated, unable to communicate, devoured by anxiety and fear, unable, above all, to struggle together. Any real communication, any truly egalitarian dialogue can only take place through the rupture of normality and habit, only in revolt.

In various parts of the world, the exploited refuse every illusion about the best possible world, turning their feeling of total spoliation against power. Rising up against the exploiters and their guard dogs, against their property and their values, the exploited discover new and old ways of being together, discussing, deciding and making merry.

From the Palestinian territories to the aarch (village assemblies) of the Algerian insurgents, uprisings free spaces for social self-organization. Often the rediscovered assembly forms are like applications of old traditions of face-to-face relationships hostile to all representation, forged in the pride of other struggles, to the current agenda. If violent rupture is the basis of uprisings, their capacity to experiment with other ways of living, in hope that the exploited elsewhere will stoke their flames, is what renders them

Another form of incomprehension involves confusion over what work is. This stems in part from the fact that the word can be used in ambiguous ways. I may, indeed, say that I am "working" on an article for WD or on a translation. But when I am doing these things, it is, in fact, not work, because there is nothing compelling me to do them, I have no obligation to do them; I do them solely for my own pleasure. And here is where the basic meaning of work and its destruction becomes clear.

Work is an economic social relationship based upon compulsion. The institutions of property and commodity exchange place a price tag upon survival. This forces each of us to find ways to buy our survival or to accept the utter precariousness of a life of constant theft. In the former case, we can only buy our survival precisely by selling large portions of our lives away — this is why we refer to work as wage slavery — a slave is one whose life is owned by another, and when we work, capital owns our lives. And with the world domination of capital, increasingly the totality of existence is permeated by the world of work — there is no moment that is our own unless we ferociously rip it from the grip of this world. Though it is true that wage slavery cannot be equated with chattel slavery, it is also true that the masters of this world, in referring to us as "human resources", make it very clear how they view us. So survival with a price tag is always opposed to life and work is the form this opposition takes.

But theft (and its poor cousin, dumpster diving) does not in itself free us from work. "Even robbing banks or reappropriating goods remains within the logic of capital if the individual perpetrator of the deed does not already have their own project in motion" (Jean Weir). And here is one of the most common misunderstandings of an anti-work perspective: confusing the avoidance of having a job with the attack on the world of work. This confusion manifests in a practical emphasis on methods for surviving without a job. Thus, survival continues to take precedence over life. One encounters so many people now within certain anarchist-influenced subcultures,

For A World Absolutely Other

> Life unbridled, a venture into the absolute other, requires the total destruction not only of 'my' work, but of the very concept of work and economy as the basis of human relationships.
>
> — Jean Weir

If the anarchist project can seem incomprehensible to those who have learned to accept the necessity of being ruled, who have learned to prefer security to freedom, that project understood in its totality, as the complete overturning of all social relations based on obligation and compulsion, can even be incomprehensible to many anarchists. The idea of the destruction of work is frequently met with incomprehension. And this comes in more than one form.

The most frequent form of incomprehension I have encountered when I have spoken of the destruction of work is that which simply exclaims: "But we have to eat!" In certain ways this reaction is quite similar to the response to the call for the destruction of prisons, cops and states which cries: "But then rape, robbery and murder would run rampant!" It is a response that stems from habit — we have always lived a certain way. Within this way specific institutions are said to fulfill specific needs — thus, work and the economy are the institutional framework through which food is provided within the present system of social relationships, and we know of no others (except by rumor). So the thought of a world without work evokes visions of starvation precisely at the point where the capacity to dream stops.

lasting, since even the most beautiful utopian practices die in isolation.

The places of power, even those that are not directly repressive, are destroyed in the course of riots not only because of their symbolic weight, but also because in power's realms, there is no life.

Behind the problem of homes and collective spaces, there stand an entire society. It is because so many work year after year to pay off a loan simply in order to keep a roof over their head that they aren't able to find either the will or the space to talk with each other about the absurdity of such a life. On the other hand, the more that collective spaces are enclosed, privatized or brought under state control, the more houses themselves become small, grey, uniform and unhealthy fortresses. Without resistance, everything is degraded at a startling speed. Where peasants lived and cultivated the land for the rich as recently as fifty years ago, now the people of rank live. The current residential neighborhoods are the most unlivable of the common houses of thirty years ago. Luxury hotels seem like barracks. The logical consequences of this totalitarianism in urban planning are those sorts of tombs in which Japanese employees reload their batteries. The classes that exploit the poor are, in their turn, mistreated by the system that they have always zealously defended.

Practicing direct action in order to snatch the spaces for life from power and profit, occupying houses and experimenting with subversive relationships is a very different thing from any sort of more or less fashionable alternative juvenilism. It is a matter that concerns all the exploited, the left-out, the voiceless. It's a question of discussing and organizing without mediators, of placing the self-determination of our relationships and spaces against the constituted order, of attacking the urban cages. In fact, we do not think that it is possible to cut ourselves out any space within this society that is truly self-organized where we can live our own way, like Indians on reservations. Our desires are far too excessive. We want to create breaches, go out into the streets, speak in the plazas, in

search of accomplice for making the assault on the old world. Life in society is to be reinvented. This is everything.

— slightly revised from an article from

"Adesso — Foglio di critica sociale", numero 14

I however remain away with the birds. Just as the variety of birdsong within species has no evolutionary function (in fact could be described as counter-evolutionary) so I plump for self-representation before function, life before its desiccation into little parcels of useful attributes. To those who think I am putting the spirit of things before the matter of them, I would ask them to reverse their priorities. To be oneself is the most materialist position to take — to rewrite oneself as an assembly of evolutionary and economic functions is the triumph of the spirit, albeit a very cynical one, as far as I can see. When crows play they take it very seriously but it is still play. A dog would have great difficulty with the concept 'It's only a game.' The playful is the most important, and only the pressure of managed lives could have led us to impose our own miserable conception of life on what is blatantly and stunningly without purpose.

state, by asserting an iron law of evolutionary determination of life itself. With the exception of certain maverick minority publications it is impossible to escape the monotonous mantra that political action or social change can only occur within the limits set by the global market, welfare state, resources available, etc. In the forefront of this adaptive behaviour from leftists is Demos, who recently held a conference announcing evolutionary psychology as a breakthrough in understanding human behaviour — a breakthrough which happily gelled with their own abject surrender to what seems most powerful in society (currently, the market, whatever that is) thereby confirming Orwell's charge against the real treason of the intellectuals. Evolutionary psychology is nothing more than Darwinism applied to the human personality and therefore presents human beings as a 'fait accompli'[a finished work — editor] that can only be managed or 'worked with'. True to their Stalinist roots the idea of freedom is foreign to them. Like any nineteenth century gentleman naturalist they toil over their taxonomy of exhibits, only this time it is human beings who are to be collected into the various types, identities, genders or categories that currently appear to present the most exhaustive picture. No wonder the present government likes them so much. They have provided it with the justification for the maximum meddling with the added advantage of a fail-safe excuse for failure. More surveillance is absolutely necessary, but if that doesn't manage to improve people's lives then it is entirely as a result of certain intractable evolutionary characteristics.

If people though it was bad enough when architecture embraced the formula: 'Form follows function' which managed to banish the playful and ornamental from most modern housing estates, how much worse will it be to live under a state for whom this watch word is the foundation of its reason to be. Adaptation being perhaps the most unequivocal achievement of New Labour there is no surprise in its willingness to subject the rest of us to adaptation to whatever is already most powerful.

Watching Birds. Peter Porcupine wonders why birds have so much fun

(Reprinted from Here and Now)

Looking out my window, or taking another break from digging the allotment, birds are always visible. The thing about birds is that they seem to have a lot of free time. Crows, in particular, hang about the air indulge in delinquent acrobatics, make a lot of noise and rarely seem to spend much time ensuring their preservation. Similarly round about the evening a hedge sparrow will start a piercing and delightful song and its persistence will invite the human — all to human question — 'What's it for?' Well what is it for? Why do we catch birds doing do much that makes no sense in evolutionary, preservational or reproductive terms? The hedge sparrow which bursts into song does so long after the chicks have fledged, at times of ridiculous abundance on the plot, such that the fruit rots on the branches when not harvested by human ands and bugs and grubs enjoy an exuberant proliferation. The crows are quite visibly playing, there is no other word for it. I've seen other birds do the same, lapwings flying upside-down, eagles faking a stoop, tits so engrossed in an argument that they have come tumbling to my feet without oblivious to any danger.

And yet when I turn to a birdwatchers' textbook or visit an R.S.P.B. visitors' centre, bird behaviour is explained primarily, if not exclusively, in survivalist terms. They do X in order to secure Y in the struggle for survival. Watch any of the fascinating nature

programmes on the box and you can guarantee that the life of the animal is explained entirely in terms of survival mechanisms. It doesn't matter whether the underlying ideology of the programme is promoting the selfish gene, evolutionary psychology or even, I have observed, cost-benefit analysis, animal lives are routinely reduced to function. Everything is given a reason and that reason ultimately comes down to a utilitarian interpretation — each manifestation of the form of a living creature can be explained in terms of its function. Hedge sparrows sing in order to delineate territory (despite the fact that no territorial imperative pertains), crows play in order to hone their hunting skills (when did you last see a crow kill anything?), lapwings fly upside-down in order to scare off potential predators (what predator is alarmed by something as ungainly and misdirected as an upside-down bird?). The explanation pales in the face of the activity it purports to describe. Science brings a spanner and wrench view to actions which in their particular nature defy functional analysis.

Or course science is not wrong. Or rather it is only as wrong as the medical textbook which describes the human act of love as the behaviour necessary for the perpetuation of the species homo sapiens. It is just inadequate. Fixated by the big picture it obscures the detail in the little ones which make everyday life everyday living. Anyone who bothers to watch anything alive will be struck chiefly by one thing. That is its incredible exuberance. I took my ten month old daughter to Bempton Cliffs near Flamborough Head in Yorkshire, near the end of the breeding season when the seabirds are just putting the finishing touches to their terrestrial existence before embarking on the long winter sojourn at sea, and she couldn't contain her delight at the furious activity going on beneath her. As far as I know she had little idea about what she was looking at and listening to but her response was immediate, happy and untutored. She knew exuberance when she came across it. At her birth some friends sent us a quote: "Man is born to live, not to prepare for life" (Boris Pasternak). If contemporary naturalists were to be believed

present life is only a preparation for the future, and every individual only a cipher for forces an imperatives whose connection with the individual is practically arbitrary.

Why is any of this important? Well one thing that is disturbing about the plethora of nature interest programmes is the relentless imperative to fit nature into human systems of thinking. Thus some ecological thinking veers dangerously close to imposing economic thinking on life. Everything is seen in terms of input/output equations, almost as if an animal were the quintessence of the enlightened self-interested individual. Nature ends up purely as a zone of scarcity requiring astute management of resources. But perhaps what I find most worrying is the vogue for evolutionary psychology as a means to explain human as well as animal life. It is almost as if we are softened up for this (not so) new explanation of our crises and problems, by the vigorous promotion of the idea of the animal as essentially a set of adaptive functions. Now that anthropocentrism is out of fashion it is an easy step to start to explain human activity through the science that claims to explain animal life, or as it would say, behaviour. Not wanting to claim any special theological place for human beings, we are exhorted to view ourselves through the lens of the zoologist. That lens leads us down the path of accepting that all characteristics are the result of evolutionary adaptation. The animal or the plant, or the bacteria is completely explained by the interaction between genes and environment. No principle of self-organization or self-expression is accepted. There is no sense that evolution exerts an influence upon a subject — everything is merely an object of forces whose time-span alone renders it impervious to individual influence. This scientific monomania is bad enough when applied to animals — it simply fails to register either their playfulness — but becomes distinctly sinister when it turns its attention to human beings and becomes a plank of state social policy.

A number of groups have become excited by evolutionary psychology. It panders to their own adaptation to the market and the