

15 Post-Primitivist Theses

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Introduction

Twenty years ago a group of Detroit anarchists began work on a new synthesis of environmental and anti-authoritarian thought. Distinguishing themselves from other burgeoning ecological movements in the eighties anarchopunk scene they sought to draw inspiration directly from our primitive roots. Anarchy, they declared, should not be considered in terms of an abstract state to be politically won, but rather a living experience and extensive historical reality. Reevaluating the ideologies and dogma of the classic anarchist movement they turned attention to the archaeological record and existing indigenous societies. By building on post-left critiques they passionately worked to bring attention to a much wider context and history of mental, social and physical expressions of totalitarianism. And finally, taking a stunningly broad stance that framed humanity's neolithic embrace of mass society in terms of the mythological Fall from Eden, the movement chose to target as a single whole both the virulent social hierarchies that accompanied the onset of agrarianism and the entirety of technological development since.

The radical core of a vast green anarchist awakening, anarcho-primitivism blossomed across the North American anti-authoritarian community and then beyond.

High-profile operations such as Earth First's creation of the Cascadia Free State to block old-growth logging built an international momentum around green anarchy. At the same time intellectuals like John Zerzan gained public exposure in defense and support of Unabomber Ted Kaczynski's anti-civilization politics. In the Seattle riots against the WTO primitivist group from Eugene stole the media spotlight. Today various bundlings of green anarchist thought have become diffuse and deeply integral in the broader anarchist movement and, despite some dramatically turning tides, primitivism still enjoys a significant influence.

Naturally this has provoked sizable criticism.

Within the traditionally socialist and unabashedly leftist veins writers such as Michael Albert and Murray Bookchin have been repulsed at the movement's radical rejection of everyday basic technology and universally accepted constructs like language itself. And on the ground many activists deride a lack of engagement with or sympathy and awareness of social realities. Furthermore, identity issues and accusations of irrelevancy have plagued the mainly economically-privileged white anglophone movement.

Despite this, or perhaps because of these critiques and their limited nature, the primitivist discourse has continued seeping out to wider audiences beyond anarchism through things like the growing infatuation of liberal conspiracy types with peak oil and Derrick Jensen's popularization of ecological struggle.

Serious intellectual resistance, where it has come, has been less theoretically inspired than socially motivated. For many radicals the most tangible effects of primitivism have been cultural. Predictions of an inevitable and permanent crash of civilization have sapped the perceived need for revolutionary action and differing degrees of survivalist elitism have mixed with already rampant shallow and self-preoccupied competitive moralisms to the effect of even greater disconnect. A sort of DIY green capitalism has been recreated by certain radical circles in which presumably if you collect enough survival skills tokens you get to retire to your very own plush post-collapse bungalow with a panoramic view of everyone you ever had drama with dying.

This is obviously all very concerning. But, as with any political philosophy or revolutionary paradigm, the demographics and particular social consequences are far less important than what primitivism actually has to say. Neither extremism nor radicalism are ever reasons for rejection

unto themselves, nor are even impracticality or a fumbled enactment – whatever tactics might be concluded from an assertion, if the underlying idea is inviolate, the consequence of it should not blind us to that reality.

The actual argument behind anarcho-primitivism is fierce. It is intelligent and complex, yet beautifully simple at root... And it is ultimately wrong.

In giving flesh to these fifteen theses I seek not to call out the radical green movement wholesale. Nor do I mean to limit myself to some official orthodoxy of primitivism proper. Rather I mean to address several core and recurring strands of thought in primitivism today and the deep failings that have come to define it as a whole.

Biological concepts & Distinctions aren't Particularly fundamental

It's no secret we, as a society, have a bad case of cosmology-through-taxonomy. The industrial revolution in particular saw an explosion of categorization and demarcation between abstractions. From animal/vegetable/mineral we got sub-parthenons, phylas, compounds, infraclasses and a host of other cognitive divisions. It was a profound and expansive campaign of centralization and itemization and, like all others, it was mostly about control.

Just as has been true since the very first person mucked around with language: naming is power.

It was not enough to build a massive physical infrastructure by which to apply social hierarchies. Humanity itself had to be broken down and controlled. The greatest tools of coercion and control that had ever been available—the needs and frailties of our own bodies—were to be so thoroughly itemized as give charge to the second greatest tool of coercion and control: a religion.

Biology over-asserted its association with hard sciences like chemistry and physics and brought that unearned legitimacy to bear in the social realm. Even as forests were clearcut and species exterminated, Europe's expanding ecosystem of social hierarchy launched a barrage of taxonomic declarations to convince the people that it best understood their interactions, place and role within the world. We may not understand the processes killing you, but we can pick its name off a chart.

Though it gave no true strength, such taxonomic knowledge provided a numbing security. A sense of personal control over the world through the ingestion of structure.

The synthesis of this pursuit of taxonomy with the valuation of position and power can of course be seen in the constructions applied to race and sex. And "Social Darwinism" justified social stratification more broadly by applying emerging biological concepts as fully descriptive and absolute laws of nature in realms they had no business in describing.

The general assurance provided by taxonomy spurred an overreach that still deeply affects our discourse. Mainstream notions of ethics—long corrupted by the church to remove any foundation save appeals to authority—reacted to the increasing potency of biological explanations by simply swapping authorities. Nature was swapped in to fill the place of god. And the fulfillment of one's role set out for them by nature was positioned as the moral good. Homosexuality, for example, gets attacked for being "unnatural" more often than "unholy."

The early field of biology, as it was appealed to and applied in the social realm, excelled in layered complex arcana, rituals and miracles. What it needed was a touch of divinity, something that could be personally mystified until it swallowed up all existential questions. And then it

would be possible to draw lines and slice up whatever was left on the metaphysical level. Thus the arbitrary category of “living” was canonized as an absolute on par with the charge of an electron, even though abstractions like “self-replicating system” were obviously subjective as all hell. We saw patterns that could be easily and pragmatically described and pretended they were perfect and fundamental descriptions. So the chemically subjective impression of “life” is declared to begin at conception, et cetera, et cetera.

The churches bought in real fast.

Yet if self-replication is somehow an entropy-breaking signature of a divinely separate force, what of the stars? They grow, collapse and, in doing so, seed their own re-growth among the nebulae. Every piece of matter around us is part of that cycle. Likewise, a mystification of the information patterns of DNA breaks down in the form of RNA and quasi-nucleic-acid carriers on the frayed edge of what’s a complex molecule and what was declared easily recognizable by a lab technician. What counts as the “sameness” between one cell and another? Why not include the sublimation of minerals?

It can seem an inane difficulty, but these notions come to bear again and again in our political and ecological discourse in ways that can be deeply problematic, yet are rarely called out.

One tradition of primitivist thought appeals strongly to the notion of “complexity”, something well defined in say computer science (where the arbitrary abstractions we choose automatically have real meaning), but not so clear-cut in the realm of cultures and biomes. You get authors like Jason Godesky arguing points that depend on *homo sapiens* being more “complex” than dinosaurs and dinosaurs more complex than say coral reefs. But for what definition of “complex”? We judge complexity based on how many “parts” we see in a system, but what exactly constitutes a part is itself hugely subjective on anything other than fundamental particles. We chose to talk and think in terms of particular abstracts agglomerates based on how useful such schemes are for us, not because things become suddenly magically more than the sum of their parts at say the cellular level. If dinosaurs are considered “less complex” than primates it’s because we have more intricate naming systems for physical and behavioral details closer to our own experience. But from another perspective a coral reef can be seen as far, far more complex than a human being.

My point is that significant abstraction based in such taxonomies can end up worse than useless. While on a some levels—in the pragmatic service of some goals—they can be useful, we need to remain explicit about those constraints. There can be just as much, say, fundamental “diversity” between a given spotted owl & lemur as between two lemurs. Narrowly focused on similarities between patterns of DNA or macroscopic physical trends in physiology, our concept of “diversity” might even be applicable in the way we want it to be. But it won’t necessarily get us beyond the assumptions, the working parameters, and the social hierarchies a given taxonomic framework is couched in. It’s all too easy to slide into making too much out of false dichotomies between ‘living’ and non-‘living’ systems or ‘natural’ and non-‘natural’ arrangements.

While pragmatic on certain levels of discussion, abstractions of any deep ethical, ontological or existential significance that are predicated on Biology’s conceptual distinctions are likely to be deeply problematic. Instead of copping out with loose and ultimately arbitrary abstractions, it behooves us to think in terms of the exact particulars and only speak of systemic distinctions that are grounded in objective fundamentals.

The biosphere is not inherently good, just highly dynamic

Between the solar wind and its molten iron core, the Earth has a thin layer of water and nitrogen. Around 3.5 billion years ago, after the planet finished aggregating, this layer of fluid locked into a sort of homeostasis around the solid mantle. The various elements caught up in this turbulent process were forced into far closer interaction than they'd seen as dust between the stars. Due to the nature of the planetary formation much of the surface experienced large and decidedly uneven outbursts of energy. Unusually extended molecules were formed and destroyed as fundamental particles followed entropy to lower energy states all while pressed up against uncountable trillions of their fellows.

Eventually the most violent energy outbursts died down and the resulting elemental muck settled into more efficient and locally sustainable patterns of relational structure. The free-floating O₂ molecule became a quite popular pattern of arrangement as erosive molecular aggregates liberated it from the surface's iron rocks. Another popular arrangement that stood the test of all those trillions of interacting particles and molecules was the amino acid. Of course, this was a far broader generalization of inter-atomic structure and, unlike the simplistic O₂, its existence depended on a much higher degree of interaction with the surrounding muck. Such increased interaction, in fact, that, as entropy played out the Earth's ocean/atmosphere, it emerged primarily in close conjunction with much larger agglomerations of closely interdependent molecules. In the background of all this an almost unnoticeable mass of sugars rolled themselves out and transmitted structural information to their surrounding proteins. The planet cooled and these sluggish uber-massive molecular arrangements gained ground against the more fiery radical arrangements of yester-eon. Today about two trillion tons of matter on the surface of the earth is intimately associated with these deoxyribonucleic acids. And the sum total of these fluidly interrelating positional structures of matter is today referred to as the Biosphere.

There are many cosmically descriptive attributes that could be applied to this planet's scummy outer film, but the most important is by far its dynamicism.

Neither an expansive vacuum of distant, weak and slow interactions nor a positionally locked, brittle over-structure, the biosphere is characterized by relatively in fluid change. That is to say interacting forces play out with significantly sped up changes in relative positions. Of course that's not to ascribe to it the properties of some perfectly dynamic super-fluid.

Rather, the Earth is simply dynamic enough to buffer the emergence and mobile propagation of rough, low-density information structures. Like us.

Our biosphere is organized in stratified layers of fluidity. From particles to molecules to cells to organisms. Given any arbitrarily limited system and the intention to convey information in the form of spatial relations able to withstand externalities, some fluid behavior is crucial. Those arrangements which survive and flourish in such dynamic systems do so through grassroots propagation. And the resulting landscapes are characterized by redundancy. By coalescing into autonomous actors they achieve a sort of distributed adaptability that morph around blunt obstacles and seep into their surroundings.

Compared to a rock, a puddle of water is very dynamic. A maple tree's probably going to be a whole lot less dynamic than the puddle of water. But the rock's not going to do much at all. The information structure contained within the arrangement of its particles isn't really going to apply itself to the surrounding world as be applied upon.

The rock, of course, can store quite a bit of positional information. These days we, as a society, spend quite a lot of time saving porn and MP3s to rocks. Because, it's worth pointing out, the structures in the rock generally don't spontaneously flow apart. At the same time, however, such brittle frozen structures are incredibly unstable in the face applied contact and motion. But that's okay because though dynamic systems erode entrenched structure, there are still ways to convey and apply positional information.

The maple tree's DNA, for example, in proportion to its total resulting weight, may not pack away an impressive number of gigs per cubic inch. But it preserves and applies such informational structures in such a way that an ipod, abandoned on mountainside, would be hard pressed to match.

Through dynamic engagement with environmental complexities, structure can be rooted with more survivability and consequence than a less dynamic one would find. The structure of a hunk of concrete is not very dynamic, and a brittle hunk of concrete embedded in a far more dynamic system will not last very long.

The positional structure of say, concrete overpasses, doesn't have as strong a history of dynamic participation in the Earth's scummy outer film as say, humanity. And, as the human body is an emergent structure highly interconnected and participant within a rather dynamic system, our own structures are somewhat colossally interdependent with all the other watery stuff whirling around us.

From our vantage point as homo sapiens, the Earth's dynamic system usually looks great! But let's remember that there are no huge metaphysical engines driving the whole thing just to sustain the crude information structure of 'humanishly' arranged deoxyribonucleic acids bumping about in scummy water sacks. The Earth wasn't made for human bodies. Human bodies were made for the Earth.

And all that means is that our template survived two million years of stabbing rabbits to death and picking strawberries. It does not mean that going back to stabbing and strawberries would still cut it for us in another thousand years (even if we had never taken up our new dastardly practice of planting carrots and wheeling around carts). Who knows? Fact of the matter is some dynamic turbulence in the Biosphere could spontaneously wipe us out any day. Following our original position within the greater biosphere (even with some mild evolution) guarantees nothing. It is simply an informed shot in the dark. Good chances but a rather hands off abandonment to fate.

Yet, at the same time, it should be so obvious as to go without saying that suddenly slapping concrete over $1/10^{\text{th}}$ of the Earth's surface will almost certainly effect a non-human-friendly result. No matter how many of your summer homes you make out of cob.

Humans can choose our dynamics

We exist immersed within a dynamic system and remain deeply dependent on its conditions. At the same time there's no denying that we can affect both our local conditions and the system as a whole.

On the face of it, this appears to present us with the two extremes: We can strive to interact with our external environment in as close to the same manner as worked twenty thousand years ago. Or we can seek different ways of engaging with it.

To the degree that we choose the first, we throw up our hands at the thought of out thinking millions of years of evolution. Uncountable trillions of calculations were involved in the formation of our bodies and ecology. Granted, the Earth isn't finished processing through all the fluid interactions of its scummy crust—and when it is, there will be nothing left—but, in the short term, it's certainly amenable to assume that enough of the overarching patterns of equilibrium involved in our upkeep will be maintained for a few dozen more millennia. ...Provided we continue to participate in roughly the same manner.

The second option, deviation, is, at least evolutionarily, a great tactic. But the most efficient processes of evolution take steps inversely proportional to the evolving structure's size. The greater the trial, the greater the error. Large scale structures have more net components involved and thus more points of interaction with the external dynamic system. A single misstep has larger consequences.

The best way to sneak around this dangerous process of physical trial and error is conceptual modeling. We can think through possible changes to way we interact with the world. We simplify perceptions into cognitive structures and then allow them to evolve against one another in our minds. The resulting successful structures we then translate back into external form.

This is technology.

It's the process of how we choose to arrange our interactions with the material world. Loose every day associations of bulldozers and computers aside, this is pretty all that the word "technology" means.

Problem is, the greater the abstraction involved the greater the imperfection. Symbolic representations diverge from material behavior as, by nature of their comparative simplicity, they cannot calculate every interaction in a fluid system. "Chaotic" behavior thus emerges as a phantom remainder, left behind to torment the carefully calculated and brittle structures we so proudly abstracted.

It's one thing when it results in a snapped vine rope, it's quite another when the structure at hand coats the entire Earth. But, regardless of degree, in every technological channel we might use to interact with the material world, whether it be through our traditional biological bodies, adopted behavioral patterns, symbolic logic, mechanical tools, or agglomerate ecosystem, our ultimate choice is between fluidly integrated structures and clunky or tractionless structures.

This is the greater truth. Our choices are ultimately a matter of dynamics. Rather than a choice between two sets of patterns, "technology" and "non-technology," every manner of interaction with the world is a kind of technology. What matters is their efficiency in providing the most fluid contact with the world.

Role-filling is an ethical abdication

We do not consider "I was just following orders" to ever be a good excuse or moral justification. Neither is, "I was just following my role in nature."

Though of course it's ludicrous to imagine our ecosystem personally issuing commands to Nazi stormtroopers, the basic issue of abdicating personal spirit and responsibility to external authority is the same.

Outsourcing our lives into the control of external systems is a surprisingly accepted practice in our society and whole swathes of people have come to believe that in doing so we can escape the

energy of vigilance and self-animation. So vast is the acceptance, that there's a general sense that actions committed while self-placed under some external authority are, in some manner, of less personal responsibility than would be otherwise true. As if the choice to abdicate choice could ever be less egregious. Whenever we accept a form of external authority, we chew away at the personal processes of thinking and living in a sort of selective internal suicide. But rarely does it stay internal. And what once might have been abstract and largely benign, if still a centrally accepted personal axiom, begins to noticeably seep out into our actions and intentions.

It's no secret that our most glamorous hierarchies and evils are assisted, if not entirely held up, by such abdications.

Some of the most instantly recognizable and specific cases of role-filling passed as morality come from the Christian church. From semi-broad conceptions of manners of personal position within a larger system as moral goods, to actual behavioral code pounded into rocks, such conceptions of external morality have been adopted and fleshed out by many sincere people striving independently. ...And, of course, inexorably lead to empowered hierarchies and the justification of outright law.

In contrast, the extreme back-to-basics of ecological role-filling do not directly lay down the specifics of some universal moral code, nor do they posit precise moment-to-moment structures of action. What is done instead is far more insidious, it embraces a generalized sense of external authority. The broad presupposition that we have a place within a larger system, and that our following of that externally defined role is a moral good.

In short, that the external world should rule us.

The fact that these external notions are more material than social is an important detail, but does not change the underlying movement towards abrogation of personal spirit and responsibility. (And the mediation of material structures into guidelines for one's personal intent and action often comes through social instruments.)

By supporting chains of governance in the abstract, such ecological role-filling ultimately throws away agency in self-definition and self-determination ...even though it may not have yet settled on particular rigid structures of personal participation.

The inescapable problem is that after embedding oneself in external causal sequences one cannot be assured of any moral force remaining in them much less being inherent. Reframing and constructing one's life according to say ecological equations or drug-induced instructions from an owl-spirit, though superficially different in structural source, are identical in nature. They can justify anything.

And over many iterations, though such external forces may have been first broadly interpreted so as to produce anti-authoritarian behavior, without an internally emergent motivation, they will justify anything.

The rejection of civilization and technology in favor of ecological role-filling, on the face of it, can't help but appear socially conservative. Still, most if not the overwhelming majority of primitivists have imported enlightenments from progressive movements of deconstruction, seeking to meld anarchist branches of queer theory within the critique of civilization. Despite anarcho-primitivism's macho appearance and reputation within the community, progressive perspectives and deconstruction of sexuality are widely embedded with the banner of green anarchy and some of the most energetic advances and popularizations of anarchism's interpersonal insights have come via green anarchist ventures. (Nothing makes folks face gender roles like a winter in the forest together.) But, while there's been some dancing around biological role-filling in regards to

gender, one universal line been drawn, as it is inescapable from the most basic premise of anti-technology: However much primitivism's role-filling might be stretched to embrace the variance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and even some limited queer identities, trans folk are right out.

Because one's biological body is a component of one's role in the greater system that can't truly be changed without technology. The greater alteration of one's body's dynamics, the more dynamic (and from our point of view complex) the applied technology must be. This occasion of an anti-civilization interpretation of the environment's orders is but one sharp and early consequence of primitivism's broader-embrace of role-filling. Even worse ones are certain to come.

As primitivism turns outward for direction from (interpretations of) ecological systems, the divergence between their resulting codes of action and our common feeling of a moral world will deepen. And one can only begin to imagine the depth to the insidious changes capable of spreading after a crash. When the touch of role-filling becomes more immediate. The embrace of one's position within a system internalizes and emphasizes one's connections to the system until the core person is subsumed and replaced by them.

Individuals flourish with increases to their dynamic connections

When our relationships to external material structures become poorly integrated, brittle and characterized by rigid control we become imprisoned.

A starving child, trapped alone, say, on a seemingly endless expanse of clay left by sudden drought, is obviously overwhelmed and overpowered by the change of integration with environment. We can even imagine such a doomed child perhaps only finding extended survival by listlessly licking up mud for nutrients. Not exactly a free mode of life, most would agree. And so too is the villager who simply follows the same processes in life endlessly with no real deviation or exploration—even in times of plenty when such chores are unneeded—pretty far from a liberated life. Furthermore, such internalized repetition of behavior might prove more than unnecessary, and, in fact, destructive to the whole community's relation with their surroundings.

On the flip side, it's clear that fluid contact with our environment helps us positively spread and grow. At heart, we like to touch. We like to see, feel and know our world. We like to reach out and explore.

That's not to say that locking ourselves out of the world can't be useful in situations of oppressive tactile structures. When our environment strays into systems of behavior we can't integrate with, limited strength and intensity of contact is often a positive survival method.

We might flee a hurricane for a concrete bunker or, when struggling through a winter, slow our bodies down in degrees of hibernation. The villager who mechanizes repetition of the same task in order to survive a bad period withdraws from sensory engagement in a similar manner.

But again with the mechanized villager we see how locking ourselves away can sometimes provide its own powerful form of role-filling. The classic caricature of a suburban businessman might come to mind, someone who locks himself away behind sterile, contact depriving doors, striving progressively to do away with any manner of fluid interaction. replacing contact's¹ and engagement with air conditioned SUVs and neatly packaged television shows.

There are stronger and weaker degrees (and of course forms or directions) of such contact possible with the world. Certain examples are obvious. The hunter who embraces the wilderness and, though more fluidly integrated sensation, feels interactions spreading out from the brushed

fern to the owl fluttering off in the distance. The same villager considered before, who just washes clothes in the river and doesn't stray much beyond the functioning of established processes, has internalized a greater barrier to contact, interaction, connection, and integration with the external environment. And, of course, the much lamented World of Warcraft addict, isolated in dark room, may perhaps enjoy great social contact but still little more than faint stimuli in matters of physical reality.

It's no coincidence that the examples given are characterized by decreasingly dynamic connections as the ostensible trappings of civilization are more pronounced. Modern civilization has acquired layers of structural blanketing that encompasses and confines our everyday lives. In every conceivable realm we have taken to throwing down fences and slinking into set patterns and channels of behavior. We still interact with the world, but the dynamics are greatly confined.

How often do we sit quietly and feel the trees move? How often do we pay attention to what exactly is in the room with us, rather than reducing our reality into crudely simplified concepts of functional relationship? How often do we touch the world rather than ignoring or itemizing it? When was the last time you turned your head up and actually looked at the stars?

No wonder our minds and bodies rot today, we function within set patterns because they can be useful. But we only truly flourish with deeper contact. It's no secret that such brittle structures and role-filling are unstable and corrosive, but in the other direction, when we approach our connections dynamically we can spread channels of stronger, more fluidic and organic tactile contact.

There is no fundamental limit to this contact.

Certain local realities provide a bunch of pragmatic limitations, but they can be worked around. In much the same way that the hunter can feel the dancing wind patterns far stronger than his skin or the rustling foliage might otherwise reveal by choosing to throw up some downy feathers and watch their interaction with the twisting air currents. Or an apple-gatherer use stilts to stride between tree branches. Or an ancient lens crafter build a telescope. Or a geneticist hack the human genome to give his skin stronger light-awareness.

We want stronger and more versatile contact, and thus we've built technology.

Rather than from a drive to rigidly control and master, technology has always been, at root, formed by the desire for greater dynamic contact. Not the divorced-from-the-world laziness that sometimes emerges from later abdications once the tools have been acquired. But from the desire to touch, feel and explore. Because the primal creation involved is necessarily rooted in an act of ingenuity and imagination.

The systems engineer who designs and builds a bridge across a ravine with her own hands applies herself in a deeply connected fashion. The world is felt and worked with smoothly. Rock is shifted. A new channel of contact becomes stronger. It's easier to move from place to place. To engage with a wider swath of the world.

The onset of our hierarchical methods of industry, though they facilitated greater and greater power and exploitation, partially stem from the human desire for deeper and more dynamic contact with the world. We don't like being confined. Or that is to say, we rot when limited or relegated to some removed subspace. We flourish with the intensity and immediacy of our more dynamic connections to the world.

Moving beyond the same socially perpetuated processes of behavior, we strive to understand and deepen our relationship, our interaction with the seeds and bushes we gather from. We try

for greater contact, attempt a more fluid integration. And so we help plant the berry bushes we need closer to us...

Symbolic structures can facilitate greater fluidity. So long as they, themselves, are treated fluidly. The moment they become rigid, when we remove or replace ourselves with mechanization, our interactions with the world grow rigid and brittle.

Understanding is not dependent on process but capacity to experience

We live in a watery world. Every particle interacts with everything else. The patterns of “structure” that emerge from this turbulent fluid do so in a (relatively) constantly shifting, redundant, and interdependent way. Organic, you might say.

The intensity of interaction—more specifically the high degree of and constant change of relative position internally—found in systems defined by a distribution of particles is the basic premise for the generation of information structures within the system. In the seminal “game of life” demonstrations programmers seeded low level algorithms in a complex environment and turned up the intensity of the environment’s internal interactions. The consequence was “spontaneously” “generated” more “complex” or “diverse” informational “structures.” A whole “complex” ecosystem of interacting informational systems.

But of course we should examine these terms critically. “Complex” can be something of a misnomer given its modern connotations of rigidity sometimes plain unnaturalness (think of the thick owner’s manual to a car or a vast board of circuits). Instead it might be better to consider the hurricane. Or the chaotic feedback found in a small backyard creek; the ripples and eddies forming from smaller masses of interactions and they, themselves, interrelating. Sometimes to form greater agglomerations.

This is a far better representation of the human body, the animal cell, bioregion or net ecosystem. We are each hurricanes in a way. Fractal agglomerates of the positional information of particles in a fluid muck. We thrive with motion and connection. Plop us in stellar vacuum or granite mountainside and, with no connection or absolutely rigidly controlling connections, our informational patterns don’t do that well.

Without dynamic integration to the world we have no channels to exist through. We cannot touch. And without the capacity to touch the world we cannot understand.

We all recognize ‘understanding’ as more than compartmentalized knowledge. More than a tally sheet of discrete informational structures built out of rigid neurons. Something more generalized. Something vaguer, but more tactile. The impression left by a lover’s skin.

The refraction and internalization of the external. The breaking down of a self that might have been discretely itemized by the empty other, not in acceptance or allegiance to emptiness, but through the blossoming enrapture of the other into the self. Until there is no hollow, deathly, meaningless other. Only the universalized self.

This is the arrow of understanding.

Given that the only tangible truth is the internal, understanding is birthed not by attempts to kill of the internal, but reaching out and finding truth by making everything internal. To take in truth. To breath in a lover’s sweat and eradicate the lies between you. Between you and you.

Technology, on the other hand, is defined by process. The process of poking a stick into an ant mound or hunting a bear or applying linguistic constructs or working through a math prob-

lem under a certain axiomatic framework or chugging through Javascript or poking an object and recording the responses you notice... it doesn't matter. Regardless of how dynamically some technology functions in a given situation, it's no more than the details of applied interactions. Codified processes. There doesn't have to be any degree of contact through them. The channels can be left empty, the same processes of interaction can be under-utilized or embraced. Technology alone is not understanding.

But here's the trick. Technology can facilitate the capacity to experience. Which is the basic requirement for the creation of understanding.

A hearing aid. Glasses. A microscope. A telescope. Pictures of animals from far away. Pictures of plants. A fine saw blade revealing the layers inside a quartz rock. Satellite contour mappings of valleys and water systems across an entire continent...

The more venues for and the stronger the tactile connections, the greater the capacity for experience.

Today we can actually feel individual molecules with our hands. We can caress the fringe star clusters of distant galaxies with our eyes. We can see the insides of our own bodies and recognize the pheromones dripping off our shoulders. See sound waves. Pick apart flavors and the patterned buzzing of our own nerves.

Understanding is perhaps simply the most dynamic and abstract fluid impressions of the external, it's that which most effectively mentally grasps the fabric of existence.

We actively want greater understanding, thus we've strived for science.

When what we call 'science' gets rigid or imperialistic in the classic sense it becomes useless, but in its most dynamic it allows us channels to press up against the face of reality. More intense experience of reality giving strength to understanding. We want to touch the world around us so that we can get a stronger feel for reality. Into those nooks and crannies that require stronger dynamic channels of information.

Can there be modes and forms of understanding without industrial or even agrarian technology? Obviously yes. But increases in technology facilitate understanding. Confined to some frail bundle of six senses within a limited framework of allowable experiences there comes with that an inherent limitation to understanding. If you bound off sections of the world. Outlaw the advanced technology necessary to reach into and grasp the microscopic or the unbelievably macroscopic and distant... you ingrain a limitation on possible experience and thus understanding.

Physical limitation inspires and triggers social oppression

The problem with the rejection of technology (or more precisely, an allegiance to one limited set of possible technologies) is that scarcity and restraint is built in. The greater the technological limitation, the greater the constraint imposed.

Because our given bodies require certain forms of environmental integration and because we desire greater connection, we've historically traded for this on a fractured, individual level, at the expense of greater social freedom and equality. For all the reasons and things discussed earlier, the restraints of rigid-technologies naturally chafe people and inspire them to take short cuts by utilizing that which is at hand by turning people into their technology. Enter alienation and all forms of oppression.

It's a simple reality that want and dependency together progressively facilitate the psychosis of power.

Certainly want can be reduced significantly, but there is an inherent and significant limit. Being restricted in your integration with the environment (having limited technology) means that there is a much more finite limit on survival knowledge carrying capacity and yet simultaneously restrictions on adaptability. Being limited to a very small area of the total dynamic system means that natural chaotic systems dynamics can occur beyond the periphery of one's limits only to suddenly and drastically effect that within. Sudden regional change is a fundamental reality of the biosphere. It's dynamic.

Want will happen. And it will do so sharply. Because society will be more regionalized. The total sum of humanity won't be able to flow around and mesh with the biosphere as a whole, it will be broken into components that will have much less scope and fluidity. Society will be more compartmentalized into autonomous cells, and these cells will be more rigid. We can argue about degree, but the point is there will be some non-insignificant degree of this.

This is where interdependency exits the realm of mutual aid and develops the potential for serious nastiness. Where there is social want and where the fulfillment of individual want is deeply dependent upon others, there is much greater temptation on the part of the individual to drastically simplify their operating processes. To become machines in pursuit of survival. And, perhaps most importantly, to simplify away the presence of other individuals. To reinterpret them as machines as well. With every biological mechanism shouting at a cacophony of simplistic structural procedures. (Get water. Get food. Etc.) It's very easy for the individual to despairingly become progressively rigidly locked. They start applying such rigid structures to their interactions with people. Bang. Dehumanization. Faith. Power structures. Social oppression.

Where does alienation originate? It is instilled by the overwhelming omni-presence of rigid structure. A lack of fluid, dynamic integration with the world. Baseline human biological structures have certain limitations to dynamic integration built in. Certain structural predispositions. We can't just realign our genes and grow chlorophyll to take in sunlight through our backs or weave wings to glide through canyons hunting deer. The baseline human body is relatively rigid technology.

And people are inspired by limitation, by want, by the encroachment of rigidity, to oppress. Limitation upon understanding likewise has this effect.

Limitations to our capacity to experience have been consistently surpassed throughout history, a flower bursting through concrete. But when others are left frozen in the concrete they can bear the brunt of such blossoming understanding.

In order for a Victorian Physicist to reach out, to explore and make discoveries involving vacuum, thousands of man hours were needed. To get the rubber, the pump, the glass, the metal... all the tools necessary to peel away the air and peer beyond the norms of our immediate environment, a massive amount of matter had to be positionally reorganized. But it would be inconvenient to educate, explain and get everyone to consent on the benefit of achieving this vector of increased integration with the world, and because most of the people in the world were still far more entrapped by more fundamental physical wants, it was very easy for the Victorians to put the wants and flourishing of the rest of humanity aside. Because the Physicist's own rigid technological and structural entrappings have promoted an alienation from others, limited connection fails to fully reveal the effects of his actions, and centuries of aggregated social psychoses have ground down his empathy. Thus, through a diffuse system of intermediaries, Congolese miners

are enslaved, ship hands are whipped and a colossal monster of wood and metal is driven across the ocean. Though the desire for integration and understanding persists, when framed by such alienating structures it can be rechanneled into driving social oppression.

Though the imagery of such Victorian Imperialism is dramatic, it is not particularly original or even that worse than similar processes on less visually epic scale.

Think of the elder whose pursuit of understanding seduces the tribe into recognizing his role and position, turning the product of their work and efforts into tendrils of his own tech. Can't spend all day on mushrooms unless there's folk who're gonna provide you with food. You get social stratification. In order to preserve the elder's high degree of mushroom-related pursuits it's real easy to apply social coercion, personal and cultural power structures so that even in a period of want, others are forced into sacrificing their own food to the self-proclaimed elder.

Physical limitation doesn't directly ordain social subjugation. What it does is grease the gears. It makes it easier to adopt the psychoses of power. Makes them progressively more alluring. Physical rigidity leading to mental and social rigidity. The more physical rigidity, the more and more likely social oppression will spontaneously emerge from all facets.

Spatial limitation ingrains social hierarchy

What tears apart the prisons within our minds is the roaring vacuum beyond. The unexplored frontier chased down past the horizon each night by the sun.

The first step in control is the securing of borders. Otherwise the people you seek to dominate could just walk away.

It is said that, in a simple world, a single empire can only reach as far as a horse can ride. But of course the idea of empire knows no such restrictions. One border inspires another.

It is a far more important truth that, in a simple world, a refugee can only travel as far as their feet can carry them. And the final periphery beyond the locally interrelating agglomerates of tribal power is often unreachable. In Europe's dark ages the refugees lacked the capability to flee beyond all of infected Europe and so they hid between, taking to the forests, much as we always have. And thus the forests were eventually cleared. The only available free space encircled and crushed. This happened because priests, kings and bureaucrats had mills and horses while the serfs had none. But more specifically it all happened because the peasants were spatially limited. They were effectively fenced within authoritarianism as a result of their own limited mobility and positioning.

If we remove all the particularly non-individualized technologies that benefited Europe's centralized powers, the same reality would remain. The spatial limitation of the peasants was both relative to that of the king's men and absolute. Power need not be so dramatically centralized and hierarchical to still be as oppressive. Remove the tools of the power zombies and they would simply organize more localized authoritarianism. And the high cost of spatial redistribution of individuals (a single individual moving from point A to point B takes more time and energy) means that society's natural resistance to power is lessened.

Perhaps an example is in order. When a husband beats his wife in the apartment beside mine the situation is immediate and so is my reaction. I am able to recognize it within seconds. I can move to their door in very little time and, as a consequence, I am able to take whatever action I take much sooner. Furthermore the wife can choose to immediately relocate herself into the

presence of safe, protective people. All these things are spatial matters. And remain effectively the same if we replace the aggregate of nearby apartments with more distant tree houses and give the individuals involved bicycles. (The communication of the situation is slightly different matter and will be covered in the next essay.)

If you relocate the aforementioned people into the forest without significant technological choice then interpersonal power structures can leech off the high costs of relative relocation to restrain subjects. This can happen with couple removed far from any others or an entire tribe.

Because of scarcity, hunter-gatherer tribes naturally aggregate with a good deal of separation between them. When the psychoses of power take root in a tribe they are emboldened and strengthened by such spatial limitation.

Individuals can flee for other tribes, they can, as the anarcho-capitalists might say, choose their government on the market. Choose the lives they want to live and choose the people they want to live them with. And, yes, in a relatively open market of infinite options this tends to work pretty well. Oppression just isn't that appealing. But, and here's the kicker. Because of their spatial limitation, their choices certainly do not constitute a free market. They have rather limited available options. Because by nature of the necessary hunter-gatherer distribution, the number of other individuals they can reach to associate with is very, very finite. And each relocation, each encounter costs them a whole lot more time.

Furthermore, when oppressive concepts spread further than their "discrete" embodiments, when multiple tribes (forced by famine or battered by climate change, say) adopt a regional consensus of power archetype, the effective boundary of such an aggregate of mini-empires can surpass the traveling capacity of the potential refugee. (And let's not even mention the even harsher inherent restrictions applied to families.)

Those on the outside of such a travesty could and normally would overwhelm and grind down such cancerous cultures. But a lack of individualized transport technology changes the odds. Simple geometry makes it harder to organize resistance around the edge of a periphery. Centralized power meanwhile retains the local advantage; it doesn't have to travel much of anywhere.

Given a generalized anarchy, broken only by the occasional tragic psychological misstep that inspires coercive sociological rigidity, society's most crucial healing factor lies in its ability to flee and isolate the cancer.

Our natural defense against power is free association. The ability to re-form, to route around hierarchy, bypass the malicious and fluidly create new relationships.

For this to be possible there has to be a high degree of positional interrelation. That is to say, people have to be able to relocate around one another easily.

Vacuous distance or overbearing proximity are both inconducive to such dynamicism. And tribal clusters are the worst of both worlds. The only solution is choice. Where distances between people can be overcome easily at will. Where we can rearrange ourselves with respect to the rest of humanity at a moment's notice. When we are deprived this ability, cancerous hierarchies grow.

Communication and Freedom of information is necessary for free societies

Central to every interaction between individuals is the conveyance of information. Of course, in a certain sense, its impossible to transfer meaning from one individual to another. We each

create that individually. But what we create stems from the informational structures we have at hand, the material reality between ourselves. The nature of connection to our environment, the channels by which we experience, by which we touch the rest of the world, are thus critical factors in the macroscopic behavior of a society.

Our interactions with each other are mediated through the physical realities of our environment and are wholly comprised of informational structures. We construct physical systems of contact, whether by movement of skin on skin, electrons in logic circuits, or common neural models and vibrating air. As a result, the nature of our interactions with one another is inherently dependent upon our relationship to our physical environment. In order to interact dynamically with one another we require strong channels of dynamic integration with the world around us.

Communication (although not necessarily through strict processes of symbolic logic or language) is the defining aspect of society. However you cut it, we interact through information.

If there are restrictions or limitations to our communication with one another those conditions will shape the total internal interactions of our society.

In the previous essay I glanced over some of the emergent methodologies by which societies heal the power psychosis. Central to all of these is the internal dynamic integration of the society at hand. In order to correct an injustice you have to first actually hear about it. When we make decisions pertaining to our associations with others we like to be informed. Free societies function because we're not all fumbling in the dark. We can make knowledgeable choices and respond quickly to changes. We don't lose sight of what the economists call the "externalities" of our interactions. Other people's lives are immediate and tactile to our own. As a result we don't marginalize others beyond a periphery.

Contact is the most vital component of society. We can only help or assist those we can touch. Those we can communicate with.

Resistance needs veins. Empathy needs arms.

Dictators know this altogether too well. Free information brings down tyrants and heals cancers. The tools, technologies and processes of communication are antithetical to control. Control can only take root through isolation and strangulation. Governments are critically dependent on keeping their actions quiet. Keeping their citizens distributed and incapable of communication past a certain degree.

In China the country's integration into the world economic standard has, as a byproduct, allowed its citizens to increasingly surpass physical impediments to communication. To fill the place of this physical limitation the government has found itself forced to wage an uphill battle of sociological domination. To survive the PRC has to expend increasingly vast amounts of energy on ingraining social psychoses to fill the restrictive roles of former technological limitations or absences.

But once the fiber-optic cable is laid (or better yet the mesh WiFi networks) the only thing ultimately keeping a Guangzhou school girl trading instant messages about fashion rather than insurrection is the cop/consumer in her head. At the end of the day it's just in her head. Deeper channels of communication do simultaneously open avenues for memetic control and vapidly suicidal mental structures. ...But why take chances? Outright tyrannies like Zimbabwe and Cuba know full well how reliant they are on the viscosity of their societies. They simply haven't the energy to keep up with the more complex and elaborate mechanisms of the world's surviving power structures. Opening the door to more dynamic interaction within and without would be

akin to gutting themselves. So in many cases they've done the efficient thing and simply removed the technology.

Look closely and all social power systems stem from impediments to communication.

To return to an example in the previous essay, if there's injustice or oppression but those involved are removed or dis-integrated from the rest of humanity how can recourse take place? All the self-repairing mechanisms championed by free societies depend vitally upon the capacity to convey information (speedily, effectively and across great distance) within that society. In order for an even slightly free society to function, a strong degree of contact must be possible between all individuals.

It's the same old axiom of system dynamics: Rigid structures of interaction are bad. But so is isolation. Free societies function through the free conveyance of information. The rigid fermentation of this interaction is bad for the total dynamicism of a society, but so is the separation and isolation of it into parts. Fragmented or localized societies marginalize others (those who they are denied an intensity of material contact with) and in doing so alienate themselves, making oppression inevitable. The dissolution and regionalization of significant informational contact is an inherent and inescapable reality of hunter-gatherer life.

In practice this is blindingly obvious.

By the very nature of communication a society's freedom is dependent upon its physical relations with the material world. Inherent physical limitations makes for inherent social limitation, restraint and oppression.

It's impossible to speak of regional anarchy

The idea that some parts of humanity can be free while others are not is conceptually incoherent. Insomuch as anyone anywhere is oppressed, I am oppressed. I mean that not as a trite greeting card summary of solidarity in liberty, but in recognition of a basic psychological principle. To speak of being personally "free" in any sense while others are not is to leave whatever remains of the "self" a laughably meaningless shell.

Far from being revolutionary, such thinking is the definition of alienation.

Power is a social psychosis and, as such, it is ultimately something we can only dissolve away individually. But even the possibility of inaction or satisfaction in the face of such power structures is ultimately the acceptance of them in ourselves. The internal dissolution of our personal power psychoses is inseparable from external action.

You can't coherently talk of achieving any measure of liberty in the absence of empathy, and empathy presupposes some semblance of universalized identity. Without such one person's freedom would necessarily impinge on another's and any strong notion of liberty would collapse. We refrain from swinging our fist into another person's face not because of some arbitrary external structure or law, but because we recognize ourself in that person. We seek not freedom from one another, but freedom from rule. To attack ourself would be to surrender to some rule, structure and limitation. In hitting another person we of course decrease the net capacity for dynamic connection and integration in our society, but more saliently we internalize a psychological approach to the world that is irreconcilable with anything other than structures of control. The only situation in which we could speak of some people having completely abolished the power psychosis in their own lives is one in which everyone else has as well.

Empathy (and consequently morality, ethics and everything else created from its inspiration) stems from the abstract possibility of transitivity of selfhood. It's why we instinctively frown on punching teddy bears or torturing squirrels; the cognitive structures we associate with our sensations of them are a reflected version of ourselves. The child who acts out violence against her teddy bear isn't physically hurting anyone, not even from a panpsychic viewpoint, but such external actions are indicative of an internal intent of violence against society and, by proxy, herself.

We interact with the world by neurologically forming imprints of the world around us. We simplify our perceptions into informational structures, into Darwinianly evolving models that allow for greater traction in our contact with the world. Modeling rigid systems of limited complexity in our minds is easy, the interaction of uncountable billions of atoms can be simplified into a "lever" or "pulley." And, accordingly, we can demonstrate a great deal of control over such systems. But systems of non-linear dynamics pose a greater challenge. Other people are preposterously, if not infinitely, inhibitory to the successful creation of such macroscopic constructs.

The way we all initiate substantive contact with other people is to, on some level, see ourselves in them. We can only deal with other people by shedding off the contextual trappings of our own position within the world and reconstructing theirs around us. As a consequence, to accept their enslavement or oppression is to accept our own.

The king, by his participation in the kingdom, is still very much a slave to the power psychosis. But so to is the monk who gathers berries in the forest, even though the king's men may not be able to find him for torment. That there could be an entire band of monks gathering berries far from the kingdom does not make them more free. Nor does it really make the sum society more free. That a thousand could live freely while one man chains another is impossible. By inaction they accept, in acceptance they are complicit, and in complicity there is nothing but arbitrary moderation. The presence of regionally inconstant degrees of overt acts of physical oppression does not make for varying degrees of liberty. We are all on the same level there. Whereas if one man chains another and we do react, so long as we remain in action rather than completion, our actions and our own lives are still bound by that chain. Only when the chain is actually gone can we speak of achieving greater liberty, and even then it is a universal reality, not regionalized.

Tribal dispersion, though it may present some of us immediately with some of the trappings of a truer anarchy, is inherently oppressive.

Given that we have knowledge of the rest of humanity, the choice to withdraw and concentrate all our efforts within some social sub-set leaves us not only complicit in the oppression of those we push off beyond the periphery but also in violence against ourselves. To preempt this by erasing our knowledge of the rest of humanity would be even more direct violence and contribute nothing but cowardice to the same reality. No tribe, commune or region can truly flourish in their own anarchy while the rest of world sees violence and oppression. The psychological effect of alienation from others, of such localized preoccupation, is the internalization of a certain rigidity. The acceptance of structure. Turning people into our technology.

The fermentation of rigid social structure is a direct result of alienation.

Any society that dismisses externalities and focuses social value on those near at hand is really making social value a result of context and physical structure. As such it is redefining others into nothing more than the structure of their relationships and functional value to other structures. As a result, the we become nothing more than a hollow structure, the organic human soul

transmuted into a structural identity. In such a world, I am this structure and you are another structure that may or may not function to the benefit and sustainability of my own structure.

The resulting society loses its warmly integrated dynamics and its internal relationships instead become matters of incredibly complex, yet rigid, mechanism. Because of the internal rigidity of personal identity all interactions are polarized towards the control of that identity's (ie informational structure) environment. Small rigid structures can be controlled, but other people's identity structures are too complex. If both extended systems are rigid then both will collapse violently.

No matter how pretty an isolated section of society may behave in contrast to the rest, oppression without will eventually manifest within. In the face of gross oppression worldwide, regional secession or ingrowth is capitulation and the collapse of such tribes inevitable.

Any society that embraces death will embrace oppression

To accept the inevitability of death or limitation is to accept an arbitrary degree of it. Because once the precedent has been truly set in the mind there remains no innate resistance to it. You can't accept giving up a finite portion of your soul. You can't really accept some oppression without beginning to accept all oppression.

It is willfully blind to believe that a society that accepts, much less embraces, the deaths of six and a half billion people will ever know peace let alone any substantive anarchy. It is demonstratively irrational to suppose that any society bound by innate physical limitations will ever achieve more than a fraction of their potential.

Physical realities are inseparable from social realities. The embrace of physical realities that restrict, control and rule our individual and collective lives is the cowardly embrace of dictatorship by environmental proxy.

Life—not in biological or taxonomic sense but rather as the blossoming act of existence itself—is an inability to accept death or rigidity. Life is motion and touch.

A transhumanist once summed up her support for the life-extension struggle in one sentence: "Existence is wonderful." It is. Mine, yours and all the possessives you can think of. Every heartbeat is a alternating symphony of resistance and hope.

But you cannot have partial resistance. You cannot have partial hope. You either have it or you do not. If you close the door somewhere you close the door everywhere.

If you wall off a portion of it, if you set a limit to what is possible, the day will come when you reap nothing but. Where nothing is left but death. Where we have nothing left to look forward to shaping. Our acceptance of death is our alienation from ourselves. It is our alienation from life.

When we, in our incessant and inherent desire for contact, experience and understanding, press up against that wall of limitation... We will conduct its rigidity back throughout our society.

Technology can be applied dynamically

Language can be a real downer. Words and concepts gather associations that weigh heavily upon us and can obscure the underlying reality. We make simplifications and structures to deal with a given context. To the degree that these structures are integrated with the world around us they can facilitate stronger and more dexterous connections. To the degree that they become

more rigid or desolate, such structures prove disastrously dis-integrated with the dynamics surrounding us.

So too, when constructing language and theoretical models around a basic reality is it vitally important that our mental structures be deeply rooted in that reality. Blindly accepting and working from previous or popular macroscopic simplifications can only result in a structure that is out of touch with the underlying dynamics.

Although concepts like “civilization” and “technology” can be simplified into some of their popular associations, any significant analysis built off of such structures will be critically unable to integrate with the root realities touched by said associations. References to “technology” as the rigid and brittle structures so obvious in today’s society can be said to effectively encompass the most visible aspects of what currently exists. But such focus obscures what could exist. ...As well as some of the finer points of what is already in effect, but still overshadowed.

By attacking the dominate rigid forms of technology under the premise of all “technology”, the anarcho-primitivist discourse builds itself around macroscopic simplifications and blinds itself to details. Though a popular abstraction of “technology” is what is adroitly attacked, the actual and full definition of technology is what’s consequently thrown out. Rigidity is critiqued but, through the misapplication of broad language and concept, human agency in our environmental integration is what’s ultimately dismissed.

As such, “technology” is misidentified as stemming from a desire of control rather than contact, experience and understanding.

But the reality is, given its popular breadth as a concept, technology actually refers simply to how we interact with the world. And it is the nature of this how is the real issue, not that there is a how in the first place. There will always be a how. By attacking the very idea of hows we simply choose to blind ourselves to the hows we’re already using. And then they use us.

So the real question is what nature of technologies should we turn to. And, yes, our options include the few primitive technologies our species was once born with as well as the wide variety of structures that have been developed and applied since, but not just those.

Of course, I think we would all agree that today’s dominate technological infrastructures are unacceptable, or, at very least, less than they could be. Today most acts of creation are perverted towards structures of control before they even leave the inventor’s mind. We open up new avenues of contact and then work harder and harder to force methods of control upon them.

But the point is not all desire for contact is a false-face for the pursuit of control. In fact one might say that control makes contact impossible. We can never really know those or that which we control. Rather our worship of control is always one of surrender to security. Control is about imposing rigidity. It’s about orchestrating the world around us so that it can’t interfere with the structure within. We do this so that we might cling to this remaining structure and claim it as an identity. Control is about creating a husk to die in. To truly touch, to have contact with the world around us is irreconcilable with such. It smashes through structures of control and rebuilds them as veins and currents.

Contact is conducted through dynamic systems. And this includes systems that we popularly classify as “advanced technology.”

Telescopes, microscopes, radios and phones. Fiber-optic cables, wifi mesh networks, satellites and infrared sensors. The more complex, the more dynamic. The more points of inter-contact. The more fluid and organic such systems become. The more adaptable.

As our new structures and approaches become more dynamically refined, the better they're able to integrate with the realities of their operating environment. In fact, beyond a certain point the technologies we create can become more dynamic than this frail, scummy planet-skin we were born into. Nanotech and biochemistry embody the current cutting edge of this drive to offer stronger and finer degrees of contact through our own bodies. (Although with both, just as with anything else, the impulsive, blind pursuit of control in such areas rejects understanding and meaningful contact at the cost of potentially catastrophic results.) We are finally gaining choice in all the myriad workings of our material world. No longer content with clunky macroscopic abstractions and simplifications, we are finally grounding the roots of our interactions and integration with the world around us.

It's a move to stop beating the world with a crude hammer and instead begin to stroking its skin.

And, with such fine understanding and contact, we are opening up possibilities previously closed. The deaf can hear. The blind can see. The crippled can walk. The old folks can get it on.

As we've seen the drive for experience, for pleasure and life itself are matters of technology, the methods and structures of our interaction with the world. Information and communication technologies, transportation technologies and science itself (science in the "pursuit of understanding through touch" sense, not the "imperialism" sense) all demonstrate such emerging tendencies.

Core to the primitivist mantra is the assertion that these means of "artificial" communication and the like are, at the end of the day, utterly dismal, leaving us disconnected and constantly enslaved. It's the least eloquent assertion and almost entirely dependent upon populist "common sense" appeals. ...Because it's completely fucking ridiculous. Whose fault is it if you can't turn off your cellphone to just enjoy some natural solitude? Stop blaming the phone (or the blasted dagnum computer with its "email") and take responsibility for the way you integrate with such technology. If our society doesn't facilitate long uninterrupted walks on the beach then change society, don't launch a crusade to abolish our ability to play with such fun toys.

Personally, I abhor phones. I just dislike the way they unevenly filter our preexisting social language. In person I'm all about the body language, hand gestures and facial quirks. But that's just me. In contrast, I love the bulletin-board format. I was prolifically using the internet long before I really started making phone calls and I feel deeply at home with its social intricacies.

Although personal, face-to-face contact provides a lot more bandwidth, at the end of the day it's only a matter of bandwidth. There isn't anything any more magical about so called "direct" physical contact. And any connection is a dramatic improvement over nothing. Being able to still contact friends, no matter how distant their desires take them, is a wonderful thing. To reach out and touch Bangkok and Berlin, to be a shoulder to cry on or a ecstatic confidant, to watch a volcano explode on another continent or pick out the wobbles of a distant star... Such connection is a thing of liberation. We really do feel better for our use of advanced technologies. All that's required is a shedding off of our own rigidities and a refusal to lazily feed ourselves to new ones.

But, of course, with the more spiritual, psychological, sociological or philosophical claims against technology for which it is famous, anarcho-primitivism has developed two pragmatic arguments as crutches.

The first is that of diminishing returns. With "technology" we are said to inevitably work harder and harder to take smaller and smaller steps (something noticeable in limited frameworks such as agriculture where more energy exerted on the same amount of land is said to produce

less and less per-investment). This is wrong of course, and the misapplication of the “diminishing returns” inference upon the whole of our drive towards more dynamic technologies stems from a misunderstanding of the root reality. The reason some “areas” of technology demonstrate such behavior while others do not is not because things like computer manufacturing have yet to hit some inevitable barrier (although certainly, the universe has an informational carrying capacity), it’s because things like “agriculture” are not discrete species of technological development but cast off, inherently limited, sections of a single progression. Computers are one of the rare technologies that haven’t yet reached diminishing returns, because there’s no limit to what a “computer” is! Yeah, when the length and breath of a single limited structure has been explored it sees less and less growth within those arbitrary boundaries. So fucking what? There can still be growth somewhere else! The conceptual division of technology into discrete fields creates the limitation that is then identified. And, ultimately, the accelerating “areas” of technology like nanotech computing will inevitably turn around and drastically revitalize lagging areas like “agriculture,” letting us take in sustenance by, say, chlorophyll in our backs, leaving behind the awkward and brittle orchards we once mistakenly built to rewild themselves.

The second argument appeals to the authoritarian nature of today’s technological infrastructures. It’s sometimes boiled down into sloganeering with phrases like “who’s going to go down into the caves to get your iron?” Of course the instantaneous response of “we’ll build machines to do that” is spot-on. There’s a reason modern capitalism feeds so ravenously on human labor when it could easily provide comfort. Socially we place value in power rather than liberation and thus market forces move at a relative snail’s pace towards post-scarcity. If we really cared about it, we could immediately make huge strides towards abolishing even the frailest degree of “work” without anyone sacrificing a steadily advancing first-world living standard. This much is, at least in part, plainly obvious to just about everyone. And the perpetual response of primitivism, that mechanization isn’t a real solution because someone would still have to occasionally fix the machines, is a cop-out. I’d much rather be playing around with the gears of mining machines than wheezing out my lungs in some coal mine. And then I could move on to something else. I would be free to learn another role. But all of this talk of new mining processes is irrelevant. It doesn’t matter if we have the machinery or not. If there are no telescopes in the whole fucking world, I’d more than gladly go down into the mine myself and personally complete all the so called “work” required to build it myself. And you know what? I’d be more than willing to share it. That’s the whole fucking point.

The advancement towards more and more dynamic technology has never innately required and does not innately require any oppression whatsoever.

Nor, in fact, does such advancement make for any inherent catastrophes or sacrifices. The pursuit of dynamic technology is grounded in the valuing of knowledge and adaptability. It has never been about diddling around with our surroundings until we find something immediately gratifying. That’s not “technology,” that’s a just single methodology of developing technology. And in such behavior no conscious or creative effort is involved, it’s simply the mechanistic/entropic eating up of that which is around you. Entirely focused towards power, profit and control now, understanding later.

But why not understanding first and action later?

Primitivism is famous for its hesitancy, conflict and sketchiness on what constitutes appropriate technology.

Reaching into an anthill with a stick, fashioning a bow, grunting sweetly or meanly, utilizing symbolic mental structures, teaching a mother to pat a baby over her shoulder, building a hut, drawing in the mud... and god forbid we talk about permaculture or bicycles!

On the whole its most obvious weakness (and yet best rhetorical defense) is that there is no clear line. Folks talk of “that which doesn’t start to control you” but never really stop to deeply analyze that. They take it to obviously call for the abolishment of satellites, airplanes, computers and genetic engineering, but that’s not necessarily true.

Such control is a choice. We don’t have to be controlled by our technology, no more than we have to crank out and obey rigid mental structures. Just as internal rigidity is a consequence of our choices so is the resulting external rigidity. In every moment in our lives we can choose life or undeath. We choose to be governed by the environmental structures we interact with or we can choose to move through them as we desire, unhindered. The internalization of rigid structure is not innate to dealing with structures. We can change and create them and ourselves. We can be rather than accepting the world and our relations to it as is. We can constantly reshape and redefine our relations to the world. Rather than following input, we can become fountains of output.

If we are sincere in our rewilding, we cannot turn to something as limiting as primitivism.

Why not nanotech, space tech, permaculture, and dynamic technology in general? Think about how we might have built civilization if we’d been true anarchists from the beginning! Wide-eyed technological lovers oft receive fiery denunciations for wanting to play god. By seeking deeper contact and understanding, of each wanting to be gods. But if one accepts the universe of Einstein and Spinoza where existence is god. Is this such a bad thing? Rather than reject and hide from our birthright as part of the universe should we not instead finally embrace it in all of its glory? To be more godly? To be more integrated with the world around us. Is not the embrace of some random, rigid biological structure alone ultimately a embrace of alienation from the universe?

Many techno-utopians fall into a similar rut as the primitivists by treating technological progress as an undeniable external force. A salvation that will inevitably arrive someday. Both attitudes smack of an “I’m only on this side because our victory is assured” morality. A legacy borrowed from the Marxists’ perpetual wait for The Revolution, and before them, the Christians’ perpetual wait for the Rapture. The reality is that our technologies are just the embodiment of our choices.

The solution? Be smarter!

Choose to think rather than abdicating from it at every opportunity.

Radiate life in your every process and action.

The failings of technologies are the failings of ourselves. Our laziness and nihilism. Our greed and hate. All these are ultimately consequences of mental rigidity. Is it any wonder we excrete this stuff in physical form? The rigidity of our technology stems from psychoses that we have the agency to overcome. To surpass. To shed off. Some primitivists have outright argued that we simply don’t have the neurological capacity for mass society, the capacity for more than a certain amount of contact or freedom.

Why not? What’s stopping us? What enforces this limited capacity? We make ourselves. Unshackled, we practically burst with creativity. Why should we snuff it out?

As long as we are alive there is no such thing as an inevitability.

We do not live in a closed system

Although its certainly true our current mass infrastructure cannot and will not survive any prolonged contact with the basic laws of physics, a permanent or catastrophic collapse is not inevitable.

The biosphere is a complex nonlinear system and concrete parking lots are not. Because our most physically dominant technologies are less 'complex' (or, as I have been using the term, 'dynamic') than their surrounding environment by relatively infinite orders of magnitude, they are deeply unstable. Furthermore, the blunt macroscopic construction of our technological systems and infrastructure leaves them especially vulnerable to entropy as the easiest resources are depleted.

Our response to the inadequacies of our infrastructure's integration with its environment is to build ever more extended structure on top of it. Rather than abolishing and rebuilding, or just modifying our existing technologies, we add endlessly to them. Concrete upon concrete. Text upon text. Until the sheer mass of technostructure begins to rival the biomass around it.

Our structures eat up dynamicism and replace it with rigidity. But this process of expansion is the only thing that keeps those resulting rigid structures intact. We use up what we can get to easily but as those resources are depleted it becomes increasingly important to expend and commit an exponentially greater proportion of our net civilization towards the upkeep of what we've already built. Eventually, in a closed system, the basic mathematical realities of chaos theory and entropy will kick our ass and the catastrophic collapse of this rigid system we've paved over the face of the earth will become an inevitability. Due to the extremely over-extended and omnipresent nature of our infrastructure, there will be no faucet of life in the biosphere unaffected. Needless to say our 6.5 billion little frail sedentary bodies will not do so well. In short, we are fucked.

...Except that we do not live in a closed system.

Although our civilization is in dire trouble and our technological infrastructure is a hideous embarrassment, we are not doomed. The crash is not an inevitability. And neither under the banner of "sustainability" are any fundamental restrictions, be they sociological or material, inevitable.

Although grinding into the Earth's crust for specific resources is a progressively harder and harder zero-sum game, the plain and simple reality is that we have the capability to reach huge swathes of resources in an extremely productive, cost-effective manner (far more efficient, in fact, than any previous process available us in history). What's more, in an unprecedented (and probably unreasonable) act of forgiveness on behalf of the universe, we don't have to completely destroy our rotting civilization in order to start acquiring them. We can implement this new process of acquiring resources and use the proceeds to gradually fluidly abolish the horrific structural cancers of our civilization. All the while giving us footing to develop more dynamic and integrateable technologies. And, if that weren't enough, the rigid structures we utilize in this process don't inherently replace biomass. Because we won't be mining our resources from within a dynamic biosphere.

We'll be chewing up nature's little bite-sized gifts and breathing in the source of all energy on Earth, finally allowing us to bypass the middlemen and stop fucking things up for them. Asteroids and solar energy. It's a real simple and practical solution.

Stop doing your fucking around in an infinitely complex non-linear dynamic system you don't yet understand. In 2020 there's an asteroid that's going to swing by the Earth's doorstep carrying

Twenty Trillion Dollars worth (today's market) of precious metals vital to our advanced electric circuitry based technology. Said asteroid is one of millions of lifeless boulders spread across the sky. Rigid and desolate. Dead rocks waiting to be ingested into the seeds of life. 3554 Amun will be far easier to reach than the moon. If even the barest amount of today's tech is applied to its capture (and entrepreneurs are already lining up) it will completely devalue the world's financial markets. The roots of the limits and restrictions, the scarcities that keep the Third World under First World satellites, that keep the mythical "hundred dollar laptop" at something as high as one hundred dollars, will begin to dissolve.

That is, if all the people waiting for it are still there when it arrives.

If the world's superpowers and their multinational corporate apparatus are ready with legal restrictions, subsidies and financial treaties, the resulting materials will be funneled into existing power-structures and their material detritus (our progressively fucked up global infrastructure).

But far worse than such a continuance of today's near-fascist powerstructures is the possibility that no one will be waiting for 3554 Amun, or, for that matter, ever again look up at the sky with hope. That our global infrastructure will finally be forced to the point of absolute collapse.

Because, and here's the problem, Derrik Jensen is right. We are playing for the endgame. If our civilization collapses hard, it might very well be impossible to rebuild. If we crash once and we crash bad, civilization will be permanently limited. We will live in a closed system. A permanent ceiling to our technology, be it dynamic or rigid. Permanent restrictions felt in every aspect of society. Limits to what we can do, who we can be, where we can go, how we can experience... limits to our capacity to touch and understand.

The cheap resources that first spurred and allowed technological development will be effectively depleted, and the remains will progressively become useless. Our fossil fuels will be almost impossible to reach and the little we acquire will have to work far harder to build far less. If we fall there's a very real chance we will never be able to get up again. That will be it.

And make no mistake about it, the crash will suck.

Our lives will be, on the whole, more horrid than ever before in history. You see, what's being glossed over is that, though advanced technology in the form of wifi mesh networks and space-elevators may disappear permanently, we simply won't lose all the technologies created by this civilization project. In fact, it looks like we'll default on middle ages technology. With all the oppression that makes for. And heavier restrictions on anarchist organizing or resistance.

Serious metallurgy will peak as will, obviously, fossil fuels, but metal won't peak as much. When the last major nation states succumb to entropy and the survivalists' bullets have finally run out, the resulting tech level will not be pre-agrarian stone age, it will be a perpetual iron-age. Although complicated endeavors will be hindered, the loose distribution of scrap metal will democratize simplistic metallurgy. Oxidization will eventually deplete vast amounts of scrap iron, but enough mass deposits will remain immediately viable for millennia and enough modern metallurgical compounds will resist oxidization to likewise matter. Likewise, enough topsoil will be farmable in various ways for forms of agriculture to continue (and it will, because six and a half billion people don't just give in to reductions in food supply). Although it will be impossible to construct complicated circuits or analyze proteins, it will be very easy to construct swords, hoes, pitchforks, crossbows, and, to a lesser extent, guns. However the acquisition and smelting process will lend itself more to social hierarchies than to individualized knowledge. And with information technologies essentially annihilated, anarchists will be drowned out by the fiefdoms around them. Paranoia stems from lackings in one's knowledge and, as information is restricted,

old psychoses will take root. Some tribes, by sheer luck, will end up isolated from one another and will achieve some equilibrium of blandness. But most will not.

If civilization collapses what emerges will be pretty fucking simple. The gun-nuts won't fade away as their guns rust, they'll fucking expand little fiefdoms. If the crash is particularly bad on the environment this'll make for universal unending tribal violence (a few magnitudes worse than pre-Colombian Northern America, but granted, not hyperbolic road-warrior dystopia). If the crash is anything but utterly catastrophic it'll simply shatter the nation state system back into feudal age principalities. The wealth, values and structures created by civilization will still exist. The same dread forces encapsulated by "civilization" will still exist. The only difference (besides the incredibly horrific living conditions and death rates within) will be the frail niche capacity for autonomous societies on the periphery.

But even if these autonomous zones are fully utilized, they will still be incredibly dependent upon the horrific society around them. Deeply intertwined in the ecology. They will be the new bourgeoisie. The suburban autonomist paradises. Never mind that undermining the overpacked ministates (and consequently accepting or dealing with refugees from such) will not be in their best interests as the ecology couldn't handle influxes of hunter-gatherers out of slave-agrarian societies and that inside/outside dichotomies would kill any potential anarchism in the long term... The basic reality is that they will have lived through the most traumatic and vicious event in Human history and that, to even begin to function as a people, they will have to divorce themselves from the rest of humanity. They will have to create hierarchies of human value based upon relative positions and roles. "Diversity" in whatever jumble of associations one has, will not be desirable because it will not be sustainable. Small forms of localized and specialized change will be accepted while any form of serious deviation will carry with it a direct price in terms of energy or food.

And the ministates? They will simply assist in further ingraining the memes and cultural psychoses of our current society. The logical progression of our balkanized suburbs, a society that protectively contracts into little closed zones of ingrown hierarchies. They will finally know safety from the globalization process of communication and competing ideas. Although the trite physical comforts of modern civilization will disappear, it will ultimately be a huge relief to many. Social hierarchies and oppressions will continue free from dissonance, with reason to further march down the path of nihilistic mental rigidity.

Furthermore, any serious technological collapse will bring with it a vast ecological collapse.

And it's a perfectly reasonable possibility that humanity, or even mammals, will not survive such. Never mind the very real possibility of nuclear winter (and no, your survival skills are not going to be able to protect you from that kind of radiation) or the windows finally cracking on the Pentagon's biowarfare lab, the plain and simple reality is that we're in the middle of the greatest alteration to the biosphere since before the fucking dinosaurs. And, as the computer guts decompose in the abandoned suburban homes, as the last bits of localization self-imposed by our civilization's infrastructure breaks down and the sheer energy of our chemical blasphemy finally merges into Earth's outer fluid, a fucking gazillion butterfly wings are going to flap with all their might. As the biosphere's non-linear dynamics reaction to these last few centuries of sudden and violent alteration plays itself out, the biosphere is going to change in a big way. You don't make that degree of drastic chemical and macro-physiological revisions without expecting turbulence. Whether or not we peaceably and instantaneously evolve past fossil fuels tomorrow or all die in some mega-collapse, the effect of the shit we've been stirring into the pot is going to become

more pronounced. And on a biological level this is going to be catastrophic. See the only defining feature of the biosphere is that it's dynamic. A big bundle of scummy fluid. Taxonomic conceptual structures like "interdependent networks of species and fauna" are just incidental arrangements of macroscopic structures. Fuck, what makes you think DNA will naturally survive into the next iteration of the Earth's crust?

The Earth's scummy surface is just going through one mild iteration of entropic chemistry. Frail semblances of repetitive structures and mild plateaus in overall energetic interaction do not make for any realistic security. And with the rise of our civilization we've just kicked the shit out of whatever momentarily normalizing patterns may have been buffering us.

There is no magical restoring force of equilibrium in the biosphere to something in any way compatible with life, much less humanity. The "natural state of things" is a vicious myth propagated by the church of biology. There is no real probability that, come a collapse, there will be a role for us or anything like us. And there certainly won't be in a few more million years.

To embrace that is to embrace death. To push our dependents, the rest of society, our own dreams and desires beyond a periphery based on their relevance to immediate physical guides. To embrace role-filling within constraints. To embrace limitation. A finite set of possible existences. A normalization away from contact, experimentation and evolution in favor of immediate usefulness, our functionality as biological cogs.

The psychological and sociological effects of acceptance alone are reason alone to fight the crash till our last breath.

But hope is more than rational, it is almost justified.

The limitations presented by the Earth alone are not reasonable guidelines to the future. Vast and significant social forces, both authoritarian and anti-authoritarian are very much in the processes of following our desire for contact beyond our immediate puddle. And the consequences of such are anything but disregardable. Closed system analysis is simply an insufficient basis for declarations of inevitability.

Furthermore, such space expansion is far from a simple postponement of the same story. It's simply impossible to apply the systematic tendencies, constraints and realities of Earth to the heavens. Even if we do decide to expand rather than just utilize astral resources as a platform to fix our relationship with the biosphere, relativity will immediately quash any empire building or any centralized civilization. You see, the very nature of space-time dissolves rigid structures on truly macroscopic scales. There can never be any galactic empires (even ones that later crash from diminishing resource returns). It's impossible. Yet at the same time there can still be connection and enough individuals immediately connected as to dissolve regional oppression and authoritarianism. Furthermore, and here's the absolutely critical component, humanity will become truly distributed and redundant rather than intractably interdependent. No longer trapped within a biosphere pressed between walls of desolation and rigidity, we'll finally shed off this mistaken iteration of sedentary life and return as hunter-gatherers between the stars. Tribes of lessening of material interdependence, much larger sustainability and thus larger market pools for anarchy to blossom. With perpetually plentiful resources for every diverse desire.

Contrary to popular assertion, we are not machines grinding out the inevitable, consequences of our environment, ultimately controlled by everything around us. We are neither mere products of our food supply nor inconsequential components of an already written collapse. We're smart people and we can make choices. We can reach out, explore, learn and we can invent. We can

choose connection rather than isolation and we can choose to see the externalities of our actions clearly. We do not yet live in a closed system. There is still hope.

Asserting otherwise does more than buy into insulting social mechanism, it develops and reinforces such.

Hard though the struggle may be, the ease of partial victories will always cost us more

Demand nothing less than everything and take whatever you can get. But don't take at the expense of gaining further ground. It's a simple premise. Take pie, but don't trade away any hope of taking the pie factory in the process. Take whatever scant freedom they allow but, for the love of god, don't ever cease fighting for infinity. We have a cuss word specifically set aside for people who do that: Liberals.

Primitivism today exists at the nexus of a modern trend in Anarchism to embrace only what's "winnable" and dismiss the rest. The consequence is a race-to-the-bottom in laziness. How to get the most dramatic of victories with the least expenditure. The crash, of course, is the natural endpoint of such regression. The promise of massive social change with almost zero personal exertion. (And cinematic scenes of explosions and mass struggle are always more aesthetically pleasing than tame FNB gatherings.)

Don't get me wrong, the problem with collapse is not that it's too easy a solution (no one should have to bleed to see change in this world, martyrdom is for nihilists, people who give a shit what others think about them and closet authoritarians). But even if we are to momentarily ignore the fact that it's impossible, the primitivist dream paradise doesn't go far enough. The nature of The Crash sets permanent limitations to future generations. If logging CEOs don't give a crap about humanity 500 years from now, primitivists most definitely don't give a crap about humanity 100,000 years from now. Because somehow violently murdering 6.5 Billion People to supposedly make a better world 500 years from now at the expense of our ancestors longing for rocketships when the next meteor hits is supposedly better than killing off some spotted owls to make a quick buck for one's family. Christ. Even thinking in those terms gives me a headache. I honestly have no clue how the collapse cheerleaders can sleep at night. ...They're certainly not sleeping with transsexuals, epileptics, women with small birth canals, or anyone alive thanks to continued surgery, medication or mechanical assistance.

So if not collapse, and not some sort of draconian social imposition of arbitrary technological limitation, what are we left with?

Well, right away let's make clear that a stasis with our current technology via some unmitigated classical left-wing anarchism would be unsustainable. Never mind that work is hierarchy in action, the very factory infrastructure that many syndicalist and communist or schemes revolve around is utterly illogical. Though primitivist societies may be more oppressive, such doesn't change the basic physics of our biosphere. Technological change is needed.

It's a pretty common flippant assertion on the part of primitivists that the only endpoint for technological advance is a nightmare of fractal chaos and mechanical death. I think this is some pretty fucking ridiculous immature masturbatory nihilism. Certainly our technologies could go all kinds of nasty places. But I don't think the "upbound technological curve" that futurists speak

of these days is heading in any of these directions. And I certainly don't think a world of infinite technological possibility would make fascism an inevitability.

If we are to presume continued technological advance in the general direction of greater dynamic integration, we must consider the consequences of more fluid information technologies, mechanical refinement and biochemical mastery. (We can more or less ignore transportation tech, as it doesn't matter where or in what context we locate a society, these same basic realities will remain.)

As far as information technologies go, it's obvious that advances will progressively bring about the dissolution of public privacy. Everything you do in the presence of others will eventually be able to be remembered in perfect clarity and such memories instantly transferred to others. Inert matter will evolve a deeper capacity for recording. Our footsteps will be apparent to anyone who cares to look.

To the degree that the government or any power structure manages to secure control over this process they will gain absolute power to define truth. And, of course, absolute knowledge of their constituents. Which will threaten to permanently quash any semblance of resistance. Though some distorted liberal populist democracy might survive in such a state for as much as a century, the fascist tendency will evolve the institution rapidly. And if the state successfully eradicates the grassroots development of rival technologies, permanent perpetual fascism will be assured. Humanity will be progressively regulated into machinery and the sum structure will die a heat death, our unthinking bodies locked in step or something. It doesn't really matter. In the onset of global fascism, whatever its form there is a point of singularity past which we can only die. Don't believe that insipid shit about "so long as there is one beating heart." Let me tell you, they'll have a big fucking board displaying every heart that dares to beat. And then the robo-wolves will get 'em.

However, to the degree that our accelerating information tech is decentralized and access to it is equalized, our natural antibodies to abuse, oppression and control will engage with extreme efficiency. The externalities of our actions will become instantly apparent and there the "tragedy of the commons" will cease. It's worth noting that, in the absence of centralized power, individual and consensually arranged mutual privacy will continue. So long as anonymity is publicly desired in any venue, basic market forces will supply it. But it won't help you get away with murder. The main result will be that, since access to any information desired will be distributed and truth commonly valued, it will be practically impossible to rule or coerce others.

Authority is derived from information scarcities and a post-scarcity society would annihilate the very concept of state secrets. Freedom of association and basic tools of defense would make prisons and, in fact, all retributive systems of "justice" starkly purposeless. Through uncountable processes the desire for freedom and social connection would make any anarchy so effective as to make even the very idea of sitcoms seem insanely dystopian.

...Which brings us to the second field of technological advance, self-knowledge. As medical knowledge moves out of the bumbling script-kiddie realm and into actual understanding, we'll gain such strength and security as to instantly abolish almost every major cultural -archy. Sex, "race", gender, prehensile-tail or no prehensile-tail... all that stuff will dissolve. The most immediate physical limitations that facilitate power psychoses will give way. When we master biochemistry to the degree that we actually know what we're fucking with an incredibly potent window will open up to us.

Self-knowledge and agency in the workings of one's own body is a big deal, and unlike the destruction of public privacy it's hard to imagine any downsides to achieving having such. I mentioned how there's not even the barest of pretenses that primitivists are on the same side as transfolk. But birth control is an even bigger issue. Would you really trust your body with some herbal concoction? Oh, wait, nine times out of ten the primitivists hawking "indigenous" forms of birth control are talking about someone else's body.

Of course it's true that as things stand, with greater medical refinement, the lethargic small-mindedness of our current market would acquire greater potency. And, indeed, so long as a corporatist economy has a hierarchical stranglehold on technological development (which pretty much boils down to intellectual property), chances are we'll be fucked long before any honest, hard-working gene-hacker starts growing his own glow-in-the-dark butterfly wings. We all know it's probably only a matter of time before some GM foods haxored by a greedy and lazy corporate PhD spins out of control and kills us all. If corporate capitalism persists.

Which brings us to nanotech and decentralized fabrication in general.

On the upside we've got both the absolute end of scarcity and the fulfillment of the old dream wherein each and every "worker" controls the means of production individually. The production not just of model #12, but of practically anything they desire. ...On the downside it means that one day each and every one of these "workers" will more or less have their finger on the button to Armageddon. Today one can make incredibly disruptive weapons if not outright WMDs with only a few thousand dollars. Imagine what'll be possible tomorrow.

So, yes, there's a tension there. A need to make the world a better place today, so that when such higher tech eventually becomes omnipresent there aren't any disgruntled folks to be cataclysmically angry about something.

We've got four possible futures: Complete Annihilation. Permanent Fascism. Permanent Post-Scarcity Anarchy. or Repeat Struggles Endlessly.

By embracing the drive towards more dynamic technology we reject perpetual struggle and try to chance it between the first three (not that Annihilation and Fascism are different in anything but cosmetics). If we go with primitivism and somehow survive the cracked bio-warfare labs we get Endless Struggle for a lengthy period followed inevitably by Complete Annihilation. The human drive for greater contact and deeper channels of experience will press up against the permanent technological limitations of a post-collapse Earth and conduct such physical limitation into the social realm. Oppression will be rampant.

But, yes, it will not even near the infinite amount of oppression we risk if we continue to pursue technological advances. As technology grows so do the stakes. Things run faster. Collapse, Armageddon, the Police State... one deviation and any of them could take the entire world.

But they're not the only ones.

The internet has seen far greater propagation of anarchist values than anything else in history. With every technological advance the struggle has been getting more intense. While the sane have built telescopes and phones, the abusive spouses and tribal elders of prehistory have progressively gained tanks and fighter jets. Hitler's Germany couldn't even begin to rival the insidious powers rife across the world today. But neither does the Spanish Revolution hold a fucking candle to the anti-authoritarian insurrection bubbling in every city in the world today. The strength brought to bear by today's oppressive power structures is utterly without comparison. And yet they aren't winning. We can march on Washington in an outright black bloc two thousand strong and despite a military that amasses in every every continent on Earth, despite enough nuclear

missiles to vaporize the topsoil, despite an economic system beaten into every child at birth, despite orbital platforms that can trace the flight of dragonflies, despite mobile EMPs that can cause car accidents without trace, despite an unprecedented coordination between every major nationstate on Earth so that they can archive 95% of their citizens electronic communications... they dare not even mow us down with bullets.

We took Seattle and all they could use was clubs, pepper spray and tear gas. We held Oaxaca for half a fucking year and yet they were so afraid of public opinion they barely killed anyone. We kill cops in Greece, blow up banks, prisons and police stations on an almost monthly basis, and yet they barely dare to respond. We still have a union a million strong in Spain. For a few months we were Argentina. We gather armies and armed with nothing more than sticks evict the police from the streets of South Korea. We write code in our mothers' basements that destroy their desperate, last minute, multi-billion dollar attempts to control our technologies. We flagrantly run community centers, libraries, schools, factories, radio stations, and gardens in full view of the public in dozens upon dozens of countries around the world. We fucking outright, absolutely, 100%, unabashedly, militantly, and vocally, oppose every last power structure in the world. And they fight for dear life just to tap our phones. Because we are but the tip of billions. The radical blade of the entire world's conscience.

And despite the hundreds of fucked up psychotics who've had their hand on the keys to global annihilation we are all still here.

But let's be fucking clear here. We've never had anything but the slimmest margin of a chance. If you're in the movement even the slightest bit because you think it's inevitably or even likely destined for power, you're in the wrong movement. Get the fuck out now.

The point isn't that we're fighting a losing battle with next to no chance, oh poor martyrs us. The point is that we fucking have a chance. The sheer ecstatic, miraculous implausibility of that. That, against all odds, it is feasibly possible for good to actually win. All that's required is to, at the end of the day, have inspired each and every single one of 6.5 billion people to become full-fledged anarchists. To personally choose to throw away the power psychosis.

I've seen worse odds.

Knowing that we've got a shot. Knowing that we do have that choice. Knowing that we do have agency in the world. That's what makes me jump out of bed in the wee hours of the morning to punch the sky, climb dew-laden trees, dance through the empty city streets and cry out thanks to the stars.

Though there may be near infinite night around, even the smallest drop of light makes the darkness irrelevant.

The new is possible

The past has no monopoly on the possibilities of the future.

The perpetual self-justification of primitivism is that although six and a half billion people dying might be a bad thing, it's inevitable. The concept of the inevitable runs core throughout primitivism which plays perfectly into the nihilistic lethargy, but it's also somewhat of an inherent result given their theoretical focus on anthropology.

From what was originally a positive reevaluation that sought to constructively take insights from indigenous and historical societies, primitivism has become a self-reinforcing faith that our only options lie in the past.

The trap is a simple one, and particularly effective as our movement begins to institutionalize burnout. Certain primitive and indigenous societies offer undeniable proof of anarchistic principles in action and tangibility is such a mighty opiate as to leave further exploration and critique undesired. I know that these essays have been received by some as though I were kicking their puppy. Primitivism and green anarchy in general has gotten wrapped in a certain immediate hope that red anarchism just can't match. (Except where red insurrectionists start sympathizing with certain showy authoritarian right-wing anti-imperialist terrorist groups, but we won't talk about that. Because it's too embarrassing.) Burning condos offers immediate gratification, whereas union organizing is a pain. Classical talk of an eventual international rising five hundred or thousand years from now is simply not as rewarding as a soon-to-come Crash that reverts things back to the natural order of anarchy.

And, boy oh boy, does anthropology offer good case studies in the realistic effectiveness of anarchistic societies. But for those desperately seeking a glimmer of hope, the canonization of such societies has become far too instinctive and negative qualities pass without serious critique. Passing mention is made about "imperfections," without really seeking to address them. Part of this stems from an inherited legacy of "cultural anti-imperialism" that really functions as postmodernism and complete ethical abdication in disguise. (Although, to his credit, John Zerzan long ago recognized that postmodernism was in many ways antithetical to the primitivist project as well as to anarchism in general.) But the biggest part of this stems from the sheer relief of having actual anthropological evidence and being part of a far bigger story.

Faced with the daily pressure of seeking, discovering and defending ways forward, it's far easier to declare the universe on your side. Yes, formalized power structures piggybacked alongside our technological innovations, the archaeological record clearly shows that (although it also shows scattered examples of anti-authoritarian cities and agrarian societies throughout civilization). But non-formalized interpersonal power structures can be just as bad, if not more immediate and controlling. Our relations with other people don't have to be systematically oppressive to still be oppressive. And the controlling limitations of tribal life are very conducive to subtle but unbelievably strong power psychoses. Physical limitations both inspire and facilitate social oppression.

Of course many primitive societies demonstrate anarchistic principles. Anarchy works! Get over it. It takes every last institution on Earth struggling 24/7 to even begin to blind us to such a basic social reality. Insofar as society even begins to function, it embodies a degree of anarchism. And, yeah, certainly some components of our society, both prehistorical and indigenous, were pretty decent. But why should that be good enough?

Those who remember the past are doomed to repeat it. Those who get wrapped up in the structures of the past will only operate within the structures of the past. If you only accept as possible what has already happened then, duh, any real technological progress past this point is impossible. But it's not. Looking back for ideas is wonderful, but let's not presume that the past has all, or even the best, answers.

Afterword

I scrawled these essays on napkins summer 2006 blitzed out of my mind at 4am in the back of a diner. It shows. The prose is tangled as all hell and shot up with the spray of five-dollar words my brain spits up when it can't find the right one. In my defense my young head was filled to the brim and riven with tension from my break with primitivism—I desperately needed to get it all down on paper by any means necessary.

Surprising they actually had an effect. Perhaps folks were just starved for any critique of primitivism thought more original than “that’s impractical” and I just filled a niche at the right time, but traffic to my little site took off and soon I was finding lines requoted in random places, in foreign radical zines and twitter posts from strangers. Of course the direct footprint of these essays wasn’t as big as I might have wished, but attitudes in radical communities have been shifting. Where certain primitivist assertions were once received uncritically, I find folks are now at least aware of the existence of a much broader radical discourse capable of contesting them. I’m happy to have helped disseminate some of those ideas.

These days I and increasingly more than a few others in the scene with roots in anarcho-primitivism have taken to identifying ourselves as anarcho-transhumanists. The change in terminology may appear drastic, but for most of us it wasn’t so much a reversal as a deepening. We still retain and cherish much of the perspective primitivism gave us, our horizons have just expanded. It feels good.

William Gillis

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