Anark
Power
December 2020

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> "[…] for those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, the next move is ours: for the gates of the technocratic prison will open automatically, despite their rusty ancient hinges, as soon as we choose to walk out."[8]

Come now and let us build this new future together. Everything that is good in this world depends on it.

[8] Lewis Mumford, "The Myth of the Machine: The Pentagon of Power (vol. 2)" (http://libgen.rs/book/index.php?md5=ACD9DC15E5826E741CC52888B1BF8404)

plete abolition of the reigning power structure, they will likely only be doomed to fighting with reactionaries in the aftermath.

A successful left in the modern era must necessarily approach the process of revolution with a lens that is equal parts strategist and technician, conceiving of territories and battlefronts, of supply networks and infrastructure. Where some strength is found in the mega-machine, we must understand how to sabotage it when the time arises and how we will prepare a horizontal response to its failure when that time comes.

Crucially, in forming these responses, we must avoid reproducing the very forms of organization used by our enemies as those are precisely the forms of the mega-machine we wish to abolish. When we mirror the structures of our enemy, we help build out the territory of the tyrannous mega-machine. Thus this new project will require that we seek a cooperative place for humanity within the ecosystem of Earth, not as a parasite, but as a symbiotic entity, both internally and externally. It will require that we reject the stale uniformity of authority so that we might rediscover a conception of humanity rife with meaning and beauty. We must build a thing which is teeming with life and dignity, capable of negating the power of the despot, and preventing the cancer of hierarchical power from once again metastasizing.

We must strike at the roots of the old paradigm and therefore create a new philosophy of justification much more complex than the cold, mechanical turning of economic wheels, instead based on a harmonious convergence of the needs of the multitudes. Such a revolutionary philosophy of justification can only be achieved by fully dismantling the mythology of the oppressors and building a new ecological counter-balance that will interrupt the cyclic re-establishment of power hierarchy and systemic privilege. We must only choose it. Or, as Lewis Mumford says in the last words of The Myth of the Machine

Introduction

The following is the script of the video I published on my channel Anark. If you would like to watch that video, it is here: youtu.be/HZeQrwKhJRQ.

Minor edits have been made to the script to instead refer to itself as an essay instead of a video. Other than this, the content has remained the same and may be seen as a copy of the video, in text form, that can be distributed wholly in place of the video.

Solidarity forever in opposition to the mega-machine. Refuse defeat until death.

Preface

In the book Walden, Henry David Thoreau famously wrote that "there are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root."[1] And this is no accident. The structure of society, far from being easily interpretable, is purposely made opaque to us. Many veils are laid over the complex foundations of tyranny, many justifications which go unnoticed are marshalled to great success in confusing and distracting the people.

Philosophical ideas are the mental scaffolding that hold entire orders in place. The detours into philosophical analysis seen throughout political theory are not idle meanderings; they are the natural procession of political questions taken to their extent. This is why, early on in his Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization, Abdullah Ocalan says that "mighty social struggles are fought beneath the surface."[2] Enduring systems of thought and meaning silently underlie society's functioning, giving it justification, forming its basic

[1] Henry David Thoreau, "Walden" (https://www.gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm)

[2] Abdullah Ocalan, "Manifesto for a Democratic Civlization: The Age of Masked Gods and Disguised Kings (vol. 1)" (https://libcom.org/files/Manifesto-foraDemocraticCivilizationvol1.pdf)

assumptions, and organizing the lives of the people that populate it under a paradigm.

This essay will discuss a great behemoth that lays just underneath the surface, often glimpsed, but rarely inspected in depth. It is what we actually discuss every time our conversations wander to the topics of suppression and revolt, conformity and autonomy, anarchism and authority. In these we are summarizing a much deeper structure, skirting an issue which subsumes all these common ideas. Let us lay out a theory of power.

Means and Ends

> "Every power is animated by the wish to be the only power, because in the nature of its being it deems itself absolute and consequently opposes any bar which reminds it of the limits of its influence. Power is active consciousness of authority. Like God, it cannot endure any other God beside it. This is the reason why a struggle for hegemony immediately breaks out as soon as different power groups appear together or have to keep inside of territories adjacent to one another. Once a state has attained the strength which permits it to make decisive use of its power it will not rest satisfied until it has achieved dominance over all neighbouring states and has subjected them to its will. While not yet strong enough for this it is willing to compromise, but as soon as it feels itself powerful it will not hesitate to use any means to extend its rule, for the will to power follows its own laws, which it may mask but can never deny…"[3] — Rudolf Rocker

[3] Rudolf Rocker, "Nationalism and Culture" (https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/rudolf-rocker-nationalism-and-culture)

ing. Ideally, in a radical labor dispute, the parallel is that we would place the shoe within the machine long enough to extract our needs from its owner then, having left the machine largely intact, seize it from the owner and remove the sabot. But this does not stop the functioning of the machine itself; it merely changes owners. In fact, this method is the one modeled by statist revolutions. Quite the contrary of their repeated desire to "smash the bourgeois state completely," in practice they carry out something much more like putting a shoe in the gears, then resuming the functioning of that machine under new ownership.

The alternative is to begin building a new horizontal society in the here and now, so that, if we can exact enough damage upon the existing social mega-machine that it is stopped from functioning, we can completely replace those components of value which it once provided. In this way, the process of revolution is less some linear procession of mechanically inevitable stages or a single moment of rupture and more akin to a protracted war between systems: one system the hierarchical, imperial machine and the other a horizontal humane society in its belly. If such a horizontal replacement system is not prepared and social rupture approaches before it is built, the result will not likely be the revolution of the masses, but instead the crowning of a new despot. What we build now is thus a preparation for what may come later.

And so, the revolutionary strategy informed by these perspectives is neither accelerationist nor gradualist. Such notions are too narrow. The revolution must move at the speed at which the masses build the prefigured, horizontal systems that can replace the tyrannical system they are subjected to. If the masses build quickly, they should accelerate tensions with the system of power quickly as well. But if they build slowly, they should exert their energy carefully; because if they do not succeed in bringing the moment of rupture, they are likely to be crushed by a tyrannous response. And if they have nothing built, yet succeed in their com-

highest seats of power," (indeed, hierarchical systems are built with that express, parasitical purpose) it is even more appropriate to say "the logic of the machine."

These machines are then built out in both a structural and ideological sense based upon the subjugation of human beings. And, as a result, the unified design of the system's supply chains, infrastructural projects, and operating ideas, is a dominator's logic and the fundamental configuration of these embodiments of power represents a sort of territorial expansion for the mega-machine. Said otherwise: the longer this machine is allowed to materially and ideologically configure itself in the real world and to build out its metropolises and extract the resources of our planet, the more thoroughly that the enemy system is allowed to solidify its power and establish a real physical territory for its ideology.

But if a hierarchical power structure is a machine, then we may inspect it through comparison with other machines. How do we take apart a non-human machine, for example? In the most absolute way, if one wishes to end the functioning of a machine forever, they must demolish it completely. However, the larger and more complex the machine, the more challenging such a pursuit will be. The current social mega-machine is quite possibly the most intricate and embedded to have ever existed, composed of many parts, compartmentalized and competing in intricate ways, now dominating an entire planet. In the collapse of any one major systemic component of this mega-machine, other components will likely just gain power. And this is not even broaching the topic that the most fundamental components of the machine are the very human beings we wish to bring into a liberatory future and thus complete demolition is self-defeating.

One could, then, choose in the opposite direction. We can stop far short of complete destruction of a machine, after all, and still stop its functioning. The very word "saboteur" roots from labor history, in which workers would place their shoes, "sabots," into the machines, in order to jam them up and prevent them from work-

When this word is spoken, power, we conjure countless mental images. When I ask: — what is power — do you think of the king atop his throne? Do you think of the parent scolding their child? Do you imagine militaries and men with firearms? Mythical beings struggling against their foes? If we are to have a discussion about power, it is contingent upon us to define what is meant by the word. Many scholars tend to use a definition of "power" that takes for granted its function as a tool for social coercion. Rocker can be seen using a definition of this sort in the quote from just a few moments ago. Similarly, the definition used by Bichler and Nitzan, who will be discussed later in this essay is that power is "confidence in obedience." But I ask that you loosen this constraint as we continue, as we will discern these terms more closely in the coming essay. If this terminology does not serve you, understand that the statements in a great many works referencing "power" can be understood interchangeably with what we say in this essay about "hierarchical power" or "authoritarian power."

In the theory of power I will set out in this essay, power is defined as: "the ability to successfully enact one's will."

With this definition in mind, there are many types of power because there are many ways of bringing one's will into existence. To which end is one's will inclined? Through which methods might they achieve that end? These are the questions that must be answered in this framework. And to do so, it will be necessary that we come to understand power in a more fundamental fashion, its modes and its ends, its desires and limitations.

So what does it mean to be powerful then in this framework? Well, clearly it is not a universal matter. Power is contextual in its means and ends. Take for example, the prisoner who becomes very strong lifting weights. Though their strength may serve them well within the prison, such a physical might will never allow them to escape their captivity, to burst down the walls and evade being recaptured, it will never allow them to find a life as a farmer, or attend Cornell University, or eat caviar upon a great yacht, or publish a

great work of philosophy. Power is contingent upon means and ends. The prisoner is imbued with a powerful means in achieving the end of lifting some great weight or of pummeling some other imprisoned threat, but that is a narrow power by comparison to the great potentiality that lies in existence.

A being is not powerful simply because of one particular strength, they are powerful to the degree that, when they will something to take place, it is materialized in the faithful image of their intention. Inversely then, their power is lacking insofar as what they will to take place mismatches intention. Therefore, when we say someone is powerful, we mean that they can reify a broad-ranging, generalized will; one in which the vast majority of onlookers can recognize their own goals as achievable. In understanding these means and ends in the full scope of potentiality, we also grasp the nature of a power. Some powers have limited ends, but very potent means, while others have a very broad range of achievable ends and very constrained means. A being is most powerful when they have the most effective means and the most diversified possible ends. That is to say, a person is most powerful when they simultaneously achieve whatever they will and can will the widest array of possible things.

This is why, in this framework, we split with the terminology of these scholars. This definition allows us to understand power on a continuum, not constrained to the social sphere alone, but also containing the ability to understand how power functions within both human and non-human populations. For example, while it is absolutely true that the ability to create mass submission of human minds has been the primary method by which the rulers have historically become powerful, in this framework, one of the earliest methods by which humans gained power was actually in the domestication of plants and non-human animals. Through these relations, humans were able to achieve a greater embodiment of their will and with less exertion. However, this power was contingent on humanity's ability to recognize ecological bounds. To

of their supremacy, just as the slavemaster looked over the plantation fields and told himself he observed an eternal order. Bichler and Nitzan continue:

> "To rule means to see the world from a singular viewpoint, to be locked into a unitary logic, to be subservient to your own architecture of power. Dominant capital cannot deviate from the boundaries of this architecture, even if it wants to. Its individual members are forced to accept the very logic they impose on the rest of humanity. And the more effective they are in imposing that logic, the more predictable they themselves become."

When the world fails to meet the predictions of the arrogant machine, the only options available to that machine are to re-discipline its components, to deny the reality of its disconfirmation, to reorganize itself into a new predictable system, or to convey a new philosophy of justification. What it cannot do is accept its frivolity. To do such a thing would be to undermine its foundational principle of accumulation.

Conclusion

With all of these pieces together, it can be seen that hierarchical power structures are massive, constantly self-perpetuating social machines which rely on material logistics, forms of economic extraction, and systematized coercion, but each gear within them only turns if the human components are disciplined, standardized, and made inhuman by ideologies of justification. Every hierarchical power structure will have a tendency to operationalize the lives of the individuals within it such that all their individual wills are subverted and controlled. And to whose ends are the individuals' wills subverted? While it is true to answer "the individuals in the

This mirrors much of what was said in the video essay Change and Revolution. There I put forth a theory of social change predicated on nested feedback cycles. But the analysis does not end with the cycles I inspected there. The systems of human power are in mass, dynamic feedback and Bichler and Nitzan's "creorder" can be seen as an umbrella to describe the accumulation of these cycles.

The feedback cycle that this essay has laid out is both primal and ancient, occurring between the structural programming of the system in the form of its supply lines, infrastructure, and distribution and the ideological programming of its constituent actors by way of interlocking philosophies of justification. These forces do not function in isolation. They feed into one another, reordering society constantly, shifting their relation as one or another is countervailed. As Bichler and Nitzan say:

> "Power means the ability to impose order, and imposition presupposes resistance – resistance from those on whom order is imposed and from others who wish to impose their own. This ever-present tension between force and counter-force makes a power creorder inherently unstable. Slack on one side unleashes pressure from another, a greater force in one direction trumps over a weaker force in the other. And since to overcome resistance is to create a new order, the very presence of power spells a built-in pressure for change."

Creordering is an act of dynamic regimentation, the social and economic world is turned into something which can be predicted because it has been transfigured into the form that power has preconceived. And in becoming something predictable, the capitalist comes to believe that their ideology is a science when, in fact, they have cursed the constituents of society with a rigid uniformity which they then condescendingly observes as confirmation

derive power within this system, humanity had to respect its environment and pay close attention to the accumulated evolutionary wisdom within the biome around them. The power granted in attention to this ecological wisdom allowed the species to achieve harmony within their environment, luxury enough to learn and play, said simply, to actualize their desires.

And, although this paradigm comprises the vast majority of human existence, it would not last. In time, a great beast arose in the form of organized, centralized power. This structure, this ideological and material engine which was formed in the early monarchies, is the earliest example of what Mumford calls the "social mega-machine." And, as he says:

> "from the beginning [...] the weight of the mega-machine itself was the chief burden of civilization: not merely did it turn daily work into a grievous penalty, but it diminished the psychal rewards that compensate the hunters, farmers, and herdsmen for their sometimes exhausting labors. Never was this burden heavier than at the beginning, when the greatest public activity in Egypt was mainly directed to supporting the claim of the Pharaoh to divinity and immortality."[4]

When there are those who wish to have their will enacted more fully, to have lives of even greater luxury and command, and given that the only means available to achieve such ends is the labor of human bodies, it then becomes only a question, for the ruler, of how they might subvert the wills of those humans to meet their chosen ends. Humans are extraordinary organisms, able in their utmost adaptability, to be set to either creative or machine-like tasks;

[4] Lewis Mumford, "The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development (vol. 1)" (http://libgen.rs/book/index.php?md5=26696CC625515AFDDA2116BF43233916)

this is why it has been overall more advantageous to the rulers to bridle us than it has been to bridle the oxen. Indeed, as they have demonstrated, better still is to bridle both.

The power of the king relies on the fact that: as he commands, other beings act. A word commands armies, a word changes laws, a word pardons the man on the gallows. If it has been said before that "power is the ability to make others do as they would not otherwise do,"[5] if all these great scholars have been content to study only the social dimension of power, this is why. No hierarchical power structure operating within these millennia could be as powerful as it has been if it did not have the ability to compel or inhibit the actions of humans. The power of the oxen to plow the field or transport grain could never have been sufficient to support the excesses of pharaohs and kings lest they also bridled the masters of those beasts. And, while humanity may one day bridle automated robotics to meet our ends, in lieu of such specialized tools and their unlikely and complete separation from human operation, whatever rulers remain will inevitably turn humans into servants. Indeed, by its measure of service to power, the human mind is reduced increasingly into nothing more than a tool.

In this way, all power in human history has been contingent on a system of control over the behavior of others and the reconfiguration of the natural world to meet the needs of the holder. The more power one has, the more obediently that some other person will act and the less gap between their resistance and their obedience will exist. The larger number of people whose behavior can be controlled and the more thoroughly that their behavior can be controlled, the more powerful the controller is. If the desires of humans inhibit the ability to carry out one's will, after all, they lack power by measure to that. Power does not then lie in potential, power lies in action and materialization. Just as two explosive

[5] Bichler and Nitzan, "Capital as Power" (http://bnarchives.yorku.ca/259/2/20090522_nb_casp_full_indexed.pdf)

> government, or the centralistic aims of a party which has made the conquest of power its slogan. The fundamental principle of basing every social activity upon a definite norm which is not subject to change is the indispensable preliminary assumption of every will to power."

Generation after generation of exploiter has innovated to create more and more effective means to bring about social subservience. The resulting inventions of psychological warfare, embodied together in this great myth of the machine, have now been sharpened into powerful tools of memetic self-obedience. Indeed, the reinforcement of these philosophies of justification does not take place merely upon an interpersonal level; it is the software of a vast social hardware.

Creorder

In their work, Capital as Power, Bichler and Nitzan present a concept they call "creorder." This concept is the novel combination of the words "creation" and "order." This is no contradiction, it is the recognition of a dynamic process of reinforcement and evolution taking place in all systems. Read holistically, it is a recognition that both the material forces of social power structures along with their accordant philosophies of justification, attempt to bring the pieces of that greater society into static obedience to a systemic will. However, in the structure's need to meet the burdens of a changing world, it must also reorient itself constantly, re-ordering its constituent parts to accommodate an eternally new environment. Or, as Bichler and Nitzan say:

> "Historical society is […] both Parmenidean and Heraclitean: a state in process, a construct reconstructed, a form transformed."

and the further the pallor of their skin differs from the normalcy of whiteness, the more deviant they are considered.

So too is patriarchy a fundamental component of the modern machine, reformed as it has been by generation after generation of hierarchical machines. Through this mythology, the man is made the superior of woman; he is associated with the features of the dominator and groomed to embody them. Gender roles are held in stasis and gender expressions are viciously policed creating an unnatural binary that helps stabilize a vast system of exploitation: the man an empty automaton to be sacrificed, to be worked, to never complain; the woman a subservient, a meek supplicant to be rewarded from the table scraps. Even as women slowly regain some measure of agency in their lives, a reactionary movement rears its head, demanding they return to a time previous to social leveling. Transgender identity, a reality observed since ancient societies, is then naturally seen as an existential threat; a wrecking ball to the staunch systematization of gender roles in society.

I give these examples not to provide an exhaustive overview but instead to echo the observations of the intersectional feminists: these philosophies of justification are not disconnected, they are complex and overlapping, having produced unique hierarchies of privilege and justification to bolster each. By recognizing the diverse range of human struggle and in embracing both the uniqueness of each intersection of oppression, while at the same time recognizing the grand unifying features of all these experiences, we find a revolutionary vector.

As Rudolf Rocker says in Nationalism and Culture:

> "The desire to bring everything under one rule, to unite mechanically and to subject to its will every social activity, is fundamental in every power. It does not matter whether we are dealing with the person of the absolute monarch of former times, the national unity of a constitutionally elected representative

chemicals may contain a great potential before combination, they are not powerful until they are actively combined and their proper mixture materialized in reality. In order to illustrate this concept in context, let us inspect two thought experiments: the idle king and the idle worker.

In the occasion of the idle king, we can imagine the drunken layabout, a son of some previous king perhaps, who has no desire to fill the role of the ruler. And yet, if this king desired, at a whim, they could have their opponents executed, could have any person contorted to meet their demands, have any will submitted to their own. Is this king not powerful, even if he chooses for a lifetime not to enact such machinations? They are powerful because the structures are in place that actively reduce the gap between the willed desire of the king and the fully realized outcome of that will. Whether the king acts upon them or not, the structures to reify his will are ready and waiting.

By contrast, let us conceive of the idle worker. The idle worker, whether they choose to act in the interest of their will or not, whether they summon the desire to command or whether they toil for the duration of their life, short of building an actual structure of dual power, it makes no difference. Atomized, they must put in extraordinary effort and sacrifice to enact their will. Conceived in isolation from a broader cooperative structure, the individual has to accumulate terroristic knowledge to enforce their will. This is because structures are not in place to reduce the gap between their will and their desired outcomes and thus they must resort to crude and ineffective means.

In this way, we can see that the idle masses start at a competitive disadvantage from those in positions of privilege and authority. What I was laying out in the essay Constructing the Revolution, was a method to make the masses powerful. To organize prefigurative structures is to develop a method that reduces the gap between the will of the masses and outcomes. This is, in fact, a necessary precondition to revolutionary change.

There are some, however, who claim that this state of affairs is authoritarian. And such an infantile claim would be unworthy of addressing were it not the sober-minded conclusion of some important theorists in the last century, most notably that of Frederick Engels in his essay "On Authority."[6] So let us untangle this old confusion.

In this argument, it is said that, to make the masses powerful is to create a new authority because they necessarily demand that the previous ruling class submit itself to the rule of the masses. But authority is not just one group holding power over another. If that were the case, we would be forced to conclude that the slave who strikes down their master is only seeking to "become a new authority." The exact opposite is, of course, the truth. Authority is the demand that there be a narrow grip on the reins and that is precisely what the slave seeks to end when he abolishes his debt of servitude. A power is more authoritarian to the degree that it monopolizes power for fewer and fewer people. To undergo a revolution of the masses is precisely to abolish such a hierarchical power and to revolt against suppression; thus revolution is to abolish authoritarian power; it is the elimination of narrow monopoly and the distribution of power to the masses.

This is not to say, of course, that we should not trust in the knowledge of experts, for example. Such an implied authority extends no further than the recognition that the expert's knowledge is genuinely beyond our own. Whatever rewards or marks of academic honor have been bestowed upon them are not what imbue them with the right to be respected. Also, such a respect does not suggest a desire to perpetuate a monopoly on that expertise. Quite the opposite, the anarchist wishes to create a society in which expertise is distributed freely and fairly instead of gatekept in the ivory tower.

[6] Friedrick Engels, "On Authority" (https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/10/authority.htm)

because it legitimizes the state through a metaphysical equivalence between subjects and rulers, such that the subjects are made to believe that they deserve to be ruled because their rulers "represent" them. It by no means functions alone, however. The logic of capitalism transfigures everything within modern society and thus a complex of philosophies of justification hold up its order: bootstrap ideology, the Protestant work ethic, economic meritocracy, rugged individualism, and many more. Through its reductive conception of the world, capitalism produces the deification of the commodity, it splinters communities into competitive, individualistic silos, and all the while, this perverse distortion of human social conditions empowers the most exploitative actors within the existing power structures. Fostering economic class consciousness in the workers is therefore a process by which the cogs of the machine are made aware of how they have been constrained and disciplined for the needs of the economic elites.

However, one must not stop there. The hierarchy of economic class is a result of the holistic needs of the mega-machine to systematize the lives of its human components and accumulate a more supreme and unassailable power, not of a narrow economic striving. Economics is merely one system in feedback, although an integral component in the great engine, churning on the blood and sweat of the masses.

In the United States, for example, White supremacy is a very central philosophy of justification because, by using the mental framework of racist ideology, power structures can exert coercion and manufacture obedience both in the duped white followers and oppressed non-white populations, by convincing the duped white followers to enforce the privilege they have been given and by convincing the oppressed populations that their struggle is futile. Through the construct of whiteness, the white population is made to feel it is the default, the uncorrupted, original copy, and that all diversity is deviance therefrom. In this way, and many more, non-white lives are gradually worn down through mental degradation

philosophies of justification in the feudal order, was the conception that the hierarchy of society was organized and re-organized by godly will. So then came conceptions of "just wars" of religious conquest and interpretation of the Bible which emphasized meekness of the masses and boldness of the rulers. Napoleon, before his rise to power a staunch anti-theist said, upon coming into power:

> "Society cannot exist without inequality of property and inequality not without religion. A man who is dying of hunger, next to one who has too much, could not possibly reconcile himself to it if it were not for a power which says to him: 'It is the will of God that here on Earth there must be rich and poor, but yonder, in eternity, it will be different."

He was mistaken in thinking a specifically religious notion was required to do such a task, but he was, in his crass pursuit of authority, stumbling upon the great importance of the myth of the machine in the churning of every hierarchical system of power. Indeed, the philosophy of justification for liberalism, representationalism, was already present in its embryonic form within feudalism.

Hobbes, for example, conceived of the necessity of an absolute sovereign that he called the Leviathan, because he imagined that it was necessary to prevent the "war of all against all." Hobbes believed that humanity without rule was inherently contentious and thus thought that humans in the state of nature were atomized. He said, then, that the sovereign was a sort of representation of the social need for order, in opposition to humanity without rule, which was separate and squabbling. The Leviathan is not a cruel despot, it is a necessary evil to countervail the inherent nastiness and selfishness of humans. The Leviathan is a sort of stand-in for God on Earth, though one need not conceive of Godliness to justify him.

The representationalist mythology of the state remains one of the key philosophies of justification in the liberal republic,

So, instead of saying that the masses, seeking to liberate themselves from a systemic slavery are "seeking to become a new authority," it is more accurate to say that the masses organized together and holding now the strength to emancipate themselves, are a new kind of "power structure." Power structures are social and material relations which vest beings within them with power above and beyond their individual means. For this reason, a horizontal confederation of councils is a power structure, an affinity group is a power structure, even an anarchy would likely contain some sort of power structure. Each of these arrangements, after all, vest individuals within them with power beyond their simple individual wills. But they seek to achieve such an affair with flat, decentralized, diffused power structures relying on social compact, agreement, and communal enforcement. So while it is not the case that the anarchist rejects all power in this framework, they do firmly reject hierarchical, centralized, or authoritarian power.

It must be said, however, that, using this conception, power cannot ever really be destroyed. After all, persuasion is power, science is power, consensus is communal power, even the usage of tools, as we have said, is power. In absence of a complete extinction of the species, human power can only ever be redistributed or diminished. But that is precisely the motivation of building a power structure which is held together by the people and diffused among them. Concentrated power is akin to a sort of cancer, having arisen inside its host from the malfunction of a necessary system. And, like cancer, whether benign or malignant, it is a tumor which must be destroyed or cut out from the body. Absolute power, predicated on the absolute contortion of other human beings, must be dissolved and systems of resistance to its re-emergence must be robustly developed. But in order for us to succeed at that task, we must know its modes and behaviors. So let us now discuss the mechanics of this great cancer.

The Dynamics of the Mega-Machine

Sometimes, when referring to concentrated power structures, there is a sort of common tendency to call them 'the machine' or 'the system.' However, usually the usage of this metaphor comes along with some mild condescension. Its wording has become attached with a sort of rebellious naivete, maybe the result of its prevalent usage in the hippy and student movement of the 60s. We see the metaphor, for example in the famous words of Mario Savio:

> "There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part. You can't even passively take part! And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop! And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it — that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!"

And to conceive of hierarchical, centralized power structures as machines is more than some reductive metaphor. Although it is true that hierarchical power structures are only embodied through the means of conscious beings and that actions carried out by that power structure are actually the result of accumulated individual actions within it, in the creation of an internal discipline, the people actually are made closer and closer to constituent parts of a machine. Their individuality is gradually subsumed hierarchical needs and their actions increasingly carried out as a regimented response, not as an individual act of choosing, as it is, in fact, precisely the act of choosing which hierarchical power structures will have a tendency to want to eliminate. Individual choice means unpredictability and unpredictability is antithetical to a reliable mechanization. Lewis Mumford, an American scholar in the middle of

of production and distribution. Power is also a function of perception and expectation. The belief that some power structure might bring about the existing or potential leverage available to them, for example, is a primary component in the real exertion of power in the world. A slave who believes they are bound to slavery and can never escape has been successfully controlled by their master. The master has used their own power to discourage the slave from seeking liberation. Power is also exerted by convincing subjects that they should want to carry out the will of a power structure. These are often the most pernicious and lasting of all such mental attitudes. Once a people can be convinced that their suffering at the hands of the machine is both necessary and good, they can compel themselves well beyond reason. They then actively take part in their becoming a component of the vast machine and in dehumanizing themselves.

Lewis Mumford called this vast, combined mythology of the power system the "myth of the machine." We will instead consider many interlocking and mutually reinforcing ideas, which we will call philosophies of justification. One might say that Mumford's myth of the machine was the accumulated canon of all philosophies of justification. These mental attitudes, which have been so unscientifically separated from material reality through a false dichotomy of "idealism" and "materialism," are of paramount importance in the continued operation of great tyrannies.

For example; many scholars have noted that the feudal age maintained order largely through threat and use of violence. The way that bonds were formed between the lords and the monarch was through the agreement to organize and enact violence, a stated willingness to martial and distribute troops for the needs of the monarch. But what is said less often is that the masses were not only made into servants by fear of violence, they were made to feel that they were part of a divine order. This is why, during the time that monarchs still reigned, liberals and leftists alike recognized the danger of religious doctrines. One of the most primary

> their little ones for his night meal… He hath broken up the backbones and the spinal marrow, he hath taken away the hearts of the Gods, he hath eaten the Red Crown, he hath swallowed the Green One. He feedeth on the lungs of the Wise Ones: he is satisfied with living on hearts and their magic."

That is the fundamental nature of the mega-machine; a cannibal zealot, now veiled by a vast Skinner box, but its inbuilt purpose unchanged. This hierarchical apparatus is a parasite built to consume for eternity, fueled by human misery and abject slavery. So what drives the death cult? Why do the masses contort themselves to its needs? Said otherwise: why do we not rebel?

The Myth of the Machine

> "The one lasting contribution of the mega-machine was the myth of the machine itself: the notion that this machine was, by its very nature, absolutely irresistible-and yet, provided one did not oppose it, ultimately beneficent. That magical spell still enthralls both the controllers and the mass victims of the mega-machine today." -Lewis Mumford

Throughout the modern history of leftist ideology, the philosophical disease of economic reductionism has permeated and undermined our movements, long masquerading as "materialism." To know society, they insist, is simply to work out its economic relations, external to human ideas. The ideas are but a superstructural mask on the real driving contradiction taking place in the economic base.

But this is an oafish oversimplification. The driving force is power and power is not just the structurally embodied mechanisms

the 20th century, wrote a book on this very subject called The Myth of the Machine. In it he says:

> "…to call these collective entities machines is no idle play on words. If a machine be defined […] as a combination of resistant parts, each specialized in function, operating under human control, to utilize energy and to perform work, then the great labor machine was in every aspect a genuine machine: all the more because its components, though made of human bone, nerve, and muscle, were reduced to their bare mechanical elements and rigidly standardized for the performance of their limited tasks."

We do not mean to say, of course, that the power structure itself has consciousness nor that those who are in control of the machine do not drive it to some significant degree, but instead that the machine is built toward an end and insofar as it has successfully subverted the will of the majority of individuals within it and turned them into operational components, it will function as per the smooth dictates of the logic of that machine. This is discussed from time to time by Marx as well, notably in Capital where he points out that, having consciously reduced themselves into nothing more than conduits for the flow and accumulation of capital, capitalists become "capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will."

Actors within regimented, hierarchical systems do not act outside the dictates of that system, including the many managers and technicians which form the functioning of its administration. If they did, they would no longer be allowed to operate within the system. The system would either discipline them through punishment and social sanction or prioritize some other human that is willing to contort themselves into the shape needed by the social mega-machine. In this way, even the holders of power are con-

torted into the mold of the machine. This is what Rudolf Rocker meant in Nationalism and Culture when he said:

> "It is the secret curse of every power that it becomes fatal, not only to its victims but to its possessors. The bare thought that one must live for the achievement of an end which is opposed to all sound human feeling and is incomprehensible in itself, gradually makes the possessor of power himself into a dead machine, after he has forced all coming under the dominance of his power to a mechanical obedience to his will. There is something puppetlike in the nature of every power, arising from its own illusions, which coerces everything coming into contact with it into fixed form. And all these forms continue to live in tradition even after the last spark of life has died in them, and lie like an incubus on the spirit which submits to their influence."

As Marx describes in his theory of alienation, humanity has a Gattungswesen, a "species essence."[7] Marx conceives of that species essence as one which desires to produce of its own volition and that, under constraint, unable to control the act of production, we are alienated from that essence. And it is true, humanity desires to control the conditions of its own production, but it is greater than that.

Humans, fundamentally defined through their adaptability and mentally able to conceive of a boundless future, are not meant to be rigidly disciplinized. As Lewis Mumford says in the second part of his Myth of the Machine "[…] it is part of the essential nature of man to transcend the limits of his own biological nature, and to be ready if necessary to die in order to make such transcendence possible." To be disciplined by power is to be limited, to be made

[7] Karl Marx, "Capital" (https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/)

subservient is to be turned into a component, a thing with a purpose but no meaning. Humanity does not wish to be made into a slave justified by race, a soldier justified by contract, a wage laborer or an automaton told it is human but experiencing nothing of what it is to be a human. Humanity inherently desires to be boundless. Humanity naturally desires freedom. Indeed, Marx, the ideological paramore of many who now so eagerly reject freedom as a principle of struggle, said "no man combats freedom, he combats at most the freedom of others."

Hierarchical power only exists because it is imposed, because once concentrated power exists, it accumulates until collapse or heat death. It is the enemy of human freedom, turning conscious beings into thoughtless instruments, an engine for suffering, a thing slaked in blood and wielding the whip and the chain, coffins proceeding to its left and obedient automatons, once called humans, to its right.

Because hierarchical power demands the mass sacrifice of human lives, it cannot be anything but a death-oriented entity and it is necessarily surrounded by those who worship it, a death cult. This can be seen in the Pyramid Texts where long passages are written about the God-Kings in the afterlife. In these passages, we see the true visage of the Mesopotamian mega-machine, a description whose metaphors have changed and whose veil has been modified, but which fundamentally captures the blood sacrificial nature of hierarchical power.

> "He it is that eateth men; that liveth on Gods, that possesseth the carriers and despatcheth messages… The Runner-with-all-Knives … he that strangleth them for him; he draweth out for him their entrails, he the messenger whom he sends death to… He it is that eateth their magic and swalloweth their lordliness. Their great ones are for his morning meal, their middle-sized ones for his evening meal, and