'The Position Of The Excluded'

Andy Robinson, The Brilliant podcast, Aragorn!

2017

[ed. – *An interview conducted in 2017 by The Brilliant podcast with Andy Robinson, which we've had pending to transcribe and publish ever since. The years that have passed since have only convinced us that it is vital to keep some of these experiences and histories alive and in circulation, especially for the generations joining us who have not sought out or been provided with veterans (however imperfect) of past cycles of struggle and survival, so as usual we've added various footnotes for further explanation if needed.*

The meat of this conversation revolves around neo-liberal exclusion (also among anarchists), focusing on the affects of anxiety generated as a result, which we would agree with the Institute for Precarious Consciousness are an under-studied reason for lack of momentum in our spaces. Since it was conducted, we have seen ever more novel regimes of exclusion and selective inclusion play out to similar effect, not least during since the start of the COVID pandemic; see 'The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Cop-

ing at All"'. First though, a word from another essay by Andy ('Democracy vs Desire') on the terms:

"An insurgent understanding of inclusion and exclusion is distinct from the conventional meanings of these terms, although related to them in a complex way. The idea of social exclusion has become fashionable [as of 2005], mainly because of a double discursive trick used by the neo-liberal power-elites. Firstly, the issue of poverty is shifted out of the political mainstream by replacing it with exclusion. And secondly, this new "problem" is blamed on the victims of capitalist/industrial society, treating the excluded themselves as the problem. This occurs, ironically enough, at just the point where new forms of biopower [ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg47] are being imposed in such a way as to render exclusion harsher and more pervasive than ever. [...] Against this regime of intensifying control, Crisso and Odoteo rightly counterpose the "new barbarians" – those who are so radically exterior to current social forms that they do not even speak the language of these forms [ed. – see 'Something Different Than the Reflection of This World'], who can engage with these forms only as a threatening force emerging as if from outside."

Since those words were written the technological means for exclusion have only become more refined and distributed; indeed, often self-administered. Take the New York group of anti-fascists who, around the time this was recorded, helped develop a YouTube plug-in for viewers of the streaming video site to more easily alert the authorities to fascistic or otherwise problematic content; an almost comically optimistic move when viewed from the vantage of 2025, as the proprietor of one of the largest social media platforms in the world (having opted to purge various anarchists instead) openly throws out Nazi salutes while the tech oligarchy line up to greet the incumbent US president, but even at the time a predictable contribution to the control architecture to be used against us all (see Calling It Terror). Would the calls from some on the Left to nationalise the alienation and friendship-commodification machine of Facebook have put us in a better position today in

figure that in an anarchist direction? It may be worth thinking about things like how do we reach (informationally) people who are maybe illiterate and not connected to the internet and don't speak English or French or Italian. It may be worth thinking about those kind of things. There are organisations that have done that; there are churches that have proselytised all over the world, there are nasty right-wing networks like the Islamist movements who have managed to grow in these kind of marginal communities: is there a way for anarchism to do that? And if so, what would it look like? Because I don't think it's going to be that kind of "oh, we go there and take leadership from the community and check your privilege etc. etc.": it's going to be about actually introducing them to anarchism, and "how do you actually solve some of these problems in an anarchist way?"

T.B: Andy, thank you very much for your time. It is clear that we need to have some more conversations because I think that your voice is desperately needed.

the rising authoritarianism had they been successful? What of the laid-bare illusion that liberal institutions cared enough about the readily-marketable identities they tried to commercialise our struggles into (see 'Identity Precedes Ideology') to actually defend them once the queerphobes and imperial revanchists feel free to let their colours fly ever-more-openly? Clearly, our struggle is elsewhere.

While exclusion is still a widening condition in general terms, justifications for explicit exclusion of marginalised groups are falling back to the more blatant chauvanism and xenophobia that neo-liberalism had previously preferred to operationalise more subtly. The trajectory mentioned during the interview has travelled much further along in terms of the near-half-century of a stable centrist consensus breaking down: it's no longer outliers like the first Trump campaign and Britain's exit from the European Union, but an international authoritarian populist surge in Austria, Italy, Hungary, Holland, Argentina, France, etc. "For decades," wrote CrimethInc. after the 2024 US election, "liberals and conservatives have worked together to suppress grassroots movements seeking to address the problems created by neoliberal capitalism; this created a vacuum that the far-right has ultimately filled. In that regard, the Democrats paved the way for nationalism and fascism to succeed neoliberalism. Presumably, they assume that those will be less threatening to their privileges than the end of capitalism would be."

Yet a little more attention is needed when discussing this "nationalism and fascism," especially in the supposed dichotomy between fascism and democracy (see Return Fire vol.5 pg61), or indeed nationalism and 'globalism' (see Lies of the Land). "Democratic mechanisms still provide an important release mechanism that can pacify and incorporate resistance movements before they become revolutionary," Peter Gelderloos tells us in 'Geopolitics for 2024' (one need think only of the anti-police uprising of 2020; see The Siege of the Third Precinct): "But in the US, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, and the UK, rightwing populist electoral victories have

shown that actually, democracy is dangerous to power because it is not total bullshit. Up until now, electoral promises were all rubbish because no new political administration endangered the underlying economic policies of neoliberalism. The technocrats didn't have to worry: their machine would keep humming along.

"Even progressive electoral victories in Greece, Brazil, Argentina, and elsewhere let the capitalists know: nothing to worry about here. And the democratic states have proved capable of dismantling actually fascist movements like Golden Dawn in Greece before they proved too much of a threat. But the rightwing white populists like Trump, Bolsonaro, Orbán, and Johnson not only eroded the functionality of democratic governance, they also threatened the stability of the technocratic status quo, scaring the hell out of investors who had been living in a Candyland made just for them, and they burst the assumed durability of key political formations like the European Union or the US-European alliance."

Today as in 2017, democracy – long capitalism's optimal environment – stands in crisis: but it is not clear that fascism will be capitalism's escape route, as it served in the early 20th Century. Rather, beneath the stew of general reactionary intellectual currents and street movements that are certainly on the boil, what seems to be the mode of operation for actual populist elites is something closer to the kind of crony-capitalism already normalised in large parts of the so-called Global South; translating into what Uri Gordon memorably characterised as "fascist rhetoric and kleptocratic practice," or what we have termed the take-the-money-and-run approach to the problem of governance. In other words, this is the section of the elite with fewest bright ideas for how to save their own sinking system, even as they grasp the controls in more and more places (and 'progressives' fall in line).

But before turning in the discussion below to what more long-term projections might be, it's worth considering how the discussion during the interview of identity is present both in the reac-

mocide. He made no secret that his was one of what Loren Goldner terms *"bourgeois revolutions with red flags,"* as in nearby Vietnam and North Korea, following the defeat of more deeply revolutionary movements on the world stage after World War I: drowned in blood whether revolutions failed (as in Germany, 1918-21) or created new totalitarianisms, such as Stalinism. Once in power, with the landed gentry expropriated and the State strengthened, Mao's regime attacked Vietnam (hosting the US President in Beijing in 1972 during that nation's bombing of North Vietnam), applauded Pinochet's coup in Chile, backed apartheid South Africa's invasion of Angola, courted the far-right in Portugal during the street movement around the fall of the dictatorship there, and even supported the Philippine dictator's bloody war against Maoist insurgents! It is none of these legacies of Maoism to which Andy here gestures, nor to the way modern Maoists operate in social struggles (see Indigenous Anarchist Convergence – Report Back) but rather the methodological origins of Maoism among the peasants. In correspondence, Andy clarified that *"in this context what I was thinking was that they often started out as urban intellectuals who went out to the peasants and used a participatory back-and-forth approach (known as "mass line") to generate a politics which was half theirs and half the peasants' – it took in elements of the peasants' worldview in a back-and-forth dialogue, it didn't just turn up with all the answers like Leninists usually do. So the Zapatistas, in this sense, are still really using a Maoist model in some ways. Maoism also interests me in terms of the subsistence economics aspect, the creation of autonomous base communities which are protected from power both militarily, and through local support for the movement, and because they're remote and difficult to operate in; and in terms of the affective empowerment of the poor which comes with "standing-up", with breaking cultures of dependence and finding a kind of autonomous power. It's also quite interesting how Marxism started in the North, was learnt by a bunch of Southern elite people who then took it back to their countries and made local versions, and that's how Marxism became a global ideology, whereas African peasants haven't heard of Stirner or post-left anarchy. Of course there's a lot of other stuff I find repulsive in Maoism... much of which also finds its way into identity politics, and/or which is now creeping out through imitation of Chinese cybernetic capitalism. (& the question I was thinking about at the time was – well, we have relatively quite a few anarchists in Northern countries and few in the South, and the ones in the South are usually in the small urban middle-class or organised working-class sectors – why don't we have anarchist movements among the real precarised sectors in Southern countries, or among subsistence peasants who are living anarchistically already – instead we either get Maoists, ethnonationalists, Islamists, etc... and I wonder if it's because we haven't learned how to do this Freirean thing yet)."*

point we're looking at something like the 1960's sometime in the fairly near, probably within our lifetime.

But we will see. I mean, at that point we're then talking: will 3-D printing take off?[81] Will robots take off? But we'll see new forms of protest, new forms of political action emerging based on the new opportunity structure, the new technologies and so on. But I think at the moment one the most powerful things people can do is, I think, looking for ways to relieve anxiety through concrete subsistence strategies: things that actually meet people's needs. Trying to find ways to build relationships where people can coexist and relate to one another without having to have this set of norms, just as mutual support. And trying to find ways to relate to the global excluded, who we're really not talking to at the moment; and I think that doesn't mean what the identity politics people are doing (that really is this top 1% or 10% of marginalised groups who are making a bid to get into the global elite). We need to be actually finding out what the people are thinking actually in the ghettos themselves or in the shanty towns or in the peasant communities. And I think that may actually be quite different.

It may be worth thinking about things like something like a Freirean[82] or a Maoist[83] approach: could we kind of recon-

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[81] ed. – Although three-dimensional printers (that use a variety of techniques to melt, assemble and harden materials such as plastic into desired shapes) have been used in some industrial processes for decades, the late '00s have seen their enthusiasts really start fantasising about their potential applications to once again revolutionise and decentralise production. A perhaps unforeseen one is the FGC-9 carbines 3-D printed and widely used by the guerrilla insurgents in Myanmar/Burma, in a broader anti-military regime struggle with some anarchist participation.

[82] ed. – Paulo Freire, Brazilian radical educator; innovated a method of literacy learning via "speaking your own word."

[83] ed. – This needs some more explaining. Mao Zedong came to the head of the Chinese Communist Party, conquering the country at the head of a peasant army in 1949, and subsequently implemented a dispersed form of industrial development in the countryside termed 'The Great Leap Forward' which resulted in tens of millions starving; one of the prime examples of de-

tionary and in the 'progressive' spheres; and how they converge. In April, the essay 'Cultural Identity, Class & Change' noted that "The populist, nationalist right play on people's fear of change, particularly the rapid change that has characterised the period of globalised neo-liberalism that's now coming to an end. In particular, they play on a fear of change that people feel they've absolutely no control over. Paradoxically, that fear of change is shared by pretty much everyone on this planet whose lives have been turned upside down by the adverse impact of globalised neo-liberalism. This ranges from the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa who in the face of increased desertification are forced to become refugees through to the inhabitants of the former mill towns of northern England who have seen the industries that used to provide them with a living exported to locations where workers can be more easily exploited.

"Regardless of what may seem to be massive differences between the peoples involved, they have all been severely disadvantaged by a globalised neo-liberalism that puts profits way ahead of the needs of ordinary people. [...] It should not come as a surprise that some elements in the white working class component of those left behind are starting to become more receptive to the siren voices of the populist, nationalist right. This reactionary political tendency sees cultural identity as something that's pretty much fixed and only changes and evolves slowly." The author connects this with the way in which they say that, in embracing identity politics to the detriment of class politics (we would amend, shifting their exclusive identity politics of class into an exclusive identity politics of race/gender/sexuality/ability etc., but that's another topic...), the Left failed to keep such vital struggles connected to a broader horizon of liberation for all: and in which we are all transformed in the process, without losing our particularity. "The material and social interests of the working class as a whole have been largely subsumed by a politics of identity which the right have co-opted elements of to confer upon the white working class. A united response to the depredations

of a failing globalised neo-liberalism becomes an impossibility to achieve as the populist right completes the process of fragmentation inadvertently started by some elements of the left. So when a section of the white working class feel they have been left behind and are powerless to influence the forces that are changing their lives, they will be receptive to those political elements who promise them stability, self respect and so on."

Importantly, the author goes on to point out how this is not just unsoldidaristic but self-defeating: "While an embittered section of the white working class may well buy into the notion that their cultural identity is more or less fixed and has to be defended [ed. – see Lies of the Land], they fail to see how that has the potential to be turned against them. It cannot be overstated that the populist, nationalist right sees the white working class as something to be used for their own cynical ends. Which is why the notion of cultural identity as something that's fixed being one that could also be applied to class differences always seems to get overlooked. Which is a surprise given the eugenicist literature that says class differences are more or less immutable and that if society is to 'progress', the lower classes should be 'discouraged' from 'breeding'.

"Traditional conservatives claim that cultures do not mix successfully and that different peoples are best left to get on with their own affairs. This stems from the assumption that culture is a relatively fixed characteristic of any given society and one that only evolves slowly. The same argument has been used by some conservatives to justify the continuance of class divisions, hence their making efforts to depict class as something that's more or less immutable with only some being deemed capable of making an upward move out of their class. Obviously, it is a rare conservative who will explicitly state such open prejudice – most will choose a form of language that either implies or sows the seed of a notion in peoples' minds that there's a natural and unchanging aspect to class divisions. This Guardian report (12 May 2009) – 'Don't say I was wrong' – cites an example of how these no-

Roman Empire,[79] and it's happened a few times in history in different places.

Now, if that happens, the potential is going to be... it may be that *bolo'bolo*[80] was just fifty years too early. Maybe that will be what happens if we have a collapse like that. That's the optimistic version; the pessimistic version is just that the capitalists will want to hold on or the states will want to hold on and they all end up nuking each other and everyone will die... but let's hope not. Or, we get this Chinese-centred world economy, we get an upturn and then we go through... at which

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[79] ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg76

[80] ed. – "[An] open utopia is the vision of an alternative society forwarded in the book *bolo'bolo* by the Zurich-based author P.M. This book not only acknowledges but treasures the type of instability and diversity of social relations that can be ushered in by the removal of all external control on the behaviour of individuals and groups. The world anti-system called *bolo'bolo* is a mosaic in which every community (*bolo*) of around five hundred residents is as nutritionally self-sufficient as possible, and has complete autonomy to define its ethos or 'flavour' (*nima*). Stability is afforded by a minimal but universal social contract (*sila*), enforced by reputation and interdependence. This contract guarantees, for example, that every individual (*ibu*) can at any time leave their native bolo, and is entitled to one day's rations (*yalu*) and housing (*gano*), as well as to medical treatment (*bete*), at any *bolo*. It even suggests a duel code (*yaka*) to solve disputes. However, *"There are no humanist, liberal or democratic laws or rules about the content of nimas and there is no State to enforce them. Nobody can prevent a bolo from committing mass suicide, dying of drug experiments, driving itself into madness or being unhappy under a violent regime. Bolos with a bandit-nima could terrorize whole regions or continents, as the Huns or Vikings did. Freedom and adventure, generalized terrorism, the law of the club, raids, tribal wars, vendettas, plundering – everything goes."* While not all anarchists would want to go that far, the point here is that any anarchist orientation which looks to the absence of law and authority must also anticipate a great deal of diversity in the way in which communities choose to self-organize socially and economically. Furthermore, the commitment to unfettered diversity must lead anarchists to respond to the possibility of a re-emergence of patterns of domination within and/or among communities, even if at a certain point in time they have been consciously overcome" (Anarchism Reloaded).

nese politics has certain characteristics which are in common with new managerialism, Third Way, and identity politics: that weird combination of a government that can be extremely repressive but generally lets things tick along, this kind of weird mix of managerial control-freakery with performed humility.) But it also might just be a kind of diffuse form of power based on global cities all over the world where you just lose centre: the centres are just the global cities.

But if that doesn't happen, we're going into a Dark Age. And that actually is good news for anarchists. Because what it means is we're going to see decentralisation, we're going to see major structures falling apart or grinding to a halt, localised alternatives reappearing, increase in linguistic diversity. We're going to see ruralisation, people moving out of cities rather than into cities: basically what happened after the end of the

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ing China's practice of predatory lending, unloading cheap loans for largely unnecessary infrastructure on poor countries in Africa and the rest of the Global South, and then appropriating their entire public sector, their resources, and their future earnings when they can't pay back the debts. The *New York Times* describes Chinese debt bondage in Malaysia and lauds the local government for supposedly standing up to the practice. They go so far as to speak of "a new version of colonialism." There's nothing inaccurate about this: there has only been one century out of the last twenty (1839-1949) when China wasn't an active colonial or imperial power with its own brand of ethnic superiority. Colonialism has taken many forms in addition to the particular race paradigm that evolved in the Triangular Trade of the Atlantic. A truly global anti-colonial practice cannot be limited to a Eurocentric understanding of race or a simplistic opposition that places all whites on one side and all people of color homogeneously on the other. What is in fact inaccurate about the hand-wringing of the *New York Times* is that this "new version of colonialism" was developed by the United States in the decades immediately after World War II. Anyone familiar with the critiques of the anti- and alter-globalization movement knows that it was the Bretton Woods institutions created in the US that pioneered the practice of debt bondage and appropriation of public infrastructure. The corporate media is apparently hoping everyone has forgotten about those critiques by now. If this too-late, too-hollow concern is the best that the proponents of Western democracy can whip up, the contest is lost already" (Diagnostic of the Future).

tions can be sown with this utterance from a former chief schools inspector, Chris Woodhead, on the issue of social class and life chances: "I think it would be unlikely that large numbers of grammar school kids would come from those disadvantaged areas - the genes are likely to be better if your parents are teachers, academics, lawyers, whatever. And the nurture is likely to be better."

[...] We're facing a future where technology and automation has the potential to destroy millions of jobs [ed. – in places, this future is already here: see 'An Opening']. [...] With the ruling elites pondering on how to accommodate millions upon millions of people who have no useful role in the automated world they rule over, the notion that the poor are poor because of their chromosomes will be incredibly useful for them..."

This is, of course, where an anarchist proposal of self-creation and expansive rather than immutable identity (while, as we wrote in our introduction to Lies of the Land in this double-issue, not neglecting the particularity of culture) offers another horizon. (It's important to note however that automation has not so far led to a reduction of the human labour force on any global level, but rather – as a State necessity for social control – a corresponding expansion of other sectors with which to keep people productive; see Return Fire vol.5 pg9.) But, in the meantime, while for the first time since the birth of neo-liberalism the capitalist class does not have a consensus on how to operate, it is at precisely this juncture of the new technological impositions where the more intelligent and hence dangerous parts of the elites (the 'progressives') may find another solution; even potentially accommodated by the otherwise-rightwards lurch if necessary.

The same year as the below interview, the text 'Long Term Resistance: Fighting Trump & Liberal Co-option' stated that "robotics threaten the social contract by undermining the historic point of unity between the capitalist logic of accumulation and the statist logic of social control: control people and profit off of them by putting them to work. Any solution to that crisis would require bold interventions by the State approaching some

kind of utopian yet corporate socialism (a prediction that was already made in 2009, that socialism would not result from the development of productive capacities, as Marx foretold [ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg11], but rather repressive capacities, once the State had the techniques to surveille and control those who were no longer kept in line by the threat of hunger) [ed. – see 'A New Relation with Social Conflicts'].

[…] The leftist (as opposed to anarchist or indigenous) portion of the anti-globalization movement made a similar error. Rather than spreading deep critiques of capitalism and the State, everyone from progressives to Negrists [ed. – see 'Our Anarchy Lives'] to anti-imperialists focused their attacks on neoliberalism. This was a way for unrepentant Marxists to avoid coming to terms with historical errors, for NGOs to make fundraising appeals without sounding like Marxists, and for elitists from the Global South to play the role of victim, casting capitalism as a purely US or European phenomenon. A chief part of this narrative was how neoliberalism violated the sovereignty of poor countries through unfair trade deals. This rhetoric is now coming back to bite the Left in the ass, with the election of a new crop of world leaders who are pro-capitalist but not neoliberal. In a greater irony, the protectionist discourse of the Left actually becomes more effective when paired with the xenophobic discourse of the Right. In the media, "anti-globalization" now means Alt-Right. So many years of mobilizations, Social Forums, and making puppets, down the drain.

[…] Given the lack of unity among capitalists, it is no surprise that Trump enjoys mixed support from the owning class. Some have recently suggested that Trump's [first] presidency represents "a victory for those sectors of capital worst at valorising themselves." Not surprisingly, articles expressing such a view are short on examples, because the argument is overly simplistic, as all positions tend to be that present politics as the mere manifestation of the needs of Capital. To be precise, Trump has significant support from the manufacturing, defense, energy, real estate, and

haven't heard of these things (or they have heard of these things but only marginally), but the significance is not really understood because it gets put in these narratives of either traditional Left or identity politics, which really it isn't.

There is a possibility... I mean, there's a couple of ways the global system could go from here. It's at a downturn of a downturn. I'm not going to try to explain Kondratiev-wave theory[75] at the moment, but basically it's in a crisis point where the system is going to have to resource-substitute, find a new organising model and new energy source, and new form of technology that is going to be the boom for the next stage if it's going to survive. And it is that question mark at the moment, we don't know if it will survive or not. If it does, what we're going to have is a shift in hegemon, because that's generally what happens:[76] it could be China,[77] in which that whole colonial situation is sort of shaken up.[78] (China by the way: Chi-

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housing shortage is one symptom, to a simple question of a housing backlog and to measure progress via the number [of] "housing opportunities" it "delivers". But one of the most common reasons for protests is outright rejection of forced removals from well-located shacks to peripheral housing developments or "transit camps". […] It is therefore hardly helpful to assume that protests against forced removals and housing developments that leave people homeless are a demand for more efficient "delivery"."

[75] ed. – Named for Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratiev; posits cycle-like phenomena in the modern world economy, linked with the 'life-cycle' of technologies.

[76] ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg11

[77] ed. – "Europe – long a valuable container for cultural and political legitimacy, given the white supremacy at the heart of the world system *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg 89]* – has for the first time in nearly a century had to consider its separate interests, and this is already showing up in a markedly different approach towards China. In the US, the political elite already consider China an adversary worthy of a new Cold War, whereas in Europe, China is considered a partially reliable strategic partner. If something does not change quickly, the US will be relegated to the same status" (Geopolitics for 2024).

[78] ed. – "In response to growing economic competition in Africa, long reserved as Europe's "backyard," article after article has appeared bemoan-

very anarchistic projects. We might refer to the Zapatistas,[72] we might refer to El Alto in Bolivia, this city that is basically self-managed by community assemblies. We might refer to the West Papuan struggle,[73] service delivery protests in South Africa...[74] There's so many examples. And a lot of people

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[72] ed. – see "It Was Wartime"

[73] ed. – see 'Let the Fire Light Up the Liberation of West Papua'

[74] ed. – A series of rebellions touching on access to water, electricity, housing, refuse removal, healthcare, education, etc. denied to residents of the black shantytowns created during the European-inherited apartheid racial segregation system, in what 30 years after the end of apartheid is still one of societies world-wide with that largest gap between the rich and the poor, although some of the rich are now racialised after the State's Black Economic Empowerment if anything increased that gap further while driving down corporation tax. Now, for a whole generation (that has only seen State spending on services decline to appease international capitalist speculators), the hope for a better life post-apartheid lies in shreds, while bordered by unattainable luxury in the suburbs. However, as Richard Pithouse has noted, it is the model profered of 'development' itself which is often at stake in these movements: *"The African National Congress (ANC) has responded to the new surge in popular protest with the same patrician incomprehension under Jacob Zuma as it did under Thabo Mbeki. It has not understood that people do not take to the streets against a police force as habitually brutal as ours without good cause. Government statements about the virtues of law and order, empty rhetoric about its willingness to engage, and threats to ensure zero tolerance of "anarchy" only compound the distance between the state and the faction of its people engaged in open rebellion. [...] A key barrier towards elite understanding of the five-year hydra-like urban rebellion is that protests are more or less uniformly labelled as "service delivery protests". This label is well suited to those elites who are attracted to the technocratic fantasy of a smooth and post-political developmental space in which experts engineer rational development solutions from above. Once all protests are automatically understood to be about a demand for "service delivery" they can be safely understood as a demand for more efficiency from the current development model rather than any kind of challenge to that model. Of course, many protests have been organised around demands for services within the current development paradigm and so there certainly are instances in which the term has value. But the reason why the automatic use of the term "service delivery protest" obscures more than it illuminates is that protests are often a direct challenge to the post-apartheid development model. Disputes around housing are the chief cause of popular friction with the state. The state tends to reduce the urban crisis, of which the*

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finance sectors, some of which are facing a valorization crisis, others of which are not. These are companies with a relatively stable place in the economy, led by extremely wealthy people who trust that the deregulation Trump champions will make their lives easier and their fortunes greater. Their position as cornerstones of the leading world economy, which they have held for decades, makes them feel immune to the rising insecurity. The global scale of their customer base and operations will help them weather any trade wars that Trump provokes. And many of them don't have to be terribly worried about tariffs and immigration bans because the aforementioned decentralization of capitalist production means they have been starting to relocate manufacturing closer to their consumers. Even before the elections, some of these companies were expanding their production within the US, cutting their labor costs below even the sweatshop level by roboticizing entire factories [ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg9]. Since Trump has been loudly blaming immigrants and taking the focus off new technologies, they know they will get a free pass from popular anger over the new forms of exploitation they are using."

So-called *"Artificial Intelligence"* is another such field (see *Leaving the SPVM Behind to Attack a High-Tech Hub*), and one which Trump has now granted huge State funds towards to please the newly-loyal Silicon Valley moguls (as well as the oil, gas and coal magnates – and, why not, wind and solar, often the same companies and depending on the same extractive processes – due to see world-wide production ramp up to fuel the hungry data centres; see *The Cryptoliberal Creep*). The recent article 'Good Night Tech Right' states that *"[b]eyond the increasing financial and environmental costs, accelerated AI production also means creating technologies that by the admission of their own creators, will automate out of existence many jobs – and not just white-collar ones. Many fast-food chains are already working to automate out their workforce through AI, from drive through windows to inside the restaurants themselves. This reality creates a paradox: Trump barely squeaked out a win in 2024*

through weaponizing growing resentment against neoliberalism; an economic system defined by corporate globalization and a declining standard of living. But as Forbes wrote, "[A]utomation technology has been the primary driver of U.S. income inequality over the past 40 years...50% to 70% of changes in U.S. wages since 1980 can be attributed to wage declines among blue-collar workers replaced or degraded by automation." The push by Trump to fuel the growth of AI will of course only accelerate this reality. In short, the Bannonite fantasy [ed. – see Lies of the Land] of "America First" is simply snake-oil: let's call it for what it is, neoliberalism coming home to roost." Despite the UK government's recent declaration in face of economic slump that it will turn these isles into another AI powerhouse (as if that ship hadn't already sailed, leaving the business sewn up by China and the US), ironically, Britain itself could be relegated to an extractive frontier as it diminishes in stature on the world stage, with AI implimentation – in data centres, middle management, HR departments, etc. – leading to profits for automated services being skimmed off by the foreign multinationals rather than circulating in the UK, similar to we already see with PayPal but at scale.

Here, it is useful to determine in which ways up until now the break with the neo-liberal model is occuring beyond rhetoric alone. Funnily enough, once again there's an echo of an anti-globalisation era slogan from the liberal wing, demanding 'Fair Trade Not Free Trade'. Returning to 'Long Term Resistance': "While Trump is departing sharply from the neoliberal dream of the world as one large free trade area, he is by no means against free trade. To understand that, we need to acknowledge that free trade is no more free than the free market. It is simply a euphemism for a highly regulated arrangement designed to increase trade volume. This can be achieved through the multilateral agreements [and the global institutions] that were hallmarks of neoliberal politics, or it can achieved through the bilateral trade agreements that Trump is promoting. In

built. So yeah, you see that kind of opening in that period. And then the rejection of Nazism within Europe then empowers anti-colonialism, that's one of the things... There's a definite relationship there.

T.B.: I mean I guess the other part of that relationship, though, that is worth mentioning, is that it became more and more difficult to manage resources from so far away as the world got smaller. And that's actually a thing that I don't think we're talking about much in this conversation, which is the fact that the Western colonial powers that as it so happens are still in charge... What does the next anti-colonial struggle look like, and to what extent is there a periphery that's no longer being maintained particularly well? And one place that isn't happening is Africa, as an example. Right now Africa is being pulled in three or four different directions by all the resource extraction happening there, and it sort of seems like that part of this conversation (which is a meta conversation about capitalism) does seem pretty different from what we're talking about in the context of exclusion in the anarchist space. But I'm curious if as a way to close this, you could connect them and do a wrap-up.

Andy: Obviously there is this huge... what I referred to earlier as the surplus population or the excluded is this massive layer (I'm not sure if it's the majority or a large minority, but this is a lot of people)...

T.B.: Oh, I think it's the majority of the planet.

Andy: There's not that many of them in the Global North, and they don't look the way that either the traditional Left or the identity politicians expect them to look. And so there's not actually been that much anarchist work done with them. But we have seen coming from those groups themselves some

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out of Communist Parties, after finding out that they had devoted decades of their lives to a lie."

ing did not clarify itself for another twenty years. And that is a terrifying lesson to take away from today, when it does feel like these modes of thought that we're talking about seem extremely dominant, extremely... like they've rationalised all comers.

Andy: That is another element of it I think: people who've lived through... first off, you're coming out of World War Two, the narrative of progress has been shattered because of the Holocaust...

T.B.: ...and the bomb.

Andy: Yeah, the atomic bomb. And you're in this Cold War that never seems to end. Communism then gets kind of discredited when Secret Speech and Stalin's crimes get admitted;[71] that increasingly undermines that closure that the Stalinists

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anti-terrorism policies as a way to control subversives, first in Germany and Spain, later in the US. Exceptionalism under democracy proves to work both ways. Whatever threatens it is perceived to be a danger of unique proportions, both in the eyes of rulers and subjects. Even people who are supposedly critical of democracy see fascism as something infinitely worse, momentarily forgetting that fascism is currently a tool of democracy and even in its heyday, from 1922-1945, fascism was a tool of the same class of people who elsewhere were using democracy to pursue their interests. By portraying fascism as exceptional, the defenders of democracy can obscure the root of the problem" (Long Term Resistance: Fighting Trump & Liberal Co-option).

[71] ed. – Reference to the speech by new head of the Soviet Union, as Loren Goldner recounts: *"World Stalinism was rocked in 1956 by a series of events: the Hungarian Revolution, in which the working class again established workers' councils before it was crushed by Russian intervention; the Polish "October," in which a worker revolt brought to power a "reformed" Stalinist leadership. These uprisings were preceded by Khruschev's speech to the twentieth Congress of world Communist Parties, in which he revealed many of Stalin's crimes, including the massacre of between five to ten million peasants during the collectivizations of the early 1930s. There were many crimes he did not mention, since he was too implicated in them, and the purpose of his speech was to salvage the Stalinist bureaucracy while disavowing Stalin himself. This was the beginning of "peaceful co-existence" between the Soviet bloc and the West, but the revelations of Stalin's crimes and the worker revolts in eastern Europe (following the 1953 worker uprising in East Germany) were the beginning of the end of the Stalinist myth. Bitterly disillusioned militants all over the world walked*

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theory, the former require that everyone follow the same set of rules (though the European Union, for example, assigned very specific economic roles to different member states, allowing core members to protect industries that peripheral members were forced to de-subsidize). This means that the rules will reflect the interests of the multinational corporations that operate throughout the entirety of the economic area. In the past, those interests were synonymous with the interests of the US and its NATO allies, since all the multinationals of note were North American or Western European. But over time, the benefits began to generalize to the capitalists of all countries.

"A second tipping point away from neoliberalism is political in nature. Neoliberalism was doomed by the institutional primacy of state power over financial power. A globalized economy needs a global state to regulate it, but power-holders are still firmly national. Their worldviews and interests are developed at the national level, and nearly all their institutional handles pertain to nation-states. In a shortsighted maneuver to maintain their own chauvinistic supremacy, US conservatives gutted the UN – the potential world government – and therefore sabotaged the very world order they put in motion after WWII.

"While all other politicians were inclined to adhere to a neoliberal strategy that immensely benefited the US but allowed US supremacy to slowly slip away, Trump is making a gamble. The US is no longer the number one global producer, but it is still the largest consumer, meaning it has a unique bargaining position: every country wants access to the US market. If Trump can encourage "free trade" that privileges US interests, he can maintain the US position as global economic leader and maybe even recover the number one manufacturing spot (not by saving factory jobs, of course, but by subsidizing an expansion of robotic labor)."

So, if this isn't enough to stabilise a US-led capitalism, what form might it turn to next to survive? "Obviously," continues 'Long Term Resistance', "none of us know the future, and nothing appears on earth that does not eventually disappear. Democracy

will not last forever. So let's entertain for a moment the scenario that it will come to an end in the next decade. A crisis of social control could certainly spell the end of democracy. While its specific strategies change over time, the State persists, and its fundamental logic is of social control. Whither will it go?

"*I find it hard to believe that the model for institutional evolution will be the fascist dictatorships of the 20th century for two reasons: one technological and the other systemic. In the age of nanotechnology and the internet of things [ed. – see supplement to Return Fire vol.3; Smarter Prison?], dictatorship is not political, it is material. What's more, in the pendulum of progress and popular resistance, entire populations do actually become inoculated against certain strategies of state power. Individual institutions tend to hammer down resistance, but systems, as they evolve, seek out the path of least resistance, and their movements are guided by the mentalities of all their members. The figure of the dictator has a bad rep. Though we have not succeeded in revolution, we have at least succeeded in rescuing common sense from the authoritarian ideologies of the past millennia; a vast majority of people are once again distrustful of anyone with a great deal of power. Any system that chooses a political strategy of dictatorship will face a legitimacy crisis from day one.*

"*Though the ideological hardcore of the Alt Right is neoreactionary, which is to say they support a dictator, I think the evolutionary usefulness of a populist strongman like Trump is in shaking up a decaying system and forcing experts to articulate the crisis of democracy. He himself is not a model for the way forward. The model will be technocratic states like China that are weathering the economic crisis better than the US, and proving to be politically more stable. The big question, then, is whether a crisis of social control will also become a factor: will popular uprisings threaten power? In that case, which method is more effective at controlling them – authoritarian liquidation or democratic recuperation? If the latter, one-state China will fail as a potential model, and the West will have the opportunity to draw on its*

Stalinist, or you're a Nazi, or you're a social democrat (which also becomes increasingly closed); and the anarchists either get kind of shunted out, killed...

T.B.: Yeah, they get clobbered, one side or the other... Sure.

Andy: What eventually brings this down is when we get to the '60s and we start to have... we've got people who've been growing up under this system who are like "actually, this is not very nice; this is existentially..."

T.B.: ...sucks!

Andy: ...sucks. And who start trying to do something different. It's a different context to now. I mean, we're talking maybe the context we'll be in twenty years time or thirty years time might be like that, but...

T.B.: ...but you're saying that basically all the pressure and the constraint at some point just pushed the kids into saying "fuck this" and rejecting the squares and the parents.

Andy: Yeah, I think it may be when they were actually getting kind of the success when they were able to get the American dream and they're like "actually it's not that brilliant." But I think probably... I'm a bit lost as to the way to do it now; we need to find a way to make people basically less anxious and less hyper-sensitive about other people.

T.B.: I do think a little bit about the... At the end of World War Two, people who were paying attention to the extent that which perhaps we're paying attention today must have been miserable. Because basically the "victory" that happened was no ideological victory, it was just a victory of illusion; and the fact that so much of the German machine got taken up by the prominent powers of the time,[70] and that the think-

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[70] ed. – "Fascist jurisprudence – and to a large extent its social organization – works on the principle of a state of exception *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg5]*. In fact, this was one of the main contributions that fascism made to the post-war democracies, alongside rocket scientists and security apparatuses in Italy and Greece. Democracy took the state of exception, not as a general legal principle but as an exceptional one, and worked it into its

anarcho-syndicalism, little Nietzschean projects going on,[68] drop-out culture, theosophy,[69] all these kinds of things. And then a lot of it gets closed down and put into Stalinism. And that then becomes the big thing; you're a closed-minded

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Netherlands, few council communist organisations survived the rise of the Nazis, despite a brief resurgence in 1960s France, Italy and Germany.

[68] ed. – "Although there are differences (certainly in terms of terminology), there are also broad compatibilities between the Nietzschean and anarchist perspectives because both – although Nietzsche would have denied this point – are of the "party of life." Both see that radical psychosocial transformation can only be effectuated through "necessary wars," whatever the nature of those conflicts might be. Both recognise that a higher "breeding" (or human development, in anarchist terms) can only come about through the destruction of limits (power) and the eradication of parasitic elements (or the entire ensemble of State and Capital, in anarchist terms). And both acknowledge that only through such a process can there come about the conditions for creating a superfluity of life which in turn is capable of generating the Dionysian condition (or anarchy, in anarchist terms)" (Attentat Art: Anarchism & Nietzsche's Aesthetics).

[69] ed. – An international philosophical system significantly popularising interpreted Eastern religious knowledge to the West (and with the effect of encouraging cultural pride in South Asia), linked with the occult revival in late 19th Century Europe. *"The theosophy of Helena Pavlova Blavatsky (1831–1891),"* writes Erica Lagalisse, *"which intrigued many anarchists, involves a teleology of divine evolution represented by successive "root races" and whose finality was cosmic union. Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), a Theosophist and anarchist himself, also admired Fedorov (1828–1903) who wrote that the common task of humanity was to use science to resurrect its dead fathers from particles scattered in cosmic dust. [C]ontemporaries of both Fedorov and Tolstoy during the Russian occult revival [posited] a "mystical anarchism" that equated political revolution with realignment in the cosmic sphere. In England, union organizer and early feminist Annie Besant, who organized women match-makers [was] inspired [by theosophy] to fight for Home Rule in India[...] [S]piritualists and mediums of all kinds, who were disproportionately women, were led by their spiritual views to engage the "social question". [...] Not every anarchist was a theosophist or enamoured with the occult. Emma Goldman, for example, wrote an entirely scathing account of Krishnamurti's arrival in America as the supposed Theosophical avatar. However, the fact that Goldman's Mother Earth and a variety of other anarchist periodicals bothered to criticize Theosophy at all should tell us something – nothing is forbidden unless enough people are doing it in the first place."*

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own technocratic traditions. Imagine a multi-party democracy in which politicians recommend policy guidelines based on electoral mandate, but it is the technocrats in Central Banks and related institutions (governing everything from environmental protection to gender relations to the borders) that draft and implement the actual policies. As Artificial Intelligence comes to play an increasing role, first in stock exchanges and currency markets, later in public health, environmental protection, traffic and transportation, immigration metrics, and so on, society will learn to accept the figure of the neutral, perfected, trustworthy technocrat."

Now, even as the Alt-Right revives on the street as its ideas find advocates within the very corridors of US power, it is precisely such a hybrid techno-democracy which could find its synthesis on a global level (though there as also serious limitations to such a model: see Capitalism & Electrification). But we are not in the business of making hard-and-fast predictions. Either way, in our daily struggles today we must still contend with the neo-liberal-derived exclusion described below (off-set as it is by the crumbs of belonging the populists offer the included) married with the cybernetic capitalist model which emerges, is referenced below, and which both a recommended second interview with Andy available at thebrilliant.org (#89) and Cybernetic Mommy Milkers in this double-issue of Return Fire describe. And either way, against the techno-industrial nightmare which has killed off over half mammal species on the planet since the start of neo-liberalism, we pose the need for what has been called a 'luddite artisanry' (see Return Fire vol.5 pg10), regaining land and freedom.]

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T.B.: Welcome to The Brilliant podcast, this is around episode fifty eight. This is/should be the last in our ongoing series on exclusion within the anarchist space; although I have a feeling that this is going to be an ongoing topic of interest. Today I'm in a long-distance phone conversation with Andy. How are you doing Andy?

Andy: I'm doing OK thank you, just in the middle of a big research project at the moment on existentialism, but taking some time off on that to revisit some stuff I've worked on before about exclusion both in anarchism and in neo-liberal capitalism,[1] in the current stage of capitalism in particular.

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[1] ed. – "A quick glance at the history of capitalist development shows that the oldest and most common technology of domination at work is forceful and traumatic conquest. This is most obvious in the colonised world, e.g., Africa, where millions were enslaved, and the Americas, where in places the vast majority of the population was wiped out. In 16th and 17th century England too, and across Europe, land enclosure was brutally enforced with clearances and dispossessions *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg55]*. Enclosures were vigorously resisted, from local acts of sabotage and disobedience through to major uprisings. The use of overwhelming force to create and maintain markets is by no means over. At the most "macro" scale, we can see this clearly in the continuing history of interventions in the service of property by both state and mercenary armed forces. Just to take the most obvious example, since the end of the second world war US government agencies and sub-contractors have carried out a constant stream of overt and covert armed interventions overseas, often justified in the name of anti-communism or, more recently, of the "War on Terror". US foreign policy serves to support business by removing or terrorising governments and populations that threaten existing markets or resist the development of new ones. Naomi Klein's (2007) study of "shock treatment" in the recent "neoliberal" phase of capitalist expansion makes an interesting contribution here. Neoliberalism can be fairly well understood, as its proponents such as the Chicago School economists avow, in terms of a return to "classical liberal" laissez-faire practices after the post-war interregnum of Keynesian "social liberalism" *[ed. – see 'The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping at All"']*. The core project, as presented by intellectual leaders such as Milton Friedman and political leaders from Pinochet to Thatcher, was to return to market control (privatise) areas of economic life that had become organised by state structures. But state controlled resources represent just one rich source of profitable commodification. Other important sources in recent decades have been the creation of new "emerging markets" in the "developing world" and former Soviet bloc; and of massively expanded financial markets built on consumer credit bubbles and the "innovation" of new financial instruments involving securitisation and derivatives. Klein argues that this wave of market expansion is characterised by the systematic use of 'fear and disorder', of 'moments of collective trauma', as 'catalysts for each new leap forward'. She traces this pattern from the experiment of the 1973

tion within the system.[66] Secondly, we need this tolerance of low-level nuisance and the fact that we're around people who are different from us, who've got their own will, who've had different lives: that's going to be sometimes… people aren't always going to understand one another. People are going to say things that are insensitive. People aren't going to have the same norms. And we need to develop networks of dispersed power; we need this kind of web of rhizomes where people are quite happy to… maybe some people will have to group with people who share their particular set of triggers and have to avoid certain things, but we're able to connect those groups without it turning into an antagonistic competition of "you have to do it exactly my way or else you're racist, you're sexist…".

T.B.: But it does seem like you're referring to what I would call an existential leap. Speak to your thoughts as to how that would happen…

Andy: …How you do it. I think what's holding this together… If you look at what happened last time; because in some ways we're living through this re-run of the '30s. We're living through a re-run of what happened to the Left. What happened basically if you look at the 1920s, you'd got this huge outpouring of everything from council communism,[67]

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[66] ed. – While this is certainly true of aspirational neo-liberal identity politics (see Follow the Fires), it does not hold for all identity: we are not so sure there is any escape from that per se; see 'A Question that Will Never be Solved'.

[67] ed. – A strain developed following the debacle of the Russian Revolution's capture by the Bolshevik party, and especially after the latter openly announced State Capitalism as the economic policy; it promotes working-class organisation in the councils (soviets, in Russian) which organised many strikes in that experience, outside of unions, and recognising that in the post-WWI world parliamentary efforts were unlikely to lead to gains. Strongly criticised by its enemies such as Lenin (see 'It Depends on All of Us'), it was essentially a non-State socialism. Largely a current in Germany and the

ton), but it was really, like, "anarchism doesn't do this". It's only (strangely enough) once the Blairites are actually out of power and then this wave of 2011 fizzles out, you then start to get people bringing this in to anarchist spaces. And they're quite often younger people and they're quite often people who've grown up with this idea "security matters more than freedom; I'm not safe; there's all these threats around me: and all these little things that threaten me are actually little precursors or elements of these huge things, so we have to have zero tolerance on using bad words because there isn't a difference really between using bad words and killing someone or raping someone."[65]

T.B.: What's to be done?

Andy: What we really need to do is find a way to revive those types of affect that are the ones that underpin what I was calling the bunds (or maybe we'll say friendship, the whatever-singularity). We need to find ways to reconnect people on the basis of, first off, making that step of rejecting the system, which identity politics doesn't do: it's all competi-

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[65] ed. – Another aspect of this completely counter-liberatory quick recourse to ostracism (see 'Between Punishment & Vengeance') relates, says Peter Gelderloos responding to commentators, to class: *"I think it's a fairly common analysis that people who grow up within systems of power and oppression learn and reproduce certain ways of being that can invisibly support oppressive power dynamics, do damage to movements, or harm those around them. One of those dynamics is the behavior that (upper) middle class people typically learn with regard to conflict. If they don't unlearn it, we can see a huge entitlement to space, a belief that they are entitled to zones of comfort, and a belief that people are disposable. This is related to growing up farther away from the frontlines of the prison system and without much daily violence, and with the privilege of not having to rely on imperfect people or damaged relationships for their survival. This practice of treating people like they're disposable means giving up on relationships that are no longer convenient. Ironically, that often means being quick to cancel those who have caused harm but also ghosting people who are suffering from trauma, marginalizing differently abled and crazy people, or vaguely labelling as "problematic" people who make them uncomfortable (and it often turns out their discomfort stems from class or race privilege)."*

T.B.: Well that's exciting because, the conversations up until now have mostly been about personal experience, and so I'm definitely hoping to round this out with a bit for of a theoretical

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Chilean coup, in which Pinochet's US-backed forces imposed a state of terror that was immediately followed up with an economic 'second shock', a raft of simultaneous privatisation and price liberalisation measures, to Iraq's case of 'shock and awe' assault followed by an attempted corporate takeover. However, military terror is only one way to create an exploitable collective trauma: for example, a natural disaster will also serve, as seen in the way that Hurricane Katrina *[ed. – see 'The Utopia We Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark']* was immediately seized on as an opportunity for radical reform of local housing, education and other government services. To summarise: *'This is how the shock doctrine works: the original disaster – the coup, the terrorist attack, the market meltdown, the war, the tsunami, the hurricane – puts the entire population into a state of collective shock. ... Like the terrorized prisoner who gives up the names of his comrades and renounces his faith, shocked societies often give up things they would otherwise fiercely protect.'* A still more current example is the effective exploitation of the 2008 credit crisis by the very neoliberal formations responsible for precipitating the collapse. The immediate aftermath of the credit crunch saw a backlash against deregulated finance, with talk of a "return to Keynes", or even a "return to Marx" *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg9]*. But this proved short-lived: in fact the outcome was a political movement towards austerity in Europe and other rich regions, not a retreat but an escalation of marketisation. [...] In Nietzsche's *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg52]* story, after the masters inflict the original trauma, the priests appear with pseudo-therapeutic 'remedies' to assuage the suffering, but which in fact create further weakening and dependence. This is exactly the pattern we find in Klein's account of the 'shock doctrine'. The identities of 'masters' and 'priests', those who apply 'noble' or 'priestly' tactics, is only a secondary question. In Judith Herman's discussions of domestic captivity, the abuser is also the beloved partner. In austerity politics, the same politicians who helped crash the system are back to inflict austerity. In contemporary crisis capitalism the same outsourcing corporations often provide the full range of functions from disaster to disaster relief. In other cases, though, causing damage and offering remedies may be independent roles, perhaps played by individuals and groups with quite distinct forms of life, who may even see themselves as antagonists. So: on the one hand the soldiers and cops; on the other the NGOs, educators, reformers, social workers, who reset the broken limbs and build the new norms. On the one hand the hard right, the hawks; on the other the liberals, the doves, the Left. Both have clear roles to play" (Nietzsche & Anarchy).

context. So tell me a little bit about your interest, insofar as you're researching this topic?

Andy: Well, I've come at this kind of topic from a number of different angles. One of them is the question of... is it possible and how is it possible to have forms of social life which are not based on the types of constitutive exclusion which are fundamental is hierarchical systems. Because in a hierarchical system you always have the division between, the conformist and the deviant; the people who are living by the system's norms and the people who aren't. And anarchism aspires to be something that doesn't do that. Even if in practice it often falls short, but I think to a degree it's able to do without those forms of exclusion because of the structure it's based on.

Now, I also come to the question in terms of the position of the excluded within... Why is it that we have people who feel they're excluded from mainstream society, who are attracted to ideas like anarchism? And also the question of the ways in which exclusion has kind of reappeared in anarchist spaces (or intensified in anarchist spaces) recently because of political shifts, possibly derived from the wider context...

T.B.: Well you're racing ahead! Just to respond to the first point you were making, are you deriving your conversation around exclusion (or I guess the formation of society) sort of as a post-primitivist[2] set of conversations or from a pre-primitivist... in other words, anarchism obviously had a hundred years of existence before primitivism came onto the stage. Where was the history as far as you were concerned of where a non-exclusionary space existed in the theoretical constructs of anarchism prior to primitivism?

Andy: Fairly clearly in Stirner...[3] I mean, Stirner is very much opposed to the idea of values attached to particular cat-

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[2] ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg92
[3] ed. – see Return Fire vol.5 pg18

eryone relies on the discretion of the power-holder to turn a blind eye to the rule they're breaking or to make these discretionary grey-area judgments in their direction. Which leads to massive discretionary punishment-by-process, managerial bullying, huge power to just blackmail people.[63]

T.B.: But this is at the heart of policing mentalities from day one. I mean, an anarchist who doesn't have a critique of this: they're not an anarchist, basically.

Andy: It's always been going on; I think it's probably been intensified. I'd say this horizontal policing, this attempt to conscript the civilian population into acting as unpaid police under threat of being held indirectly responsible or liable for something someone else has done that they've failed to prevent or failed to report: that I think has been brought over into anarchist spaces.[64] And this is really quite new; this has only really been happening in Britain for the last perhaps 3 or 4 years *[at the time of the interview]*. Up until then, it was like, anarchist spaces: this does not happen. It happens in Blairite spaces (you know, the Third Way, what would be like our version of Clin-

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[63] ed. – Basically, what has become known as 'cancel-culture': *"now that the social justice language associated with cancel culture is becoming a standard feature of corporate HR culture, with prominent companies like Disney and Google using social justice reasons as excuses to fire people, that means that it's going to start affecting tens of millions of workers, which to me means that it is something worth talking about. [...] And while the term cancel culture is new, there's nothing new about these techniques – they're the same one that hierarchical institutions have used for thousands of years, whether it's the medieval catholic church, modern day cults or 20th century ruling communist parties. [...] And keep in mind that political correctness is historically most often a straight up right wing affair, with no left wing pretense – like in the 1950s for example, the things you'd get in trouble for was criticizing capitalism and sympathizing with socialism, or in the early 2000s people like Donahue or the Dixie Chicks were getting literally cancelled and banned for criticizing the Iraq War, and today you get professors fired or denied tenure for their positions on Israel Palestine politics, or you have Colin Kaepernick blacklisted for criticizing the police"* ('Cancel Culture' is Management Culture).

[64] ed. – see 'Between Punishment & Vengeance'

body who has got an outstanding accusation against them that they're considered not to have dealt with properly…

T.B.: Yeah, I'm not sure how familiar you are with the controversy around *Atassa*, but essentially *Atassa* has been referred to as a neo-fascist group because they have taken claim for killing people and they've used certain terms, like because they've killed a woman they've used the term femicide, and that has been expanded to be a sort of fascistic modality. And so therefore by publishing *Atassa*, or by publishing anything associated with ITS,[61] we have been argued against for platforming fascism.[62]

Andy: Yep, this is the way this kind of drift has happened. I think the drift also involves this kind of… the rules become more and more vague as time goes on. I mean, the terrorism stuff is already vague, but all this sort of harassment, anti-social behaviour, and now this kind of view of oppression that you get in identity politics: it's not just "you must not break this rule", it's "you must not break this rule that is not really that defined as to what breaking it would be and if I say you've broken it that means you've broken it; but you can't know in advance." And this creates this kind of… Classical totalitarianism relied on this system where they had rules which were vague, they had rules that were broad, they had rule which you had to break in order to not break other rules, in order to live up to your production quota: and not fall foul of that rule you had to break about six other rules. (Which also happens in modern workplaces by the way.) And as a result of this basically ev-

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ultimately taking a US plea deal and avoiding jail-time there. Swedish prosecutors ultimately dropped their case despite saying they were confident in the complaint.

[61] ed. – see Calling It Terror

[62] ed. – This was, of course, before the main figure behind *Atassa* (and ITS and other self-described 'eco-extremists' which that journal focused upon) made actual reference to esoteric Nazis – though still seemingly looking to provoke and generally get attention from the anarchist space that tendency declared hostility towards – before being doxxed.

egories, values attached to 'spooks',[4] and therefore the idea of societies that are constructed around some kind of commonality of nation[5] or humanity or whatever, which then necessarily excludes its opposite, the un-man or the foreigner or the Other of the group. So he's already trying to work beyond that. I think the aspiration is there…

T.B.: …Actually how would you distinguish between Stirner and the liberal subject that was constructed in the same time-frame?

Andy: The freedom of the liberal subject is conceived in terms of the ability to act on what Freud[6] would call the super-ego,[7] to act on a moral imperative separate from desire, sep-

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[4] ed. – "This is one of the central concepts of Stirner's thought. A spook – at the risk of defining undefined and flexibly-used terms – is a concept, principle, or idea that has become "sacred." That is, it has become separated from actual persons. Stirner makes full use of the way that anything expressible in language, or thinkable in thought can, by that fact, be rendered as a concept, and therefore an alien spook. This frequently happens in the form that other people become the concept of other people, and therefore a spook. The concept, rather than being "owned" or used by persons, has come to stand above and to dominate them. Stirner uses the post-Christian, atheist sensibilities of his audience [of his day] to argue that concepts being championed as the overcoming of God – like humanism, communism/socialism, critical philosophy – are really just God in new forms. That is to say, they still are based upon the elevation of abstractions that do not actually exist to a position of domination over actual people" (Entanglement: On Anarchism & Individualism).

[5] ed. – Although Stirner himself was inconsistent on this, also writing that "a "German Union" is a possible and desirable thing for Stirner and that *"the Nationals are in the right; one cannot deny his nationality"* " (Entanglement: On Anarchism & Individualism).

[6] ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg55

[7] ed. – "In Freudian psychoanalysis, the socialization of the child is a repetition of the collective social history of the repression or sublimation of this malignant original nature. The longstanding alternative of childhood innocence, a reflex of the subdominant ideology of good nature/bad culture, could have no credence for Freud. He would have endorsed Augustine's *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg77]* observation (from *The Confessions*) that "if babies are innocent, is it not for lack of will to do harm, but for lack of strength."

arate from worldly and social influences, and the subject was considered to be not free if they were acting on anything other than pure moral duty. So in practice (although liberalism was meant to be a philosophy of freeing people from, for example, dependence on tradition) it rapidly turns into subordination to the insistence that everyone be this particular type of subject.[8] Now of course being this particular type of subject rein-

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Freudian theory, in which the primitive anti-social instincts of the child – specifically, libidinal and aggressive instincts – are put down by a superego representing the role of the father and more largely the culture, thus takes specific Augustian or Hobbesian *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg20]* form of the sovereign domination of man's *[sic]* anarchic impulses" (The Western Illusion of Human Nature).

[8] ed. – "The most important element of the Enlightenment that is lost in the premature celebration of equality is the fact that these men of property, through discourses on rights and equality, were bestowing on themselves the right to define humanity. And humanity, for them, and eventually for the rest of the world thanks to a process of total conquest, meant reproducing the social relationships that they considered to be good and natural, and which would quickly grant them and their political heirs dominion over the entire planet. Being human means being a participating citizen of a modern (Western-style constitutional) state, accepting the concepts of capital and private property and trying to acquire them, hallowing the practice of wage labor, reproducing the patriarchal family and patriarchal definitions of politics and economy, and entering into dialogue with eurocentric, white supremacist culture and learning. Anyone who did not accept that definition of humanity was considered to be rejecting their human rights, and was subjected to the most total forms of genocide possible for the contemporary techno-social order. Even into the 21st century, stateless peoples have never been granted human rights in actual practice. The prior, aristocratic and feudal system in Europe had no use for a shared category that would unite nobles and commoners. Their philosophies tended to emphasize and naturalize the specialness of the nobility. The new political class that arose in the Enlightenment, however, used calls to equality to mobilize the commoners as cannon-fodder in the liberal revolutions against the aristocratic system, replacing feudal obligations not with a strengthened commons but with the very practices of wage labor and land commodification that would utterly destroy the peasants and create a totally dependent urban lower class, both necessary conditions for enriching the bourgeoisie and favoring the economics of colonization. Until they lost access to the land, lower class Eu-

terrorism, banning terrorist content on social media, banning ideas that are not themselves terrorist but might lead to that later, banning preparatory acts, banning association. And this has been going on really since 9/11.

T.B.: So the modern way in which this is being talked about within our circles is called no-platforming.

Andy: Yep. I mean, no-platforming I think originated as a tactic specifically against violent neo-Nazi organisations that would physically control territories; and it's been expanded to cover anybody who is deemed to have said or done something oppressive by the standards of whoever is doing it. And in Britain at least this had actually evolved through... [It] begins against Nazis (as far back I think as the '70s), gets expanded for use against radical Islamists as part of the State 'Prevent' strategy[58] in the mid-2000's (often with involvement of the student Left – who were often in with Blairism[59] – and of feminist, gay rights and Jewish groups on the basis that Islamists are often homophobic, anti-Semitic and sexist). So this was used to shut down radical Islamist speakers as the next stage from the Nazis and then it's gone from there initially to other racists, pick-up artists, misogynists, etc., and then gradually to somebody who said the wrong thing about the Julian Assange case,[60] or some-

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[58] ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg13

[59] ed. – see 'The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping At All"'

[60] ed. – Australian liberal journalist, early 'hacktivist' and founder of Wikileaks (see Return Fire vol.3 pg48) with the aim to *"make capitalism more free and ethical."* At the time, he was in the UK wanted by Sweden on rape and sexual assault charges but had been granted asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy, on grounds that Sweden would extradite him to the US – where he faced major charges after unveiling US espionage against the UN, war crimes in Iraq, sales to Syria for repression of revolutionary movements by Finmeccanica (see 'Our Anarchy Lives'), etc. – and his claim that Swedish culture had a "crazed radical feminist ideology" (perhaps surprising to Swedish comrades). While there he launched the WikiLeaks Party and unsuccessfully stood for the Australian Senate. Falling out with the Ecuadorians, he was arrested in April 2019 and spent 5 years in a UK prison fighting extradition,

think that one could be terrified by a mass shooter![55] But there is a strange disconnect on this level, where – again, this is kind of an Adam Curtis point – where he talks about how politicians are managers of the chaos that they're benefiting from in the particular way that they are. But I think that you are trying to turn this in a different direction to talk explicitly about exclusion in our spaces. So continue.

Andy: I think the identity politicians are basically doing a "me too" on this. I know we have a #MeToo campaign at the moment that means something else… but I think we're getting "me too" securitisation.[56] I think we're getting "if you're going to do this to stop terrorists from killing shoppers in New York or whatever, you should also be doing the same thing to the same extent with the same extensiveness and the same overreach in relation to rape, in relation to black people being murdered", you know…

We have two theories I think that are linked to this. One is broken windows theory[57] or order-maintenance policing which appeared in the '80s. And this idea; you try to prevent serious, gang-related crimes such as murder (and serious crime in general) by enforcing zero-tolerance on petty so-called "quality of life" offences: things that aren't even really crimes, like loitering in the street and trespass and graffiti and yeah, broken windows. Another is conveyor-belt theory, which has been the dominant counter-insurgency theory since 9/11: which is the idea people become terrorists or insurgents on the basis of becoming gradually radicalised on the basis of something like a deviant career (exposure to increasing degrees of extremity of their views and actions), and attempting to cut that off by cracking down on the process, the conveyor-belt. So for example: banning glorification of

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[55] ed. – see Calling It Terror

[56] ed. – see 'A Lose-Lose Situation'

[57] ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg18

troduces normativity and the idea that there are those who conform to this well and there are other who are deviant, and the deviant have to be excluded or punished or reconditioned into the right type of person. And Stirner is really attacking that in liberalism;[9] using some of the arsenal he's getting from Hegel[10] (and via Hegel from Kant[11]), so it's coming *from* that tradition *and* critiquing it…

T.B.: You know I often when it comes to these ideas try to avoid referring to the sort of source person, especially when they have a name and instead try to refer to a particular body of ideas, or an idea that I like and I try to modernise it. So, one of the things I really liked about this book that we put out (and I didn't exactly catch it when we first got started on it, but I'm really convinced by now) is this book that we did called 'Enemies of Society'. And at the heart of it is basically a set of translations of French egoists who were trying to put Stirner's ideas

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ropeans didn't need to be included in and validated by the bourgeois cultural project, nor did they need to join the armies of colonization that earlier had been limited to ambitious or impoverished members of the mercenary and knightly classes. Once newly urbanized plebes had been instructed in the Enlightenment definition of humanity, they could be trusted to go overseas and force the natives to adopt the same definition, either begging for inclusion within the patriarchal, capitalist, white supremacist club of equality or facing extermination. In practice, defining humanity was a way of destroying that which didn't fit the definition" (Of Superhumans & Cyborgs).

[9] ed. – "Stirner's idea of the "ego" needs to be clarified. […] The egoist self is expressive and passionate – not a being of rational interests. It is ultimately something, which cannot be thought or conceptualized, since any fixed definition turns it into a representation or spook. As Stirner writes in his reply to critics: "What Stirner says is a word, a thought, a concept; what he means is no word, no thought, no concept. What he says is not what is meant and what he means is unsayable". Egoists resist the use of normativity and social mediation in defining their relations. Instead, a kind of direct connection ("intercourse") or enmity arises. In essence, the relation to another is not mediated by a "third party," or a normative regime of rightness" (From the Unlearned Un-man to a Pedagogy without Moulding).

[10] ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg55

[11] ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg54

into practice. And what I really like about the book (and really like at least about that era of egoists) is that it seems like they had come up with an idea of society, that there's a transition that happens when you perhaps surpass Dunbar's Number[12] (or however it is that it comes into being), but that there's a distinction between society – as an abstraction, as a construct that is kind of bigger than you or I can wrap our minds around – and not-society… And I bring that up mostly because I feel like that's the place that I find some affinity for egoists, is somewhere in here. But really when we're talking about the liberal subject, the liberal subject seems to be somehow connected to this, being perhaps on the pro-society side of that particular divide.

Andy: Yeah very much so I think… And very much somebody who's repressed and inhibited. Somebody who's living primarily through the super-ego.

T.B.: Talk about what that means to you. Because obviously the simple construction of the Freud id/ego/super-ego… perhaps you're talking beyond that?

Andy: Yeah, the super-ego is part of the ego that's turned against itself… The ego is all about getting satisfaction from the outer world… reality principle[13]… The super-ego is an internal

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[12] ed. – Theory of anthropologist Robin Dunbar that humans are cognitively equipped to function best (in trust, efficiency and self-organisation) in groups of no more than around 150 people. Fails to account – among other things – for numerous stateless societies and federations which self-organised above this scale (see Lies of the Land), and for spontaneous solidarity in general (see 'The Utopia We Dream of Becomes Most Visible in the Dark').

[13] ed. – "Though it could be argued that the first regulation of the child's all-out search for pleasure by the "reality principle" is more like a political order of off-setting powers, insofar as it involves the frustration of infantile desires by others attending rather to their own good. In any case, the infant's grasping of "reality" through experiences of pleasure and pain is a virtual replication of Hobbes' empiricist epistemology[…] So again, what should we make of the considerable ethnographic evidence to the contrary: that all round the world, other peoples know no such idea of children as innate

gets selected for and survives rather than one of the ones who gets democided or forcibly de-linked out. So there's that competition as to who gets included, and that's happening at every level from the very top (the stockbrokers, the CEOs, the politicians) right the way down to the struggle to survive in gangs, among homeless people, and the struggle to be recognised as a benefit claimant not have your benefits cut off, this kind of thing. And this has got into the social ethos on such a level that it is being brought in to I think anarchist spaces, into I think other kinds of horizonal de-centred spaces; I think also Left spaces and things like universities it's been in for a while.

There's these tricks and dynamics that come up. First off you have this kind of horizontal policing, which I think is initially introduced by neo-liberal states as a way of cutting down on policing resources by forcing (for example) pubs, football clubs and so on to police their own users. That gets brought over by people like identity politicians as "the community should be enforcing against racism etc.". Then we have the idea… the State isn't able to provide security anymore. This isn't Fordism. So it's providing an illusion of safety based on exposing other people to greater risk, supposedly for the protection of the supposedly-privileged: which in fact is not providing them with protection, but it is providing them with validation and a sense that the State cares about them.

T.B.: This is basically an assertion you're making post-terrorism. In other words, the State can no longer be seen as protecting people (and that's evidenced by attacks in London and attacks in different metropoles all over the world).

Andy: Yeah, also the fact that people don't have stable jobs. The fact that people don't have welfare rights. This kind of thing as well.

T.B.: Yeah, I will say in the US context since 9/11 we really haven't had… I mean, what's strange is how cognitively we disassociate the mass shooting from terrorism: because one would

Andy: I suppose we could use it, it's a bit dubious…

T.B.: Yeah, I don't love it, but I guess the idea or at least the political parallel that we're seeing is that there are particular people who seem to have control over modes of conversation or modes of thought, who are attempting to constrain people. Or at least harness the political energies around what liberation would look like, in a way that looks very similar to what would happen if they were in fact capitalist classes owning a limited resource. The problem of course is that they're not.

Andy: In a sense they are. I'm in myself unsure about how far… There is this commodification and artificial scarcity around social validation, attention (because of course there's so much information now, people competing for attention and try to get attention, trying to get validated): to what extent that's really commodified and an aspect of capital or to what extent it's something that capital is trying to bring in… But certainly that's how people experience it, I think a lot of people. And it's tied in with survival. Your ability to be visible, to be validated, to have social capital, to have networks, to have recognition as somebody who counts, somebody who's life matters, is absolutely vital to being one of the people who

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even develop it further. So I can grow my power, in a similar way to capitalists accumulating economic capital. While it may sometimes be useful to think of power in this way, Foucault insistently reminds us of its limitations. Foucault's first thesis on power in *The History of Sexuality* is that 'power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds onto or allows to slip away'. Instead, he emphasises the 'strictly relational character of power relationships'. For example, money only gives me power within a complex context of property norms, a functioning money system, and people who desire or need to trade for goods, etc. Take away that context and it becomes worthless. Similarly, whiteness or maleness carry power within specific contexts of norms and scripts. These contexts are certainly widespread, though their features also differ widely across cultures and localities. But be careful to remember that gold or printed paper or skin colour in themselves aren't the "sources" of power. A possession or resource view of power is a handy, but limited and potentially dangerous, abstraction" (Nietzsche & Anarchy).

part of the ego that gets its satisfaction from frustrating the rest of the ego.

T.B.: So, patriotism…

Andy: Yeah! Religious self-abnegation… subordination to a cause… self-sacrifice.

T.B.: Right, work ethic… Yeah yeah. OK, interesting. So, onward!

Andy: I think what we find in anarchist movements and autonomist movements at their best, is we find a kind of social world that is not relying on what are generally… I mean there's this discussion in sociology, there's all kinds of theories about how societies work and what is and isn't possible, but there's this really old distinction that you will still find flying around, between *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* (which is roughly "community" and "organisation"); community being usually a prescriptive social order where people are assigned roles, and community has a sense of normativity, a sense of what's normal, what's required, that is imposed on everyone through their prescribed roles; an organisation is a formal structure which has more form, it's more individualistic in that it's based on contract, it's based on rules and law and so on…

T.B.: "I had a choice in the matter"…

Andy: Yeah… It's kind of choice of two kinds of spook-based organisation really. But then you have this sort of third type, which was theorised by some people who were criticising this, called the *bund*. Now, the idea of the bund is that there is this third form of social organisation that doesn't rely either on normativity or on this kind of organisation, contracts and rules and so on. It relies on an immanent connection which is established (primarily an emotional connection), and it's established primarily through action in common. An event, or a ritual, or a practice that the group have in common that then brings the

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monsters and no such necessity of domesticating their bestial instincts" (The Western Illusion of Human Nature).

group together feeling that they're part of a group who are united by (or in relation to) this practice or event.

T.B.: This is a German word, right?

Andy: Yep. "Bund" I think just means a group or a league.

T.B.: OK, but there's something like a "bund uprising", or… For some reason the Beer-Hall Riot[14] era seems like there's something that's tickling my mind that has the term "bund" in it… But OK, go on.

Andy: Yeah, it appears in organisation names. There's a Jewish socialist organisation called The Bund in the early 20th Century, but you also find it on the end of these German agglomerative words sometimes. I'm saying that a bund basically doesn't have normativity, it has minimum of formal organisation (if any)… By normativity I'm meaning this idea that we have norms that make the world predictable, and there's something that's socially acceptable that you have to conform to; and you have a duty to conform to it, which I think is different from having an ethos, or an ethic, or values, or an idea of virtue. And I think the way this has worked in practice in anarchist and autonomist movements is often the big events, or the protest mobilisations, things like eco-camps in the '80s and '90s,[15] and things like the summit protests in late '90s/early 2000's,[16] the squatting scene and the big street protests and clashes that can happen around that… It's something like Greece in 2008[17] (you know, the big uprising in Greece)…

T.B.: Actually I want to get precise here. Because really what you're talking about is the affinity group (and the affinity group model and the different variations on it)…

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[14] ed. – Reference to the Beer Hall Putsch, attempted Nazi Party coup of 1923 led by Adolf Hitler in Munich; Hitler thereafter focused on democratic means to reach power before instituting dictatorship.

[15] ed. – see 'Mobilising Disaster Relief'

[16] ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg68

[17] ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg17

people by letting them die, by taking away the basis for them to survive in a context where the system is monopolising the basis to survive and making it as hard as it can for someone to live outside it; at the same time telling people there's no outside, pretending to be the social totality (which really it isn't, but it passes itself off as).

T.B.: OK. So again, I want to stay focused on the micro-politics of this rather than the macro. Because… the one thing I am enjoying about this is that it's very unusual in the US context for us to link neo-liberalism to capitalism and to explicitly capitalist social relationships, because identity politics in much more the *lingua franca* here in the US context. But to put it more bluntly, what you are saying is that to the extent to which… well, are you comfortable with the term social capital?[54] Do you like that term? Do you think it's useful?

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by the British government (see Return Fire vol.2 pg87). Rummel concluded that *"concentrated political power is the most dangerous thing on earth."*

[54] ed. – "For example, the "privilege theory" that is fashionable in left-wing circles at the moment can work with a view of power in terms of resources. See, for example, Peggy McIntosh's discussion of 'white skin privilege' as 'like an invisible knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear and blank checks'. Appearing white, or male, etc., gives you a store of resources that you can use to wield power or dominate others. Resource based approaches to power really reach their height in economists' and sociologists' theories of human, social, or cultural *capital*. "Human Capital" theory was pioneered by the neoliberal Chicago School economists Gary S. Becker and Theodore Schultz: very roughly, the basic idea is that education is investment in one's future earning power. See Foucault's lecture course *The Birth of Biopolitics* for an important discussion of human capital theory and its role in developing a new stage of the conception of humans as 'subjects of interest', in which now the pursuit of 'interest' is understood specifically on the model of rational investment in future (self-)production. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was largely responsible for introducing ideas of social, cultural and symbolic capital. Many power resources involve reinforcing and cumulative structures. E.g., occupying a social status position gives me power to threaten, offer, persuade, or simply be accorded certain forms of treatment as an unquestioned right, etc. And then I can use these powers to maintain my status or

people can be arbitrarily fired or punished (and excluded from that layer of people who are included and exploited) on very little basis. And this is quite different from Fordism, which had near-full employment and which had things like welfare state. And you see this series of practices: basically, we're under an obligation to be communicable, in order to be employable and so on, but we don't have a right to be communicable. Basically, we don't have a right to be included. That's something we had to earn as a privilege that can be taken away.

So you see everything from, like, capital will disinvest: disinvest in Greece because they've had a revolt or because they're not paying their debts back, will disinvest in swathes of Africa, forcibly de-link. Workers who don't behave as they're supposed to will be fired. Kids will be kicked out of school. Social services will be cut off. Areas will be occupied, put on lockdown. People will be put in destitution, just not have any money at all. Prisoners get put in solitary confinement, these kind of regimes like Super Max and Guantanamo: this is really social death, cutting people off from communicablity. And this is hitting particularly the excluded, the surplus population, the people who don't have jobs in the economy at all: and this is what's causing revolts like the Arab Spring.[52] And it has in it this kind of logic – I've seen it called democide[53] – killing

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[52] ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg87
[53] ed. – Aside from battle deaths, collateral damage in attacks on military targets, capital punishment, and killings of armed rioters, basically any deaths caused by the State in fact fit under the defination of democide created by R. J. Rummel to cover that not covered by genocide because those who were killed were supposedly not selected on the basis of their race (though this is open to question in many cases). By his metric, democide surpassed war as the leading cause of non-natural death in the 20th century. While importantly, as Andy recounts here, leaving a daily body-count from quidodian capitalism, some of the more spectacular examples of this would be the Great Purges carried out by Joseph Stalin (see Memory as a Weapon; Indigenism & its Enemies) in the Soviet Union, the deaths from the colonial policy in the Congo Free State, and the Bengal famine of 1943 perpetrated

Andy: ...yep...

T.B.: ...But that model, especially in the North American context, has pretty much ended. By and large (along with the code-word "security culture")[18] [there] has been a dissolution of anything that even looks like a bund, [so] that when we do an action on the group nowadays, we do it as a series of whatever-singularities.[19] And it seems to be that the radical

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[18] ed. – see Beyond the Screen, the Stars
[19] ed. – "[Giorgio] Agamben proposes 'whatever-singularity' as an alternative basis for political action, which escapes the logic of sovereignty. Taken from Deleuze and Guattari's thought *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg55]*, a singularity is something which is unique and which can't be reduced to a measurement or representation. Agamben likes it because it avoids his having to choose between universality and particularity. "Whatever" in English has unfortunate overtones of indifference ("whatever, talk to the hand") which is not at all what Agamben means. Rather, he is referring to something mattering whatever it is, always mattering regardless of what it is – as opposed to the sovereign decision to divide life into things which matter and things which don't. A "whatever-singularity" is neither reducible to its attributes nor expressible as an abstract generality such as universal humanity; rather, it is something which has general value as it is, with all of its attributes (and especially, as potentiality or possibility). It does not depend on any standard of conformity or subjectification or normality, or on belonging to the people or masses. It also denies that there is any particular essence which makes people human – instead, being human is a scattering of singularities. Whatever-singularity is also a kind of being which people are assumed to already have, which for instance motivates resistance to being normalised. In a sense, this is a radicalised version of human rights discourse, since anyone, whatever they are and whatever they do, is recognised as having a kind of autonomous ethical value. This is fundamentally an ethics of 'letting be' (with overtones of 'being who you are'). It entails doing away with normativity as usually defined, with standards of good and evil which declare certain people to be valueless because of some particularly heinous deviant act they've committed (in contrast to the more common approach of either contracting normativity to cover a smaller range of acts, or altering it to focus on oppressive abuses). For instance, Agamben argues that ideas such as guilt and responsibility are derived from legal thought and hence from sovereignty. The ethical challenge Agamben poses is to still view every person – and, in line with the discussion in The Open, every animal – as fundamentally valuable in their own life, as having forms of life

distinction here has to do with this attempt to move us in the direction of the French (and especially the thinkers around the Invisible Committee)[20] and their idea of "friendship"... So I'm curious where you would draw the line between an anarchist position (perhaps around the bund) and this new, autonomist-type position around the "friend".

Andy: I think they're actually probably quite similar in that key dimension. I mean, what I've read of the Invisible Committee stuff, when they talk about a commune[21] they're again talking about something where the friendship, the affinity, is produced in practice. It's not necessarily something that's produced through an organisation.

T.B. Sure... I'm actually saying that I think there might be a fourth form.

Andy: Yeah, I think there are different forms of... I think it's possibly a different form of the bund, but you might be right that it's a kind of fourth type. I think there's probably a reason, I mean... I get the impression that possibly the type of anarchist and autonomous organisation that was about fifteen years ago (and was very strong then) has maybe gone into decline because of the difficulty in generating and sustaining the type of large-scale temporary-autonomous-zone-like events that maybe is what sustained that.

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and particularity worthy of respect and autonomous existence, regardless of how 'bad' they are or what 'crimes' they commit. In effect, Agamben aims to take away, through choices in terms of language, ethics and philosophy, the threat posed by others' ethical judgements in constituting a person or being as vulnerable. This does not remove human vulnerability per se, but does remove the particular risk of being made into homo sacer. It does, however, leave a particular ethical problem: are agents of sovereignty also to be treated as 'whatever-singularities', or as the negation of all such singularities?" (Giorgio Agamben: Destroying Sovereignty)

[20] ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg58

[21] ed. – Their conception of the commune is, of course, far from the only one; see 23 Theses Concerning Revolt

little development hubs in other areas, you've got certain social groups that are very conservative anyway...

T.B.: Let's turn this around back into a conversation around exclusion within the anarchist space. Because obviously, it does seem like a "monkey see, monkey do" problem where we're not exactly innovating at this moment... Where what we in the US call call-out culture,[51] identity politics, seems to be chasing the dog. And so let's talk about that a little bit.

Andy: Yeah... What I'd like to say first about that is I think there are these shifts within neo-liberalism which are based on exclusion and threat of exclusion as what normalises the labour-capital relation for those people who are included. And what I mean by this is, people are treated as disposable; and

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[51] ed. – "It is no secret that "Left" social media is dominated by the act of "calling out", where "problematic" behavior is publicly exposed and punished by social isolation for failing to uphold a perfect image of social justice. This spectacle of politics crosses into "real life" organizing spaces as a common source of conflict. As extra-state models of "justice," call outs echo failed accountability processes, which only end with exile from community. But call out culture owes more to neoliberal identity politics and its performance of righteousness. Call outs operate through the carceral logic of punishment, identifying someone as a problem with a solution of isolation. They end up consolidating identity positions created by anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and cisheteropatriarchy, and do nothing to build the communities and world we want to live in. We want to discuss experiences anarchists have with call out culture and its entanglement with modern identity politics. How can we find effective ways to organize without replicating systematic oppression? How can we hold bad behavior accountable, while understanding people cause harm and can learn from the experience? How do we create space where ideas and behavior can be constructively challenged with compassion? How can we build non-hierarchical infrastructure, while not knowing what will work? Can we embrace failure, confusion, and the need to keep starting again? Call out culture creates unrealistic standards that ultimately hinders true revolutionary action and change. It is our responsibility as anarchists to create situations grounded in the present that open up possibilities to alter the way we interact with the world and each other for the future *[ed. – see 'Between Punishment & Vengeance']*" (abstract for 'Call outs, Identity, and Punishment in Anarchist/Radical Communities', NAASN conference 2019).

T.B.: Obviously our society is a bit more racialised: we refer to these people as the remnants of the white working class.

Andy: Yep. That's exactly who we're on about. And it's the same phenomenon [which] in France they call *France Peripherique*, the peripheral France. They're the people in the towns that are just too small to be part of the global economy. In Britain people tend to say the north of England, although it's not just the north of England, but sort of ex-industrial... but basically London is booming because it's a global city, the rest of the UK's kind of left behind, but the dynamics are really complicated because you've got regional nationalisms, you've got

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prisingly – David Cameron that asked the question that most needed to be answered: 'why on earth would we do this to ourselves?'. From the perspective of a calculated economic act (which is what pure neoliberal ideologists *think* is the fundamental character of human thought), to vote Leave in the EU Referendum *appears* to be an irrational impulse. How and why would people that stand to (potentially) lose so much, expose themselves to such risks? It was after all some of the poorest areas of the UK, many of which also receive the highest amount of EU funding (namely Cornwall, Wales and the North East), that commanded some of the highest Leave votes. What Cameron missed – along with all the other commentators and politicians – was that the language of self-harm being mobilizing contained an insight into what may have underpinned much of the Leave vote. This referendum was only ever a proxy, a way for a disenfranchised and hopeless sector of society to experience a *feeling* of control after decades of declining living standards and no feasible method of affecting change. Indeed, the Leave campaign were (at least inadvertently) aware of this hidden subtext to the whole charade, having heavily branded the whole referendum as an opportunity to 'take back control'. [Yet] the 'statement' of the Leave vote offered no *real* control whatsoever. To the contrary, the Leave vote was a symbolic act that, in the process of providing an opportunity to *feel* in control, triggered a highly predictable and damaging economic shockwave that would affect most those that were also most likely to vote Leave. What the Leave vote fundamentally offered – and perhaps the one promise that it didn't break – was a way for the most disempowered and disenfranchised to experience the ephemeral *feeling* of being in control. The fact that the campaign was a hatchet job of lies and mistruths, or that the Leave campaign didn't offer any real control, matters very little in understanding the outcome of the referendum" (Brexit, Self-Harm, & a Method for Taking Control).

T.B.: I mean just to speak to this a bit more in depth, I feel like there was an incident here in the US that really showed the weakness of the affinity group. And this has to do with the fact that in the US context what we call the Green Scare[22] was largely fed by the fact that this personal who had a personal moral weakness (i.e. they were a drug addict) basically flipped on their comrades and then wore a mic to hang out with them. And obviously it's useful to compare this in the UK context to Mark Kennedy or "Mark Stone"[23] who obviously also had a personal weakness which I guess I would take a stab at saying was the ladies, and did something very similar, where a lot of people's information was shared... And I feel like somewhere in there was built in the end of the affinity group.[24]

Andy: He was actually an undercover cop who was being employed by a sort of special operations/special demonstra-

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[22] ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg78

[23] ed. – see 'The Tip of the Iceberg'

[24] ed. – Actually, as has been seen in the infiltration-and-entrapment cases in the years since the Green Scare on that side of the Atlantic alone – for example, look up 'Bounty Hunters & Child Predators: Inside the FBI Entrapment Strategy' – the State has caught often young, inexperienced or otherwise more vulnerable individuals who do not seem to be in a pre-existing affinity group; precisely the reason why insurrectionary anarchists (among others) recommended and experimented with such groups (often drawn from your local life rather than far-flung contacts) that deepened their mutual knowledge in a variety of levels instead of just a one-off protest context (unlike the anti-globalision era model of 'affinity groups' that slung previously totally unknown people together with these infiltrators). This does not mean that affinity groups are immune to infiltration, but the cops themselves have long noted how difficult they are to penetrate; see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; Open Letter from Return Fire Magazine to the 2024.03.29-31 International Anti-Prison/Anti-Repression Gathering

tions squad,[25] and had been sent in to infiltrate and was eventually caught.

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[25] ed. – The outing of Kennedy (seemingly compromised by his own handlers' deliberate carelessness) led to exposure of other undercovers of recent years to much outcry, and an government inquiry into activities since the late '60s by the undercover political policing unit mentioned here. Targeting exclusively anarchists, animal liberationists and leftists to spy, manipulate and sow division, it included figures such as a future head of the Metropolitan Police's Special Branch, multiple officers who had deceptive relationships with the people they spied on and fathered children with them before disappearing, or joined anarchist papers and wrote articles, opened files on anti-fascist school-kids and other legal minors, and seemingly engaged in actions as consequential as the 1987 arson of a major Debenhams store in London during a campaign against the fur trade (sending the other participants to prison as a result). During the early '80s they investigated supposed links between anarchists and radicalism in the north of Ireland, under British occupation; in modern times, the support group for anarchist (formerly Dissident Republican) John-Paul Wooton and another co-convicted with him on weak ground for a fatal ambush of a cop was also infiltrated by an undercover. Much media sensationalism has focused on the predatory sexual behaviour of male 'spycops', but while this is hardly unique among police forces (see On Sexual Murder & Police Sadism, or indeed the "hero" of UK TV show Call the Cops consequently being reported for various assaults on women and a girl), it also glosses over agents such as the still-unnamed 'Officer A', known to the activists she spied on as "Lynn Watson". In 'We Need to Talk about 'Officer A", one person *who was extensively targeted for over half a decade"* writes that *"Lynn is minimised by most of the discourse surrounding infiltration, (in both the mainstream and so-called 'alternative' media) as she doesn't fit within the spycop narrative. When she is mentioned; it is often only as a footnote, a joke: someone who was a fluffy clown[...] That does not correlate with the Lynn that I knew: meticulous, cynical and uncompromising woman [who] coordinated several large scale site-takes and land occupations, and orchestrated a motorway blockade[...] Like many of the infiltrators, Lynn was many things to different people. We forget this adaptability of "legends" at our peril."* Despite key participation of UK undercovers in repressive cases on mainland Europe, Iceland and across the Atlantic, the inquiry refuses to investigate their activities off British soil. The inquiry has been split into chronological 'tranches' and so far over near 10 years has only studied activities up to the early '80s, foot-dragging to the maximum. There are fears that it will be mothballed entirely before reaching the era of Kennedy et. al. Although seemingly thwarted, a Home Secretary in 2023 attempted to change the inquiry's systematic nature into a "sampling method" of simply considering the unit's impact in general. A further report is due late 2026... The

Andy: Yes, that's exactly what's happening; and in France it's Le Pen...[48] it's this kind of right-wing populism in a lot of places. It's a slightly different constituency; the people you would get in autonomous social movements tend to be... there's a BBC survey that uses the term 'emergent service worker'. These are people who are on the lowest rungs of the service economy (the 'New Economy'),[49] tend to be university-educated or at least educated to some degree, tend to be involved in the New Economy, tend to living in cities where there's a little bit going on. The people who are into Brexit and things like that tend to be the people who were relatively included under Fordism, but they've really been hurt by the transition to the so-called New Economy. These are people who live often in small industrial/post-industrial cities, cities that used to have industry that has been run down because the country is moving towards competing in a global economy; or also sometimes rural areas. It's traditional working class people who are manual workers, who haven't got the education to work in the service economy but the jobs have been taken away as the industries have been taken away to China and places ike that.[50]

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[48] ed. – see Lies of the Land

[49] ed. – see A New Luddite Rebellion

[50] ed. – "The Royal College of Psychiatrists – the principle professional organisation for psychiatrists in the UK – summarizes that those who are more likely to harm themselves are those who feel: that people don't listen to them; hopeless; isolated, alone; out of control; powerless – it feels as though there's nothing you can do to change anything. As the mental-health charity *Mind* outline, one possible reason for people to self-harm in response to these feelings is to exert 'a sense of being in control'. Faced with the visceral experience of hopelessness and an inability to exercise control over ones life, a dangerous or destructive act of self-harm becomes the only way for an individual to feel like they can exercise control and gain a sense of 'presence' in the world. However risky or destructive it may be, and however paradoxical or illogical it may appear to the observer, an act of self-harm is commonly a way to experience having agency. [...] Given the abundant rhetoric of self-harm in the lead-up and analysis of the referendum, it was – perhaps sur-

into anarchism (particularly, it's a lot harder to live on benefits now, it's a lot harder to be a student and be politically active, it's a lot harder to have temporary part-time work and not be massively overworked by it)... But I think in general the climate is based on... neo-liberalism is based on generalised anxiety. And the source of a lot of that anxiety is... Basically, if people are living by active desire, if people are living by the things they want and the things they feel, capitalism and the State are not going to be sustainable. So capitalism and the State have to find ways to decompose, block, stop those kinds of feelings; and it varies over time what they do. In Fordism[47] it was sort of monotony, it was these very entrenched institutions that didn't seem escapable; in neo-liberalism I think basically... Fordism broke down with the autonomist waves of the '60s and '70s, the flight from the workplace, refusal of work, drop-out culture; people started to escape from the factory as a site of work, and the education system and so on. Capitalism has tried to deal with that by bringing itself out into the rest of society, turning it into one big social factory and closing and controlling all society. But the other thing I think it's done is it's tried to undercut that level of minimum guarantee which lets people drop out without immediately coming up against survival problems. And that's how it's undermined the activism of that period.

T.B.: I don't want to dwell too much on living in the UK, but obviously the big counter-argument to this conversation is the fact that Brexit is the way in which the UK is "fighting back" against neo-liberalism, just like here in the US of course Trumpism is the way in which we're fighting back against neo-liberalism. Does that feel comfortable to you, or does that feel ridiculous?

T.B.: The point I'm making is that his personal failings is probably why he continued doing it, rather than that he loved his job so much.

Andy: Yeah, but we also have a situation here where we had a massive crackdown on the animal rights movement not long before the Green Scare happened, or around the same time.

T.B.: Right... was that the 'Gandalf' trial[26] or something else?

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author of 'We Need to Talk about 'Officer A'' reminds us that *"[i]t is also important to remember that not all infiltrators are state agents; and that even if they lose their badges (as in the case of Mark Kennedy) they can still continue to spy on people in a freelance/corporate capacity (see his 'Tokra' company). This has been investigated by various campaign groups; but it doesn't change the fact that these shifting careers fall outside the remit of the inquiry... and it is increasingly these types of careers which are more profitable than the risky and expensive use of an undercover officer. Freelancers, informants, grasses, and snitches pose as much of a threat as the police. The CHIS (Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct)) Act of 2020 means that 'human intelligence sources' are legally allowed to commit crimes and operate outside the law."*

[26] ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; Open Letter from Return Fire Magazine to the 2024.03.29-31 International Anti-Prison/Anti-Repression Gathering

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[47] ed. – see 'The Difference Between "Just Coping" & "Not Coping at All"'

Andy: No, the SHAC[27] trials, late 2000's. (I think a bit after the Green Scare actually.) But SHAC was pretty much de-

[27] ed. – Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty, a campaign against Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS, the most protested vivisection lab in history and which was the largest in Europe) which systematically targeted investors in the company – one of which was Britain's Labour Party – leading around 250 companies (among them some of the world's largest financial institutions) to cut ties, running them into over £100 million in debt. This was off the back of successful campaigns closing down animal breeders in previous years. In 'The SHAC Model: A Critical Assessment', author/s note that *"The campaign offered participants a wide range of options, including civil disobedience, office disruptions, property destruction, call-ins, pranks, tabling, and home demonstrations. In contrast to the heyday of anti-globalization summit-hopping, targets were available all around the country, limited only by activists' imaginations and research. The intermediate goals of forcing specific investors and business partners to disconnect from HLS were often easily accomplished, providing immediate gratification to participants. Whereas an individual might feel insignificant at an antiwar march of thousands, if she was one of a dozen people at a home demonstration that caused an investor to pull out, she could feel that she had personally accomplished something concrete. The SHAC campaign offered the kind of sustained low-intensity conflict through which people can become radicalized and develop a sense of collective power. Running in black blocs with friends, evading police after demonstrations, listening to inspirational speeches together, walking through offices yelling on bullhorns, reading other activists' reports online, the feeling of being on the winning side of an effective liberation struggle – all these contributed to the seemingly unstoppable momentum of the SHAC campaign."* The UK government ultimately saved HLS with a huge loan once the pharmaceutical industry threatened to take their business abroad, and HLS became the only commercial business in history to have received private banking and insurance from the British State. Activists in the UK, Belgium and Holland were charged with "conspiracy to blackmail" as part of a what was then the largest police operation in UK history (parliament passing the 2005 Serious Organized Crime and Police Act specifically to protect animal experimentation companies), with sentences of up to 11 years and a transphobic media campaign against a defendant. *"Primarily,"* reads 'The Future of Insurrection' when speaking of the SHAC campaign, *"it operates at the level of the basic logic of capitalism, which is instrumental and inhuman: it imposes costs. Capitalists make decisions to disinvest, because the risk of suffering losses outweighs the profit which can be made. This has proven very effective in pushing HLS to the point where it can no longer function in the capitalist market. SHAC's vulnerability is that, while it imposes costs on animal abusers, it is open to retaliation by the state, on which it does not, on the whole, impose costs. [...] In the case of the UK animal rights movement, the*

really happened is the government cracked down really hard after that wave of unrest and started giving out draconian sentences, and that kind of put the lid on it for the time being, and nothing after that seems to have been all that… There's been little upsurges; the #Anonymous marches on 5th of November are always a bit… some of those have been quite interesting[45] but there's not a huge amount goes on.[46]

T.B.: Well obviously this is a useful time, since you're talking about 2008 and there's maybe been a malaise in the UK since then, this is a good time to talk about neo-liberalism and the impact of neo-liberalism on the topics of exclusion. Because it does seem to relate back to the talk about the liberal subject.

Andy: And of course neo-liberalism has effects on anarchists and activists the same as it does on everyone else; and one of the things it has done is undercut both some of routes

ing the Prince (now King; see Lies of the Land) and his partner on their way to the Royal Variety Performance, shouting "off with their heads!" A major milestone was Liberal Democrats receiving many student votes on a pledge not to raise tuition fees, only to do just that: the day of the Millbank storming, disorder was also cleared from outside that party's headquarters as well. Many youth were involved as a grant enabling poorer young people to study vocationally (rather than academically) was slashed by 90% by the Tories, who'd promised not to; in this way, along with closing of youth centres, this segment of the movement segued into the nationwide August 2011 riots. Though often framed in the context of cuts to spending as a result of the 2008 crisis, for some universities the 'restructuring' plans had been set in place well before that crash. The movement took inspiration from forerunners during those years; in Austrian, German and US universities, adopting their anarchic slogans such as 'Demand Nothing, Occupy Everything', and occupations against Israeli attacks on Gaza shortly before. Anarchists were involved at Millbank and other movement moments.

[45] ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg51

[46] ed. – Obviously this was before UK events such as the re-born wave of ecological action (see Stop HS2 & Extinction Rebellion), mutual aid from the start of the pandemic (see 'Mobilising Disaster Relief'), more anti-cop violence (see On Sexual Murder & Police Sadism) and anti-racist protests (see The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis), resistance to the 'Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts' Bill (see 1 May 2021…), etc.

Andy: Yep, very similar phenomenon in that sense: wasn't really a movement, it was kind of...

T.B.: Eruption.

Andy: Yeah, eruption over a few days. It starts in this one area in London where the guy *[Mark Duggan]* had been killed (basically assassinated by the police) and then the police were mistreating people who were protesting against it and it erupts in this area; then spreads to the rest of London; then to the rest of the UK. But I got the feeling... I don't know the dynamics in London so well, but other parts of the UK it just took people so much by surprise that people didn't really have time to respond...

T.B.: Especially the movement people.

Andy: Yeah. Occupy also happened, on a very small scale. There was a lot going on around... there'd been some very militant student protests in 2010-11 as well, Tory party headquarters was occupied and this kind of thing,[44] but I think what

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[44] ed. – During a large official demonstration that majorly disrupted traffic in the capital, around 100 charged into Millbank, the Conservative Party building, smashing windows and chanting "Tory scum, here we come!", while thousands – overwhelmingly school kids and undergraduate students, some in black bloc – flooded the courtyard, cheering the occupiers above. Conservative Party chairman Baroness Warsi was inside the building at the time. Riot cops arrived and came under immediate fire from the crowd both below and above with eggs, sticks, bottles and a fire extinguisher, while demonstrators wearing captured police hats danced on tables to sound systems for several hours. As effigies of Tory and Liberal Democrat (their coalition partners) leaders burned, representatives of the student union (who'd called the demonstration, and whose president – soon to become a £125/hour education consultant – designed the route in cooperation with the cops and denounced the subsequent actions) linked arms to try to stop more joining the occupation, earning heckles of "You're all Tories too! Shame on you for turning blue!" The movement saw clashes with riots cops on and off campuses and escalating property damage from this point on, with around 35 new occupations (in Brighton, even encouraging walkouts at schools), and a further major disturbance in London smashing multiple banks, the Treasury and Ritz Hotel windows, torching the Christmas tree in Parliament Square, looting Fortnum & Mason (the Queen's favourite grocery shop) and attack-

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stroyed, and up until then they'd been an inspiration for a lot of the other direct action that was going on. But it's also partly generational I think: the people who'd grown up in the generations of the '80s and '90s and then the people who'd sort of become active during that big summit protest wave were getting older, and for a lot of them I think Occupy[28] and the 2011 stuff was probably their last big movement. And the generation who are taking over now are people who've grown up in this very securitised post-9/11 context. They have a very difference relationship to themselves, the system...

T.B.: ...to each other...

Andy: ...yeah; to anarchy, to the idea that anarchism is based on, and to the older generations. And they seem to have the kind of fetish of security and this kind of safe spaces stuff;[29] but at the same time to be more open to things like

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state did not intervene to save various small operations such as Hillgrove Farm, but was prepared to go to very extreme lengths (from government financial bailouts to bogus trials) to protect HLS itself, viewed as central to an accumulation strategy based on biotechnology." Undercover police were also employed in the operation. After moving its financial centre to the US (where there's greater anonymnity for shareholders), HLS finally merged into a company now called Inotiv. Their mode of operation remains the same; in 2022, they were fined $35 million for abuses against the US Animal Welfare Act at their dog-breeding facility.

[28] ed. – see the supplement to this chapter of Return Fire; 'Centering Relationships'

[29] ed. – We think that 'some anarchist feminists' said it best in their 'Letter to AFEM 2014': *"To be anarchists and feminists means to fight, to confront the structures of domination. That means taking on the repressive violence of the status quo. It also means confronting our own fears, traumas, habits and fixed ideas, the ingrained passivity, shame and guilt, all the little comforts and rewards for being good girls and boys, and all the other shit that has been screwed into us through our lifetimes. It is by challenging ourselves to fight back and destroy what destroys us that we become more powerful. When we come to think about spaces, more or less safe or dangerous, this is where we're starting from. Being safe is not an end in itself. You might be relatively safe locked up 'for your own protection' in a timid life of conformity and earned privileges. That's not what we want. On the other hand, we don't love danger*

or conflict for its own sake. What we want are spaces and encounters that empower us, that help us grow, that help us fight, because only by fighting can we make lives worth living in this world. [...] On the one hand, yes, we need some safety. For example, we want to have discussions without cops, fascists, loudmouth macho idiots, or other abusers barging in. And we want to make spaces that are welcoming, where a wide range of people feel able to come and participate, including, for example, people who feel vulnerable or traumatised, intimidated by meetings, or are new to our events. On the other hand, a good gathering also needs a bit of danger. Empowering encounters often involve an edge of confrontation, challenge and expose us and push us out of our comfort zones. It is often through arguments with our comrades that we have learnt most, either changing our views or affirming them. Maybe a half-decent analogy is how we learn martial arts: you don't want to break your bones every time you train, but you expect a few bruised muscles and egos. Of course, we can't be sparring all the time. You need to rest and recover between sessions. Get a massage, get a hug. Sometimes you need a longer break, time to recover from an injury. But, if we want to be fighters, we can't be in recuperation mode all the time. Not if we want to grow, become powerful, able to defend each other and take on our enemies. We don't want to stretch this analogy too far. There are many kinds of gatherings, many kinds of spaces. But our worry is that the idea of 'safer spaces' is pushing us much too far in one direction. It's pushing an image of meetings, encounters, exchanges as all about safety, retreat and recovery, with no element of risk or confrontation. Like every time we meet we need to be wrapped up in a warm fluffy blanket of caution, to protect us against all the sharp words and edges. And the more we seek to legislate on safer spaces, enforce 'correct' terminology, insist that harmful words come with a warning attached, the more we become accustomed to the comforts of our cliques and detached from the harsh world outside it. We find it harder to relate to others, and when people outside our self-referential bubble express themselves in the 'wrong' way, they are snapped at impatiently. Even other anarchists and feminists are intimidated and excluded by the language required at these events. Far from being inclusive, such events are exclusive to those versed in the (frankly complex) and shifting debates around 'correct' terminology and behaviour. Is this empowering new people to action, or merely entrenching the power of well-read feminists to define our oppression? When the state talks about increased safety and security, it means we're about to see new anti-terror laws, police powers, and surveillance systems. When anarchists and feminists write rules for safer spaces, who sets the lists of forbidden words? And who is going to make sure we conform? Years ago, "get out of your comfort zone" was an oft-bandied about phrase. It meant: be prepared to take risks, be prepared to annoy and upset people if you want to take action that threatens the status quo. We

I think the effect that had is, if we can get hundreds of thousands out, we can get this really sympathetic environment, and it does no good... what's the point. And the movement just started fizzling out after that. Now, I think part of the reason that nothing happened is that there was not enough action around it, it was just... There were a lot of people on the streets but there wasn't any real threat to the government, so they could just ignore it.

But the movement then kind of dwindles; you then see the SHAC model comes into fashion, and you have small-scale groups carry out actions, ranging in the degree of militancy but something like that kind of Italian affinity group model.[42] And that starts to fizzle out when SHAC is destroyed in the late 2000s. And then at just that point you have this social crisis, which I think by the way is stemming from [the] 2008 financial crash; and up until then the poorer and middling groups had been kind of treading water. People weren't getting any better off, you didn't really have a chance of the good life, but you could survive: and after that it really became increasingly difficult for people. [In] 2011 there was that huge wave of... it was actually only about four or five days, but huge wave of street revolt which there was really very little anarchist or activist involvement in,[43] this was coming from marginalised communities, coming from working class people.

T.B.: I just happen to know people in Brixton who very much felt like anarchists were involved.

Andy: Yeah? Quite possibly on the ground then.

T.B.: But you didn't feel like there was enough there for there to be a large feeling? Because it sort of prefigured our Black Lives Matter movement here in the States, because it was about police violence.

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[42] ed. – see Return Fire vol.2 pg35

[43] ed. – Indeed, some UK anarchists disgracefully distanced themselves from the revolt, although in London, Nottingham and Bristol other anarchists were on the streets participating; see Return Fire vol.2 pg58.

people have had them but have burned out, they've been traumatised by repression or they've just… It's too long since they've had their big event, it's lost that inspiring force; that glue of the social movement has come apart.

T.B.: Actually I'd like to hear your thoughts… Of course, when we have this conversation in the US it entirely hinges around the failures and the defeats since Occupy. But you didn't really have a parallel to the Occupy movement; what you had instead at that time was literally a month of social unrest.[39] Can you talk about what the consequences of that were?

Andy: The British movement had had… there had been a wave of militancy in the '80s and '90s deriving from *[then-Prime Minister]* Thatcher imposing neo-liberalism; that had led initially to a lot of labour revolt, then there was a big green movement. There was a huge eco-camps wave in the '90s, and then Britain had its kind of little bit of the summit protest wave with J18 in London in 1999.[40] That wave kind of fizzled out around 2003-ish, but what we then had was the Iraq war:[41] and there was a massive, massive demonstration, hundreds of thousands of people against the Iraq war. Not that much direct action; RAF [Royal Air Force base] Fairford was occupied at one point, but mostly sort of just huge marches. And the government just ignored it. And ignored public opinion, and ignored expert advice, and ignored legal complications, and ignored media hostility, and just went ahead regardless. And

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[39] ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg61

[40] ed. – An occupation of the City of London (the notorious financial district) in a huge Carnival Against Capitalism to coincide with demonstrations in forty different countries, from Belarus to Israel, Uruguay to Switzerland, Port Harcourt to Sydney, Prague to Gujrat. The first of the most significant set-piece battles of the anti-globalisation movement, it saw hand-to-hand fighting within the London International Financial Futures Exchange itself, sound-systems on the streets, and various targets and surveillance cameras smashed before police got control.

[41] ed. – see Capitalism & Electrification

social media[30] and constant self-exposure and self-branding and so on.[31] That doesn't fit well with the affinity model, DIY *[do-it-yourself]* politics or social centres or things that *had* been done. So they're really sort of transforming everything into their way of doing it or going off in a different way; I think that's really what's shifted. But yeah, when Kennedy was exposed the network in his local town and a lot of other people then burned out, or dropped out… It did have a big disruptive effect.

T.B.: Well, what I'm really trying to tease out here (which you're obviously on the same page) is that I see that this gap that we're talking about between these… where you're talking about the *bund,* I think this friendship category is also a place that I at least want to explore because I actually think that there's been a lot of pain in it; but that hasn't been explored that much. And then this: we're not talking about yet a third category, which I would describe myself as having to do with the internet and this generation of people who weren't raised hanging out on a street corner with their buds (and then it naturally turned into something political…). Instead, the new generation of people have basically… their first exposure to other human being people is via politics on the internet.

Andy: Yeah, that is increasingly what's happening. And initially that took quite an anarchic form.[32] You had things like #Anonymous,[33] and before that other 'hacktivist' groups, some things like Indymedia,[34] but I think as it's gone on it's increasingly become… I mean, the way social media in particular is

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need to be prepared and willing to do this where necessary. At a time where actual action seems so lacking, we wonder if we have given up on that idea."

[30] ed. – see We Close the Door

[31] ed. – see the supplement to Return Fire vol.4; Caught in the Net

[32] ed. – see 'From Fringe Prophecy to Voguish Ideology'

[33] ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg48

[34] ed. – Activist open publishing platforms with comment-boards, which in many ways social media went on to copy.

structured (social media is a relatively recent, sort of really starts to grow in the late 2000's): there's a tendency to people to cluster in very densely clustered networks, in which they're clustered with other people who share their beliefs and interests. And they tend to share information, points of view and social pressure, which reproduces – and even radicalises and polarises – those particular views and interests; and I think it's in that context really that you get a very different style of politics, of this almost micro-nationalism of different groups and factions, whether that be identity politics,[35] whether that be alt-right and ultra-nationalism, whether that be people with very intense political loyalties. We've got a newly-emergent traditional Left, a sort of socialist Left, who have also got that kind of structure. And it seems to be structured into the social media that the community takes this particular form – that there is very strong... what Jean-Paul Sartre used to call fraternity terror. There is this relationship where you commit to the group: by committing to the group you are committing to do your part in the group, to uphold the group norms...

T.B.: ...this is gang logic.

Andy: Yeah. And if you don't, you're out. And worst case scenario, if you don't you're dead. But usually, these days, you're out of the group: you're shunned, you're ostracized – or you're banned.[36]

T.B.: Well, and that does bring us back around to people's modern experiences; which is that more and more social categories seem to be taking on these characteristics. So why do you think that's the case and relate it back to Sartre, because that's interesting and I haven't heard that before.

Andy: In Sartre's theory, basically we start out in seriality (which is atomisation, alienation, everyone's a separate person, the relationship to the other is competition or is one of being

a series; like people queuing for a bus). A fused group (which is basically the same thing as a bund) happens when a group comes together for something in common, in relation to an object or project or an immediate threat. Sartre's example is the storming of the Bastille;[37] so, a big uprising would be an example of this. But the problem with that is that it's somewhat fleeting and it breaks down when you've lost that immediate focus. And the way people try to keep organisations going (obviously you've got the French and the Russian revolutions in mind here) is by forming more rigid organisations which then attempt to enforce loyalty to the group norms through taking an oath, or taking a pledge, making a commitment: you join the party and you have the party commitment, you'd have to sell the paper so many times a week and whatever. And when you do this you get this fraternity terror.

Now, it eventually evolves through two others; there's the organisation then there's the institution, which are different but that doesn't really matter that much... What I think we've undergone is this process of... Anarchism and autonomous movements (and identity-based movements really) in the '80s, '90s, 2000's are really fused-group type: and they flip toward pledged group I think partly as a result of social media, partly as a result of scarcity in the social context, partly as a result of movement defeat and difficulty producing... I mean, the fused groups are really held together by those emotions. You have those big events, you have powerful emotion, exhilaration, and empowerment, and this feeling you could do things that you couldn't do before: and that really is what holds the movement together. But then when you get this big counter-insurgency[38] wave and suddenly people feel like you can't do that anymore; you're not getting those emotions anymore: and the new generation coming up I think have never had them. Other

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[35] ed. – see 'Identity Precedes Ideology'
[36] ed. – see 'Between Punishment & Vengeance'

[37] ed. – see Return Fire vol.4 pg6
[38] ed. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg5