

# Fist Full of Concrete

Some Thoughts Towards Insurrection

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# Contents

|                                                                           |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>It Doesn't Have to Be This Way, You Know</b>                           | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Against the Production Ethic</b>                                       | <b>5</b>  |
| What is the Production Ethic? . . . . .                                   | 6         |
| Foundations and Consequences . . . . .                                    | 7         |
| Ableism . . . . .                                                         | 7         |
| Colonization . . . . .                                                    | 7         |
| Dehumanization and Alienation . . . . .                                   | 8         |
| Punishment . . . . .                                                      | 9         |
| "Communism" with Capitalistic Characteristics . . . . .                   | 9         |
| Anti-Work Thought as Attack . . . . .                                     | 11        |
| <b>On Moralism, Relation, and (Anti)Militarism</b>                        | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Don't Film, Act: A Call for Confrontation</b>                          | <b>16</b> |
| It Happened Again Today, It'll Happen Again Tomorrow . . . . .            | 16        |
| The Fear and Moralization of Observation . . . . .                        | 16        |
| Footage as Counterinsurgency . . . . .                                    | 17        |
| What it Takes to End This World . . . . .                                 | 18        |
| <b>Expropriate, Use, Destroy</b>                                          | <b>20</b> |
| Illusions and Delusions . . . . .                                         | 20        |
| The Concentration of Power and the Reproduction of Daily Life . . . . .   | 22        |
| Fetish as Smokescreen . . . . .                                           | 22        |
| Expropriate, Use, Destroy . . . . .                                       | 23        |
| <b>No Such Thing as Neutral</b>                                           | <b>25</b> |
| <b>No More Martyrs: On Death, Dying, and the Courage it Takes to Live</b> | <b>27</b> |
| The Appeal of a "Meaningful" Death . . . . .                              | 27        |
| How We Orient . . . . .                                                   | 28        |
| The Courage Necessary to Live . . . . .                                   | 29        |
| <b>To the Cracked and the Crazy</b>                                       | <b>32</b> |

# It Doesn't Have to Be This Way, You Know

There is a beauty that creeps in under the plastic blinds, covering the window, in the form of sunlight. A beauty that seems an attempt by the world outside to draw some contrast to the words I write here, and that you will read later on. That for all the expression of pain, and dissatisfaction, and desire for more, there is still beauty to be found here, bouncing around the walls of this mold infested apartment.

This opening is an attempt to offer some broad context for the essays that follow, primarily in regards to the frameworks used (and not used) in their analyses. My hope is that by placing these pieces in the context of this opening and in the context of one another, a more rich and meaningful conversation may be had between you and the text before you, than would be possible with the pieces in isolation. These texts will never be a perfect encapsulation of the thoughts I'm trying to realize. They will always be an approximation, though hopefully a useful approximation nonetheless.

First and foremost, each of these pieces is written from a relational framework, not a moral or ethical framework. By "relational framework" I mean that each piece focuses on attempting to articulate existent ways in which we are forced to relate to the world, to one another, and to ourselves. They then ask, and attempt to answer, how those ways of relating are produced and reproduced by our actions, our frameworks of analysis, the systems we exist within, and the objects we use and how we use them. You may also find, within these pieces, expression of some desired ways of relating in the form of calls for more direct antagonism towards the institutions of our suffering or more intimate desires of how we speak to, live with, and care for one another.

I make the distinction between "relational" and "moral" frameworks for the somewhat simple reason that I don't believe that there exists such a thing as an objective morality. I specifically try to avoid using words like "right" or "wrong" and "good" or "bad", in both formal and informal communication, as I don't find them useful in working to make explicit my desires. In fact, I find their use to be an obfuscation of expressions of desire and often an attempt to convince or evangelize some doctrine.

I find speaking under the guise of morality to be an attempt at avoiding conflict, of avoiding the acknowledgment that people can want different things, things that are often in direct opposition to what we might want for ourselves. We can be against something without needing to rely on some moral framework to back us up. We can speak explicitly about what it is we desire and what it is we wish to destroy. I believe that we would be better poised to find one another, and develop meaningful action if we spoke more in the realm of desire and less in the pit of morality.

So, I don't say I'm against the police because they are "bad" or "vestiges of a morally reprehensible system", I say I am against the police because of how my guts wretch and heave when I pass a cop on the street. I am against the police because of what it feels like to have a knee in the back of my neck, choking on the dust in the gutter while my spine does its best to not give way. I'm against the police because cannot stomach the possibility of their permanence.

I don't want to continue to exist in this way, in this relation. The same can be said for the world of prisons, of work, of capital and all the big and small things that affect how we exist. It isn't about right or wrong, or good or bad because I don't give a shit about how well my actions, thoughts, or desires adhere to some prescriptive dogma. I care about finding others who desire something different, something more in a similar way as me. I care about the articulation of that desire and the positionalities we take in pursuit of these other ways of existing. I care about attacking, with all my might, the existent systems of our suffering.

That understanding of relational frameworks in mind, it is necessary to discuss the idea of "utopia", or at least how I relate to it. In its most common usage, utopia tends to denote some desired and idealized place, either temporal, geographic or both. Often utopia is understood (either derisively or positively) as something to be reached through the culmination of ever progressing revolutionary action. I do not believe in this concept of utopia. I do not believe that there exists some end goal or steady state (beyond the likelihood of cosmic heat death) to be achieved. I do not operate from a desired "end of history" scenario where all is well and right with the world for all time. I view the interrogation of desired relations as an everevolving way to position oneself within the world, not so much a statement of end goal. I fear this may not satisfy those who are primed to be skeptical of anything resembling utopic ideation so I offer the following metaphor to try and make an abstract idea a bit more concrete.

If I unknowingly step into a bear trap, I will immediately experience a deep and searing pain in my leg as metal teeth dig into flesh. I must attempt to articulate (or identify) the cause of that pain and find some way to undermine that cause in order to find some less painful way of existing, as the suffering I experience from this trap is unbearable and will likely result in my death. I do not want to continue existing in this suffering, I do not wish to die just yet, and so I seek something else. I seek to articulate and undermine the present state of things.

Whether in the concrete context of a bear trap, or the broader and all the more horrifying expanse of capital, these attempts to articulate and undermine my present suffering do not equate to belief in some utopic or ideal end goal. To say otherwise would be to view all relations of suffering as inherent to our existence, fated, inescapable. I will not attempt to argue that all suffering is (or should be) escapable, but the world of prisons, capital, police, and work was built, invented. Made. None of the suffering this manufactured world and its machines have wrought is fated or necessary. It simply does not have to be this way. Police were made and they can be unmade. Prisons were built and they can be destroyed. The work relation and capitalist mode of production were invented and can be attacked and undermined.

To desire different for oneself, and to articulate that desire, cannot be understood as naïve idealism. Otherwise, we are simply resigning ourselves to a fatalism as dogmatic as any other belief system; a fatalism that in its own right helps to reproduce the world as it is, a self-fulfilling prophecy. As you read on and navigate the calls for attack on existent relations and the expressions for desired ways of relating, I ask only that you keep this introduction in mind as you formulate your own critiques and positions.

As you read you may find some essays containing more poetic or polemic phrasing, but I promise you each was written with the above-described framework in mind. Simply put, I write because I want different, I want more.

I want everything.

What do you want?

# Against the Production Ethic

(February 2022)

*This piece was written in the winter of 2021-2022 in the midst of nearly all covid precautions being phased out in the part of the U.S. I spend the most time. Thousands of people were still dying daily from the virus. But precautions limit productivity, productivity limits profit. So it goes.*

This is for those who are tired of the exhaustion enforced on them by an unfeeling, uncaring world.

This is for those who cry out in the night for respite knowing they must rise in the morning to put food on their table.

This is for those who are told they are unworthy of care, of support, told that their life is a necessary sacrifice.

This is for those taken from us too soon, for too long.

This is for those who refuse to be made stone in defiance of this world, who yearn for something more.

This is for all those who fight back.

I see you.

This is for you.

It is February 2022. The US has now entered its third calendar year of being ravaged by a global pandemic. 3,579 people died yesterday in the US alone. These lives were not lost through some tragic accident as nearly all media coverage would lead us to believe.

No, these lives were taken, sacrificed by those with power who stood to gain from the pandemic. Sacrificed in service of the production ethic.

Even when actions are taken with the ostensible goal of curbing mass death, the framing of those actions is rarely about prioritizing people's health. Instead, the actions are taken to "help us get back to normal" as soon as possible, to get us back to producing.

How else could Bezos increase his net worth by over \$50,000,000,000 since January 2020, or Musk increase his by over \$100,000,000,000 in the same time.

In this perpetual "return to normalcy" we have seen a massive number of people quitting their jobs, refusing to put up with the conditions that have been imposed upon this world since the advent of capitalism, and the chattel slavery and colonization that served it; heightened and highlighted by the pandemic.

This zine does not attempt to offer an explanation of *why* people are quitting their jobs now, or even posit the meaning of this current situation. There are as many reasons to refuse work as there are people.

We are not yet two years removed from a sustained Black rebellion that demonstrated the meaning of possibility in a torched cop shop and a thousand other daring acts across the country.

I have no desire to explain that which intentionally evades characterization. No desire to paint a collection of moments as a prescriptive movement.

This intro is only to serve as context for the world in which I am writing, the world I wish to make dust. The world dominated by the production ethic.

## **What is the Production Ethic?**

The production ethic is the system of value by which actions that are deemed to be “productive” are considered good, and those that are either neutral or deemed “unproductive” are considered bad. Similarly, individuals who exhibit “productive” behaviors are considered to be good, and those who are “unproductive” are considered bad.

The value of a person comes to be defined by their alleged productivity. This ethic is a consequence of, or response to, the capitalist mode of production. This ethic is intentionally constructed, propagated, and enforced by those who stand to gain from the capitalist mode of production in order to reinforce their power.

Individuals who are considered productive are considered deserving of being rewarded; socially, financially, spiritually. Those who are considered unproductive are deserve to be punished. This system permeates all aspects of our lives. It not only affects us where we work, but it is first beaten into us (either metaphorically or far too often literally) at school and within our own families.

We internalize the ethic to cling to existence within this meatgrinder of a system and so the ethic infects our relationships with others, with space and time, and with ourselves.

Anyone who has ever worked a service job and had their boss get pissed at them for taking too long of a smoke break or taking five minutes to compose themselves during a particularly rough shift understands that their role is to be productive first, person second.

Inherent to this system is the fact that “productiveness” and “unproductiveness” are entirely subjective categories that are bent and molded in order to serve the existing power structures of white supremacy, antiblackness, cisheteropatriarchy, colonialism, and ableism. Actions are always racialized and gendered within the context of these systems. Both the characterization of “unproductive” and the consequences of being deemed “unproductive” will be born most intensely by the disabled, the Black, the targeted nonwhite, the queer, the indigenous.

Ironically, the proponents of the production ethic claim the opposite. Those with the power to define someone or something productive will claim to be focusing solely on the actions themselves, claiming a “color-blind” view of the individual taking those actions. They claim not to consider the contexts that informed these actions.

The teacher claims they’re writing up the student solely because they refused to pay attention in class and were always falling asleep. That teacher doesn’t give a shit that the student is falling asleep because they don’t have the luxury to rest after school because they need to work at the local gas station to help pay the rent.

The production ethic serves, and is, in turn, served itself, by systems of power it operates within. There is no separating the production ethic from white supremacy and antiblackness, from colonialism, from any and all systems of oppression.

## **Foundations and Consequences**

Beyond simply serving existing systems of domination, the production ethic extends these forms, reproducing them as ever more specified and intimate oppressive structures.

Foundational characteristics of the production ethic become indistinguishable from its consequences as any system of domination that serves the production ethic is in turn served by the production ethic.

The following are brief summaries of some of these foundational characteristics, consequences, and combinations of the two.

### **Ableism**

Given that, under the production ethic, our value is defined solely by our ability to produce, and that since production for most people is defined by their ability to labor, ableism is inherent to the production ethic. Calling it a consequence would be a bit of a misnomer, as that implies the ableism is an unfortunate afterthought, rather than a foundational instrument of reinforcing the ethic. Ableism forms the basis on which value is defined.

The prescriptive category of disabled (meaning that which the state ascribes to individuals as a characterization as opposed to that which individuals can claim for themselves as identity) perpetually remains a moving target. As the goals of production change people move in and out of being valuable to, and valued by, the production ethic. Similarly, the category can be narrowed or expanded depending on how desperately the system requires more sacrifices on a given day.

The ever-shifting CDC guidelines on who is at risk during this pandemic and what is required to “safely” re-enter the workplace demonstrates how disability as prescriptive category will always conform to the desires of the bosses and the state. When the bosses can make due without your labor, the state may allow you the prescription of “disabled”. When the bosses begin losing money from a lack of employees to exploit suddenly the category of “disabled” becomes more heavily scrutinized and constrained.

### **Colonization**

The production ethic necessitates colonization because of its evaluation of all space and time in terms of potential productive utility. This means that land also falls within the jurisdiction of being either “productive” or “unproductive”. More specifically, land is considered a resource to be given to those who will use it most productively. Within a white supremacist system this inherently means that white people are considered, by the production ethic, to be the most productive and therefore hold providential claim to all land. Land that is not serving the institutions of white supremacy can never be considered productive and therefore must be made to do so.

So, through the frame of production, the forced seizure of land, the displacement of the people indigenous to that land, and the establishment of settlements of people who will “be more productive” on that land are justified. These settlements can be literal towns and cities, or they can be mines, logging camps, and pipelines.

This colonization extends beyond land and turns again towards people. Slavery is built into the bedrock of the production ethic. Service to the white supremacist machine, in regards to both material profits of capital and the psychological profits of white individuals, is the standard by

which all productivity is measured. Therefore, those unwilling or incapable of being “productive”, by that standard, of their own accord are objectified, reduced to property rather than person, and utilized by the white supremacist machine (through the actions of white individuals).

## **Dehumanization and Alienation**

Seen most clearly through the system of slavery, in which the violent recontextualization of person as property is made explicit, the production ethic relies upon the dehumanization of all people forced to labor. We become nothing more than a means to an end, pieces of machinery meant to serve production. Our value is drawn from our utility, our utility from our productiveness. We become solely the labor our bodies and minds are capable of. All of the things that make us who we are as people are stripped of any meaning beyond what traits make us, or others, productive. The artist is only useful as such if they inspire us to work harder. The healer is only useful if they get us back to work faster. The dancer only useful if they distract us from our ordeal long enough for us to walk back into work the next day.

The dehumanization becomes more intense when even the actions expected of us are not deemed to have value (or at least not worth compensation). The relationship between gender and valued labor demonstrates this most clearly. Within the framework cisheteropatriarchy, women are expected to perform certain actions as an extension of their being without any value being ascribed to those actions. Childcare, housework, emotional labor, are all examples of such actions that are expected and understood as necessary yet are given no value in the form of compensation. Do not misunderstand this as a call to simply append a wage to previously unwaged labor. Such action can only serve to bring previously unwaged labor into the fold of the leviathan that is wage labor writ large.

We suffer not only from the work-related consequences of the production ethic. We suffer in all facets of our lives. This is because all facets of our lives are wrenched from our control. This is the constant creep of production. There is no such thing as being “off the clock”. There are no “non-working hours”.

Rest and leisure become framed as time for us to “recharge” for the sake of being more focused and productive at work the next day. Whether rest is understood as literal sleep or as time spent in distraction of a movie or album, it is always defined against the specter of the next day’s work.

Even the ways we love are valued by their productivity. Those of us who develop romantic relationships outside of the white supremacist and cisheterosexual frameworks of a cis man marrying cis woman are deemed “unproductive” at an existential level. Our sex is “unproductive” because we cannot promise the 2.5 children expected of us to be raised as good workers who will in turn serve production themselves one day.

Under the production ethic we are not free to live according to our own needs, our own wants, our own desires. Time is made a scarce resource we must ration. Of this resource production always takes the lion’s share, leaving only rancid scraps for us to salvage for some sad chance at self-realization. We are allowed no space to develop relation with one another beyond that of survival. No space to develop relation to the communities we live in or the land around and under us. All soil is barren, capable only of growing that which serves those who made it so.

## **Punishment**

Take one too many sick days from your retail job and your boss tells you to not bother coming in next week. Take advantage of promised maternity leave and come back to find your hours cut. Get injured off the clock and good luck explaining to your manager why you need to move slower.

Those who are deemed unproductive (or even less productive), regardless of whether they intended to be or not, are punished. They are stripped of their jobs, their source of income, their ability to keep a roof over their head and food on their table. They lose access to social spaces, and leisure activities. They are pushed to take on riskier actions in order to survive, actions that are then criminalized by the very system that forced their existence.

If the system decides such actions warrant more explicit violence, the individual ends up in the modern system of slavery, prison. Here, all of the punishments mentioned above are enforced to a stricter and harsher degree with the additional punishment of the further restriction of autonomy. In a truly cruel irony, prisons enforce yet another punishment in the form of forced labor, forced productiveness. The system of the production ethic is determined to extract everything it can from the individual, whether it deems them valuable or not.

The knowledge that such punishment awaits those of us who ever become (or are deemed to be) unproductive serves to keep us working. Even our ability to envision a world outside of this system of productivity is curbed by the knowledge that spending time in such fantasies would risk our productiveness in the here and now.

There are many, many other consequences that are created or worsened by the production ethic. These are just brief summaries of some such consequences.

Because of the relationship between the production ethic and the systems of white supremacy, anti-blackness, cisheteropatriarchy, colonialism, and ableism, the consequences described above will be far more acute for those who are impacted by the intersecting oppressions these systems enforce.

There is no untangling the consequences of the production ethic from the consequences of any other system of oppression. These systems must be understood in conjunction with one another.

There is no way to consider the production ethic from strictly a class-based lens as I have seen many white radicals attempt to do. To make such an attempt is to miss the point entirely about how we might actually free ourselves from this system.

## **“Communism” with Capitalistic Characteristics**

You might be tempted to say that the problem is not with the production ethic, but rather with capitalism. Perhaps, you think, if the state were of the communist variety, comprised of a dictatorship of the proletariat, the production ethic might even be a good thing.

My response is simple: There is no rehabilitating the production ethic. There is no state without the capitalist mode of production. There is no capitalist mode of production without the ordering of society in accordance with the production ethic. There is no production ethic without its foundations and consequences.

Whether your state claims to serve capital or “the masses” it is reliant on a production ethic to function. In order to maintain legitimacy, the state needs to sell the myth of a hegemonic,

benevolent purpose. The production ethic is what underlines the supposed purpose of the state as it offers a cohesive goal for all so-called citizens to strive towards.

None of the underlying foundational characteristics or consequences, the underlying racialization and gendering of production, discussed previously are meaningfully affected by this transition from a capitalistic state to a “communistic” one. Individuals are still dehumanized, valued by their ability to produce. There is still the ever-present creep of the production ethic into our daily lives; rest and leisure are still in service of our productivity. Punishment is certainly still present for those who either reject the production ethic or are unable to keep up with its demands.

Ableism still exists as the backbone of the state-communist production ethic, with able-bodied individuals serving as the hegemonic myth of the proletarian worker and the disabled individual being either abandoned (did Lenin not say “he who does not work, neither shall he eat”?) or tokenized in order to justify and reify the existence of the production ethic. Outsized power will still be held by those who decide what counts as a “legitimate” disability and how that decision process is used to punish those who struggle to meet the demand of the production ethic or refuse it altogether.

Colonization still exists within the communistic state. Land is still seized and turned over to those who will “use it more productively” except now instead of that productivity being based around the accumulation of capital for wealthy business owners, it’s to accumulate resources for the state. People are still displaced from their lands, relocated at the whims of the state’s thirst for resource extraction. They are still “reeducated” to better serve the state. Some will say that a communist state will be kinder in its displacement, relocation and reeducation, that such acts are necessary in order to ensure an economy that can care for “the masses”. This is apologia for colonization, plain and simple. There is no kind displacement, no kind ethnocide.

\*Note this thought is also present in white-anarchist tendencies that seek the establishment of communes or autonomous zones on stolen land as a means by which to “re-establish” some connection to land that was never ours to begin with. These currents are dangerous in their own right and should be understood as misguided at best. This is not to say all communes are inherently colonial, but any such white-led structure in the US almost certainly is.

The belief that somehow a “communist” state would be able to function without the dehumanization of people and extraction of resources from land amounts to the worship of technology we see from every tech bro who believes in crypto currency as a revolutionary force. The only difference in this case is that the state-communist supplants the worship of capital with the worship of the state. Both are a worship of technology as savior and both rely on the capitalist mode of production. Any attempt to rehabilitate the production ethic is doomed to fail, if by fail we mean do away with the consequences of that ethic.

Through this worship of technology, the state-communist takes what was ostensibly (in their own theory) a means to an end, a temporary measure on the road to a stateless communist society and venerates it as the end itself. The goal is no longer to create a communist world where individuals are free to develop meaningful relation as they desire, but rather to venerate the consequences of the state as well. These consequences are often not even considered necessary evils, instead they are signs of success, signs of “progress”.

There is no untangling the production ethic from white supremacy, from cis-heteropatriarchy, from colonialism, from ableism. And there is no disentangling the state from the production ethic.

## Anti-Work Thought as Attack

There is a recognition of the danger of anti-work thought to projects interested in state building. Because the state requires the myth of a hegemonic, benevolent goal the possibility of large numbers of people rejecting to work towards that goal threatens the myth, and therefore the state. Work refusal is a threat to, but not directly an attack on, the production ethic. If we wish to do away with the system of domination imposed upon us through the capitalist mode of production it is not enough to refuse work, or prioritize individual rest and leisure. Individual lifestyle choices will never be enough.

We must attack.

In order to directly attack the production ethic, we must attack the institutions of oppression that are fundamental to it.

If we wish to live in a world where we are free to develop meaningful relation to one another and to the communities we live in

If we wish to live without the imposition of a value based upon the alleged productive capabilities of our bodies

If we wish to rest when we decide to rest, and to rise only when we are ready to rise

We must attack that which forces the framework of productivity upon us

We must attack the institutions of colonialism

We must attack the institutions of white supremacy

We must attack the institutions of ableism

We must attack the institutions of cisheterosexism

We must attack the institutions of anti-blackness

We must torch the mechanisms of capitalism so thoroughly that even the state-communists cannot turn them against us.

There is no place for class-reductionism in this attack. Such reductionism only serves to reinforce the oppression inherent to the production ethic and must be denounced as such.

I attack because I refuse to be sacrificed on the factory floor; The Boss's, The People's, or otherwise.

I ask only that you attack in the ways that you are able, whenever you are able. You deserve better than what this world can ever give you. You deserve so much better.

# On Moralism, Relation, and (Anti)Militarism

(May 2022)

*This piece was written in late May, 2022, as a response to the swift and uncritical support many anarchists in the U.S. began to vocalize and organize around for the Ukrainian war effort against Putin's invasion a few months prior. Primarily, this piece was meant to question US anarchist support for an "anarchist territorial defense unit" under the purview of the Ukrainian state military as well as push us to consider how such a position affects our orientation towards struggle at home.*

I've no interest in changing minds. I'm not here to tell you I'm right and you're wrong. I write for those who are thinking along similar lines, to give them some assurance that they are not alone. I write for myself, to carve out space for the relation I desire within a world bent on suffocating us.

Before I begin in earnest let me say this as explicitly as I can: I am an anarchist. I believe in the destruction of all oppressive systems (the state included) through autonomous attack. I have no desire to manage or dictate the terms of others' engagement. I trust that people will attack the systems that oppress them in the ways that they are able in the moments they are able.

I have fought in the streets against the state and against those who wish to wield its power. I have faced courtrooms and held firm when offered deals to make felony charges disappear at the expense of my principles and the well-being of those around me. I have been beaten bloody, held at knife and at gunpoint for what I believe in. I do not write from some ivory tower. I write from an apartment with mold in the walls and a sink that won't drain. I write because I want more than what this world could ever provide.

I write because I've grown tired of seeing other anarchists take positions that preserve the world I seek to destroy.

In February of this year the Russian military invaded Ukraine with an immensity and swiftness comparable only to the media spectacle that accompanied it. For the audience of this spectacle, suddenly they saw war erupt out of peace. Conflict, when accompanied by sufficient spectacle, has the tendency to become exceptionalized. The new conflict is made unique against the backdrop of all other conflicts that we have grown to normalize, rationalize as natural features of distant landscapes; distance being measured as much in degrees of relation as in miles.

Within hours of the invasion several anarchist media projects began to platform writings of a handful of anarchists from Eastern Europe.

Within days there was talk of an anarchist and anti-authoritarian battalion being formed in order to resist the Russian invasion.

Then there were calls for others to go to Ukraine in order to join this battalion. The images conjured were of the Spanish Revolution, of partisan militias, of militant resistance to fascist rule through autonomous groups of volunteers. These images were, and are, a false comparison.

Those that platformed these calls did so uncritically. There was minimal interrogation of the battalion's deference to the Ukrainian State military's command. There was minimal discussion of

the forced conscription taking place. There was minimal discussion of the inherent collaboration between this anti-authoritarian battalion and explicitly nationalistic and fascistic battalions.

I use the word collaboration as when taking part in the military apparatus of a state, one inevitably collaborates with the other arms of that military apparatus whether intentionally or otherwise.

It quickly became the “anarchist position” to support this anti-authoritarian battalion in their noble fight against the Russian invaders. This is war. There are sides. There is good and there is bad. Which are you?

Moralism, the reactive positioning of defining actions or people on the scale of good to bad based on some moral doctrine, runs deep. Moralism often runs deepest within currents of those who believe they’ve long since excised its influence from their rationality. Through moralism one abdicates any responsibility to interrogate the social relations that are attacked, reified, or replicated through particular actions or positionalities. In moralism one relies on a dogma of their choice to justify their decisions, to themselves and to others. If one follows the correct moral line, how then could they possibly be in the wrong?

So it is in moralism that these calls for support, material or otherwise, for the Ukrainian state apparatus are rooted. More specifically, they are rooted in the implicit assumption that when state conflict arises, there are no positionalities other than to support one state structure or another, and so the “correct” course of action is in supporting the more “moral” state. This self-imposed binary warps anarchist liberatory principles and slogans, turning them into rationalities for siding with one state apparatus against another.

The truth of the matter is that there exist anarchist positionalities, that explicitly further ways of relating that most anarchists speak to as desires, present within such inter-state conflicts.

There is sabotage of border checkpoints which prevent those seeking refuge from traveling. There is the care work of helping those who sought refuge find housing, basic necessities, community; building modes of care outside of state apparatuses. There is the clandestine attack on conscription offices and other military infrastructure undermining the myth of a hegemonic, supportive citizenry.

All of these actions, and more, explicitly undermine present ways of relating to the world and put forth the possibility of new ones. By and large, these efforts have seen only a fraction of the platforming that the anti-authoritarian battalion has received, a formation that can only ever serve to reify state power given it is explicitly under the purview of the Ukrainian State.

So now I ask, what does it mean to have major anarchist publications calling for support for an arm of a state’s military? Why do we see other anarchists falling lockstep in line with these calls? My belief is that this comes down to two primary motivations, justified through moralism: complacency and fear. Complacency with the current systems of domination and the relations they engender. Fear of the consequences one risks by pushing beyond the existent modes of relation.

While not expanded upon here explicitly, one should consider how whiteness and euro-centrism shape and define the boundaries of what actions, critiques, and positions are acceptable.

When one abandons the interrogation of the social relations they inhabit (or desire) through the deference to moralism, decision making becomes an objective process by which one assesses a given situation in accordance with their chosen dogma. They remove the “personal” from this process, and therefore can sidestep the questioning of their own reactions, their own emotional responses. Moralism is objective, it is righteous, who cares if it just so happens to always point

towards action that maintains relations I'm comfortable with? So what if it always points away from that which frightens me?

For many in the US, anarchists included, war is an abstract and distant force. But war has always been here. War is in the pipelines being built through Indigenous land. War is in police interrogation rooms. War is in the condos casting shadows over the homes of those who couldn't make the rent. It is in the prisons, and the factories, and the schools, and the courthouses, and the street. War is here and it has been here since the very first ships arrived from Europe.

But if one admits that they are in a war zone, then they must inhabit some position within the conflict. If they were oblivious, or willfully ignorant, to the very fact that war was existent, then logic would suggest they aren't positioned to attack the systems of power perpetuating war, and may even be complacent in their existence.

So, we see many US anarchists attempt to keep war at a distance. If war can be kept in the abstract, then the sense of self-that-stands-against-systems-of-power can be preserved.

Their platform calls for solidarity demonstrations, for donations, for policy proposals all for a distant militarism in order to cover their lack of militancy at home, muddying the distinction between the two in the process. Their words of support or financial contributions to the military conflict overseas serves as donation to the collection basket of their moralism. And so their sins of omission are absolved. There is no solidarity to be found here, no matter how many banners are dropped.

Acting in real solidarity would necessitate interrogating the ways in which one can realize the war at home, necessitate bringing the abstract and distant to your city or town, to your doorstep.

To be in solidarity with the victims of war while maintaining an anarchist positionality would require taking on positions of antagonism to the mechanisms of war in totality. One could attack the factories that build the bombs, undermine military advertising and recruitment, sabotage the transport of weapons, and attack the banks that fund it all. There are infinite positions of attack one could take, but one needs to realize those positions at home in order for them to have any meaning beyond a singular moment. Attack the war machines with which you have proximity and trust in others elsewhere to do the same.

But to realize the war at home risks consequences. It requires a refusal of the world that is far more explicit than most are willing to engage in. I feel that for many, it is a fear of the consequences such a positionality risks that keep them from realizing said positionality, despite their professed politics pointing them in that direction.

Fear is understandable, this type of conflictuality is terrifying and if one didn't occasionally feel afraid I'd question if they understood what they were getting themselves into. We shouldn't be ashamed of fear, but when one frames reactions based in fear as analysis for others to act upon, fear becomes cowardice.

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, Reuel Rodriguez-Nunez was shot 30 times by the Raleigh Police Department after torching two police SUVs, and while attempting to throw a molotov in the direction of the police exiting the precinct. His brother later went on to tell local news that he felt Reuel was protesting his treatment at the hands of these police from previous experiences in custody. Reuel was 37. In his actions he sought an end to the violent systems he experienced. He sought an end to the world that created those experiences.

Aside from a few retweets or likes on a short write up, I saw hardly any anarchists engage with this news. Those I spoke to typically shrugged their shoulders and said something about how sad it was, suicide by cop and all. The same people and platforms who put out calls of support for a

state military apparatus, the same people who refer to anyone critical of those calls as “pacifists”, had fuck all to say about Reuel. I don’t think that’s a coincidence.

Supporting a state military apparatus is wholly incompatible with solidarity with the actions of Reuel and others like him. Supporting a state military apparatus reifies, reinforces, reincarnates the very world such actions seek to destroy.

As I said at the onset, I’m not here to change minds, I’m not here to tell you you’re wrong and that I’m right. I’m here to carve out space and demonstrate a position. I’m here to state very plainly, I am an anarchist seeking an end to the world.

If you seek something similar, I ask you to make personal the interrogation of the ways of relating your positionalities make possible or undermine.

If you seek something else, then honestly, I’m surprised you read this far. See you in the street, I guess.

# **Don't Film, Act: A Call for Confrontation**

(January 2023)

## **It Happened Again Today, It'll Happen Again Tomorrow**

In January of 2023, police in the so-called United states (at the latest count) murdered at least 73 people, brutalized hundreds more, and traumatized a near infinite constellation of others. Each day reveals a new story written to coincide with the release of the latest snuff (or attempted snuff) film directed by your local sheriff's department. Sometimes the cops provide the film equipment themselves, funded by liberal demands for accountability at every level of governance. Other times a bystander dutifully lends a hand to capture a person's final moments while they plead for someone, anyone, to help them, to do something.

Maybe there was once a time when it was reasonable to believe that capturing the brutality of police on film would mean an end to that brutality would be brought about by some righteous conscience of the society bearing witness, but that time (if it ever did exist) is certainly long gone now. Year after year, brutal video after brutal video, we find ourselves inhabiting the same world of the police, their cruelty, and their brutality.

Your footage will not save anyone, you are not exposing some unknown side of the American cop. We know what the police are, and we know what they do. It's what they've always done. The footage of the murder of Eric Garner didn't prevent the murder of George Floyd. The footage of the murder of George Floyd didn't prevent the murder of Tyre Nichols. And the footage of the murder of Tyre Nichols won't prevent the next cop from killing the next person whose name will be added to a list that has grown so long that its growth is assumed to be inevitable.

In the most unambiguous terms I can muster, whether captured on a body cam or a cell phone, whether amassing retweets on Twitter or opening the hour on the nightly news, footage will never be able to prevent the violence captured within its frame. Once it has been filmed, you are too late. We are all too late. The moment of potential intervention is gone.

But we don't have to film.

We don't have to be passive observers when the violence of policing breaks out in our proximity. We can act.

## **The Fear and Moralization of Observation**

A person runs down the sidewalk, two cops are in chase close behind. As the person passes you one of the cops catches up and manages to tackle them to the ground, quickly placing a knee in their back and holding their head to the ground. The second cop pulls his Taser and begins to scream commands, often contradicting with those shouted by the first cop. The person held on

the ground is clearly frightened, in pain. Their eyes are scanning a growing crowd, they cry out for help. People begin filming.

What compels a person to raise a camera when incredible violence befalls another person in their proximity rather than run to their aid. What forces craft a way of relating to the world in which that response makes the most sense, even for people who ostensibly care about limiting the violence of policing. Those who don't care, or who are supportive of such violence aside, the most obvious answer would seem to be fear.

To act is to take on the responsibility of acting, which means you'll likely face some consequence (legal, societal, physical) that you might be afraid of. When staring at the reality of policing, it opens the possibility that to act would "invite" the same violence on yourself. This is itself rooted in the assumption that the targets of police violence must have done something to "invite" that violence upon themselves. The truth, as far too many know, is that within a world dominated by deference to capital, to colonialism, to anti-blackness, to cisheterosexism, police will always find a target for their violence. No invitation is needed.

Depending on their relation to police violence more broadly one begins to rationalize their fear in different ways. For many their fear is rationalized as a "strategic decision" to film rather than act.

"Maybe the very act of observing will force the cops to limit their violence during an arrest" (which of course ignores the incredible violence of every part of an arrest that comes after you're placed in the squad car).

"If I were to act it would just put the person in greater danger than they already are" offering some convenient prophetic connection to a future yet unwritten.

"What good would it do for two of us to be beaten and jailed?"

For others their fear is less about physical/legal/social safety and more about the fear that if they were to acknowledge that acting is an option, it would force them to reconsider all prior situations in which they didn't act.

For those with less reason to personally fear police (often stemming from their proximity to whiteness and capital) the rationalization shifts from one of "strategy" to one of moralization. In order to justify their inaction to themselves, the observer rationalizes bearing witness as a moral act, a duty even. Those being arrested, beaten, and murdered become martyrs for the cause of these people's self-actualization. To bear witness to this incredible violence and to be moved to sympathy by it is to be a "good person". And secure in their belief that they are now "good" they are free to go about their day.

The outcry of the moral observer is never about ending the police and their world. It is performance of moral duty to convey moral disposition. The performance becomes ritualized, becomes ritual. It becomes another weapon in the arsenal of the state and its defenders.

## **Footage as Counterinsurgency**

On January 7<sup>th</sup> of this year, Tyre Nichols was beaten by several members of the Memphis Police Department. He died in the hospital three days later. His family demanded answers of what happened that night, their lawyers calling for release of any relevant footage from either body cams or nearby surveillance cameras.

In the days that followed it was revealed, despite initial claims to the contrary, that there existed footage from a security camera across the street from where the beating took place. Instantly every news station began a countdown to the public release of this latest snuff film. We were flooded with articles and statements warning of the horrific and graphic nature of the film. We were told to brace ourselves as the hours ticked closer to the release date, told that what we were to witness would be a violence so aberrant and so severe that it might shake us to our very core.

Every politician and every public official made statements urging calm, begging for civility amidst the whirlwind of rage we might feel, ash from the third precinct still caught in the back of their throats. These calls were echoed by the nonprofits and the named orgs with ascendant leaders seeking positions of institutional power, desperate to demonstrate their capabilities of tempering and directing the emotions of those under their purview.

The spectacle of the release date continued to grow as five of the officers involved in Tyre's murder were fired and charged on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January. Everything seemed to scream "Look! We're listening, we're holding the system accountable. Justice will be served!" Even still, cities across the country prepared for the street conflicts of 2020.

And as the video surfaced on the 27<sup>th</sup> the response in the streets was undercut by this weeks-long pageantry. The entire ordeal of the footage, from the announcement of its existence to its ultimate release, served to funnel the energy, that might have otherwise arisen organically, into well managed and prepared-for scenarios.

The liberal activists, the nonprofits, the wannabe politicians were all satisfied with the cops being fired and charged. After all, they don't want an end to policing and certainly not its violence. They simply want that violence to be controlled and enacted more specifically against those who their sensibilities deem worthy of harm. Their boldest dream is of a world in which all types of people are brutalized and murdered by the police at proportionate rates.

The state, more specifically the police, will make whatever sacrifices necessary to preserve its own legitimacy. State actors have learned that they can better maintain their legitimacy by quickly and decisively firing/charging some of those within the state's ranks. They have learned to use what was once considered incriminating footage (of the system) to help in that task. Every cop not caught in the frame of this footage is offered cover by the handful that find themselves in a courtroom. While not touched on in any more depth here, I implore you to consider the ways in which this calculated sacrifice also justifies the world of prisons.

I remember seeing images of signs at a protest in Memphis with the common phrase "Justice for Tyre" and feeling sick. Tyre is dead. There is no justice to be found for him now. We've already failed him by allowing the continued existence of this world of policing, and no amount of footage, however horrific, will ever do anything to change that.

There is no way out but to destroy the police and their world.

## **What it Takes to End This World**

Put simply, if we are serious about ending the world of police then we must cultivate a culture of confrontation and antagonism against police whenever and wherever we can. While my ultimate desires involve every brick from every precinct being thrown into the ocean, in the meantime I offer some visions of what this cultivated antagonism might look like in action:

- The instinctive cursing and verbal berating of every cop who walks down the street, or enters a coffee shop, or has his window rolled down. Any cop anywhere in public should be made to feel like shit and they are unwelcome.
- Every time a cop leaves his cruiser unattended, to write a ticket, chase someone on foot, or just to pick up lunch, he returns to find its tires slashed, its paint keyed up and maybe even its windows busted out.
- Whenever a cop tries to trespass an unhoused neighbor from the patio of a restaurant, others arrive with food to eat with their new friends and berate the cop until he either leaves or the following takes place.
- Every time a cop attempts to make an arrest they are required to do so with fists and legs and bats and rocks hitting them until either they give up or until a full-scale riot breaks out. Either way, they will pay for every single person they put their hands on.

These types of actions may seem absurd, risky, or impossible but I dare you to treat them as attainable realities and consider what actions you could take to help bring them about. Every struggle for life against domination necessitates a willingness to protect ourselves and each other from the police. I believe that it is in this open antagonism that we might be able to best care for each other.

It seems to me it isn't that there aren't enough people who care to end the horrors of the world of police and prisons, but rather that most of these people believe that *others* don't care, which limits them from taking the types of actions that might actually bring about such an end.

And so the project becomes to find, build, and foster connections with others who have similar desires this can be done through consistently tabling zines and stickers in the same part of town. If that feels too difficult it can be done asynchronously through consistent flyering and stickering to let others know that they aren't alone in this locale. You can drop relevant literature in newspaper boxes or on the tables of outdoor patios. You can publicly screen films. You can graffiti. You can drop banners Just make your presence known and break the illusion of civil society. Allow yourself to experiment, remain nimble. Be willing to get kicked in the teeth (either metaphorically or unfortunately literally) and still do whatever you can to claw your way back to verticality. Fight for your life. Fight for life writ large.

Conflict with the police must not be something that we reserve for demos (though it certainly should occur there as well). It needs to be integrated in how we move through the world, how we talk with our neighbors, how we walk down the sidewalk, how we breathe. We must break open space, with whatever means we have at our disposal, for resistance to become ingrained in daily life. We must embolden each other to fight back.

I want more. I want better. I want all of this for myself and for all those around me. Help me. Help yourself. Take the possibility of a world without police seriously, and begin bringing it about with every breath.

# Expropriate, Use, Destroy

AKA An Anarchist Anti-Gun Manifesto

(May 2023)

*This piece came out of a number of discussions around the concept of safety (what it is, who it's for, if it is even a desirable goal) and how its prioritization often comes at the expense of action. Those discussions often meandered towards a similar point; the question of firearms and their fetishization. Here I use fetishization to mean a fixation and centralizing focus, where firearms become the idealized symbol and tool of revolutionary action and self-defense. This piece is written in the context of anarchist projects within the U.S., though I welcome those who find themselves elsewhere in the world to consider if/how similar ideas might relate to your locale.*

Before I begin in earnest, let me be clear: this is not a call for pacifism. This is not some plea for non-violence in the face of the near incomprehensible brutality of the police, the prisons, of the state and its vigilante accomplices. If anything, this text is intended as a call for more explicit attack on our enemies, more direct antagonism against the institutions of our suffering, a more intentional incorporation of resistance to these brutalities into our daily lives until such resistance is as second nature as breathing.

I believe in fighting back with anything and everything we can get our hands on, however, I have grown tired with the continued fetishization of guns in radical (specifically anarchist) spaces. I've grown tired of the borderline admission of defeat that leads to reactionary positionalities where we lose site on how our orientations reproduce the world around us. This text is an attempt to critique what I believe to be a culture of self-delusion as to what guns are, what they do, and how they impact our relation to the worlds and people around us. My goal is to articulate a broader position of antagonism so we might be better poised to draw blood and be this world's undoing.

Surviving is not enough.

I still want to win.

I want it more than anything.

What the fuck do you want?

## Illusions and Delusions

We exist in a world of incalculable, purposeful, brutality; most directed at the most marginalized. The institutions of our suffering are vast, near omnipresent in our lives, and ever expanding. The police are at our doors, their vigilante counterparts, ever eager for their chance to take part in the rituals that keep capital flowing, are waiting in the wings for their chance to crack skulls. Sometimes on a subway, sometimes outside of a Walgreens.

Our bodily autonomy is stripped as abortion access is pushed further and further towards impossibility and trans existence is criminalized to the point where what bathroom we use becomes a game of Russian roulette. With each law passed, each drag story hour threatened, each

captured display of violence on film, I see many with whom I find affinity echo some version a similar refrain:

“This is why you need to buy a gun”

Every time I see this refrain, I pause and sit with the unease that rises from my guts into my throat and out my nose. I sit in the unease until a question formulates “What do you think a gun changes?”

I’ve been around guns my whole life. I learned how to shoot at a young age, first a shotgun, then a rifle, then a handgun. I learned how to clean and care for a gun. I learned to make eye contact and verbally confirm control when being handed a firearm. I am comfortable with a gun in my hand. I say all this, somewhat awkwardly in the middle of a thought, to assure the reader that no matter how outlandish you find my critiques, they are not coming from a place of irrational worry or fear of firearms. They are intentional and as precise as I can make them.

In no subtle words, believing that gun ownership is a meaningful answer to the violence enacted on marginalized peoples is to reify the illusion that to possess a gun is to increase one’s proximity to “safety”, and that to possess more guns is to become even “safer”. Owning a gun will never make you safe, because there is no such thing as safety in this world for the marginalized, for the Black, the targeted nonwhite, for the poor, the visibly queer, for the immigrant, for the disabled, for the unhoused, for the incarcerated (in prison or in the all too similar psych wards).

If you wish to continue breathing, there is no gun you can possess to prevent the sheriffs from carrying out an eviction. There is no gun you can possess to turn your heat back on. If someone really, truly, wants you dead, no gun will keep you alive, unless you turn yourself into a machine of pure vigilance, sacrificing living for the hope of survival that can never be guaranteed.

If there is to be a path towards anything resembling “safety” it will not come from individually arming ourselves, even in large numbers. It will come from a generalized culture of antagonism towards both formal and informal institutions of power. It will come from a culture of spontaneous resistance, from insurrectional potential. Guns may be a part of some explicit actions within that culture; however, they are neither necessary nor sufficient for bringing it about and may (as I will touch on later) hinder its continued existence. The only chance we have at protecting each other is gaining ground in the social war of our time.

But for the radical, for the anarchist especially, to recognize one’s position within a social war, to admit the stakes and the costs and begin to build that culture of antagonism, is to take on incredible risk. It is incredibly frightening to confront what we must be willing to lose if we are truly willing to win. So many don’t confront that risk at all. They look anywhere else, towards any other path. Rather than taking an offensive position of articulating worthwhile actions and carrying them out, many revert to a defensive (even reactionary) positioning of arming themselves and simply waiting for the coming genocide, for the coming collapse. They may have other projects that they take part in but they are mostly ways to kill time. They don’t attempt to gain ground and so they don’t risk losing ground. Still, they are convinced of their own radicality because they armed themselves, they have primed themselves to defend the marginalized (potentially including themselves), the most radical thing one can do.

But the genocide isn’t coming, it’s here. It is in the hospital billing departments and waiting rooms. It’s in the classrooms and the lunch lines. It’s in office of records and it’s in the church halls. It’s in the interrogation rooms and it’s in the prison cells. They are no better primed fight

back now than they were prior to becoming armed. Nothing has changed about their positionality or orientation, only their means of expression.

We can't shoot our way to liberation, not if liberation means the ability to determine for ourselves what a life worth living would be. A few shots may help, but they will never be the sufficient form of resistance against a world built upon the logic of concentrated power, of which guns are a primary mode of expression.

## **The Concentration of Power and the Reproduction of Daily Life**

Here is where I get a bit pointed. I don't think the illusion of safety is the primary reason people acquire guns, though I think they convince themselves otherwise. I think people acquire guns because of the fantasy of possessing hyper concentrated power. We live in a world of incredible alienation and disempowerment. We look outside and believe ourselves broadly incapable of affecting our surroundings. In this context, a machine that, with the push of a button, can irreparably alter our existence is easily fetishized.

For the radical who has grown disillusioned with the prospect of revolution or mass movement, guns become a way to ease the existential dread of that disillusionment. Through the possession of such a machine they are able to maintain the belief that whenever they so desire, they can, in fact, enact their will on the world.

These fantasies become so engrained that even when those beautiful moments of real revolt explode, the gun toting radical ends up emerging as a de facto police force rather than making use of the exposed vulnerabilities of our enemies. These power fantasies inevitably blind the radical from recognizing the experimental space opened before them, and so these radicals actively repress the experimentation and insurrectionary potential of others in those spaces. I saw far too many such "radical" policing forces in 2020 to ever trust a person who shows up to a riot carrying an AR.

It is because of such experiences witnessing self-described radicals and anarchists take on the role of policing within supposedly anti-police spaces that it feels imperative (especially in the context of a world of relations defined by colonialism, anti-Blackness, racism, etc) to question the role of machines that so deftly concentrate power in our spaces at all.

If we seek and end to police, we must seek and end to the relations that allow for policing as well.

## **Fetish as Smokescreen**

Perhaps the consequence of the continued fetishizing and fantasizing that feels most pressing, is how it alters our relation to the arms manufacturers themselves. I rarely, if ever, see these manufacturers recognized as viable targets of direct action even at the height of anti-police mobilizations despite the fact that the only reason the police are able enact violence on the scale that they do is because these manufacturers supply them with near infinite arms.

I ask you to sit with this question for a time. Bring it up with friends at your next assembly or reading group. Is it because you don't care? Is it because you think it too abstract a target? Too risky? How does the culture of gun ownership within radical spaces affect how we talk or don't talk about gun manufacturers?

If you don't care, fuck you.

If you find the target too abstract, I ask if you would say the same about the police, or the prisons, or capital, or any other indefinite system we decry on our dropped banners or in our communiqués.

If such action is too risky, I ask if you've fully considered the risk of not acting. Is your risk assessment somehow tied to your current proximity to, and prioritization of, comfortability.

The very fact that it has been near radio silence from anarchists on these points in recent history, to me, signals a complete lack of willingness to engage with the actual terms of the social war in which we find ourselves. If we aren't willing to consider finding ways to undermine the supply of arms to the police and military, then we assume the inevitability of their being as well armed as they currently are.

This is as good as admitting defeat, as we will never be able to match the police or military in the arena of arms procurement, and even if we could, the only way we'd be able to match them in an arms-focused conflict would be to turn ourselves into a military of our own with all the loss of autonomy and life that entails.

I refuse to admit defeat, and I refuse to fulfill some dutiful role within a misnamed revolutionary military. I desire life, I desire a life worth living.

## **Expropriate, Use, Destroy**

As I said earlier, while neither necessary nor sufficient for bringing about a culture of antagonism towards the existent world and all its intersecting brutalities, guns may serve some purpose within specific actions and so it feels worthwhile to throw out a potential way of relating to them in the moments we deem them useful.

We expropriate (both individual armaments and the means by which to produce them) in order to break away from participating in the profiteering of the gun manufacturers while simultaneously dispossessing our enemies of their means to brutalize us.

We use what we have expropriated in the ways deemed worthwhile when we have deemed such actions necessary.

We destroy what we have expropriated to the best of our ability.

Most importantly, we destroy the means by which these arms are produced. So long as there exists a way to quickly mass produce arms, there will always be a timebomb waiting for the next police or military to emerge.

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At its most simplistic, a gun is a machine designed with the specific purpose of killing. The majority of handguns and rifles produced today are designed with the specific intention of killing people. I refuse to accept the normalization, and fetishization, of such a machine within anarchist spaces.

While I'm not so naive as to believe there will be some idyllic future in which no one harms anyone else, I am certainly idealistic enough to believe a world without these machines is possible. If you disagree, fine, you can stand in defense of the gun factories, maybe even point one at me as I light the match.

As I said at the onset, I want to win. I want it more than anything.

Winning, to me, looks like the ashes of every precinct and prison mixing with the ashes of every factory, the ones that make guns included.

Winning looks like concentrations of power being incessantly confronted, wherever they arise.

It looks like children playing, adults playing.

It looks like breathing, breathing free, whatever that means for each of us.

It cannot look like a gun in every hand, while we wait for the next police to show itself.

I will never be able to breathe in that world.

And I need to breathe.

So, get a gun if you feel you must. Learn how to use it, learn how to clean it and how to properly hand it off to another person. But never, ever let it become more than what it is, a machine for killing. It is not safety, it is not defense, and your desire for it cannot supersede the need to undermine their production writ large. There will come a time when it will need to go, like all other vestiges of the world of police and prisons. I only hope you understand by then.

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“The most useful thing one can do with arms is to render them useless as quickly as possible”  
~ At Daggers Drawn

# No Such Thing as Neutral

On the Tools We Use  
(June 2023)

*While I had already conceptualized and begun writing this piece prior to the publication of “An Anarchist Anti-Gun Manifesto”, the final form of “No Such Thing as Neutral” has been largely influenced by the response to the former. In particular, I was inspired by the common response of guns being “a tool” and “therefore neutral”, of the assumption that my critique of guns, and their world of relations, was of a moral character, and as such the concept of “neutrality” would hold some rhetorical weight. This piece is an attempt to break out of the confinement of moral frameworks we operate within, especially when we aren’t aware of our doing so. It is an attempt to argue for a more explicit articulation of desire, a more explicit analysis of the world of domination around us. As with every line of ink I have ever left on a page, this piece is, at its core, a call for more explicit action.*

When we, as anarchists and associated radicals, talk of objects or tools, moral frameworks tend to creep their way into the conversation. However, the way these frameworks butt in is less explicit than one might assume, often disguising themselves as the anti (or non) moral argument. These frameworks frequently sneak into our discussions through the trojan horse of “neutrality”.

It would be impossible to count the number of times I’ve seen a discussion on the use of particular tools or tactics begin, and often end, with a flippant statement about how said tools are “neutral” and therefore neither “good” nor “bad”. Such statements are typically employed, knowingly or otherwise, in an effort to deflect critique of a particular tool or tactic and move to some place of resignation that tools are outside of the realm of critique by their nature of being “neutral”. Despite seeming to argue against a moral interpretation of tools, this rhetoric implicitly reinforces a moralistic view of the world by presupposing a good/bad binary and placing “neutral” somewhere within it.

All tools have some existent way in which they are produced (in this case I mean the literal production of tools as objects). All tools have some intended use at the point of their production. All tools have realized uses once they are employed in the world. All tools affect the ways we relate to the world around us, even if their effects are small. There is no separating a tool from the relations it engenders, and there is no such thing as a “neutral” relation. Therefore, there is no meaningful way in which a tool can be considered “neutral” outside of a moral interpretation of the world.

This argument may appear semantic, but I ask that you sit with it for a time before making that claim. I believe this shift in language and lens by which we talk about tools is imperative for us (anarchists and fellow travelers) to move towards a place of more meaningful communication of our desired ways of existing (and how we wish to attack the current ways of existing forced upon us). Let us take a moment to consider a few specific examples: a handgun/rifle, a car, and a doorbell security camera.

At this point, you’ve likely already read an entire piece outlining some of my broad analysis on guns (specifically in a US context), but I’ll summarize a few key claims here. Handguns and

rifles are machines primarily produced in factory settings, designed with the explicit purpose of being a device that can quickly mortally wound a living thing. The most powerful of these machines primarily serve to bolster to immense power of the US military and police forces. Even when owned by self-identified radicals, within a world dominated by commodities, guns can engender a reactive and reactionary positionality, limiting insurrectionary potential by granting the illusion of concentrated power that is easily fetishized.

Cars are machines primarily produced in large scale, assembly line factories. Their intended design is to allow individual people to travel large distances in relatively short amounts of time. Their existent production (speaking of both gasoline and battery powered) encourages continuing ecocide, a hyper extractive relationship to the world we live in. Their production also encourages ecocide through the continual encroachment of drivable space into green spaces. The existence of these machines is both reified by, and itself reifies, a world of commodities and consumption. These machines, and the current world they reify, leads to thousands of preventable deaths among people forced to use them as a means by which to access their place of employment.

Doorbell security cameras are machines primarily produced in assembly line factories. Their production, like the existent factory production described above, reifies and is reified by the capitalist mode of production. The existence of these machines serves to bolster the security apparatus of civil society, encouraging individuals to police their neighbors (and even themselves) under the guise of “safety”. The companies producing these machines frequently have agreements with law enforcement allowing for the footage they record to be used in active investigations even without the consent of the device’s “owner”.

You may agree or disagree with some of the claims I have made about the specific devices I have listed, and clearly none of the above discussions are anything close to exhaustive. But even if you disagree with the claims and even if you agree that there is much more to be said in each case, it becomes impossible to meaningfully make the claim that any of these machines are “neutral” in this type of analysis. The mode of production, the intended use, the actual use, and the existent effects of these machines are not “good”. They are not “bad”. They are not “neutral”. They just *are*. We can argue for days about what exactly their mode of production/intended uses/actual uses/existent effects are, but we cannot deny their existence which is precisely what I believe the use of “neutrality” in the context of tools attempts to do.

Whether you are motivated by belief in the possibility of a more preferable way of living, or if you prefer to focus primarily on the art of negation of the existent, or if you exist in the wonderful space between the two, I ask that you make the effort to as curious and as explicit as you can possibly be in explorations of your analysis of the world around you. I ask this of you, not because it is “right” or “correct” but because I want us to build more meaningful connection with one another.

I want us to find others who share some desired way of relating to the world. I want us to prime ourselves to define meaningful actions, carry those actions out, and to learn from them. All of this is an expression of my desire. So do with that what you will. If it resonated at all for you, then I hope we find one another in the street someday. And if it didn’t resonate, then I expect we’d pass each other without thinking twice, and I’m okay with that.

# No More Martyrs: On Death, Dying, and the Courage it Takes to Live

(July 2023)

*While many of the ideas presented in the following piece have had some ethereal existence between my synapses for the better part of a decade or more, the motivation to attempt to focus them in written word began in January of this year (2023). That month saw the murder of no fewer than 70 people at the hands of US police with a few of those murders breaking through the noise into the public consciousness. Tyre Nichols was beaten to death by the Memphis Police Department. Tortuguita was shot to death by a myriad of police departments occupying the Weelaunee People's Park outside of Atlanta, Georgia. The circumstances of the deaths, and their subsequent pageantry, of these two young people quickly saw them elevated to the status of martyr, however taking significantly different forms of that status. The goal of this piece is to lay out a critical analysis of the process of that elevation, the status of martyr, and the relations that elevation/status engenders among radicals, anarchists specifically. This analysis is specifically articulated from a US context. While others may desire to extend certain critiques beyond the US where they feel them relevant, I am not personally attempting to do so.*

*I have struggled for a time with worries about the timing of this piece, not wanting to come across as leveling some personal critique of specific people while wounds are still very raw and grief remains heavy on the hearts of family and friends. I don't think the martyrdom of Tyre or Tortuguita is unique, but they are two important (and current) examples of a phenomenon I wish to critique writ large and so they are mentioned here. I wish I could wait for a moment of respite, when we are far enough removed from any particular instance of brutality and subsequent martyrdom for grief to be processed and healing found. But every single day brings about new brutality, new martyrs. There is no moment of respite to wait for. So, I say now plainly: No More Martyrs.*

## The Appeal of a “Meaningful” Death

There is an existential pit to the edge of which many radicals find themselves clinging by their fingernails, feet dangling downwards. It is a pit that widens and deepens as we are confronted by the possibility that everything we do might be for naught, that we may face impossible odds, that we may never live in the worlds of which we dream. It widens most rapidly when we are confronted by the reality that we, too, will die one day; no one gets out alive as they say. It can be terrifying, truly a stop-dead-in-your-tracks-choking-on-your-own-breath type of fear, to sit with these ideas. That fear can become so intense as to push us away from engaging with these ideas, instead leading us to search for something to cling to, something to give the cosmic joke of existence some purpose.

I don't believe it can be overstated how terrifying the notion of non-existence, and of meaninglessness, can be for many. I say this without judgment, as it is a fear I have felt to varying

degrees throughout my life as well. However, that understandable fear is often exploited, used as a tool to reproduce the violence of the institutions surrounding us. Given most (though not all) view death as an inevitability of life, the notion of “dying for something” can become deeply appealing when staring into the possibility of an endless nothingness.

The image of the sacrificial protagonist has littered our media for ages. It is used to convince young people that there is meaning to be found dying “for their country”, bolstering military ranks with recruits searching of martyrdom as much as a way to pay for college. It’s used to give an audience the catharsis of vicariously living through an action they will likely never encounter themselves, offering distraction from the mundane brutality of every-day life. It keeps the carrot of an objective, achievable meaning dangling in front of our eyes, blinding us from opportunities to create our own meaning daily. Even in radical spaces the image of the sacrificial protagonist, of the martyr, holds near reverential weight.

This reverence is seen most explicitly when the police kill, especially when the police kill someone understood as having been a radical themselves. But in these instances, the fantasy of martyrdom is not in service of the dead, it is in service of the living. The grief that comes with the loss of a loved one, or even someone we simply know of and find commonality with, is as relentless as it is cruel. We are hit by wave after wave of as many emotions as there are languages. While we struggle through the sea of this grief, a lighthouse often cuts through the fog, but its light is more a siren song begging us to wreck against the unseen rocks than a sign of refuge.

In our flailing, we are often drawn to the idea that those killed by the police “died for something”. It is too painful to believe we lost someone to the sheer immensity of the meaningless brutality that is civil society, that this loss is simply the most recent iteration of a cycle of violence that has been ongoing since long before any of us were born. The dead become objects, props to be held up as symbols of resistance for the living to draw inspiration from. Their memory is flattened into a shape most useful for those grieving or those seeking to use this memory to advance their own positionalities.

This process of objectification, this elevation to the status of martyr, serves to reproduce the fantasy of a meaningful death. If we can posthumously ascribe meaning to the dead, then we too can look forward to such meaning being assigned to our own life in the event of our inevitable demise. We can take solace in the fact that we may be remembered, that our memory may be used as inspiration for the struggle to continue.

At its most insidious, this elevation offers cover for broad inaction. If we convince ourselves that meaning can be found in martyrdom, and the dead have been elevated to such a status, then is it really all that necessary to act against the martyr producing machines? If we destroy the mechanisms that produce martyrs, then we inevitably lose access to the meaning derived in martyrdom. Are we willing to suffer such a loss?

## **How We Orient**

So, our struggles largely become oriented around the dead. Slogans about “justice” for the deceased cover cardboard signs and graffitied walls, come out of megaphones and the chests of angry crowds. The dead are objects, tools, often cudgels, to be used and discarded. Sometimes they are used to inflict beautiful strikes against the police or prisons or even civil society writ large, though these actions rarely generalize. Unfortunately, they are equally as often used as an

appeal for civility, for peace. Either way, when the orientation of struggle is framed around the dead, as their memory begins to fade so too do the actions in their name. For all the verbiage of “never forgive, never forget”, a lot of forgetting takes place with haste.

But there are other ways to orient struggle, and such orientations can happen naturally outside of the more ritualized radical practices, without the need for explicit articulation. Struggle can be oriented as fighting for the living, and not just a nebulous concept of “the living” but *us*, for *me*. We can fight for ourselves. It is not a coincidence that when riots break out, and especially when those riots become prolonged to the point of resembling an attitude of social war or insurrection, that it is primarily the young and racialized who go the hardest and fight with the most abandon. Those most marginalized by the existent world often implicitly understand that all that is expected of them is to suffer, that their suffering is both inherent to, and necessary for, the existence of civil society to continue. The desire to not suffer, personally, therefore necessitates the desire to end the existent order writ large.

Those who recognize their suffering as inherent to the existent world can take on such a positionality, though, the path to that position, and what one does with it will likely differ depending on the proximities to power (whiteness and capital especially) an individual inhabits. Unfortunately, too many radicals conceptualize themselves as the arbiters and organizers of a revolution that is meant to serve some nebulous “other”. This other is often called “the masses”, or “the proletariat”, or “the people” but it is almost always understood as something outside of the radical themself. These radicals fail to speak for themselves as individuals in their attempts to speak for a collective they will never actually represent. In this failure, these radicals also fail to act for themselves, fail to recognize moments in which cracks have appeared in the pavement and in which new relations may be cultivated. Often, these radicals fail to act at all.

It becomes too easy to fall into the trap of believing it possible, or useful, to play gardener of the “revolution” or some grand insurrection. Many are yet to be disabused of the notion that if only they organize in some perfect way, they will be able to materialize riots at will. That if only they speak the perfect words the crowds will swell and take the action necessary to bring about a new world. These words do not exist, there is no use attempting to plan the insurrection, or even a single riot. As I see it, the most useful thing the radical interested in insurrection can do with their time is to find ways of building a general antagonistic position towards the existent world, both as an individual and in concert with others they share affinity with. Through the building of a generalized antagonism, space is created that may allow for the next insurrectionary moment to be prolonged, to be pushed further than the moments prior, for an even deeper rift to be opened. But that building requires acting now. It requires more than day dreams. It requires courage.

## **The Courage Necessary to Live**

In the simplest terms, it takes incredible courage to choose to really live. It takes courage to break from the illusion of choice presented by the world of capital and the worlds of prisons, police, colonialism, racism, patriarchy, etc. which uphold it. It takes courage to identify what it would be to actually choose some new path, each deviation an inherent strike against the existent world. Most of all, it takes courage to make these choices with the intention of living with them.

Many harbor daydreams of taking some drastic action to strike against the brutality of this world. These dreams can be so vivid that we smell the smoke and feel the adrenaline coursing

through our veins, each brick becoming an extension of our hand as we wind up to throw. But rarely do these daydreams continue to the day after we strike out. Rarely do we daydream of the morning after the riot, when the consequences of the previous night begin to take concrete forms, when we must actually take that first step into the unknown. The martyrdom fantasy lives within these daydreams, envisioning an action that eschews all consequence beyond a death that is as much a goal as a consequence. Given that within this fantasy death is precisely what grants the existential relief of a prescribed meaning, death isn't much of a consequence at all.

I desire more than fantasy. While a daydream may offer some relief from the acute pain I experience living in the world as it is, it is nothing compared to the actualization of the undoing of that world, nothing compared with choosing to actually live. Therefore, I don't want to avoid discussion of consequence as I don't want an orientation in which we prioritize avoiding consequence above taking action. Instead, I want to offer a possible framework for how those who find themselves swept up in the fervor of an insurrectional current might engage with consequence. As I see it, fear of consequence will always be an obstacle to be overcome in pursuit of desired action. It is reasonable to fear repression in the form of acute police violence, the violence of courtrooms and prisons, and the economic fallout of not knowing how you'll survive if you lose your job. It will always be frightening to deviate from the ways of living that we have grown accustomed to, to experiment when the risks of experimentation are so incredibly high. There is always some hidden calculus, a weighing of a fear of consequence and a desire to no longer suffer in the ways imposed upon you.

For me, the goal is to find ways to reduce the fear of consequence by limiting the consequences of experimentation themselves while, at the same time, increasing the capacity of individuals to articulate their desires. The former can come from the generalization of antagonism towards the existent. The latter comes from the normalization of speaking explicitly to our desires as individuals and encouraging, and helping others to do the same. In limiting consequence and increasing the capacity to articulate desire we simultaneously offer the possibility of pushing further, taking ever bolder action when insurrectionary space is opened, as well as helping ourselves (and each other) to make use of that opened space, already primed to experiment.

When I speak of "increasing the capacity of individuals to articulate their desires" I am gesturing towards projects that encourage an individual's creation of meaning and critical understanding of the world. This is more an orientation of a project than a project in and of itself. For example, I believe tabling zines, reading groups, workshops, etc. can all be projects that encourage an individual to develop a critical understanding of the world and begin making their own meaning, but they can all just as easily build a dogmatic and incurious way of relating to the world.

When I speak of "the generalization of antagonism towards the existent" I am speaking of taking actions that, by nature of being taken, open space for their own reproduction. This can come from the clandestine demonstration of what actions on what targets are achievable, but it can also come from small acts of public solidarity with those with whom we share a locale. When a cop harasses someone, for any reason, we can be there to tell them to fuck off, to call them a pig, to intervene further if the situation calls for it and to embolden others to do the same. If we see someone struggling to pay for their groceries we can shoplift (if we weren't doing so already) and share our spoils. We can organize broader court support networks and pool resources to minimize (as much as we can) the toll of catching charges. The important point in all of this is that none of these actions be interpreted as exceptional. In order for generalization to be a

possibility, we first must consider such acts a part of daily life, bordering on cultural instinct, and speak to them as such.

In the end, my reason for leveling criticism at the act of elevating the dead to the status of martyr is my desire for a world in which we attack the mechanisms that create martyrs in the first place with more ferocity than what I see at present. I do not believe that there exists an objective meaning to be found, and certainly not to be found in death. I want us to fight for the living, to fight for ourselves. I want us to believe that difficult things are possible, that we can desire more than the specific circumstances of our death. I want more than a tear-filled eulogy at a candlelight vigil, with my face on a poster that will be replaced by the next face on the next poster in a day at most. I want to live, here, now.

It's reasonable to fear the possible consequences of acting. It's reasonable to fear the unknown that comes with experimentation. But if we truly desire the end of the existent, this fear cannot be justification for inaction. We cannot allow our preference for the suffering we know to prevent our choosing to live and embracing and wrestling with the consequences of that choosing.

We can choose to be brave.

We can choose to live.

We can be more than martyrs.

# To the Cracked and the Crazy

Everything that exists in these pages, each and every word, is for those who recognize themselves within the tenor and tempo of these collected essays. I write to those cracked by this world, those whose hearts ache for some peace from the banal brutality of daily life in service of racial capital. I write to those whose bodies grow ever wearier after countless days of throwing themselves into the meatgrinder of work for fear of where they will live, what they will eat or wear, if they were to not sacrifice limb and joint and immune system and mind on the altar of production.

I write to those whose stomachs turn and guts churn with the cadence of a passing siren. I write to those who have been knocked to the ground, kicked in the teeth, and made to know the taste of their own blood while others stood by and watched, unwilling to intervene because a badge was flashed. I write to those who know the pain of metal rings digging into the flesh of wrists, who know the look of a judge who wants nothing more than to make them disappear. I write to those who struggle to bear the enormity of this brutality, but who have no choice but to bear it.

I write to the crazy. To those who, despite bearing no illusion to the immensity of these brutalities, continue to find ways to strike back. I write to those who hold onto that wild and beautiful desire to be free, to live according to one's own desires, to be more than what this world would have them believe is possible. I write to those who not only desire, but who act, and who in acting encourage others to act as well.

I write to those who climb out of their window in the dead of night with a crowbar in hand and hood pulled up. I write to those who scream out in daylight, who curse the sun and all those in power who believe themselves responsible for its rising. I write to the teenager hitting the jewelry store in a riot and to the shoplifter swiping from Walmart on a Tuesday. I write to those who understand that to live, and not simply exist, is to attack the existent. I write to you, you who is as capable of acting as anyone else.

I write to those who seek encouragement, or who seek to encourage others. I write to connect thoughts to actions, to make more intimate otherwise disparate desires or ideas. I write to stake out positions and to find others who find themselves drawn to some similar ways of relating. I write because I know that my ability to act for myself is tied to the ability of others to act for themselves. I write because none of us will be getting out of this world alive, so we might as well fight tooth and nail for a life that would really be worth living. I write because I want more.

If you are to take anything from this collection, take it as a challenge to be explicit about what it is you desire. Take it as a challenge to find others who carry within them some similar desire and find ways to attack with everything you have. Help each other to be brave. Choose. Act. Fail. Pick each other up. Act again. Fail again. Learn. Grow. Be. Fucking Live.

It really, truly, doesn't have to be this way, you know.  
Everything that is made can be unmade.  
Find the cracks in the concrete.

Shake loose the rubble.  
Hold a chunk in your hand.  
Pull back.  
Take a breath.  
Live.



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