

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

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The Futility of Struggle

ziq

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To struggle is to embody the activist mentality. To struggle is to take up the role of activism. The activist belongs to the struggle, gives themselves fully to the cause, makes it their job, their mission, their whole existence.

Social struggle is activism, it's protest, it's empty obsessive-compulsive ritual, it's imposing sanctimonious moral values on others, it's collectivizing people into in-groups and out-groups so they can better do war with each other, it's entrenched in dogmatic ideology and personality cults, it's self-aggrandizing and endlessly congratulatory, it's a constant push and pull between the system and those who struggle to seize control of it to reboot it in their own image, appointing themselves as the beloved God-given saviors of The People™, the purveyors of fairness, equality and rational world building.

Tearing authority apart needn't be done in the name of an epic global struggle for the greater good or to achieve the grand master plan set out for us by the great elders of anarchy in their uplifting manifestos promising us a new world order dedicated to worker-led factories and social justice for all.

Destroying authority where you see it isn't a struggle for revolution, it doesn't need to be done in pursuit of anything

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bigger than a simple personal desire to watch tangible instruments of authority burn to embers right in front of you so they no longer blight your senses.

The actions we take don't need to be in pursuit of an amazing utopian society dreamed up by a long-dead Russian prince or an epic battle between good and evil of our own imagining where we cast ourselves as the heroic protagonists in a brutal social war where victory is everything and there can be no rest or amusement until the glorious prophesized end goal is achieved.

An anarchist's actions don't need to be connected to anything beyond what we see and feel right in front of us: A tangible, immediate outcome we can perceive with our own senses in this time and space. What we do doesn't need to be presented as part of some incredible 4D chess move to build a new, 'better' society or government, to ignite a new age of egalitarianism that promises to solve all of humanity's problems by putting the right people in charge of constructing the right systems.

I can paint over a billboard or spike a tree or tear up a road or stab a dictator or spread dandelion seeds in a wheat field without it being a struggle to upend society to conform to my favored vision of how society should be run. I can be an agent of chaos simply because it feels good to be. I don't need to lie to myself or to you and claim my actions or your actions are going to bring on a new dawn of civilization if only we all struggle enough together.

I can deal blows to the imposing instruments of authority that surround me just because I want to, without ever believing any of my actions will lead to a social revolution to remake the world in my (or my God's) image. Without ever thinking I'm a mighty warrior fighting the good fight, a worker's Messiah sent to Earth to right all the wrongs of humanity and lead the chosen people to anarchist Mecca.

Or in Aragorn!'s words:

(Strugglismo is) a critique of boring, stale, ineffective, ritualized activity and, recently, has given birth to a bunch of stale, boring, sanctimonious projects.

I can destroy the instruments of authority that work to slowly crush me under their weight without needing to craft a meticulous plan to build nicer replacements for them.

I destroy that which crushes me because I don't find being crushed to be very pleasant. I don't destroy authority because I'm under the impression I'm saving the world by preserving myself or that something as innately crushing as mass society can even be made to be fair and equitable.

I have no delusions of grandeur. I can't save civilization or build a better civilization. I'm not a vessel for change, I'm not the trigger for a new world order, I'm not the purveyor of universal justice.

What I can do is pick up a brick, and I can break the object I fling the brick at.

Whatever rifts may or may not form from that action are beyond my control, and I'll be too busy aiming the brick at the next grotesque object of authority to care.

I have power over the things right in front of me that I can affect. A brick through a windshield is an immediate cause and effect action with no ego trip behind it to pretend the brick is bigger than it is. I'm under no impression a brick is a symbol in the battle between good and evil, just and unjust, left and right, prole and capital. A brick is just a brick. A tool to achieve a measurable, immediate result.

I don't have power over things far bigger than myself, I can't force society or economics to bend to my will. I can't control how millions or billions of people live. I only have power over the brick in my hand and the things I throw it at.

Struggling to affect outcomes you have no power over is a life spent in miserable exasperation and futility. You have no

ability to mount a struggle to correct all of society's ills. Every hard-fought revolution in history has only further entrenched structural oppression and mass subservience.

The brick I pick up off the ground and hold in my hand has infinitely more value to me and to anarchy than a thousand years of desperate struggle to knock kings off their thrones and bring in new kings and new thrones.