

# Post-Scarcity

## Anarchism

Vol. 3

A journal of social ecology



## Table of Contents

### Glossary

<b>Political Realism</b>	William Thatcher
<b>Humans, Nonhuman Animals, and Ecological Resilience: A Bridgeable Chasm</b>	Peter Venkman
<b>Why we don't support Cryptocurrencies</b>	Elliot Alderson
<b>Capital as Power</b>	Simon Petrikov
<b>Did anarchism influence the Dadaists?</b>	Little-blood
<b>On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs</b>	David Graeber

## Contributors

**Little Blood** is an abhorrent and vile disease that has infected the biological spaceship referred to by other homo-sapiens as Alfie Killick. Symptoms include artistic ambition, a love of the avant-garde and an unwholesome obsession with the destruction of the status quo. You can track the progress of this dangerous threat to our normality here:

[little-blood.com](http://little-blood.com)

[facebook.com/AlfieKillickArt](https://facebook.com/AlfieKillickArt)

[little-blood.bandcamp.com](http://little-blood.bandcamp.com)

**Peter Berkkman** is an anarchist propagandist. He runs the blog "Post-scarcity municipalism" at [postscarcitymunicipalism.wordpress.com](http://postscarcitymunicipalism.wordpress.com) and spends his free time democratizing cities.

**Ryan Salisbury** is the editor of this publication and the developer for the website. He runs the blog "Transferics" at [transferics.com](http://transferics.com)

**William Thatcher** is a humble English peasant serving under the old knight Sir Ector.

**Elliot Alderson** Sometimes I dream of saving the world. Saving everyone from the invisible hand, the one that brands us with an employee badge, the one the forces us to work for them, the one that controls us every day without us knowing it. But I can't stop it. I'm not that special. I'm just anonymous. I'm just alone.

**Simon Petrikov** I know my mind is changing, but I'm already gone too far to know what to do. I want people to know that if I do things that—if I do things that hurt anyone, please, please forgive me.

**David Graeber** is a London-based anthropologist and anarchist activist, perhaps best known for his 2011 volume *Debt: The First 5000 Years*. He is Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics.

## Glossary

**Cuck** Anyone who isn't currently vomiting white supremacy all over everyone. Pinochet-loving tough guys think it makes them sound real bad-ass. I think the rest of us can agree they sound like chickens.

**Fascist** Someone with the foul, authoritarian opinion that nazis and white supremacists should not be welcomed to march around town; Anyone who uses violence. Anti-fascists are the *real* fascists, maaaaaan!

**Pig** A pale-skinned, slightly hairy mammal of near-human intelligence. Liberals think they're cute and cuddly, and would never consider living without them.

**Gun control** Wealth redistribution to cops.



fig. 1: Brave souls surviving a devastating straw man argument.



fig. 2: Propaganda from the near future.

**Technocracy** The fanciful idea that money would be fine as long as it were based on energy, and authoritarianism would be fine as long as the authorities were nerds.

**Millennial** Entitled, militant anti-capitalists who prostrate themselves by stubbornly choosing not to spend all the superfluous money they definitely have on doing what they want.

**Straw Man** I don't really know, but I know that if I repeat it until you give up, I win the argument.

**All Lives Matter** All lives, from conception to birth, then skipping ahead to my age group, who are well-off and educated, do not express sympathy with any political movements or ideas I disagree with, are ethnically European, born in this country, and are not targeted by police or government agency or other people like me, matter. Sort of.

**Trump** Oh, you anachros thought people would stop buying into electoral politics if they just could just see how fraudulent and ridiculous they were? Watch this mediocre capitalist and dumb-guy TV personality act like Hitler, and run against yet another corporate cultist who will benefit from an overtly rigged system starting in the primaries. Then weep, fools, as people become more impassioned by electoral politics than ever!

# Political Realism

by William Thatcher

There is no sense to politics when it is not examined from the standpoint of power.

At the most basic, there are only a few political categories:

1. *Rule*—those with power control those without.
2. *Duty*—those with power and those without have duties to one another.
3. *Autonomy*—no one person or group has power over the rest.

Whatever their specific details, all political beliefs and practices fall into one of these three categories. All three are practiced throughout the world today, though the first is overwhelmingly the most common.

In the first category are obvious things like monarchies and dictatorships. However, today's nation-states should also be considered to be in this category. We may think to put them in the second category because we have elections, but in almost every instance of electoral politics, the only thing that one votes on is who gets the power to control them. Once power is given by the voters to their "representatives", the ruling class who represent a wealthy minority of society (and always have), the position of powerlessness is gradually solidified through the infiltration of police, surveillance, bureaucracy, and nationalism. And as we are seeing clearly in the United States in 2016, elections are rigged to begin with. They are manipulated by those already in power in order to preserve their status quo. Not even the ritual of choosing which hand to get slapped with is real.

Rule enjoys its greatest success when the powerless believe that what is really happening is in one of the other two categories. While governments do just about whatever they want to most of us, we are led to believe that the government has a duty to protect our rights or that we actually have a say in what happens to us. Previous governments were based on other myths that legitimized rulers, such as a cosmic hierarchy or royalty. Once people began to question those myths, they began to question everything that went along with it. What's important thereafter is the myth or reality that comes to replace it. After the downfall of feudalism, the prevailing social myth came to be liberalism. Whereas before people believed that the rules of society were just because it was how god made it, today people believe that the rules of society are just because it was how *they* made it.

A boss in Heaven is the best excuse for a boss on earth, therefore If God did exist, he would have to be abolished.

Attributed to Mikhail Bakunin

Legitimization is important because it causes people to participate in their own subjugation. It prevents resentment and manufactures consent. Most people believe that it's moral to pay debts, even if they're predatory, immoral to steal even, when it's necessary, and their civic duty to pay their taxes & obey the law, even when they're unjust. When rule is legitimized, the dictates of the rulers are followed for the most part, and force need only be deployed on those who disobey.

Legitimization can fall into any one of the three political categories—as an example of legitimization through rule, the belief (or acknowledgement of fact) that a ruler will kill whoever rises up against them can cause people to stop resisting. Violence is the most basic and overt form of power, and fear is the most basic and overt legitimization of rule. In the second category, duty, we could place debt, tradition, and the social contract. These legitimizations are based on the idea that rulers and the ruled have some sort of mutualistic arrangement that best serves them according to their particular qualities. In the third category are autonomy, elections or the free market. These require quite advanced trickery, and involve making people believe that they are running the show, or that they formerly did and now the system has been corrupted by evil forces.

While most of us believe that the law affects us all equally, the ultra-rich are not actually subject to many, if any laws. Private services mean that the ultra-wealthy largely create their own rules. I don't only mean private versions of public services, but also services completely unavailable to the rest of us (lawyers, financial advisors, wealth managers, publicists). The enforcement of laws falls disproportionately on the most oppressed groups, while the wealthy can break laws with more or less impunity. It rarely comes back to hurt them except because they attract the ire of some equally or more powerful actor. Even when charged with a crime, the wealthy have lawyers to avoid conviction and plenty of money to settle suits out of court before they even happen. Thanks to their ability to freely travel and the existence of various political regions, the rich can shop around for the laws they want to follow.





fig. 3: Powerless immigrants make up a large part of the agricultural workforce. Where unionization is the organization of workers, capitalism is organization against workers.

Most importantly, wealth is itself a form of power. Money's value is not intrinsic; it is relational—the only thing that determines the value of money is what it can be used for. Its value is in commanding and controlling others. The focus by common political mythology and by academics such as economists on the good as the primary object of political economy is to obfuscate the true value of money. Even the purchase of goods is centered around the command of others. If you purchase a good, you are commanding its transference to you; if you sell a good, you are accumulating command over others. Purchasing a service is much more clearly the mere command of others using money. Most clearly is the command of wage laborers, especially those that are disorganized or without the backing of governmental power in upholding labor organization. A wage laborer is a servant rented hourly.

If we take the example of the illegal immigrant day laborer, it's clear that the laborer is essentially powerless: They are not protected by contracts or contract enforcement, so the conditions of their work are not fixed. They do not have the security of stable employment and if they object to their employer's demands, they can simply be replaced. They do not receive the benefits of minimum wage or poverty reduction programs, and must offer themselves for sale at a much lower rate than others. They have a very limited set of choices over where to work, and because of the previous facts, and their need to pay their way through existence, they need to take whatever is given to them. This describes the particular situation of the day laborer, but these conditions exist to some degree or another everywhere in society except its highest echelons. As the influential early political economist James Steuart notes, precarity is the precondition for rule:

By appropriating to themselves the fruits of the earth, [those with personal or political advantages] have the means of subsisting their offspring. The others, I think, will very naturally become their servants. [...] If we suppose all mankind be idle and fed, living upon the spontaneous fruits of the earth, the plan of universal liberty becomes quite natural: because under such circumstances they find no inducement to come under a voluntary subordination (Steuart 1770).

Faithful neoclassical economists attempt to force the provision of services into the narrative of markets being about the exchange of goods, treating services as goods that are consumed immediately, then applying their pet myth of supply and demand equilibrium to them as usual. They do this for wage labor as well, treating as the "exchange of labor", and again applying supply and demand as the sole basis of analysis. However, as the example of the day laborer illustrates, the most important facts are political and power-based. The lack of contracts and stable employment is not because of supply and demand, but because the day laborer does not have the power to demand a contract or long-term employment. Freedom of choice does not make any real difference here, nor does pulling oneself up by the straps of their boots, because the unequal distribution of power remains. Your employer does not care whether you choose to work for them, as long as someone good enough works for them.



fig. 5: Command of this operation is distilled into a quantity of money.

Money's uses are not even limited to market exchanges, which is one of the many absurdities of attempting to split society into "the state" and "the market" in the first place. Money is used in the operation of the government as well, whether through government programs, contracts, taxes, fines, fees, or just plain bribery. While those of us in the developed world tend to see bribery as something that only happens in "corrupt" countries, it is extremely widespread here; it simply hides in plain sight. In 2014, Glaxo-Smith Kline was fined half

a billion dollars in China for widespread bribing of doctors to carry their medications (WSJ, 2016). "The market," considered by some to be a neutral domain of freedom which is interfered with by the state, is also intimately involved in the state and in statecraft. The common understanding of this idea by those who are not market fundamentalists, is that "the market" does exist, and is separate from the state, but enjoys a symbiotic relationship with the state. However, it goes much further: business is a direct outcome of statecraft.

The state creates business through the issuing of money and the demand of that money as taxes (see: *Debt*, Graeber 2011). Many of the functions of the state, today increasingly so, are carried out not by government institutions but businesses. This is not limited to some specific subset of functions or only "productive" activities. It includes activities that are normally considered to be part of the state and not "the market", such as policing, imprisonment, surveillance, intelligence analysis, creation of propaganda, military action, and administration. These activities are funded by money creation, and the businesses that are not directly funded through money creation are funded by those that are. Thus, the "non-state" activities of businesses are incidental to the state activities.

It should be noted that money creation is not an exclusive power of the nation-state. Money creation is a hallmark of statecraft, as every type of state from the religious oligarchy, to the monarchy, the socialist republic, the fascist dictatorship, the city state, to the multinational bank, all have the ability to create obedience by issuing money and demanding it back as taxes or debt. The volume of money created by and repaid to a given institution could be seen as a relative measure of their power. Money creation is effective because it comes with the self-sustaining morality of debt. Money creates a sleight of hand: Money is created *ex nihilo*, yet something real is demanded to repay the debt. Money creators get your obedience and labor in exchange for access to a small amount of the obedience they have exacted from others. They gain this authority *ex nihilo*. Money exchange appeals to our sense of reciprocal fairness, but in reality there is nothing reciprocal or fair about it.

The spread of capitalism has brought ever-greater proportions of human activity into a more or less unified system of obedience. Most things cannot be reasonably obtained without needing money. The control over things that are necessary for people to survive and thrive provides the leverage to force them into servitude, while the people generally believe that they are participating in a fair exchange. While the complex web of nation states and differing governments give the appearance of political diversity, nearly all of them participate in the global money system ruled by capitalist money creators. Today the number of participants involved in money

exchange and the variety of things available for purchase is cited as evidence that we have autonomy. However, in the end, we don't have the meaningful choices of whether or not to use money, whether or not to repay our debts, or whether or not to pay taxes.

We cannot meaningfully refuse to participate in wage labor, unless we are willing to put up with a life of severe precarity, deprivation, and hardship, or we are willing and able to become an oppressor ourselves. We have the freedom to choose wage labor in the same sense that a medieval peasant had the freedom to choose to be a Christian, or to till the land. This is for the same underlying reason: The capitalists, like the church, hold in their hands the obedience of the vast majority of the population. Those that do not obey are punished by the capitalists or church itself, or by those who do obey. The rebellious few lack the numbers and organization to overcome the power that the state holds. Criminalization takes care of the truly rebellious activities, classifying them as an affront to society and legitimizing retaliatory violence towards the rebels. The most insidious part of capitalism, though, is that thanks to the primacy of money and commerce in socialization, most of the punishment is completely unconscious and invisible. We do not think of it as punishment for a failure to conform when we don't feed, clothe, and house the destitute, but in effect that is exactly what we are doing. As if it were an insurance plan, those who would do so require a personal sacrifice of money to help.

In all the forms of statecraft that have existed thus far, money and debt are some of the threads that string them all together. Whereas the society organized around the free market has never existed anywhere or anywhen in known history, statecraft through money, debt, and commerce have existed everywhere and everywhen since the rise of the civilization. For this reason, it seems trivial to conclude that markets do not have the liberatory potential that they are often attributed. Money is foremost a tool for accumulating power and obedience, and since the free market is not intended to distribute this money equally, it is thus founded on power imbalances and the obedience of some to others, not all to all.

With power as the primary unit of analysis of a political system, democracy emerges as the only known anarchist system of organization. Democracy, in this case, means the case where each person has equal political power. The alternatives, marketization, where those with money hold power over those who need money, or rule, where those in positions of rule hold power over subjects, cannot be anarchist, no matter the details of their implementation. If power is not equally held by all, or equally held by none, then it can be or is held by some over others, which means there is some form of rule.



# Humans, Nonhuman Animals, and Ecological Resilience: A Bridgeable Chasm

by Peter Venkman

Climate change and species extinction destroy the global ecosystem, and harm non-human animals and humans. Ecoresilience, well-being of non-human animals, and well-being of humans can be seen as three categorically different yet interwoven metrics for the end goal of well-being of sentient life. The destruction of all three of those metrics are rooted within hierarchical relations of humans and humans. Social freedom and virtues that lead to and are interwoven with human well-being are not only compatible with ecoresilience and non-human well-being. The virtues and freedom that enable human well-being to flourish give humans the potential to be catalysts for the flourishing of non-human well-being and global ecological integrity and resilience. Changes in human attitudes are necessary but insufficient for solving current ecological crises. The individualistic conception of social change misses the forests for the trees. Hierarchical institutions inhibit the potential for ethical and ecological lifestyle choices.



## Hierarchical roots of avoidable human suffering:

Hierarchical relations are institutionalized forms of authoritarian relations. Authoritarian relations are based on the negation of free association (the ability freely join an association, freely disassociate from an association, and maintain freedom within that association as well as a lack of rulers in regards to decision-making processes bounded by the rights of others to these very relations). Hierarchy is based on rulership. The Whitehall Study shows that disparities of economic and political power increase mortality risks, especially for those at the bottom of hierarchies [1]. The studies presented in *The Spirit Level* show that inequality is harmful to physical health, mental health, child well-being, education, and social mobility, increases drug abuse, obesity, teenage births, imprisonment and violence [2]. "Not only does Structural Violence kill more people than all the behavioral violence put together, structural violence is also the main cause of behavioral violence." – James Gilligan [43]. We have the potential to minimize toil through abolishing bureaucratic jobs and automating undesired mechanical labor, which would free us to do what we want to do and not what we are coerced to do in order to survive. The buying and selling of things is the buying and selling of people who use things. The state is a form of hierarchical political governance that not only enforces the laws of the market, but is harmful in and of itself through the inhibition of free association and the use of force to maintain centralized violence (by extension the most powerful weaponry the state can use), and by extension the unnecessary harming of humans. We can have rules without rulers, or rulers unaccountable to rules they selectively enforce.

# **Hierarchical roots of artificial climate change and species extinction and the destruction of eco-resilience:**

As opposed to viewpoints that reduce ecological crises to non-social factors, social ecology is a theory that claims “present ecological problems cannot be clearly understood, much less resolved, without resolutely dealing with problems within society.” [3]. Social ecology roots artificial ecological problems in hierarchical relations between humans and humans [3]. Capitalism uses money as a measurement for resources, and incentivizes profit and by extension cost efficiency at the expense of ecological resilience, liberatory technical potential (the potential for technology being used to liberate life from harm), and human and non-human freedom and well-being at every single stage of production and distribution that doing so makes sense for the end goal of profit maximization. The market turns life into non-life to the extent that doing so centralizes economic power. The state turns life into non-life to the extent that doing so enables a monopoly on violence through maximizing violent technical potential. This competitive self-maximization principle of hierarchical systems is at the expense of humanity and the environment humans are dependent upon. The grow or die imperative of microcosmic and macrocosmic hierarchical political economies creates self-maximization at the expense of the very life support systems required for life to flourish. Markets enforced by states provide no legal limits to how much one can own, creating scarcity and ecocide when the technology and resources exist for there to be more than enough to go around and enable a high standard of living for all people on the planet [42].

Rather than an ecological economy based on “life → means of freedom, virtues, and well-being → better quality of life and life systems”, we have a life/freedom/virtue/pleasure-blinded economy based on “money → means of destruction for production → more money” and an economy based on “money → more money” [47]. The competitive self-maximizing mechanisms of money, hierarchical economic institutions, and hierarchical political institutions generate scarcity which is then fuel for more profit since the more scarce a good/service is the more one can sell it for. This destroys ecological resilience which is based on “variety and diversity: if the environment is simplified and the variety of animal and plant species is reduced, fluctuations in population become marked and tend to get out of control” [57]. Ecological resilience creates greater “creativity, choices, and freedom” throughout human communities and non-humans and not just more stability [58].

In regards to artificial causes of greenhouse gases as of 2004, 26% of greenhouse gases can be sourced to energy supply, 19% of greenhouse gases can be sourced to industry, 17% of greenhouse gases can be sourced to deforestation and land use, 13% can be sourced to transportation [9].

Regardless of our attitudes, hierarchical systems do not enable us to act ecologically. Abolishing hierarchy is necessary but insufficient for dealing with ecological problems. It is possible to have free forms with ignorant content. In this sense ecological crises are also rooted in ignorance and malevolence, which are maximized and institutionalized through hierarchy. We have the technical ability to solve ecological issues, yet hierarchical socioeconomic systems suppress our current technical potential. Our suppressed liberatory technical potential in relation to climate change is as follows:

## **Energy Supply:**

We already have the energy resources and technology to avoid the use of fossil fuels. We currently use 0.5 zettajoules of energy every year. There are currently over 2000 easily accessible zettajoules of geothermal energy, which rejuvenates [4]. If we capture less than 1% of the solar energy hitting the earth’s surface during high noon in just one day, we would have enough energy to power the entire planet for a year [5]. According to the Stanford source Evaluation of Global Wind Power, wind energy alone can satisfy 100% of our energy needs [6]. Harnessing energy from the waves has the potential to provide 50% of the world’s energy supply [7]. Hemp-based nano sheets batteries are more efficient and more ecological than current methods of energy storage. [10]

## **Transportation:**

Transportation that uses maglev technology (magnetic levitation technology) has the potential to take us from Los Angeles to New York in 45 minutes, and from The US to Beijing China in 2 hours. Maglev technology such as ET3 uses 2% of the energy requirement of traditional transportation methods [8].



Maglevs are also more resource efficient than traditional transport. And in a compassionate and sane society utilizing current liberatory technical potential, there would be a free maglev transport system and automated cars that one could use. If there was a library system of usership of maglev capsules and automated cars, owning & personalizing such items would be a hassle in the same way that owning & personalizing a shopping cart would be a hassle. This library model being extended throughout the economy would help limit our consumption of resources.

## Industry:

A large amount of the greenhouse gases are from fossil fuels that power industry. But there is more than merely fossil fuel use. Production under the influence of profit has a very different means and ends than production for meeting human needs with ecological care. Not only is there production for the sake of production, there is planned and unplanned obsolescence because cost efficiency and profit oriented economic systems get in the way of our ability to ephemeralize industry (do more with less). Ephemeralization has an ecological potential because it enables us to use less resources to do more. Money and profit are at the expense of recyclability, durability, renewability, ephemeralized production, and ephemeralized distribution. Library-esque access centers would enable there to be less produced to be used by more people. Computers and the internet have enabled a relatively infinite digital commons. Often (but by no means always) more ecological (and more ethical) products are more expensive because cost efficiency is at the very least slightly stunted (as a mechanism to maximize profit). This makes more ecological products for those who are wealthier. Conspicuous consumption, that is the consumption for the sake of status rather than freedom and well-being, is an anti-social and anti-ecological value system that is at the expense of the conspicuous consumer who is psychologically tortured enough to have such a value system. Plastic and many forms of metals can be replaced by the use of hemp [11].



fig. 6: The ocean is one of the many places that active domination by humans has led to ecocide and collapse

## Towards Social Animal Liberation:

Sentient life, and ecosystems that enable sentient life and can develop into sentient life, deserve ethical consideration because sentient life is able to feel pleasure and pain. If we ignore potentiality of life to evolve from what is to what it could be, we are thinking reductively, freezing time and space at the expense of the future. The ability to perceive pain and pleasure gives animals ethical consideration to those who care about the pain and pleasure of these non-human animals. More than 70 billion land animals are killed every year from animal agriculture [15]. .94-2.7 trillion animals are pulled from the ocean every year [16]. We ought to develop a way of minimizing harm to non-human animals. Alternatives to animal agriculture:

It is important to root potentiality in actuality, or root what should be within what can be and what is. We have the potential to use aeroponics and veganic permaculture. Aeroponics, although it uses initial labor, uses much less labor over time, using less horizontal space, 50% less nutrients, 45% less time to grow plants, and 99% less water [12]. It is scalable technology, can control for climate variables and be used to get greater degrees of localization food productions. It would take 144,000 vertical farm structures using .006% of the world's land to feed 7.2 billion people using 30 story farm structures that use 6.4 acres of land and feed 50,000 people [56]. Veganic permaculture mixes vegan ethics with permaculture using free-living animals rather than domesticated ones. We should not exclusively use aeroponics for a few reasons: Aesthetic characteristics and beauty of plants throughout a community, terpenes one gets from the sun; resilient communities should use multiple methods, there is a diversity of plants created through polyculture gardening, and communal gardening, assisted by automation of mechanized labor, will be an "intellectual, scientific, and artistic challenge" for people that will help give them an understanding of life and ethics [57].

## **Roots of unethical human and non-human relations:**

Animal agriculture and the killing of animals for food has been used in times due to scarcity and necessity, and in times when there other options available. "Human and non-human relations" are caused by human relationships to humans. Every individual has a social dimension that gives them the knowledge and ethics that they develop. Outside of non-artificial scarcity, It is the ignorance, malevolence, abuse, unmet needs, and most importantly hierarchical social systems that cause animal agriculture and animal cruelty to flourish. Capitalism turns life into non-life to the degree that doing so maximizes profit, and the laws that enable such ecocidal externalities are enforced by the state which turns life into non-life to the degree that doing so secures and reinforces the monopoly on violence through creation of the most powerful weaponry possible. The USA spends 60% of agricultural subsidies on animal agriculture [13]. Subsidies to animal agriculture make ecocidal and cruel products more profitable to produce and less expensive to buy, and the ecosystem services and functions destroyed in the process are mere "externalities" to the laws of the market. [14]. Killing animals on a large scale is good for many people's businesses, and inversely stopping animal agriculture would be bad for many people's businesses, as would free food for everyone on the planet. This shows how contradictory hierarchical socioeconomic systems are to humanist and ecological ethics.

## **Harm to humans:**

As nutritionist Dr. Greger says, "animal products are the only significant source of cholesterol" which is related to heart disease [18]. Even one egg exceeds the recommended amount of cholesterol one should have in a day [17]. One meta analysis showed that vegetarianism reduces heart disease by a third [35]. Eating dead animal flesh is a causal factor for cancer [32, 33, 34]. The China Study found that mortality rates are inversely associated with the amount of plant-based foods one eats and did not even find a threshold at where more plant based foods stopped producing a benefit [36]. A vegan diet defines itself by what is not being eaten but not what is being eaten. There are many ways to do a vegan diet poorly, which is why it is essential that people take B12 and D3 vitamins as well as eating a balanced diet. If done well, humans can lower risk of mortality and live a better life that goes far beyond temporary pleasures of eating dead animal flesh.

## **Destruction of ecoresilience and biodiversity:**

When livestock and byproducts are taken into account, livestock counts for up to 51% of artificial greenhouse gases, releasing thirty-two millions tons of carbon dioxide a year [19]. Livestock is responsible for 65% of nitrous oxide [20]. Cows produce 150 billion gallons of methane on an average day [21]. Livestock occupies 45% of Earth's land [22]. If factory farms were to be abolished, yet demand and supply of animals were at the same rate, then almost the entire planet would be hosting animal agriculture. Livestock produce 130 times the amount of waste as humans produce a year within the USA [23]. 91% of Amazon deforestation is due to clearing forests for cattle raising [24]. 150-200 species go extinct everyday and on average of 137 of these species go extinct due to animal agriculture [25]. The average vegan requires 1/18th the land as a meat eater requires, and has half the carbon footprint [26, 27].

## **Harm to animals and flaws of most animal liberation approaches:**

On top of harm to biodiversity, increase in greenhouse gases, and harm to human health, animal agriculture harms animals. We ought to be concerned with non-human animals having good lives as well as humans if we care about those animals. However, we must also make important demarcations between humans and non-humans. Humans are capable of ethical deliberation and systems of rights and duties. Non-human animals do not have such abilities nor should we give them such responsibilities, and attempts to focus on their rights is a way of avoiding what our obligations should be to the nonhuman world. "Animal rights" is an incoherent position that, if applied consistently, would obligate us to save all animals from being eaten by other animals (the same way we would have an obligation to do so if they were humans), by extension destroying ecosystems and human and animal life on large scales. Human rights and duties, and the means required for them, can enable humans to live better lives, but animal rights do not enable animals to live better lives if we apply such principles consistently. Focusing on individual animals like traditional animal liberation leads to reductionism. This reductionism makes it so thinking ecologically is nearly impossible. If we focus on individual animals at the expense of the ecosystem we are all dependent upon we can ironically harm those individual animals we are trying to help. However, an ethical system that dissolves the ethical category of human is not only anti-human in effect, but anti-ecological because as proven earlier authoritarian and anti-social relations between humans and humans are the very roots of current ecological crises. To dissolve the category of human is to ignore the social roots and solutions of current ecological problems. We ought to



focus on our obligation to the well-being of humans and the ecosystem we are dependent upon, and by extension our obligation towards helping the well-being of non-humans through stopping ecocidal practices and systems. We also ought to encourage supererogatory ethics based on minimizing harm towards non-humans for food (on top of the minimal social animal liberation program which is an ecological and non-hierarchical society).

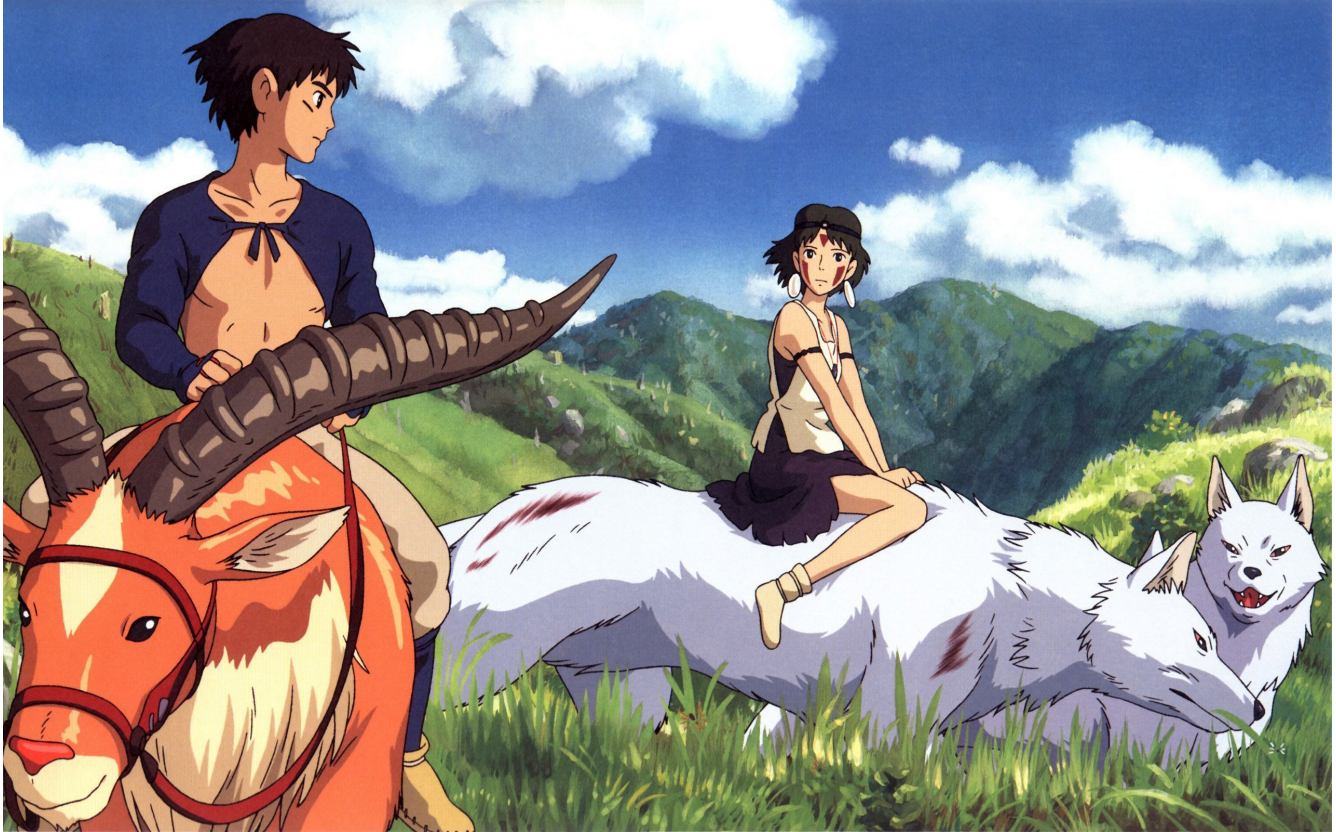


fig. 7: Still from *Princess Mononoke* (1997), a film by Hayao Miyazaki: it criticizes the domination and exploitation of the ecosystem by humans, even as the dominating power is otherwise relatively feminist and non-hierarchical.

A social animal liberation approach can be made through focusing on structural changes to production such as direct community management, localization, and de-commodification. A minimal program could be the reduction of animal agriculture by extremely large amounts (at least that which is required to ensure the integrity of the ecosystem we are dependent upon) with a maximal program of completely stopping the killing of animals for food unnecessarily, as well as animal cruelty more generally. The minimum/maximum programs for social animal liberation could be accomplished through appealing to the human right to well-being. This right is infringed upon by animal agriculture through the damage animal agriculture does to the ecosystem we are dependent upon, as well as care and concern about the well-being of non-human animals. Although human liberation from hierarchy is at the root of harmful human-non-human relations, there is a degree of animal liberation necessary for ecological integrity. This should be accompanied by a cultural shift to one where people tend not to accept killing animals that feel in order to eat when there are other options. The de-commodification of food should be accompanied by cultural and educational shifts in regards to what we value, otherwise we will use that which is finite in a way that produces avoidable scarcity, harm to human health, harm to non-human animals, and the destruction of biodiversity and eco resilience.

## **Property, the Commons, Communal Governance, and Institutional/Constitutional Ethics:**

On top of rejecting socioeconomic hierarchy as anti-human, anti-ecological, and harmful to non-human animals, it is essential to find alternative political economies to combinations of central planning and markets. Artificial ecological problems, rather than being periodic, are institutional, and require us to think long term and holistically, rather than reductively in scenic disaster scenarios. One person owning and driving a fossil-fueled car, eating a hamburger daily and living a relatively fossil fuel intensive life would surely not harm the environment, but billions of people doing such behaviors would. We must go beyond a mere lifestyle ethics. We ought to develop institutions and constitutions that are able to achieve social freedom and by extension virtues and well-being of life. From the right to human well-being and the obligation to ensure other people have such a right, other

rights/obligations follow that create a coherent system conducive to human well-being. By extension they create the flourishing of the ecosystems humans are dependent upon, and the well-being of non-human animals. If one is serious about achieving certain end goals, one must be serious about the means necessary to achieve such ends including motives intentions, rules, institutions, constitutions, acts, etc. To actually achieve sustainable pleasure, the means and ends of social freedom and virtues must intertwine and develop over time to create fecund well-being.

Property rights are relations between a person (or persons), another person (or persons), and a thing (or things). By extension property rights deal with not only how we relate to each other, but how we relate to our environment. Usufruct is a form of property relations that bounds ownership by use; it encompasses both the right to usership and the obligation to make sure others have that right, and the means required for that right (such as ecological integrity). Usufruct could and should be a standard that enables communities to directly govern the commons, persons to directly govern personal possessions, and collectives to self-manage collectives. The developmental boundaries of use and decentralized, confederated, and regional planning make it so everyone has a direct stake in management of what they manage while immersed in the qualitative experience of developmental free association and virtuous intentional volition. When care for others is present, social and ecological concern is present, given we have an awareness of the relationship between societies and ecosystems. Political and economic central planners who try to maintain their positions of power over others have a stake in disempowering the people they govern, and the process of doing so is anti-social and anti-ecological.

“Animal rights” is an incoherent position that if applied consistently would obligate us to save all animals from being eaten by other animals, by extension destroying ecosystems and human and animal life on large scales.

A constitution can and should exist that formalizes a minimum standard of ethics. It should hold people accountable based on rights and obligations that are based on free association, as well as the means required to do so such as an irreducible minimum (the necessities of life or the means of existence). It should give the right to directly participate in political economic processes without rulers as well as the obligation to make sure other people have that right. Direct community management of the commons is a means towards post scarcity, which is the use of finite resources to make it so there is enough, using eco-technology uninhibited by hierarchical political economies.

The institutions that ought to exist for governing political economies should be directly democratic community assemblies bounded by the limits of free association and non-hierarchical constitutions. Direct democracy enables us to collaborate towards cooperative goals and solve incompatible preferences through a preference satisfaction ethic while bounded by rules without rulers. Decentralization alone can allow for extreme parochialism. Not every problem is just local. And pure and complete self-sufficiency and independence is not desirable compared to communal interdependence based on sharing within and between communes and communes of communes. The individualist goal of “pure independence” is illusory, due to the social dimension of knowledge required for various degrees of independence, and the fact that we are dependent upon our global ecosystem and each other. The question is how we ought to organize given those facts rather than how to invent delusions to avoid them. This is why it is necessary that the direct governance systems confederate. The directly democratic governance systems should be on neighborhood, sub-municipal, municipal, and regional levels while policy power will remain in the hands of people directly [41]. The principles of localization and decentralization when complimented by interdependence and confederation enable more community resilience and ecological resilience, as different communities act as each other’s “safety nets,” minimizing social problems (and by extension ecological problems) through managing the commons at different scales.

Administration has the potential to be delegated from the bottom upwards with policy-making power remaining on the bottom level. Delegates from administrations can be mandated & recallable by policy-making bodies and accountable to policy-making bodies. Bureaucracy professionalizes policy-making, whereas non-bureaucratic administration can implement only what it is delegated to do. Non-bureaucratic administration incentivizes the efficiency of the task at hand, whereas bureaucracy incentivizes calls for more power over others through the process of maintenance of power over others. Bureaucracy lacks direct and immediate accountability, places policy power beyond the realm of direct participation of scaled levels of political economic governance, and has a tendency to “feed on itself” and expand.

The content of decisions should be based on the compassionate use of reason and technology towards the goals of developing freedom, virtues, well-being of sentient life and the flourishing of the ecosystems sentient life is dependent upon and developed out of. This should be assisted by experts in given fields, and interactive resource calculators that show available technology, resources, as well as carrying capacity of scalable regions and regeneration rates, and developmental relations of life to life and non-life.





fig. 8: Ginko from *Mushi-Shi*. Ginko is an expert on esoteric lifeforms called mushi, some of which are depicted in the smoke. Though he values human life over mushi life, he recognizes the value of mushi life and does not needlessly harm them.

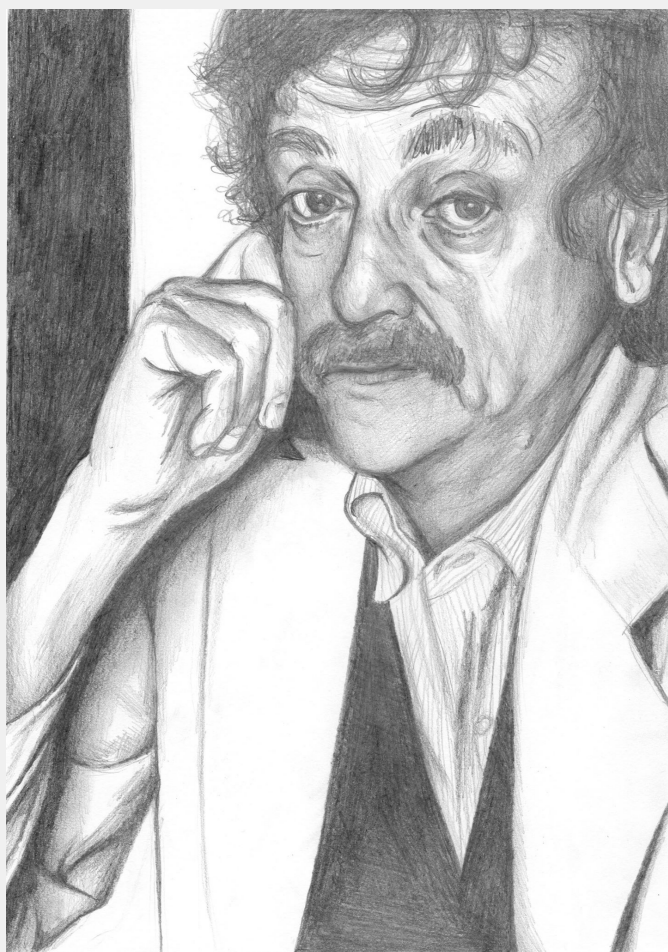
The means of non-hierarchical communal management lead towards those ends. The municipalization of political economies is based on meeting peoples' needs, while decentralizing decision-making power and building the very organizational model that we should have in a future society before/during/after a transformation of society. Rather than merely creating an intentional community in some distant or particularistic place like many utopians, this process calls for the intentional communalization of communities. A current example of this model can be seen in Rojava, where 3.5 million+ people have organized non-hierarchically and directly democratically for over 4 years while fighting ISIS and Turkey [44].

## Social Virtue ethics:

We need a society that fosters virtues rather than vices given the desired goal of well-being. Such character traits will enable us to care in a rational way and have the means to give to our society and the global ecosystem, which will enable us to have a society/ecosystem that enables a prudent sense of well-being.

Hierarchical political economies that have legalized free speech enable money to buy speech [47]. This leads to hierarchs being able to own "the loudest megaphones" which can be used to propagandize to those they rule over. The extreme lack of an even playing field for ideas leads to ignorance rather than wisdom. Hierarchical political economies create contexts that inhibit compassion and fuel the flames of non-empathy in the upper castes [48]. Abuse and unmet needs, directly from hierarchies and indirectly from hierarchies, foster addiction rather than temperance [49]. Hierarchies foster appeals to authority rather than wisdom and compassion. Rewards- and vengeance-based education and non-participatory education foster obedience to authority and a lack of intrinsic motivation towards education. Participatory education fosters intrinsic motivation and the burden of proof placed on authority [50, 51]. Cooperative goals, systems, and interpersonal relations foster friendliness rather than competitive self-maximization. Competitive self-maximization is based on wanting others to do worse [52] and has ecocidal consequences. Interpersonal competition creates "low self-worth" which in turn generates more competition, fostering

everything from parasitic egoism to cowardice, rather than a healthy sense of self-worth and respect [52]. Self-worth and respect minimizes consumption for the sake of status.



"We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."

"True terror is to wake up one morning and discover that your high school class is running the country."

"Dear future generations: Please accept our apologies. We were rolling drunk on petroleum."

"I tell you, we are here on Earth to fart around, and don't let anybody tell you different."

—Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Given the goal of ecological resilience and social self-management, we ought to foster characters that put the burden of proof on rules and that have intrinsic motivation to align with ethical and rational rules while abolishing unethical and irrational ones. Quoting Alfie Kohn, "If... the goal is to help students grow into compassionate, principled people, then having students "define the real meaning" of rules is the best way – perhaps the only way – that a list of rules prepared by the teacher can help students become thoughtful decision makers. But such an arrangement can only do so much: it is far better to ask children to create the rules." [53]. And in familial relations, society, and the classroom, we should use a restorative justice approach and a harm reduction approach rather than a vengeance based model to enforce rules that harmonize to create conditions of social freedom. Such an approach reduces recidivism, doubles offenses brought to justice, reduces post traumatic stress, provides both victims & offenders more satisfaction than retributive models, reduces desire for revenge, and fosters intrinsic motivation, rather than only wanting to follow rules out of fear of getting caught [51, 54]. This should be accompanied by a transformative justice approach, based on transforming society and individuals in a participatory way to minimize harm and foster social freedom and virtues. Eco-technology, the automation of menial labor, a guaranteed minimum, as well as a participatory society, will enable people to foster their own virtues and their own hobbies and develop artfulness in arts they wish to explore.

Virtue ethics calls for a moderation of character traits that harmonize to create the good life. This can be distinguished from vague calls for "maximization" by capitalism, which calls for the

maximization of profit at the expense of humans, life, & ecosystems, and vague calls for "maximization" of pleasure by hedonistic utilitarianism. A non-egoistic utilitarian, that is a utilitarian who does not value their own pleasure at the expense of the well-being of others, should prefer the virtuous life to a pleasurable life precisely because of the abilities of virtues to foster well-being among humans and non-humans. A "social virtue ethics" should focus on what virtues we ought to foster to achieve a good society, what society best fosters virtues, the participatory dimension to fostering such virtues, more universal virtues, and an understanding of how virtues develop over time/space. Social freedom is not a "maximization of rights and a minimization of obligations" but a process of developing virtuous, intentional volition based on non-hierarchical rights and non-hierarchical obligations. It is individuals and groups harmonizing through diversity bounded by non-hierarchical principles. Well-being ought to be achieved through a "social virtue ethics" or a "freedom ethics", as opposed to calls for act utilitarianism which can rationalize murdering a random person and taking their organs to save five lives. Well-being, social freedom, and virtues are an intertwined ethical metric because: Social freedom → virtues → social freedom, virtues → social freedom → virtues, social freedom → prudent well-being, and virtues → prudent well-being.



The fostering of virtues such as wisdom and compassion enable us to intelligently care and act and give back to our global human society and ecosystem that we are dependent upon. Doing so will enable us to get closer to prudent well-being, enable us to have the intelligence and compassion required to be stewards of our ecosystems rather than plunderers, as well as provide “forms of freedom” with compassionate and intelligent content.

## **Beyond not Harming, Towards Ecohumanism:**

Humans are not inherently parasitic towards the ecosystems we are dependent upon. Humans have the potential to be consciously mutualistic towards ecosystems and non-human animals. One does not need to be an anthropocentrist to see the actuality in some humans, and potentiality in others, for intentional, rational care that goes beyond all other organisms we know of. Seed-saving enables us to improve agricultural biodiversity, and to preserve non-artificial genomes as well [28, 29, 45, 46]. Seed banks can be scaled on various levels of community, enabling resilient responses to potential, artificial, and non-artificial disasters. Seed banks can even be adapted to particular environments and probable environments of areas that they are stored near. We also have the potential to help minimize harm from non-artificial disasters through saving and sheltering non-human animals. The unique abilities humans have to use applied knowledge gives us a potential to stop non-artificial harm. We must get away from naturalistic fallacies that conflate “that which is” and “that which is natural” with “that which should be”. This potential for us to help non-humans would not halt the evolutionary process, but become a part of the evolutionary process, as evolution gives birth to beings that intentionally become defense systems of the Earth and catalysts of ecosystems & the gradations of freedom and pleasure created by ecosystems. Humans have the ability to stop a killer asteroid through many methods [30]. Out of every organism on the planet, humans have the best cognitive abilities to deal with artificial and non-artificial disasters our global ecosystem will face in the future. Veterinary medicine can be applied to wildlife to alleviate non-human suffering [31, 55]. Mycoforestry can enable us to reforest destroyed forest ecosystems [37]. We also have the potential to seed life on other planets and spread life throughout the universe. Directed panspermia is possible with current technology [38], and it ought to be done carefully through life being directed towards places that are not likely to have life. This will allow humans to be catalysts for spreading life support systems throughout the universe, as well as stewards of the Earth. Social freedom → ecological resilience, virtues → ecological resilience, social freedom → animal welfare, and virtues → animal welfare.

## **The Harmony of Human Freedom, Virtues, and well-being, Nonhuman well-being, and the Ecosystem life is dependent upon:**

The development of social freedom and virtues that enable prudent human well-being are interwoven with ecological resilience, biodiversity, well-being of non-human animals, and the ending of climate change and artificial species extinction which are caused by hierarchy and ignorance. Rather than thinking reductively, we must think ecologically and developmentally to solve ecological problems. Artificial ecological disasters are not periodic; they are institutional and require institutional solutions. To think ecologically is not to focus on the particular at the expense of the whole. It is through seeing the whole as more than the sum of its parts that we can actually achieve prudent goals. The potential in the evolutionary process to move towards self-organization [39, 40], intentional volition, subjectivity, interdependence, and intentional mutualism give us a primordial ethical blueprint through which humans can construct ethical systems that enable the flourishing of these potentialities [58]. By extension, it gives us ethical significance as not just beings that can feel pleasure and pain, but as “nature rendered self-conscious” and as free and virtuous ethical agents capable of embodying these potentialities, unlike any particular life form we know, and of embedding the world with theoretical and applied ethics through reason and compassion. It is through us getting closer to fulfilling such potentialities (which are by no means inevitable) that human and non-human well-being can flourish, as well as the ecological web we are dependent upon. The hierarchical roots of artificial ecological destruction, of harmful human and non-human relations, and of avoidable human suffering must be destroyed rather than merely be reformed, unless of course we want to cut off one head of the hydra only for another to grow. Prudent human well-being, and the means and ends that achieve such ends, such as virtues and social freedom, would help the ecosystems we are dependent upon to flourish, and by extension help non-human animals and humans. Abstaining from animal cruelty and the killing sentient of animals to eat when it is not necessary to do so is beneficial to human health and ecological resilience as well as nonhuman well-being and freedom. In this sense, prudent flourishing of one of the above metrics (human well-being/virtues/social freedom, ecological resilience, and non-human well-being) is by extension the prudent flourishing of all of the above.

# Why we don't support Cryptocurrencies

by Elliot Alderson

## We don't believe markets are liberatory.

One of the core beliefs of the cryptocurrency utopians is that markets are liberatory, or in the more extreme case, that markets are literally freedom. Most see the state/government (typically these are considered exactly the same) as inherently oppressive and the market as the sole domain of freedom, only ever becoming oppressive as a direct result of state intervention. The rest of us, on the other hand, do not isolate the market from the state, do not consider the state as the sole source of oppression, and do not see the oppressive actions carried out by capitalists as being directly caused by state intervention.

More broadly, the market is an inherently hierarchical, privilege-based system. This is true when markets are democratically planned (there is still going to be a hierarchical distribution of income and thus of privilege and power), but especially when they are capitalized and use wage labor. Even if markets were able to liberate us from state oppression, markets are themselves oppressive, and we would eventually have to be liberated from the market. What makes this any better than the social democrat proposition of using the state to liberate us from markets?



## We have a power problem, not a trust problem.

Banks, corporations, and states are fleecing the poor and marginalized. Further conflicts manufactured by the ruling class causes mistrust among the poor and marginalized. However, the problem isn't that we mistrust, because the mistrust of the rich by the poor is perfectly-placed and reasonable. The problem is that even if we know something is wrong, we don't actually have the power to do anything about it.

Like most libertarian understanding of political economy, it's only when you reduce things to the atomic, transactional level that any of this liberatory cryptocurrency stuff makes any sense. When we consider what is actually being verified by the blockchain, it's that payment was made and double-spending did not occur. In other words, it prevents any random person from creating money. But trust of the accuracy of an individual transaction is not the problem that most people have. Most people trust that money is not being magically created out of thin air with every transaction. Arbitrary money creation is not the problem we have with mistrust, powerlessness is.



Let's say someone calls your grandpa and tells him he owes them \$1000 and needs to pay immediately or it will be sent to collections. This isn't just something I made up, this actually happened to my girlfriend's pops. The problem is not that grandpa can't trust that his transaction is happening, it's that he's a confused old man whose fears are being played on by someone. If they had gotten the money (they had trouble getting him to send them money in an untraceable way), we would be largely unable to track them down. Bitcoin would have made it easier, not harder, for people like this to get away without being tracked down, thanks to its anonymous wallet addressing and ability to control and program any number of wallets.



Okay, but not all of us are confused old people being targeted by petty fraudsters, so what? So what more major source of fraud is there? One that cryptocurrency is happy to enforce: That we owe something to the people that own wealth. Again, because of the reductionist, transaction-level analysis of right-leaning liberals and libertarians, we are supposed to believe that wealth is a reward for contribution, and therefore the distribution of wealth is just. However, as most leftists know, this ignores the historical and political facts





of the distribution of ownership, which is rooted in imperialism, colonialism, and legalized robbery. Bitcoin would not change this fact, and to imagine that theft would be prevented simply because we would have a public ledger that clarifies ownership is the height of bureaucratic idealism.

## **Cryptocurrencies don't actually control inflation.**

Bitcoin theorists do not understand the basics of inflation. They claim that Bitcoin's inflation will be controlled because it creates new coins at a relatively low, fixed rate. Essentially, they are basing this on the quantity theory of money, which explains increases in the general level of prices (inflation) as being directly related to the supply (and demand) for money. This is not an uncommon belief: it is widely believed that the role of central banks is to control inflation through the pace of lending and the setting of interest rates. There's just one problem with this theory: There is no mechanism whatsoever that explains how it can actually function. No one can determine from the growth in the money supply how much they should raise their prices; there are simply too many confounding factors that make this completely impossible.

Inflation therefore cannot be caused by "too much money chasing too few goods," as few, if any, of the people responsible for determining prices have any idea how much money is in circulation and how much value it's chasing relative to that amount. They have no idea how the change in available money will affect peoples' spending habits, let alone the spending habits of their particular customers. They also don't know who got the extra money, because it's not everyone equally. The only thing that we can correctly say about inflation, therefore, is that inflation is caused by price-setters raising prices. This isn't as interesting or neoclassical as the quantity theory, and it raises many questions that market utopians would rather not ask, such as: Why would someone raise their prices, and what, if not a change in supply/demand of money/goods or an increase in value, explains how much someone can raise their prices? The answer to these questions lies in the fact that the market is not an impartial, apolitical meritocracy, but in fact a political space where power struggles are extremely important.

## **Power still ends up in the hands of a few people.**

Cryptocurrency utopians believe that the public ledger means no one can cheat. What it really means is no one can create money except the miners. Because bitcoin creation becomes more difficult over time, the power to create bitcoin becomes concentrated in the hands of those with the resources to run expensive, specialized mining equipment. The bitcoin itself will still be concentrated in the hands of capitalists. As of writing, 48% of bitcoin mining power actually resides in the hands of just two Chinese mining pools.

If everything goes the way that cryptocurrency utopians want it to, we'd still have wage labor, we'd still have private ownership and workplace dictatorships. The only thing that really changes for the poor is that they pay slightly lower transaction fees (assuming that we can still abundantly produce low-cost electricity, a shaky assumption when we are nearing the end of the fossil fuel age, for better or worse). Much like the libertarians' greatest opposition to the state is taxes and regulations, something that hardly affects poor people at all, their greatest opposition to the modern money system is likewise. It's not its obfuscation of rule and enslavement, its connection to the burning of fossil fuels, or its concentration in increasingly few hands that they take issue with, but that it grows too rapidly in quantity and costs too much to spend.

## **Smart Contracts can be really dumb**

At the time of writing, a major hack of a Distributed Autonomous Organization (DAO) created by an Ethereum-based "smart contract" was unfolding. A smart contract is the next



stage of evolution for the cryptocurrency: A business created as a computer program that behaves automatically based on users' interaction with it. The smart contract is immutable and behaves exactly as it is programmed. Cryptocurrency utopians see this as the best possible form of business agreement, as opposed to the convoluted, arbitrary, subjective legal system surrounding traditional contracts. It makes business possible without needing teams of lawyers to write contracts, and can turn a good idea into a self-sustaining money-making machine.

The hack, at its most basic, involved an attacker exploiting a bit of code that calls a user-provided function. Using this, the attacker was able to pass one in that recursively called the smart contract's function to withdraw funds, and used this method to drain \$60 million from the business. While this is clearly not what was intended by the DAO's developers, it raises serious philosophical issues: In the "traditional" legal system, this would clearly be theft, and the investors would be protected. However, in the smart contract world, you get exactly what you code—in this case, the contract was coded to accept a user-defined function when withdrawing funds, and the user's fund recursively calls the withdrawal function. So, will they develop some kind of way to deal with obviously unintended consequences of the smart contracts, or stick to their ideological purity, and say "well, you fucked up, better luck next time?"

As post-scarcity anarchists, we are not averse to computers, nor would we ignore the liberatory potential of computing. Computers are indispensable for the elimination of toil, the progress of scientific understanding, remote communication, and the creation of effective systems of logistics. But programmers have long had a phrase that captures the essence of the logical soundness but practical uselessness of cryptocurrencies: Garbage in, garbage out. You can have perfect understanding of cryptographic, mathematical, and computational theory, but when you combine it with garbage political theory, you're going to end up with garbage tools. And while crypto-anarchists have come up with some great tools, such as Wikileaks, I2P, and Googlesharing (RIP), cryptocurrency does not really belong in that category.

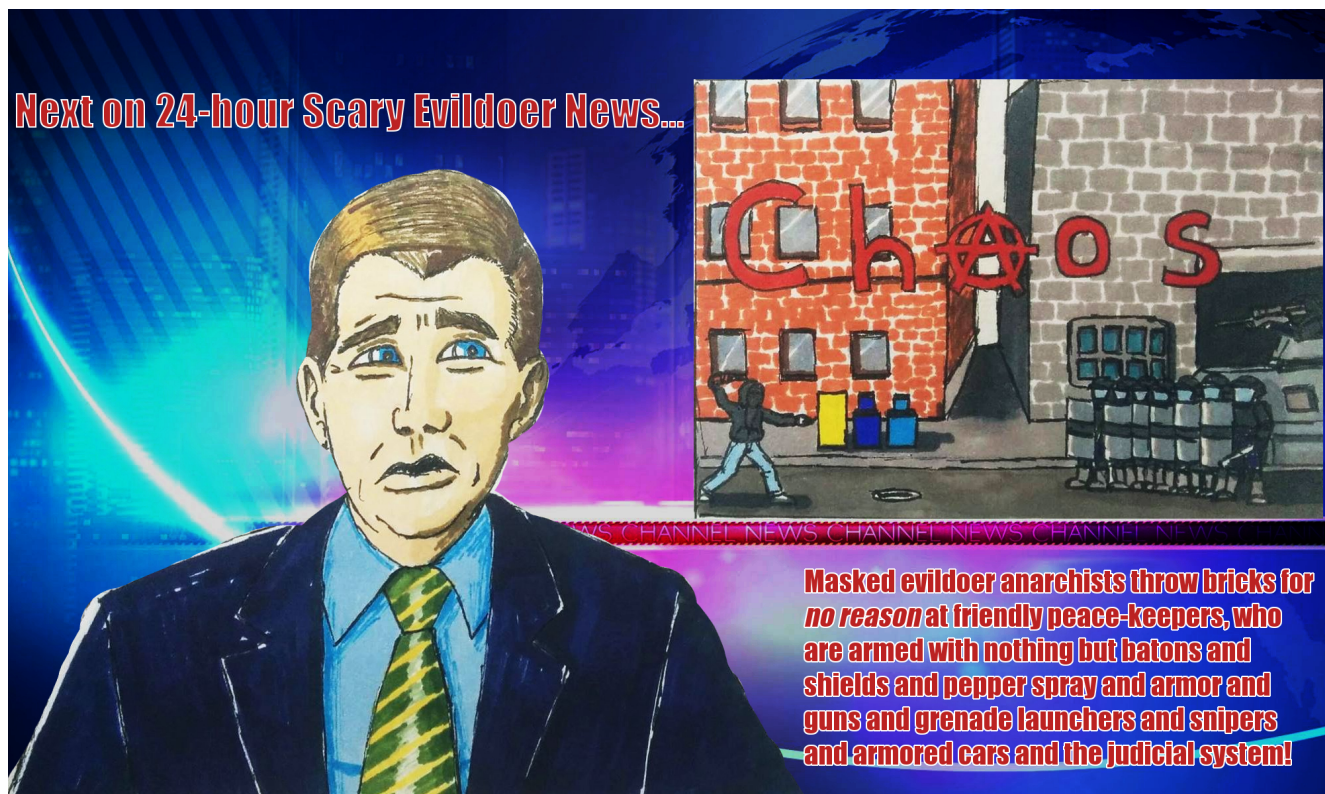


fig. 9: #bluelivesmatter



# Capital as Power

by Simon Petrikov

Contemporary political economist Jonathan Nitzan, along with his colleague Shimshon Bichler, have developed a modern theory of capital that supercedes Marxist and Neoclassical theories of capital. Whereas the aforementioned theories both treat capital as a thing which is quantitatively reflected through finance and prices, the Capital as Power (CasP) theory understands capital as the finances, and rather than reflecting the realities of production, quantify control over the social sphere (including production). Rather than treating capitalism as distinct from the state, the modern state is considered the “state of capital”, owing to the inability to meaningfully distinguish between the actions of “the state” and “the market”, which in reality undergo constant, integrated action, determining the behavior and form of one another and occupying the same spaces. Rather than treating the corporation as an anomalous legal fiction created by state interference, the corporation is the primary organization of interest in capitalism. Rather than assuming that prices are a distorted mirror that reflects key information about the underlying production process, prices are considered, like they are by actual businesses and actual capitalists, to be the fundamental unit of analysis, the thing that matters more than any other.

## Capital

The exact definition Nitzan gives of capital is “the corporation's expected future profit and interest payments adjusted for risk and discounted to their present value” (Nitzan 2009, p. 8). This is what a financier would actually consider to be his capital. Whereas the economic sciences, if they can be called that, seek to fit reality to their models, Nitzan's work is on making our models fit reality. As Nitzan notes, “that capital theorists remain so hooked on production and consumption is all the more perplexing given that capitalists themselves are not” (*ibid.*, p. 13). Industry, described as a “social hologram” of human activity, is differentiated from business, which is a form of organization that appropriates wealth and power from human activity.

What makes this understanding important is that production does not need to be involved whatsoever in capital accumulation. On the contrary, he goes to show that inflation, or more specifically stagflation, are partly responsible for the bulk of capitalist accumulation. The sabotage of industry is what allows capitalists to derive profits from it. As an example, “early in the twentieth century the automobile companies bought and dismantled 100 electric railway systems in 45 US cities” (*ibid.*, p. 234). The destruction of efficient and accessible public transportation would subsequently push people into accepting the less-efficient, more business-friendly private transportation. Nitzan supports the stagflation argument in *Capital as Power* by showing that unemployment went from fluctuating to stably hovering around its current value, and that capitalist power is strongly correlated with positive unemployment. As another example, in a paper by Joseph Baines, a study of the recent history of the agricultural sector finds that most of the wealth from agribusiness in the last few decades came directly from starving people and using the crops that would have gone to feeding them to produce biofuels. These biofuels are an even worse energy source than fossil fuels, often not even producing net positive energy. Their efficacy is all but irrelevant to the capitalists.

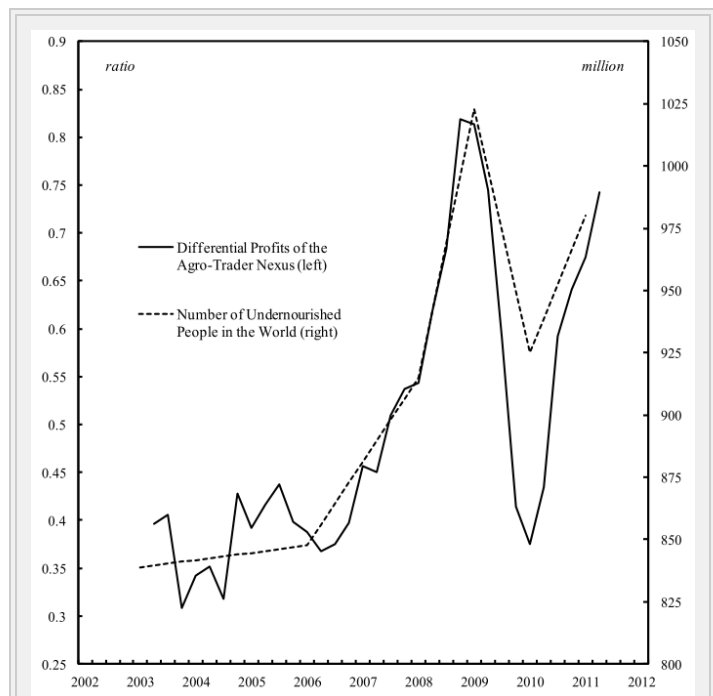


fig. 10: This chart reveals a positive relationship between the amount of starvation and the profits of the top agribusiness firms.

Chart source: Food Price Inflation as Redistribution: Towards a New Analysis of Corporate Power in the World Food System (Preprint)  
Baines, Joseph. (2013). New Political Economy. April. pp. 1-35.

# The State and the Economy

Those of us who follow politics and history closely should be well aware of the fact that “the economy” and “the state” are really just an integrated unit. Today we see not an anomalous situation where the state (or specific, greedy part of the government) is working with “cronies” to ruin capitalism and democracy, but the highly advanced and time-tested version of what has always been. Capitalists have long been part of the creation and reordering of society (what Nitzan calls “creorder”) in their favor, which is why the political environment so strongly reflects the needs of capitalists. Without the right institutions in place, without the force of imperial governments, and without transforming culture, capitalism would not be as widespread and penetrating as it is today.

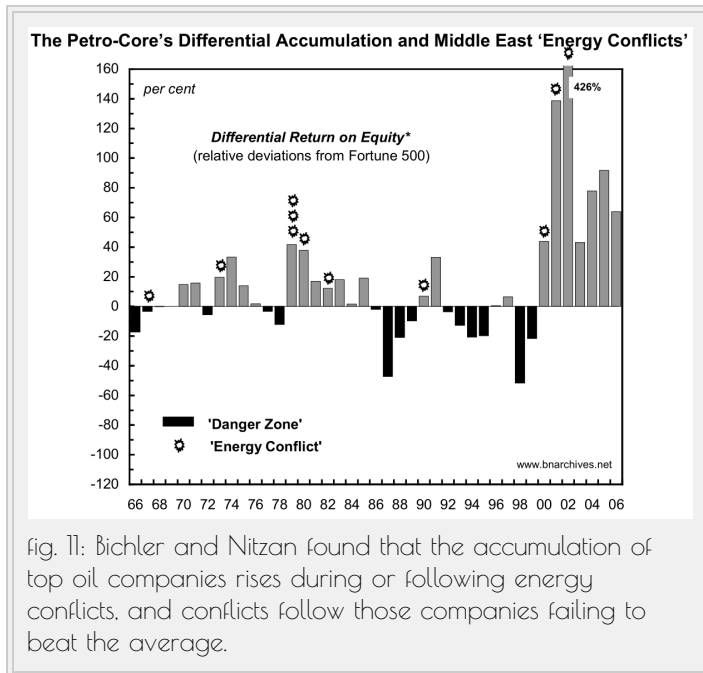


fig. 11: Bichler and Nitzan found that the accumulation of top oil companies rises during or following energy conflicts, and conflicts follow those companies failing to beat the average.

The corporation, far from being an abomination of capitalism gone wrong, is an entity created by and for capitalism. The corporation enables the fluid creorder of capitalism to proceed through financialization and bureaucratization. The accumulation of wealth through business would eventually necessitate something like a corporation, something that allows business owners to be shielded from liability, to allow widespread investment but maintain central control over the business, and so forth. The corporation is the modern-day equivalent of the fiefdom. This is more true than many may realize: The term “investment” comes from feudal tradition, where a king or lord would literally invest, clothe in special garments, their lords or vassals. The ceremony was called “investiture”. The fiefdom (or fee) was created through feudal investment, and the corporation is created through capitalist investment. The only difference between the respective investments is that capitalists measure their power quantitatively (and don't involve silly hats).

## Prices

Prices are the greatest focus of contemporary economics, and for good reason, since they are the fundamental quantity of capitalism. Despite this place of importance, and the hundreds of years that economics has had to come up with a proper theory of prices, there is still no proper theory of prices. The CasP framework changes this by changing the focus to power. Prices are based on power, and money transactions are transferences of power. Differences in wealth are explainable as differences in power. Capital accumulation works through changes in prices moreso than it does through the gain of profits; In Nitzan's analysis, corporate dominance is a much clearer picture when looking at capitalization, the price of a corporation, than when looking at profits.

Inflation turns out to be a major driver of capitalization. Nitzan compares the 500 largest firms' average rate of inflation with the average to observe that corporations which engage in greater degrees of inflation tend to be the most valued. Capitalization, remember, relates to expected future profits and risk. The firms that are most strongly expected to increase their future profits are those that engage in inflation. This is in contrast to conventional wisdom, which is that companies compete over the *best* prices, by achieving “marginal profit”/“marginal cost”.

Economic theory holds that inflation “is a monetary phenomenon” and “the most common catalyst for inflation (aside from the proverbial printing press) is ‘excessive’ economic growth” (*ibid.* 376). However, when Nitzan plots a measure of inflation against the favored measure of growth, % annual change in GDP, there is a clear relationship over the last 200 years to high inflation and low growth. Were economic activity causing economic growth and leading to scarcity as capitalists catch up by deploying more means of production, then we would see that prices would tend to rise during this period of growth and scarcity. Instead, inflation actually tends to happen during periods of crisis, making it very clear why “crony” capitalism and the deployment of force on a geopolitical scale is not the exception, but the rule. Capitalism is a fundamentally “cronyist”, imperialist system.



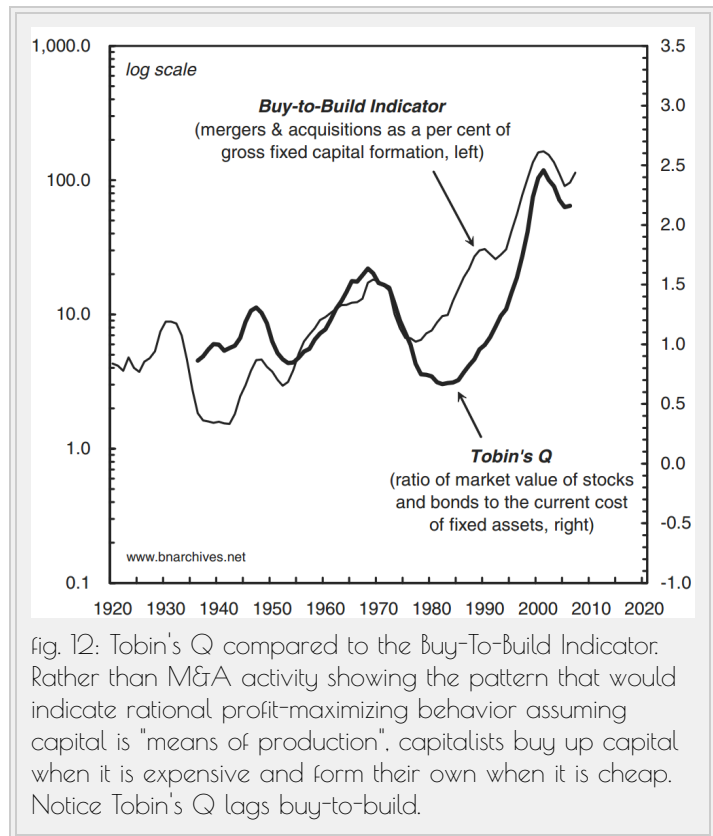
# Hierarchy-building

The other major driver of capitalization is company growth. Conventional wisdom holds that the expansion of the company into new markets is what would lead to higher capitalization, i.e. company growth. Capitalization, being merely a mirror onto the real economic activity, would reflect the real economic activity of the corporation buying more means of production to increase their productivity. Mergers & acquisitions (M & A) turn out to be far more important. An existing index of capital acquisition, the Tobin's Q, compares the relative ratio of new fixed asset costs to existing fixed asset costs (greater than one meaning it's cheaper to build and less than one meaning it's cheaper to buy). The idea is that capitalists will do whatever is cheapest, so if capitalization mirrored means of production, we would observe that M & A activity would occur when capital is cheap and not when it's expensive. Instead, the opposite occurs: Capital forms primarily through M & A activity when it is most costly, and through building when that is most costly. The reason, Nitzan says, is this:

New capacity indeed may be cheap if only a few capitalists add it. But if many capitalists do the same, the calculus becomes very different. The latter circumstances spell 'glut': glut means the disintegration of full-cost pricing: and if prices end up dropping faster than costs, the consequence is falling profit. In this context, building green-field factories – although seemingly 'cheaper' than existing assets – is a recipe for business disaster. [...] As the emphasis flips from passively accepting prices to actively managing them, *Tobin's Q* turns from a cause to a consequence: it goes up when investors happen to buy and down when they decide to build (*ibid.*, 345).

Blair Fix, a grad student who has been working with Professor Nitzan, focused his research on hierarchy-building. In a presentation he gives, he points out the implication of the laws of thermodynamics to organizational structures: Any structure will collapse unless it is continuously maintained using energy. This implies that energy consumption is usable as a proxy for the size of an organization. He connects the creation and growth of corporations to a process of active construction of hierarchical command structures. Because of the limitations of time and cognition, a large organization must necessarily limit the number of interactions required to operate within the organization. A highly-hierarchical organization allows for individuals to only need to interact with 2-5 others within the organization, to have only a few levels of decision-making, and yet still scale the organization into the thousands, millions, or billions. He concludes that hierarchy-building facilitates technological progress as a means to overcome the barrier of energy needed to maintain the structure.

The CasP framework provides a much-needed contemporary, empirical perspective on capital. It disenchants economics, taking it off of its pedestal of apolitical, abstruse, academic authoritarianism, and revealing how little it actually explains about the world compared to a political examination. It is still a small field of study, but one that can inform our political ideas universally. The role of market models made up of man-machines has always been for motivated reasoning. Its separation from politics perpetuates the illusion that a ruling class doesn't exist, that one is accidentally borne by bumbling bureaucrats trying foolishly to politicize the perfect production process. The neoclassical theory is more akin theology than physics, ignoring the most important parts of that which it purports to study.



# Did anarchism influence the Dadaists?

by Little-blood



fig. 13: "Drinnen und Draußen". by Georg Grosz

In this essay I shall assess the claim that anarchism influenced the Dada movement and see how appropriate it would be to refer to it as an 'anarchist' movement. I shall begin with a loose definition of the ideology that we can then apply to the art movement.

Contemporary anarchist intellectual, Noam Chomsky provides a coherent definition of anarchism, without being too restrictive, in an attempt to do justice to the nature of the ideology. He typifies Anarchism as 'skepticism towards authority':

Anarchism is... a kind of tendency in human thought which shows up in different forms in different circumstances, and has some leading characteristics. Primarily it is a tendency that is suspicious and skeptical of domination, authority, and hierarchy (Wilson, Chomsky, and Success, 2013).

This provides us with a loose umbrella definition from which we can then cover the diverse and disparate developments of anarchism underneath. These different 'trends' vary radically – from the ego-driven individualist anarchism of Max Stirner (Stirner, 2007), to the

collective mutual aid of Kropotkin's anarcho-communism (Kropotkin, 2002) and beyond. This also perfectly illustrates how anarchism stands outside of the conventional left – right political dichotomy, which has come to shape our understanding of politics in the modern age. I would assert that it is much more apolitical. As Chomsky continues:

[Anarchism] assumes that the burden of proof for anyone in a position of power and authority lies on them. Their authority is not self-justifying. They have to give a reason for it, a justification. And if they can't justify that authority and power and control, which is the usual case, then the authority ought to be dismantled and replaced by something more free and just. (Wilson, Chomsky, and Success, 2013)

This is not a call in itself for a complete destruction of all facets of civilization, just an assertion that nothing should be deemed so sanctified that it is free from questioning. If we can take an incredibly broad definition of right wing politics as valuing liberty over equality, and left wing politics as being the reversal of that polarity



then we can begin to address anarchism as evidently 'apolitical'. Generally speaking, Anarchism asserts that by destroying and dismantling oppressive and unnecessary institutions (for example 'the state') to ensure greater personal liberties, equality and horizontal cooperatives based on free associations, would naturally arise (an example of what scientists, anthropologists and economists call 'spontaneous order'). However, anarchism is generally considered a radical 'left' ideology most likely because of its widespread insistence (There are a few exceptions) that private property is despotic, tyrannical and unnecessary – (made evident in Proudhon's famous declaration "property is theft") (Proudhon, 1994 p.34).

Despite being considered a politically radical ideology, It is worth mentioning that there are many great artists and writers that were also noteworthy anarchists in our mainstream cultural pantheon; From Oscar Wilde's adoration of Kropotkin's theories (Wilde, 2001) to the Christian anarchism of Leo Tolstoy (Tolstoy, 2009) and the anarchic sympathies of Henry David Thoreau (Thoreau, 2000) – Anarchism has always had its fair share of representatives in our collected consciousness. They even date back to the ancient Chinese dynasty; Zhuangzi wrote "A petty thief is put in jail. A great brigand becomes a ruler of a Nation." (Ludwig, 2012) With this proclamation he establishes the tradition of skepticism towards state power, which becomes anarchism's biggest theme. It is entirely plausible, then that such an age-old philosophy could very well have influenced the anti-establishment, anti-war and anti-bourgeois art of the Dadaists.



fig. 14: "The Mechanical Head" by Raoul Hausmann

Now that we have a loose framework to appeal to we can begin the analysis. The First World War became a catalyst for critical activity; through its senseless violence and bloodshed it exposed the chaotic and

valueless nature inherent to existence. This greatly undermined the prevailing value systems of the time and by extension the dominant institutions that espoused them. The Dadaists were driven by a destabilizing and destructive ethos in regards to society, which they believed had become illegitimate after suffering the irreparable damage of the First World War. This is evident in Louis Aragon's "Dada Manifesto," which reads as an intense negation of all western values: "No more bourgeois, no more aristocrats, no more arms, no more police, no more nations, an end at last to all this stupidity, nothing left, nothing at all, nothing, nothing" (1916).

Speaking for the Dada movement generally, prominent artist Hugo Ball explained it thus: "For us, art is not an end in itself ... but an opportunity for the true perception and criticism of the times we live in" (Bright, 2016). We can see how this mentality also resonates with Chomsky's propositions mentioned earlier. In his book 'On Anarchism' Chomsky further elucidates:

...at every stage of history our concern must be to dismantle those forms of authority and oppression that survive from an era when they might have been justified in terms of the need for security or survival or economic development, but that now contribute to – rather than alleviate – material and cultural deficit (Chomsky, 2014 p.2).

Applying this reflectively, it seems to perfectly echo the context in which the Dadaists were working. Their propensity to mock and degrade western values through 'shocking' art was foundational to the movement. It is not a stretch to assert that the Dadaists felt that mainstream society was responsible for a 'Cultural Deficit'; As art historian, Fred S. Kleiner writes, the movement was a "reaction to what many of these artists saw as nothing more than an insane spectacle of collective homicide" (Gardner and Kleiner, 2012). The art was designed to be challenging, irrational and offensive; a celebration that all things were possible. In his article "Unpopular Culture: Dada", Peter Fleming explains: "Dada was a fully-realized, soulless expression of Dionysian excess; A howl of existential despair ... and a casualty of war" (Fleming, 2015).

Working before the Dadaists was Russian dissident intellectual Mikhail Bakunin (who may or may not have been an influence). We can certainly see, in their anti-idealist thought, similarities to the writer. "No theory, no ready-made system, no book that has ever been written will save the world. I cleave to no system. I am a true seeker." (E. H. Carr, 1961 p. 175).

In response to this ugly world, ravaged by war, the Dadaists employed a form of 'Active Nihilism' to topple



fig. 15: "Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany" by Hannah Höch

the remaining vestiges of western civilization. This was in order to create a vacuum for new values to flourish. 'Active Nihilism' was clearly a prominent idea in circulation amongst the Dadaists, however it is worth noting that its main proponent – Friedrich Nietzsche, had a decidedly anti-anarchist view. He actively attacked the state, but also the anarchists whom he thought perfectly embodied his philosophical idea of 'ressentiment'. This was a worldview that was summarized by feelings of intense resentment towards ones position in life, whereby one values themselves not in accordance with their own self assigned ideals, but by contrast to the value system of their oppressors, in order to gain a psychological revenge of sorts:

"A word in the ear of the psychologists, assuming they are inclined to study resentment close up for once: this plant thrives best amongst anarchists and anti-Semites today" (Nietzsche, 1998 p.48).

With this Nietzsche successfully manages to abolish the two political divisions that would appropriate his ideas in the years after his death – The Nazis and the anarchists. He was also a fierce critique of the democratic method believing that it only perpetuated mediocrity and restricted our individuality through mass conformity. He warned that under a democracy "exalted, self-directed spirituality, a will to solitude, even great powers of reason are felt as a danger" (Nietzsche, 2001 p.123). This is in direct contrast to the anarchist's love of horizontal, linear, non-hierarchical rule where a democracy (of sorts) would operate.

Writing in 1937, in order to disparage political readings of Nietzsche, French surrealist writer George Batailles wrote against the appropriation of Nietzsche's work for any political end – be it left or right. He maintained that a political reading of Nietzsche was "radically incompatible" with the philosophers' themes of fierce independence and self-determination (Bataille, 1993). With this in mind, was the Dadaists' use of Nietzsche's 'Active Nihilism' justified? Or are we misunderstanding Dada to say there is a connection with anarchism in the first place?

Nietzsche's relationship with anarchism – much like the Dadaists he undoubtedly influenced – is however hard to define. Despite openly rejecting their ideology and having a personally negative opinion of its principles, He nonetheless espoused views that were similar to anarchist thought; As Spencer Sunshine writes:

There were many things that drew anarchists to Nietzsche: his hatred of the state; his disgust for the mindless social behavior of 'herds'; his anti-Christianity; his distrust of the effect of both the market and the State on cultural production; his desire for an 'overman'—that is, for a new human who was to be neither master nor slave; his praise of the ecstatic and creative self, with the artist as his prototype, who could say, 'yes' to the self-creation of a new world on the basis of nothing (Sunshine, 2010).

My own view of this would be that for Nietzsche, much like everything else in his philosophical canon, there are gradations. An anarchist that embodies the virtues of self-sufficiency, direct action and independent values seems to be much more amenable to Nietzsche's philosophy than one who is driven by a deep resentment towards those who he perceives are in power, driven by an unrelenting desire to seek revenge upon them. Murray Bookchin, in his 1973 introduction to Sam Dolgoff's book *The Anarchist Collectives*, describes the anarchist's vision of society as a Nietzschean project.

Workers must see themselves as human beings, not as class beings; as creative personalities, not as 'proletarians,' as self-affirming individuals, not as 'masses' [...] [the] economic component must be humanized precisely by bringing an 'affinity of friendship' to the work process, by diminishing the role of onerous work in the lives of producers, indeed by a total 'transvaluation of values' (Bookchin, 2010)

Perhaps the Dadaists embodied a nihilistic and destructive attitude without being anarchist? After all,

destruction and chaos aren't interchangeable terms for anarchism, and amongst Louis Aragon's treatise we can also find the explicit demand for "No Anarchism". It reads, to me, as a complete rejection of all ideology. However, I would assert that there is a shared theme that pervades all and that is the crisis of humanity facing a godless world.

We have already established how Dadaism was a reaction to the insanity, barbarity and 'godlessness' of the First World War. Nietzsche's most famous assertion was "God is dead" (Nietzsche, 2013 p.184) and with this he accurately prophesied the nihilistic years after his death; of frantic searching for meaning and the inevitable depravity that would follow. In his eyes, it is only through our own self-prescribed values that we can sincerely escape the void left in its wake. Mikhail Bakunin also wrote his essay "God and the state", where he explains how religion is utilized as an instrumental tool to keep the masses in servitude. He argues: "God being everything, the real world and man are nothing. God being truth, justice, goodness, beauty, power and life, man is falsehood, iniquity, evil, ugliness, impotence and death. God being master, man is the slave" (Bakunin, 1916). Only with the reversal of this dichotomy can humanity truly be free. 'Godlessness' implies liberation through Bakunin. "A boss in heaven is the best excuse for a boss on earth..." He proclaims, "therefore if god did exist, he would have to be abolished." (Bakunin, 1916)

The First World War had already established a worldwide suspicion against ecclesiastical authority. Reacting against this godless world, The Dadaists were active in cleansing culture; to allow it to redefine itself again. In this sense, they enlightened humanity and empowered it, paradoxically through aggression and humiliation. Their actions and love for personal liberty also resonate well with the famous anarchist phrase 'no gods, no masters'. (Conrad, 1994)

There is a long-established relationship between these existential problems and anarchism. Albert Camus, famous for his related philosophy of Absurdism, was an ardent anarchist, even fighting in French resistance movements during the war and writing for different underground anarchist newspapers. "The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion" (Existence, n.d.). In this passage, it's as though Camus is advocating the rebellious attitude of the Dadaists who preceded him.

All of this points to the fact that although the Dadaists may not have been militantly 'anarchist', they did put significant effort into clearing the path for

anarchism to potentially grow, and they may have unknowingly been reacting, albeit in a very limited destructive way, to the same crises that the anarchists were also undertaking. It is perhaps apt to describe Dadaism as 'anarchic', rather than foundationally anarchist; to see the similarities without seeing a causal connection.

It seems to fit more the stereotypical misapplication of the term, of anarchism being irrational, chaotic and destructive, rather than the actual nature of the ideology itself, which is obviously much more than this. Their direction seems to be far too lacking in foresight to be considered 'anarchist'. After all, anarchism (broadly speaking) still has a strong humanitarian ethos that ultimately seeks the benefit of all through emancipation rather than destruction, irrationality and chaos for its own sake. However, we do see glimpses of idealism that escape the Dadaists revolt against everything. Writing regarding his intentions for the Dada club Cabaret Voltaire, artist Hugo Ball wrote: "It is necessary to clarify the intentions of this cabaret. It is its aim to remind the world that there are people of independent minds—beyond war and nationalism—who live for different ideals." (Hofmann, 2001) This quote goes someway to illuminate a potential deeper force driving the Dada movement and it was the anarchist printer Julius Heuberger that published it.

However, at the core of the movement seems to be this all consuming, anti-everything stance, which rejects all ideology – however radical it may be. It would be hard to argue that such a negation would stop short enough to allow affiliations with anarchism.

Dada artist Marcel Janco explained Dada's mentality as this: "We had lost confidence in our culture. Everything had to be demolished. We would begin again after the tabula rasa." For me, the potentiality for 'anarchism' to sincerely be ascribed to the Dadaists exists solely in this tabula rasa state. Without anything to assert their future intentions, the Dadaists could equally be portrayed as nihilists rather than specifically anarchists. To say this would be to assume that Dadaism could of continued. Yet it was Dada's short lived, explosive nature that was precisely its power. Because the movement was such a disparate mix of interlocking individuals it would also be disingenuous to assume that there was one unified vision, political ideology or project that they all ascribed to. It was these passionate differences that inevitably destroyed the movement, and by 1924 Dada had dissolved into a myriad of different movements – most notably Surrealism and social realism.



# On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs

by David Graeber

In the year 1930, John Maynard Keynes predicted that, by century's end, technology would have advanced sufficiently that countries like Great Britain or the United States would have achieved a 15-hour work week. There's every reason to believe he was right. In technological terms, we are quite capable of this. And yet it didn't happen. Instead, technology has been marshaled, if anything, to figure out ways to make us all work more. In order to achieve this, jobs have had to be created that are, effectively, pointless. Huge swathes of people, in Europe and North America in particular, spend their entire working lives performing tasks they secretly believe do not really need to be performed. The moral and spiritual damage that comes from this situation is profound. It is a scar across our collective soul. Yet virtually no one talks about it.

Why did Keynes' promised utopia – still being eagerly awaited in the '60s – never materialise? The standard line today is that he didn't figure in the massive increase in consumerism. Given the choice between less hours and more toys and pleasures, we've collectively chosen the latter. This presents a nice morality tale, but even a moment's reflection shows it can't really be true. Yes, we have witnessed the creation of an endless variety of new jobs and industries since the '20s, but very few have anything to do with the production and distribution of sushi, iPhones, or fancy sneakers.



fig. 16: Still from *Clerks* (1994)

So what are these new jobs, precisely? A recent report comparing employment in the US between 1910 and 2000 gives us a clear picture (and I note, one pretty much exactly echoed in the UK). Over the course of the last century, the number of workers employed as domestic servants, in industry, and in the farm sector has collapsed dramatically. At the same time, "professional, managerial, clerical, sales, and service workers" tripled, growing "from one-quarter to three-quarters of total employment." In other words, productive jobs have, just as predicted, been largely automated away (even if you count industrial workers globally, including the toiling masses in India and China, such workers are still not nearly so large a percentage of the world population as they used to be).

But rather than allowing a massive reduction of working hours to free the world's population to pursue their own projects, pleasures, visions, and ideas, we have seen the ballooning not even so much of the "service" sector as of the administrative sector, up to and including the creation of whole new industries like financial services or telemarketing, or the unprecedented expansion of sectors like corporate law, academic and health administration, human resources, and public relations. And these numbers do not even reflect on all those people whose job is to provide administrative, technical, or security support for these industries, or for that matter the whole host of ancillary

industries (dog-washers, all-night pizza deliverymen) that only exist because everyone else is spending so much of their time working in all the other ones.

These are what I propose to call "bullshit jobs."

It's as if someone were out there making up pointless jobs just for the sake of keeping us all working. And here, precisely, lies the mystery. In capitalism, this is precisely what is not supposed to happen. Sure, in the old inefficient socialist states like the Soviet Union, where employment was considered both a right and a sacred duty, the system made up as many jobs as they had to (this is why in Soviet department stores it took three clerks to sell a piece of meat). But, of course, this is the sort of very problem market competition is supposed to fix. According to economic theory, at least, the last thing a profit-seeking firm is going to do is shell out money to workers they don't really need to employ. Still, somehow, it happens.

While corporations may engage in ruthless downsizing, the layoffs and speed-ups invariably fall on that class of people who are actually making, moving, fixing and maintaining things; through some strange alchemy no one can quite explain, the number of salaried paper-pushers ultimately seems to expand, and more and more employees find themselves, not unlike Soviet workers actually, working 40 or even 50 hour weeks on paper, but effectively working 15 hours just as Keynes predicted, since the rest of their time is spent organizing or attending motivational seminars, updating their facebook profiles or downloading TV box-sets.

The answer clearly isn't economic: it's moral and political. The ruling class has figured out that a happy and productive population with free time on their hands is a mortal danger (think of what started to happen when this even began to be approximated in the '60s). And, on the other hand, the feeling that work is a moral value in itself, and that anyone not willing to submit themselves to some kind of intense work discipline for most of their waking hours deserves nothing, is extraordinarily convenient for them.



fig. 17: Bullshit jobs are plentiful in the white-collar world.

Once, when contemplating the apparently endless growth of administrative responsibilities in British academic departments, I came up with one possible vision of hell. Hell is a collection of individuals who are spending the bulk of their time working on a task they don't like and are not especially good at. Say they were hired because they were excellent cabinet-makers, and then discover they are expected to spend a great deal of their time frying fish. Neither does the task really need to be done - at least, there's only a very limited number of fish that need to be fried. Yet somehow, they all become so obsessed with resentment at the thought that some of their co-workers might be spending more time making cabinets, and not doing their fair share of the fish-frying responsibilities, that before long there's endless piles of useless badly cooked fish piling up all over the workshop and it's all that anyone really does.

I think this is actually a pretty accurate description of the moral dynamics of our own economy.

Now, I realise any such argument is going to run into immediate objections: "who are you to say what jobs are really 'necessary'? What's necessary anyway? You're an anthropology professor, what's the 'need' for that?" (And indeed a lot of tabloid readers would take the existence of my job as the very definition of wasteful social expenditure.) And on one level, this is obviously true. There can be no objective measure of social value.

I would not presume to tell someone who is convinced they are making a meaningful contribution to the world that, really, they are not. But what about those people who are themselves convinced their jobs are meaningless? Not long ago I got back in touch with a school friend who I hadn't seen since I was 12. I was amazed to discover that in the interim, he had become first a poet, then the front man in an indie rock band. I'd heard some of his songs on the radio having no idea the singer was someone I actually knew. He was obviously brilliant, innovative, and his work had unquestionably brightened and improved the lives of people all over the world. Yet, after a couple of unsuccessful albums, he'd lost his contract, and plagued with debts and a newborn daughter, ended up, as he put it, "taking the default choice of so many directionless folk: law school." Now he's a corporate lawyer working in a prominent New York firm. He was the first to admit that his job was utterly meaningless, contributed nothing to the world, and, in his own estimation, should not really exist.

There's a lot of questions one could ask here, starting with, what does it say about our society that it seems to generate an extremely limited demand for talented poet-musicians, but an apparently infinite demand for specialists in corporate law? (Answer: if 1% of the population controls most of the disposable wealth, what we call "the market" reflects what they think is useful or important, not anybody else.) But even more, it shows that most people in these jobs are ultimately aware of it. In fact, I'm not sure I've ever met a corporate lawyer who didn't think their job was bullshit. The same goes for almost all the new industries outlined above. There is a whole class of salaried professionals that, should you meet them at parties and admit that you do something that might be considered interesting (an anthropologist, for example), will want to avoid even discussing their line of work entirely. Give them a few drinks, and they will launch into tirades about how pointless and stupid their job really is.



fig. 18: Workplace motivation

This is a profound psychological violence here. How can one even begin to speak of dignity in labour when one secretly feels one's job should not exist? How can it not create a sense of deep rage and resentment. Yet it is the peculiar genius of our society that its rulers have figured out a way, as in the case of the fish-fryers, to ensure that rage is directed precisely against those who actually do get to do meaningful work. For instance: in our society, there seems a general rule that, the more obviously one's work benefits other people, the less one is likely to be paid for it. Again, an objective measure is hard to find, but one easy way to get a sense is to ask: what would happen were this entire class of people to simply disappear? Say what you like about nurses, garbage collectors, or mechanics, it's obvious that were they to vanish in a puff of smoke, the results would be immediate and catastrophic. A world without teachers or dock-workers would soon be in trouble, and even one without science fiction writers or ska musicians would clearly be a lesser place. It's not entirely clear how humanity would suffer were all private equity CEOs, lobbyists, PR researchers, actuaries, telemarketers, bailiffs or legal consultants to similarly vanish. (Many suspect it might markedly improve.) Yet apart from a handful of well-touted exceptions (doctors), the rule holds surprisingly well.

Even more perverse, there seems to be a broad sense that this is the way things should be. This is one of the secret strengths of right-wing populism. You can see it when tabloids whip up resentment against tube workers for paralysing London during contract disputes: the very fact that tube workers can paralyse London shows that their work is actually necessary, but this seems to be precisely what annoys people. It's even clearer in the US, where Republicans have had remarkable success mobilizing resentment against school teachers, or auto workers (and not, significantly, against the school administrators or auto industry managers who actually cause the problems) for their supposedly bloated wages and benefits. It's as if they are being told "but you get to teach children! Or make cars! You get to have real jobs! And on top of that you have the nerve to also expect middle-class pensions and health care?"

If someone had designed a work regime perfectly suited to maintaining the power of finance capital, it's hard to see how they could have done a better job. Real, productive workers are relentlessly squeezed and exploited. The remainder are divided between a terrorised stratum of the, universally reviled, unemployed and a larger stratum who are basically paid to do nothing, in positions designed to make them identify with the perspectives and sensibilities of the ruling class (managers, administrators, etc) – and particularly its financial avatars – but, at the same time, foster a simmering resentment against anyone whose work has clear and undeniable social value. Clearly, the system was never consciously designed. It emerged from almost a century of trial and error. But it is the only explanation for why, despite our technological capacities, we are not all working 3-4 hour days.



## Want to get involved? Got something to say?

We are always interested in new contributors. We would be happy to include letters to the editor or other comments. Here are ways you can get in touch:

Email the editor at [rsalisbury@transfersics.com](mailto:rsalisbury@transfersics.com)

Request to join the "P-SA Zine" group on Facebook.



**Instead of the Holy Scriptures, we now have the universal language of business accounting and corporate finance. The power of God, once vested in priest and king, now reveals itself as the power of Capital vested in the 'investor'.**



Approved by Hillary Clinton. Paid for by Anarchists for Hillary Clinton.