



Life As Totality

*Challenges
to Myself
and Others*

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them up. There is a habit in these situations of falling into a framework of support/social work/charity. In terms of our aims and desires, I think this is a huge mistake. Without denying the necessity in building defense funds and keeping communication open, our primary question is how to turn this situation into a way for attacking the ruling order. The anti-prison activities of the French group Os Cangaceiros give some food for thought here.

Small-scale, everyday ruptures – There are events that happen every day on a small scale that cause temporary breaks in the social routine. How can we use these subversively against this order, to expose the reality of this society and to open other possibilities? How can we create such ruptures in a way that undermines resignation and acceptance of normality?

Large scale ruptures – Disasters, riots, local and regional uprisings all cause ruptures that can reveal a great deal about the ruling order and that move people to self-activity, generosity and a temporary rejection of the moral order of this society. How can we take advantage of such situations in a timely manner? What can we do to help extend the awareness and the rejection of the moral order beyond the moment? How can we expose the various politicians and bureaucrats of rupture – political parties, union leaders, militants and activists – without coming across as another one of that parasitical bunch?

So there is a vast and challenging game before us, one that I believe could make our lives into something marvelous. It is a game we have to play fiercely, because in this game our lives are the stake. There are no guarantees, no sure-fire methods for winning. But for each of us, as individuals, there is one sure-fire way to lose. That is to give in, to resign oneself to what the ruling order imposes. Who's ready to play?

LIFE AS TOTALITY

Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties anarchists face on a day to day level is that of finding reliable comrades with whom to carry on ongoing projects of revolt that are integral to their lives – projects that go beyond the customary formulas that can be found everywhere (Food Not Bombs, Critical Mass, collective businesses...). These formulaic projects develop easily because they require little thought. For the same reason (no real need to think) most anarchists seem to have little problem with spontaneous one-time night activities. But it is difficult to keep any sort of ongoing project in which a combined practical and theoretical effort is necessary going. Such projects demand an ongoing assessment of what we are doing and why we are doing it in terms of our revolutionary desires, our relations with comrades and other people and the reality we are facing. They keep on calling our lives into question and provide no comfortable place to rest and say “I am content, I have it all together, I have no need to struggle with myself.” I think we all fear this.

For most anarchists, anarchy and revolution remain abstractions external to them, because their own lives remain external to them. They do not see their life as a totality and so they do not consider what they want to do with it on that level. So they don't ever feel the need to create practical projects as an outgrowth of a life of revolt involving ways of relating that reflect the world they desire. This is not simply a matter of personal failing on the part of individual anarchists. There are concrete social reasons why people usually fail to get beyond this point of thoughtless activity. The social reality in which we exist forms its own totality and imposes it on our lives. Recognizing this *imposed* totality in a direct way would place an ultimatum before us that few of us are ready to face, one that demands looking the horror of our present world in the face and choosing to oppose it in its totality. It is easier for us to break our lives down into separate incidents, events, spaces and moments in order to avoid facing the full significance of this imposed totality. But this totality is that of the state and the commodity, the intertwining rule of wealth and power. And it imposes itself precisely by breaking our lives down into separate pieces, unrelated moments, alienated fragments. So our tendency to protect ourselves

in this way plays right into its hands. Separated in this way, the incidents, relationships, activities and moments of our lives have no real meaning for us as individuals. So this tendency toward fragmentation is something we need to battle in every moment.

But to fight it, we need to try to understand how it operates on a concrete level. It is the reality of our daily lives, the endless parade of meaningless interactions and activities in which we are forced to participate: working, paying rent, buying and selling, paying bills, dealing with the presence of cops, bureaucrats, bosses, etc., etc. All of this together makes us dependent on the totality of the social order and at the same time transforms us into atoms that mainly seem to bump into each other randomly due to circumstances beyond our control in the meaningless, ceaseless movement of commerce. In the United States, an ideology has grown around this that absurdly goes by the name of “rugged individualism”. The absurdity is dual. First of all this ideology defines “individuality” precisely in terms of this atomized existence in which each one is nothing more than a cipher, equal to and separate from every one else in their nothingness. Secondly, these atomized beings that are the “individuals” of this ideology are made absolutely dependent by a social order that defines their lives as a competition for the same petty ends, thus guaranteeing their ongoing identity and separation. There is certainly nothing rugged in such abject dependence. The aspect of social fragmentation that this ideology seeks to justify – atomization – may play a major part in our inability to create real projects of affinity together that spring from our own lives, particularly if its ideological justification has penetrated into our own ways of conceiving individuality.

It seems to me that we still often perceive things in a fragmented and atomized manner. We look at work, the payment of rent, buying and selling, etc. as separate problems and come up with solutions such as work avoidance, squatting, shoplifting and dumpster diving, etc. (all fine things to do, mind you, but only in a context of the total conscious creation of our lives in revolt against this world). Since we perceive the problem in a fragmented manner, we look upon fragmented, often solitary, activities as solutions, and our practice remains one of getting by within this society. So there needs to be something deeper behind our projects, something that recognizes the totality of the enemy we face and the totality of what we desire on a

enemies of this order. This conflict is deeply ingrained in our daily lives, in the variety of activities that are imposed on us by the rule of survival over life. So this conflict is central to determining our strategy. Since part of our goal is to grasp our lives back here and now, our means need to embody this. In other words, any means that involves surrendering our grasp on our lives (such as voting) is already a failure. But this is where it becomes necessary to distinguish what activities constitute such a surrender (voting, litigation, petitioning, bargaining with the enemy) and which can be incorporated into the reappropriation of one’s life and the attack against institutions of domination (for example, a temporary job, certain sorts of scams, etc., that give one access to certain resources, information and skills that are of use in one’s subversive activity). And our accomplices could be anyone, regardless of whether they have a conscious anarchist critique or not, who uses means in their specific battles against what immediately dominates and oppresses them that correspond to our own – means through which they are actively grasping their lives and struggles as their own immediately. And our complicity would last only as long as they used such means, ending the moment that they give up their autonomy or begin to bargain with their rulers.

Having established this basis, here are a few areas for discussing strategy:

Survival vs. the fullness of life – Strategies for continually overturning the dominance of survival over our lives, for making our projects and desires determine how we deal with survival to the greatest extent possible – for example, when one needs to take a job, using it against the institution of work and the economy through theft, giving things away, sabotage, using it as a free school to pick up skills for one’s own projects, always seeing it as a temporary means to ends of one’s own and being prepared to quit as soon as one’s desire requires it.

Solidarity – There are two distinct aspects to this. 1) There are many flare-ups of social conflict that partially reflect the desire to take back life and destroy domination and that use a methodology like that described above, but without a full conscious critique on the part of the participants. How do we connect our conscious, ongoing conflict with the ruling order to these flare-ups of conflict in a way that fits with our aims, “principles” and methodology? Since evangelism and “moral leadership” conflict with these “principles” by turning us into pawns of a cause that we are trying to promote, we need to think in terms of complicity and straightforwardness. 2) Then there are the times when the enemy grabs some of our comrades and accomplices and locks

methodology reflects both the ultimate aim and the immediate desire of anarchist revolutionary practice.

But if we are to consider this practice as a game, it is necessary to understand what type of game this is. We are not dealing with a game in which two (or more) opponents are competing against each other in an effort to achieve the same goal. In such a game, there could be room for compromise and negotiation. On the contrary, the subversive game is a conflict between two absolutely opposed aims, the aim of dominating everything and the aim of putting an end to all domination. Ultimately, the only way this game could be won is through one side completely destroying the other. Thus, there is no place for compromise or negotiation, especially not for the anarchists who are clearly in a position of weakness where to “compromise” would, in fact, be to give up ground.

The aims, principles, methodology and understanding of the nature of the battle at hand describe the anarchist revolutionary game. As with any game, it is from this basis that we develop strategy and tactics. Without such a basis, talk of strategy and tactics is just so much babble. While tactics are something we can only talk about in the specific contexts of deciding what moves to make at specific points, it is possible to speak in a more general way about strategy.

Strategy is the question of how to go about reaching one’s goals. This requires an awareness of a certain factors. First of all what is the context in which one is trying to achieve these goals? What relationship do the goals have with the context? What means are available for achieving these goals? Who might act as accomplices in this endeavor? These questions take on an interesting twist for anarchists, because our goal (the eradication of all domination) is not just something we want for a distant future. Not being good christians, we aren’t interested in sacrificing ourselves for future generations. Rather, we want to experience this goal immediately in our lives and in our battle against the ruling order. So we need to examine these questions in terms of this dual aspect of our goal. The question of context involves analyzing the broader global context, the nature of the ruling institutions, the broader tendencies that are developing and the potential points of weakness in the ruling order and the areas for potential rupture. It also involves examining the immediate context of our lives, our voluntary and involuntary relationships and encounters, the immediate terrains that we traverse, our immediate projects and so on. The relationship between what we are striving for and the general context of this social order is one of total conflict. Because we are striving not only to destroy domination, but also to live immediately against it, we are

concrete level. This begins with grasping our lives as a *totality* of our own. But what does this mean?

From Stirner, we get the clue that each of us must be our own basis, and from Vaneigem we get the further clue that this requires a “reversal of perspective”, in other words, turning around to look at the world from a new perspective – our own. But these clues remain useless if we continue to conceive of individuality in the way this society does, as something abstract and isolated, as some mystical “nature” within each of us, completely separated from the relationships that make up our lives. If we see individuality in this way, we will not be able to grasp the totality of our lives, because we will lose all the relationships, interactions and historical and social realities that weave into who we are and who we are becoming. The concept of individuality that this society imposes stands as a crystalline and pure object outside of all relationships, but real concrete individuality is, in fact, a relationship. I become who and what I am in relation to Esther, Dave, Tiger, Susannah, Mary, Ivy, Anais, Membrane, Brendan, Brandon, Avram, Mandy, the woman at the coffee shop, the preacher in the church my parents made me attend, my parents themselves, the cops, the state, the economy, the technological apparatus, etc., etc. None of these relationships *determines* who I am, but all play a role in how I create who I am. A relationship is not a crystalline statue. It is an activity, a movement in course. And so this is also the nature of individuality. I do not want to be misunderstood – my individuality is not ever imperfect or partial. It is always whole, but that whole is a *movement* – a dance, if you will, with others – and is therefore never *finished*. Its end could only be in death.

Thus, I could say that my individuality is a dialectic between myself as a being who desires and acts and the world (including all the personal and social relationships I am involved in directly or indirectly). Realizing this dialectic on a practical level – the reversal of perspective – means looking upon all these relationships either as enhancements of myself, thus worthy of encouraging and strengthening, or as obstacles in my way, which I will strive to remove from my life, destroying them if necessary. The totality of this society acts to bury the awareness of this dialectic. By attaching individuality to sacred (i.e., private or collectively “owned”) property (as an identity bought both figuratively through competition for prestige and literally as identifying commodities),

this society places it outside of us as human beings and so undermines our awareness of the dialectic between ourselves and the world around us. As sacred property, individuality is not our activity, but a thing outside of us which we must purchase, which means we must competitively strive for it. But as I indicated above, this competition atomizes and homogenizes us, thus completely undermining true individuality.

It might be easier to understand the difference between the conception of individuality as property and that of individuality as relational activity by looking at the trait of strength. In this society, strength is a kind of private property. It is the individual's capacity for defense, for armoring her or himself, for standing alone against the world. As such, it is limited and measurable, and therefore easily depleted. This conception can create some twisted dynamics between individuals. People often seem quite willing to nurture the *weakness* of others, offering a kind of personal charity that maintains the other in their weak state and maintains the nurturer's role as the strong provider. Of course, such relationships are two-way, and the process is largely unconscious. So there is no use in trying to place blame. Nonetheless, such relationships maintain the private ownership of strength for the one providing the "nurturing". And if strength is indeed private property, if it is simply one's capacity to withstand external attacks and to stand alone against the world, it makes sense to act this way. While one can indeed be another's hero, using one's own carefully guarded strength to protect them, one can never truly act as their comrade or accomplice, breaking down the boundaries between individual strengths so that they can intertwine with and enhance each other. Since anarchists desire a different social reality, we need to develop a different conception of strength, one that is based on the refusal of atomization, on the discovery of the enjoyment and wealth that we can find in each other. This means recognizing that strength is not a commodity in limited supply for which we are competing, but is rather something that increases when shared. It is not a question of self-defense and standing alone against the world, but rather of our capacity to realize our desires within the world in relation with others. In this sense my strength is indeed my own, but not as private property with its boundaries; rather it is my individual capacity that perpetually challenges and expands itself. As such it is

Here is where anarchist "principles" – the "rules" of the game – come in. The refusal to choose masters, promote laws, go to the negotiating table with the enemy, etc. are based on the desire to make our lives our own here and now, to play this game in a way that gives us joy immediately. So we choose these "rules" not out of a sense of moral duty nor because they are the most efficient way for achieving our goals, but rather for the joy we get from living on these terms.

In this light, we can also understand why in the area in which compromise is most forcefully imposed on us – the realm of survival in a world based upon economic relationships, which always opposes the fullness of life – we will choose whatever methods are necessary to keep us alive (how else could we play this game). But we will do what necessity imposes on us in these situations (work, theft, scamming, etc.) as temporary measures for sustaining our capacity to steal back our lives and fight for the world we desire, maintaining our defiance in the face of this imposition. This is, in fact, one aspect of the subversive game in practice, twisting the impositions of this world against it.

Here, I feel it would be good to draw a distinction between the outlaw and the anarchist who is playing the game of subversion. Of course, every anarchist is to some extent an outlaw, since we all reject the idea that we should determine our activity on the basis of laws. But most outlaws are not playing the subversive game. Rather they are centered on the much more immediate game of outwitting the forces of order without seeking to destroy them. For the anarchist revolutionary outlaw, this immediate game is simply a small part of a much greater game. She is making a much bigger wager than that of the immediate "crime". He is grasping his life now in order to use it to grasp the world.

So this game combines the goal of destroying the ruling order so that we can create a world free of all domination with the desire to grasp our lives here and now, creating them as far as possible on our own terms. This points to a methodology of practice, a series of means that reflect our immediate desire to live our lives on our own terms. This methodology can be summarized as follows: 1) direct action (acting on our own toward what we desire rather than delegating action to a representative); 2) autonomy (refusal to delegate decision-making to any organizational body; organization only as coordination of activities in specific projects and conflicts); 3) permanent conflict (ongoing battle toward our end without any compromise); 4) attack (no mediation, pacification or sacrifice; not limiting ourselves to mere defense or resistance, but aiming for the destruction of the enemy). This

Play Fiercely!
Our Lives Are at Stake!
***Anarchist Practice
as a Game of Subversion***

When I first encountered anarchist ideas in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was quite common to talk about play and the subversive game, thanks to the influence of the Situationist International and better aspects of the counterculture. There is a lot to be drawn from thinking of our practice on these terms. In particular, I think that looking at anarchist revolutionary practice as a subversive game is a fruitful way of understanding anarchist aims, principles and methodologies as a basis for developing our strategies and tactics.

The thing that has distinguished anarchism from other conceptions of radical transformation is that anarchists have generally considered their ideas to be something to live here and now as much as possible as well as goals to be realized on a global scale. While there have certainly been anarchists who have chosen to turn their perspective into mere politics, the idea of living anarchy immediately gives anarchism a scope that goes far beyond such meager visions, opening it to the whole of life.

This aspect of anarchism is what makes anarchist practice resemble a game. Let me explain. A game could be described as an attempt to achieve a specific aim using only those means that fit certain conditions accepted by those involved for the enjoyment they find in following these conditions, even though they may lower efficiency. The aim of anarchist practice would be to achieve a world free of all domination, without state, economy or the myriad of institutions through which our current existence is defined. I cannot claim to know what the most efficient way to get there would be. From an anarchist point of view, there has not yet been a successful revolution, so we have no models for efficiency. But those who desire this end, not out of a sense of duty as a moral cause, but rather as a reflection on a grand scale of what they want immediately, for their own lives, petty calculations of efficiency in achieving this end are hardly a priority. I know that I would rather attempt to achieve this end in a way that gives me the immediate joy of beginning to take back my life here and now in defiance of the social order I aim to destroy.

not weakened, but expanded when I combine it with that of others whose aims intersect with mine.

Recognizing individuality as a relational, dialectic movement, rejecting the idea that strength – and similar traits such as love, freedom, etc. - is limited private property to be held in reserve and protected, it becomes clear that grasping one's life in its totality in order to fight against this society means grasping all the relationships that make up one's life. Of course, this is never a finished task. The social reality that surrounds us perpetually intrudes and imposes itself. So this is something we can only do in ongoing revolt against this society. But the ongoing battle to grasp one's life requires a high level of awareness. We need to examine each and every relationship we participate in, not moralistically, but to determine whether it is helping us practically to build the life together we desire. Since we are not looking for "purer" ways to *survive*, but are rather striving to grasp our lives as a totality we create, it may be that the sorts of projects we decide to carry on against this society can be accomplished more readily if we have a steady residence – and in the present social context this may mean paying rent or buying a house. We may need money or specific tools to carry out our projects and may use a job, disability or other welfare bureaucracies to get these things. There is no use in lamenting or moralizing about this. What is important is to know precisely why we make the choices we do in terms of how we are desiring to create our lives and our projects of revolt.

But this brings us back to the area of our relationships with each other. If the lives we wish to create are lives together, if we want to build comradeship, practical affinity and mutuality, then we need to communicate in a straightforward manner so that we can make intelligent choices. This goes against everything this society instills in us. Trained to view everyone as a rival, we build up unconscious defenses. Thus, we have a tendency to use manipulation rather than straightforward communication, to dance around each other rather than with each other. If supposed comrades and accomplices constantly dance around each other, unconsciously manipulating each other in order to get what they want, no one will ever be able to make intelligent choices, since all of our choices will be founded on illusion. Yet this is how we are taught to relate – it is the basis of negotiation and compromise. But how can practical affinity, comradeship, complicity and mutuality ever come from this? We

frequently have to deceive and lie to our *enemy* – the power structure and its lackeys – but since we are striving to create life together in a different way, we can't relate to each other like this. To build affinity and mutuality, we need to be clear with each other about our needs, desires, capacities, aspirations, dreams and what we are willing to offer each other in the mutual realization of these things. Lives, strengths, struggles and projects can only intertwine in a mutually beneficial way when everyone involved is straightforward about their aims and desires, and thus provides a real basis for affinity.

Revolution is not just a bunch of atomized ciphers throwing themselves against the walls of society; it is individuals, discovering themselves as such, coming together against a common enemy, finding ways to intertwine ongoing struggles. The history of insurrection shows this to be true even where there is no evidence that potential for this awareness existed before the uprising. Those of us with a conscious desire for a different world need to be willing to make an effort to relate differently now. This means developing *practical* relationships of affinity. Affinity is too often looked upon as something abstract: we have similar ideas, therefore we have affinity. But if we cannot transform these shared ideas into concrete projects, into a real intertwining of lives and struggles in a focused manner, then our supposed affinity is just another meaningless spook haunting our heads. Thus, we need to recognize our strength in each other, and put effort into each other for *mutual strengthening*, rather than offering charity to each other and nurturing weakness. To me, this is where Stirner's union of egoists and Kropotkin's mutual aid come together.

So if we want to grasp our lives in their totality to enjoy them fully and make them weapons against the totality of this society, we need to understand how to relate in ways that enhance each one's individuality. In this light we should consider a few things: What is *practical* affinity? Isn't it a real knowledge of each others' ideas, dreams, desires, capacities, aspirations and needs that permits us to come together on a projectual basis, intertwining our rebellions? And this requires us to talk with each other without hidden agendas. What is comradeship? Isn't it the willingness to have each others' backs in a practical way, to wager ourselves on our comrades, because they are our wealth, our joy in life? What is complicity? Isn't it the recognition of a specific intertwining of projects where it

what moves me to publish Willful Disobedience. But it calls for other projects as well. Taking back space – whether for an evening or on a more permanent basis – for meeting and discussion, creating situations where real knowledge of each other can be discovered and developed, is essential. And this cannot be restricted to those who call themselves anarchists. Our accomplices may be found anywhere among the exploited, where there are people fed up with their existence who have no faith left in the current social order. For this reason, discovering ways to appropriate public spaces for face-to-face interactions is essential to the development of a projectual practice. But discussion in this case is not aimed essentially at discovering a “common ground” among all concerned. It is rather aimed at discovering specific affinities. Therefore, discussion must be a frank, clear expression of one's projects and aims, one's dreams and desires.

In short, anarchist projectuality is the practical recognition in one's life that anarchy is not just an aim for the distant future, an ideal that we hope to experience in a far away utopia. Much more essentially, it is a way of confronting life and struggle, a way that puts us at odds with the world as it is. It is grasping our own lives as a weapon and as a stake to be played against the existence that has been imposed on us. When the intensity of our passion for freedom and our desire to make our lives our own pushes us to live in a different manner, all the tools and methods offered by this world cease to be appealing, because all that they can do is adjust the machine that controls our lives. When we make the choice to cease to be a cog, when we make the choice to break the machine rather than continuing to adjust it, passivity ceases and projectuality begins.

boards, proposals for stricter legislative control of police activity, etc. Neither of these methodologies, in fact, questions policing as such. The programmatic methodology simply calls for policing to become the activity of society as a whole carried out in a self-managed manner, rather than the task of a specialized group. The pragmatic, circumstantial approach actually amounts to policing the police, and so increases the level of policing in society. An anarchist projectual approach would start from the absolute rejection of policing as such. The problem with the police system is not that it is a system separate from the rest of society, nor that it falls into excesses and atrocities (as significant as these are). The problem with the police system is inherent to what it is: a system for controlling or suppressing “anti-social” behavior, i.e., for conforming individuals to the needs of society. Thus, the question in play is that of how to destroy the police system in its totality. This is the starting point for developing specific actions against police activity. Clear connections have to be made between every branch of the system of social control. We need to make connections between prison struggles and the struggles of the exploited where they live (including the necessity of illegality as a way of surviving with some dignity in this world). We need to clarify the connections between the police system, the legal system, the prison system, the war machine – in other words between every aspect of the system of control through which the power of capital and the state is maintained. This does not mean that every action and statement would have to explicitly express a full critique, but rather that this critique would be implicit in the methodology used. Thus, our methodology would be one of autonomous direct action and attack. The tools of policing surround us everywhere. The targets are not hard to find. Consider, for example, the proliferation of video cameras throughout the social terrain...

But this is simply an example to clarify matters. Anarchist projectuality is, in fact, a confrontation with existence “at daggers drawn” as one comrade so beautifully expressed it, a way of facing life. But since human life is a life with others, the reappropriation of life here and now must also mean the reappropriation of our life together. It means developing relations of affinity, finding the accomplices for carrying out our projects on our terms. And since the very point of projectuality is to free ourselves here and now from the passivity that this society imposes on us, we cannot simply wait for chance to bring these people into our paths. This point is particularly important in the present era, when public space is becoming increasingly monitored, privatized or placed under state control, making chance meetings of any significance increasingly impossible. This desire to find accomplices is

makes sense to join forces to accomplish a specific aim – the recognition on the immediate level of struggles and rebellions coming together? And what is mutuality? Isn't it a reciprocity that does not weigh or measure, in which all involved recognize each other as sources of strength, enjoyment, and the only kind of wealth that matters – the fullness of life? Brought down to the practical level we need to ask ourselves: Are our relationships our own creation, or the product of unconscious habits instilled by this society? Are they really mutually strengthening and expanding? Are we creating and enhancing the wealth of life and joy in each other? Are we multiplying our ferocity against this authoritarian, money-based civilization by intertwining our lives and struggles? If not, we should question why we have any sort of relationship. Because the point is not that we owe something to each other. We don't. The idea of debt is part of the economic framework of this society. The point is that the best way to fully enjoy and grasp our lives and to fight against this society is to make every moment, every activity and every relationship significant in the creation of a unitary life to the extent that we are able. And until we destroy the society that imposes its reality on us at every moment, this will be a constant struggle and challenge, requiring a high level of awareness and mutual effort.

I would like to discuss all this more with people who are willing to put a concerted effort into overcoming the various ways of thinking and acting that spring from the fragmentation and atomization this society imposes, who are willing to put in the effort to become ongoing creators of their lives, relationships and struggles *together*, who are ready to pursue ongoing projects of revolt together, projects aimed immediately at attacking specific factors of this society that stand in our way here and now and that expose the nature of this society in its totality.

ON PROJECTUALITY

“Anarchism... is a way of conceiving life, and life... is not something definitive: it is a stake we must play day after day. When we wake up in the morning and put our feet on the ground we must have a good reason for getting up. If we don't it makes no difference whether we are anarchists or not... And to have a good reason we must know what we want to do...”

—Alfredo M. Bonanno

Perhaps one of the most difficult concepts that I have tried to express in Willful Disobedience is that of anarchist projectuality. The difficulty in expressing this concept does not merely stem from the fact that the word is unusual. Far more significant is the fact that the concept itself stands in total opposition to the way in which this social order trains us to exist.

In this society, we are taught to view life as something that happens to us, something that exists outside of us, into which we are thrown. We are not, however, told that this is the result of a process of dispossession, and so this alienation appears to be natural, an inevitable consequence of being alive. When life is perceived in this way, the vast majority of people simply deal with circumstances as they come along, for the most part simply accepting their lot, occasionally protesting specific situations, but in precisely those ways that acceptance of a pre-determined, alienated existence permits. A few people take a more managerial approach to this alienated existence. Rather than simply dealing with circumstances as they come, they seek to reform alienated existence along programmatic lines, creating blueprints for a modified existence, but one that is still determined in advance into which individuals must be fitted.

One can find examples of both of these tendencies within the anarchist movement. The first tendency can be seen in those anarchists who conceive of revolution as an event that will hopefully eventually happen to them when the masses arise, and who in the meantime face their life with a kind of pragmatic, circumstantial immediatism. A principled anarchist practice is considered “impossible” and is sacrificed to the amelioration of immediate conditions “by any means necessary” – including litigation, petition to the authorities, the promotion of legislation and so on. The second tendency manifests in such programmatic perspectives as platformism, libertarian

municipalism and anarcho-syndicalism. These perspectives tend to reduce revolution to a question of how the economic, political and social institutions that control our lives are to be managed. Reflecting the methods by which people cope with alienated existence, neither of these methods actually challenges such an existence.

Anarchist projectuality starts with the decision to reappropriate life here and now. It, therefore, immediately and forcefully exposes and challenges the process of dispossession that this society imposes and acts to destroy all the institutions of domination and exploitation. This decision is not based on whether this reappropriation is presently possibly or not, but on the recognition that it is the absolutely necessary first step for opening possibilities for the total transformation of existence. Thus when I speak of anarchist projectuality, I am speaking of a way of facing life and struggle in which the active refusal of alienated existence and the reappropriation of life are not future aims, but are one's present method for acting in the world.

Anarchist projectuality cannot exist as a program. Programs are based on the idea of social life as a thing separated from the individuals that make it up. They define how life is to be and strive to make individuals fit into this definition. For this reason, programs have little capacity for dealing with the realities of everyday life and tend to confront the circumstances of living in a ritualized and formalized manner. Anarchist projectuality exists instead as a consciously lived tension toward freedom, as an ongoing daily struggle to discover and create the ways to determine one's existence with others in uncompromising opposition to all domination and exploitation.

So anarchist projectuality does confront the immediate circumstances of an alienated daily existence, but refuses the circumstantial pragmatism of “by any means necessary”, instead creating means that already carry the ends within themselves. To clarify what I mean, I will give a hypothetical example. Let's take the problem of the police. We all know that the police intrude upon the lives of all of the exploited. It is not a problem that can be ignored. And, of course, as anarchists, we want the destruction of the police system in its totality. A programmatic approach to this would tend to start from the idea that we must determine the essential useful tasks that police supposedly carry out (controlling or suppressing “anti-social” behavior, for example). Then we must try to create self-managed methods for carrying out these tasks without the police, rendering them unnecessary. A pragmatic, circumstantial approach would simply examine all the excesses and atrocities of the police and seek to find ways of ameliorating those atrocities – through lawsuits, the setting up of civilian police review