

A Free World

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The Foundational Baseline

A free world **cannot** begin with a finished blueprint. The attempt to design one system for everyone and then impose it from above would reproduce the very structure that freedom is meant to overcome.

The proper starting point is therefore not a *prescribed* model of society, but a framework for evaluating relationships, institutions, and methods of change.

What this framework seeks to foster is **autonomy**: the capacity to shape your own life without being placed under structures that enable others to oppress you.

Our objective is structural clarity:

What is the true source of the world's problems?

The Incentive Structure

To answer this, we must first understand the **incentive structure**.

An **incentive** is any condition that gives a person or group a reason to act.

The first incentive that likely comes to mind is *money*, but money is only one form. People are also motivated by security, belonging, recognition, reciprocity, self-respect, creativity, and compassion.

An **incentive structure** is the machinery of rewards, punishments, risks, opportunities, and constraints that channels behavior by making some actions advantageous and others costly. It describes what a system **encourages in practice**, regardless of what its rules or those controlling it claim to value.

Reward System

Centralized power structures reward the pursuit of power, money, and control. They disproportionately reward those most willing to seek power because **centralized control** gives them greater leverage over everyone else. ☒

People call this “corruption,” but the outcome is *not separate from the system*. Those who exploit centralized power are rewarded by it, while the institutions they control protect them from accountability.

The incentive structure comes first as the deeper foundation. Hierarchy crystallizes where **concentrated power is rewarded** and refusal is costly, then preserves the structure that produced it.

Hierarchy

Hierarchy is a pyramidal organization that subordinates one individual or collective body to another in an exploitative relationship. It is a ranked organization in which variations in rank correspond to levels of authority (i.e. the right to command those below you & the obligation to obey those above).

In the **political sense**, hierarchy means a social structure of command and obedience. Past incentive structures created existing hierarchies; hierarchy then reshapes those incentives to reproduce itself.

Organization does not become hierarchy merely because roles differ or persist; hierarchy begins when those roles **harden into authority** and an obligation to obey.

Existing conditions make hierarchy possible when command becomes rewarding and refusal costly: control over food, land, security, employment, law, information, or violence gives one party leverage over another.

Hierarchy then formalizes that unequal relationship. It turns temporary leverage into **recognized authority**, durable rank, command, and an obligation to obey.

Once established, however, hierarchy is no longer merely an outcome of incentives—it becomes an **incentive-producing mechanism**. It rewards those who accumulate authority and obey strategically. It punishes refusal, selects personalities suited to command, and reproduces the conditions that justify its continuation.

Understanding incentive structures and hierarchy exposes the power structures that dominate our world and the oppression they produce.

Authority

Authority is a socially legitimized claim that grants one individual or institution the right to command, demands obedience, and backs its commands with force.

Authority is not the same as power. Power is the capacity to act, persuade, resist, help, or harm. Authority converts power into an entitlement.

Expertise can inform and leadership can propose direction, but neither gives anyone the right to rule. Authority begins when guidance becomes jurisdiction and *refusal becomes disobedience*.

Authority does not need to use force constantly because the threat has already been built into the institution. Those who refuse may lose their income, shelter, status, access, freedom, or eventually face violence.

This is what allows authority to appear peaceful. The command becomes normal, obedience becomes expected, and punishment becomes the legitimate enforcement of order. Authority gives hierarchy its **social legitimacy** and allows domination to continue without exposing its violence at every moment. ☒

Government

Government is a specific institutional form of hierarchy: a centralized organization that claims authority over an entire population and territory, claims a monopoly on legitimate violence, creates binding laws, extracts taxation, and enforces compliance through courts, police, prisons, and military force.

The argument that humans are too violent and untrustworthy to live without rulers collapses under its own logic. Rulers are the same flawed humans, except they control armies, prisons, surveillance, taxation, and law. Concentrated power does not restrain the worst of humanity. It gives it greater reach and protects it from accountability.

If human beings are dangerous, the answer is not to give a small number of them power, authority, and control over millions. Distrust is an argument for decentralizing and distributing power so that no individual or institution can impose its will on huge swaths of the population.

Checks on rulers can restrain them, but their force comes from the **capacity to challenge power**, not from the ruler's **entitlement to obedience**. A standing right to command adds a danger: those being challenged can punish refusal and control the resources needed to oppose them.

Distributed power risks fragmentation and failures of cooperation; authority risks imposing its failures on everyone and protecting them from correction. Rejecting authority means retaining coordination and restraint without granting anyone a standing claim over those who must bear their failures.

The idea of a free world is often dismissed as utopian. Yet the current system rests on the utopian assumption that humans can be trusted to have power, authority, and control over other humans. The truly utopian assumption is that fallible people can be trusted to control entire populations.

The problem is not merely that the wrong person is currently sitting on the throne. The problem is that there is **a throne at all**.

Taxation

Coercion is the use or threat of force, punishment, or deprivation to make someone act against their will or prevent them from acting freely.

Taxation is the coercive extraction of resources under threat of punishment.

Government demands a portion of what people earn, own, buy, or transfer. Refusal does not end the relationship. It triggers penalties backed by government enforcement.

This is what separates taxation from voluntary exchange. A voluntary exchange allows either party to walk away. Taxation does not.

Taxation also **separates decision from cost**. Government can spend resources without those making the decision bearing the full cost themselves because that cost can be distributed across a population that cannot freely withdraw its support.

War exposes this mechanism clearly. Those who authorize war do not personally finance its full cost. Government extracts the resources from millions of people, including those who oppose the war itself, allowing a small number of decision-makers to command resources for violence without requiring the consent of those forced to provide them.

Government does not generate these resources independently of the population it governs. Taxation gives it continuous access to the products of people's labor *without requiring continuous consent*. ☒

The issue is therefore deeper than the amount being taxed. Taxation establishes the principle that an institution may claim part of another person's labor without requiring their consent.

Balance of Power

A **balance of power** is a condition in which power is sufficiently distributed so that no individual or institution can impose its will on others without facing meaningful resistance, alternatives, or costs.

Balance does not mean that everyone possesses identical strength, resources, knowledge, or influence. These differences do not need to disappear. The issue is whether those differences can become large enough to make refusal meaningless and harden into authority.

Hierarchy becomes possible when one party controls enough food, land, security, employment, information, resources, or force to make compliance safer than refusal. A balance of power reverses this incentive. When people retain the capacity to resist, withdraw, reorganize, and meet their needs through alternatives, domination becomes harder to establish and more costly to maintain.

A free world therefore does not depend on people being inherently good or trustworthy. It depends on creating conditions where no one has enough concentrated power to rule everyone else. The incentive to exploit may remain, but the capacity to exploit can be constrained by the power of others to **resist**. ☐

This requires decentralizing and distributing power back toward individuals and freely associated groups. Autonomy and self sufficiency are important because **dependence creates leverage**. If one institution controls the necessities of life, the freedom to refuse it becomes largely symbolic.

Self sufficiency does **not** mean isolation. People can remain deeply interdependent while maintaining many different sources of food, energy, knowledge, communication, support, and cooperation. The more alternatives exist, the harder it becomes for any one institution to make itself indispensable enough to command everyone else.

A balance of power therefore operates in two directions at once. It **dissolves existing hierarchy** by reducing the dependencies and concentrations of power that sustain it, while **resisting the return of hierarchy** by keeping power distributed, alternatives available, and refusal possible.

There is no guarantee that new concentrations of power will never emerge. Such a guarantee would require another authority powerful enough to enforce it. The objective is instead to prevent concentrations of power from becoming permanent and inescapable.

Power may shift, gather, and disperse. What matters is that it remains **contestable**.

An indispensable service does not require an irreplaceable ruler. Even where the service itself cannot be duplicated, control can remain replaceable if the equipment, knowledge, supplies, and support needed to run it remain accessible beyond any one provider. This allows control to change without interrupting what people need.

Dependable protection requires durable defensive capacity, **not** a permanent right to command. That capacity can remain distributed across independent associations so that no protector controls the support needed to resist it.

A standing right to command changes the relationship: refusal can become grounds for punishment in itself, allowing the protector to act against resistance to its own demands. Protection becomes less contestable when the protector also controls the means of challenging it.

A healthy balance of power creates a centrifugal pressure against concentration: as power gathers in one place, alternatives, competition, resistance, and new associations create pressures that push it back outward.

A durable balance of power is reinforced through **education** that spreads knowledge and capability, **opportunity** that keeps alternatives open, and **deterrence** that raises the cost of domination. When conflict occurs, **arbitration, rehabilitation, restoration, and disassociation** provide ways to address harm and disagreement without creating a permanent right to command.

The purpose is not merely to constrain domination, but to unleash human potential and the indomitable capacity of people to *resist being reduced to obedience*.

A free world remains possible only where a balance of power preserves autonomy and prevents any individual or institution from imposing its will on others at a systemic level.

Spontaneous Order

Spontaneous order is a significant coordinating force in which decentralized negotiations, exchanges, and entrepreneurship converge to produce large-scale coordination without, or beyond the capacity of, any deliberate plan or explicit common blueprint for social or economic development.

Much of the order around us already develops this way. No one designed language as a complete system. It emerged through countless people communicating, adapting words, creating conventions, and responding to one another over generations. The internet developed through deliberate projects and shared protocols, yet no single planner designed the total system it became.

At the center of spontaneous order is **equilibrium**. Equilibrium does not mean a fixed or motionless state. It is a continually shifting balance produced as different pressures act on one another and the system adjusts.

Natural, social, and socioeconomic systems are shaped by these pressures. Changes in one part produce consequences elsewhere, which generate further responses throughout the system. Scarcity, abundance, incentives, cooperation, conflict, demand, and available alternatives all push behavior in different directions. The incentive structure shapes the direction of this adjustment by determining which behaviors are rewarded, discouraged, or made costly. Order emerges from the interaction between these forces rather than from one force controlling the whole.

This process operates through **feedback**. People act, experience consequences, observe one another, and adjust. Each response creates new information that influences what happens next. Through repeated adjustment, local interactions can converge into coherent patterns that no individual designed or fully understands.

When damage can be hidden or shifted onto others, feedback can reward exploitation instead of cooperation. Spontaneous order does not *inherently* produce desirable outcomes; the incentive structure shapes what emerges.

Centralized control interferes with this process when it attempts to replace **distributed feedback** with a prescribed outcome. Knowledge is scattered among the people actually interacting with changing conditions, much of it local, practical, and temporary. As scale and complexity increase, a central hierarchy must process more information across greater distances, making it increasingly difficult for a small number of decision-makers to respond to the whole system as effectively as the people responding directly within it.

Spontaneous order allows complexity to be handled through many interacting points of knowledge and adjustment. Coordination emerges from the accumulated responses of the system itself. Because adaptation does not depend entirely on centralized coordination, disturbances can be absorbed locally, alternatives can develop, and the wider structure can continue reorganizing around failure.

The result is **emergent order**: large-scale coordination produced through the continuous interaction of smaller parts. Order is not something placed over the system. It is something the system produces as its parts respond to one another and move toward a shifting equilibrium.

Order cannot simply be prescribed by law. Order is an **emergent outcome** of people choosing to cooperate. If people are incentivized to conflict, law alone cannot make them cooperate. Building a free world is about creating the incentives that make cooperation and order possible.

Networks

A **network** is a structure of connected individuals or groups that can communicate, coordinate, and act directly without routing every interaction through a central authority.

Hierarchies concentrate information and decision-making through a limited number of central points. Networks distribute them. Coordination can develop from the grassroots as people respond directly to changing conditions, exchange information, and organize around practical needs.

One mechanism behind this is **stigmergy**: actions leave signals that guide further actions. ☐ People respond to what others have already done, allowing complex coordination to emerge and spread without a central planner directing every step.

The **rhizome** is an immensely powerful structure for this reason. Unlike a tree organized around a central trunk, a rhizome spreads laterally through many interconnected roots and shoots. It branches, reconnects, reproduces, and continues growing when parts are damaged. No single point controls or contains the whole.

A network is not decentralized merely because it lacks a formal hierarchy; if **one node becomes indispensable**, dependence can recreate the leverage hierarchy requires. That dependence can also emerge when many nodes rely on the same suppliers, resources, information, or gatekeepers, or when coordination itself makes an existing network difficult to leave.

This is why real change begins at the grassroots. Change imposed from the top remains dependent on the centralized authority that imposed it. Change that grows from below can spread through countless independent points, compound through their connections, and become increasingly difficult to capture, suppress, or reverse.

Horizontal network structures distribute power while multiple paths remain available and no single node becomes indispensable enough to command the whole.

Distributed networks become resilient through redundancy, alternative paths, and the ability to reorganize around failure. Hierarchy **concentrates failure along with control**. Networks can reorganize through other connections, experiment in parallel, and route around disruption.

Spontaneous order scales through networks: coordination grows from many interacting parts, while the absence of an indispensable point of control makes the whole structure more adaptable, resilient, and difficult to capture.

Free Association

Free association excludes imposed membership, compulsory participation, and any authority that prevents peaceful exit. No group has a claim to an individual's continued participation beyond continuing consent. People remain free to leave, change direction, recombine, and form alternatives as their needs and interests change.

Free association begins with the individual. Joining a relationship, organization, or community does not surrender autonomy to it. **Consent must continue** for as long as participation continues; an agreement made yesterday cannot become a permanent claim over someone tomorrow.

Exit is not meaningful when leaving means losing access to the necessities of life; free association depends on alternatives strong enough to make refusal *practical rather than merely formal*.

Those alternatives must also be **reachable when needed**: somewhere to stay, a way to get there, and care that continues through the change. Shared reserves and arrangements for receiving people can make that possible before a crisis. No one should have to rebuild their means of living alone in order to refuse a provider.

People naturally associate around shared interests, needs, relationships, and goals. These affinities create groups built from actual alignment rather than imposed membership. A person can belong to many different associations at once, each reflecting a different part of their life, without any one of them claiming the whole individual.

Agreement does not need to be universal. People can negotiate, compromise, and peacefully resolve conflicts **case by case**. When their goals move too far apart, they can separate. One association can divide into several, preserve the relationships that still work, abandon those that do not, and recombine in entirely new forms.

This produces an enormous range of possible arrangements. Groups can form, split, overlap, reconnect, and change direction as circumstances change. Instead of forcing incompatible people into one decision, free association allows **different answers to exist at the same time**. ☒ **Multiplicity** emerges through the unlimited diversity of people and their capacity to compose different forms of association. Pluralism becomes a structural consequence of freedom rather than something granted from above.

This also changes the meaning of community. Sharing a territory does not make hundreds of thousands or millions of strangers one meaningful social body. Community grows from relationships, familiarity, shared purpose, proximity, and mutual concern. Strong local associations can remain closely connected to wider networks without being absorbed into a single authority.

Scale therefore does not require hierarchy. Small associations can connect through horizontal, overlapping networks, cooperating where their interests meet while remaining independent elsewhere. Information, resources, knowledge, and coordination can move across these connections without passing through a central command structure.

Such networks remain open because participation is permissionless. People can propose, experiment, imitate what works, alter it, or create an alternative without waiting for approval from above. Successful forms spread through voluntary adoption. Failed forms can disappear without becoming compulsory failures imposed on everyone else.

The **freedom to exit** is what keeps these relationships from hardening into rule. Exit may mean leaving completely, reducing participation, changing partners, forming a parallel association, or simply refusing an arrangement that no longer works. Where peaceful separation is blocked and participation becomes compulsory, association has ceased to be free.

Free association does not promise that every conflict will receive a clean resolution. People can leave an association without escaping responsibility for harms they caused or commitments they freely made and others reasonably relied on. Responsibility for a commitment does not automatically justify forcing someone to fulfill it. It remains tied to the particular harm or commitment; it cannot become ownership of the person or a general obligation to obey.

Refusing cooperation **does not by itself establish coercion**. Using control of necessities to compel obedience, or blocking access to willing alternatives, does.

Where separation cannot stop continuing harm, those affected may defend themselves, seek mediation, or act with others to stop it. A claim of harm does not settle the dispute; protection must remain tied to stopping the particular harm rather than creating a general right to command.

Some problems will remain unresolved rather than creating a permanent authority whose guarantee of resolution depends on the power to compel everyone involved. Claiming to protect others does **not** establish a standing right to command them.

Free association does not prescribe one final organization of society. Its strength lies precisely in leaving that question open. It allows radically free and autonomous people to continually compose their own relationships, creating a social order of countless overlapping associations rather than a single structure with the authority to contain them all.

Mutual Aid

Mutual aid is cooperation through reciprocity: people helping one another because our interests do not have to be in conflict. We all have different needs, abilities, knowledge, resources, and opportunities. By sharing them, both people can become better off than they were before.

Reciprocity does not require repayment from everyone receiving care. For someone who cannot leave or arrange support alone, freedom depends on care not being controlled by one person or relationship.

Overlapping caregivers and independent relationships make abuse easier to challenge and care easier to continue through change. Where a person cannot give informed consent, care should follow their expressed preferences wherever possible and remain limited to their needs. Dependence gives no one ownership of the person.

A free world shifts **away** from zero-sum relationships. Wealth is created by producing **new value** that leaves people better off, not by taking from others. It can be created when cooperation leaves both people with more than they could have produced alone. These win-win relationships become easier as barriers to entry and artificial scarcity are removed, opening more ways for people to provide for themselves and one another.

Reciprocity becomes stronger through repeated relationships. Strong neighborhoods and communities grow out of friendship: people knowing each other, caring about what happens to one another, sharing food, tools, skills, knowledge, shelter, time, and support. When people are no longer strangers to those around them, someone falling into poverty or homelessness is no longer an invisible problem left for a distant institution to manage. Their needs are visible to people who know them and have reasons to care.

These relationships can connect into wider **mutual aid networks**, multiplying what any individual or neighborhood can provide alone. One person has food, another has an unused room, another can repair something, another can teach, grow, build, transport, or care. The more these relationships overlap, the less anyone has to **depend on a single institution** for access to what they need.

Dependable mutual aid also requires maintenance. People have reasons to sustain services they use, care about, or may need later. Continuing provision depends on recurring contributions of labor and resources, shared reserves, and relief for exhausted caregivers or maintainers. During shortage, making needs and available supplies visible allows people to negotiate priorities and seek help beyond the local network. Need cannot create missing resources, but **neither can scarcity establish a right to obedience**.

Mutual aid is **not self-sacrifice**. We flourish when the people around us can flourish. Safer, healthier, freer, more capable people make our own lives safer, richer, and more free. Individual wellbeing and shared wellbeing reinforce one another rather than existing on opposite sides of an equation.

Domination and revenge reproduce the conditions of conflict rather than peace. Mutual aid answers suffering with care, love, and hope while building the material conditions that make suffering less likely to reproduce itself. We create the peaceful world we want to live in by taking the first step to build it: helping one another now, strengthening the relationships around us, and making those relationships strong enough that no one has to face the world alone.

Friendship

A strong community begins with friendship, **not** the abstraction of community. Friendship is personal, deliberate, voluntary, and directly shaped by the people inside it. No larger body has a claim over the relationship simply because two people belong to the same place, group, or cause.

Friends do not need an external authority to prescribe their relationship or force them toward consensus. They decide for themselves how to relate, where their boundaries lie, and when a relationship should change or end. Freedom of association means little without the freedom to disassociate.

Friendship also has a natural limit. It cannot scale into one relationship encompassing everyone, and that is part of its strength. Friendships can remain small while overlapping and connecting outward, allowing cooperation to spread without binding everyone into the same social body.

The aim is to **make friends** rather than build communities. ☒ Let stronger communities emerge from relationships people actually choose.

Nonviolence

Nonviolence is the preferable strategy for building a free world. Most people prefer peaceful conflict resolution, and a peaceful world cannot be created through terror, domination, and revenge and somehow become peaceful afterward. The methods used to build a new world shape the habits, incentives, organizations, and distributions of power that emerge from them.

Political violence can strengthen the structures it is meant to challenge. When people see violence, they become afraid. Fear pushes people toward the institutions that promise protection: police, military, and government. Violence can therefore strengthen the enforcement arms of the very hierarchy being challenged, giving government greater justification for policing, surveillance, repression, and force while turning the wider population against those challenging it.

Government already possesses an **overwhelming advantage in organized violence**. It controls police, militaries, prisons, intelligence systems, weapons, and logistical networks built to enforce its authority. Violence lets government define the terms of the confrontation and play to its greatest strength.

Nonviolence attacks hierarchy from another direction. Direct action, civil disobedience, strikes, refusal, mutual aid, self sufficiency, community building, constructive alternatives, and the withdrawal of participation attack the dependencies that allow centralized institutions to function. Government does not operate through force alone. It depends on people continuing to operate its systems, maintain its infrastructure, fund it, obey it, and accept its authority.

Hope is also political power. The goal is not to terrorize people into a struggle, but to inspire them with the possibility of a peaceful and free world where people can live good lives, pursue their dreams, develop their potential, and help one another. ☐

Hope becomes real through experience. Friendship, mutual aid, autonomy, self sufficiency, gardens, cooperation, direct action, and working alternatives give people fragments of another way of living now. Prefiguration distributes capacity before centralized authority disappears. As people become increasingly capable of meeting their needs through free association, mutual aid, independent knowledge, and alternatives, dependence on centralized institutions begins to fall away.

Violent revolution risks moving in the opposite direction. Destroying an existing government does not necessarily destroy the structure of concentrated power. Armed organizations concentrate weapons, secrecy, command, intelligence, logistics, and operational capacity. If the existing government collapses before power and capacity have been distributed, the organization most capable of violence is also positioned to **fill the resulting power vacuum**. The ruler changes while the structure remains available to be seized.

Nonviolence **does not mean pacifism** or refusing self-defense. Defensive force may be necessary when immediate harm cannot otherwise be stopped. The purpose is to stop domination, not to make force the organizing principle of liberation. Violence remains a last resort.

The capacity for self defense can endure while its use remains *defensive and temporary*. A balance of power keeps defensive capacity distributed and contestable, while free association

prevents temporary force from becoming a permanent structure of authority or a right to command.

Sustained threats require preparation, dependable supplies, shared information, and coordination across associations. People can entrust particular defensive tasks to experienced people without giving them a permanent right to command others. That distinction remains real only while weapons, supplies, and outside support **stay beyond any one group's exclusive control**.

Emergency coordination must remain limited to the task and open to challenge. Distributed defense can still be defeated; permanent command offers no guarantee of survival either.

Freedom should not arrive only after the struggle. It should be recognizable in the way the struggle is lived.

The 3.5% Rule

Systemic change does not require an entire population to rise at once.

Research by Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan found that major nonviolent campaigns seeking regime change, independence, or an end to occupation between 1900 and 2006 succeeded at more than twice the rate of violent campaigns.

The **3.5% rule** emerged from this research: in the original dataset, no nonviolent campaign failed after actively mobilizing at least 3.5% of the population at its peak. It is not a law or a guaranteed threshold. Most successful movements never reached 3.5%, and later research identified an apparent exception.

The importance of the finding is not the number itself. It is what relatively small levels of active participation can reveal about the structure of power.

Government does not operate through police and military force alone. It depends on people throughout society continuing to work, obey, enforce commands, move resources, maintain infrastructure, and accept its authority. Government **depends** on cooperation from far more people than those who actually govern.

As participation and refusal spread, that cooperation becomes less reliable. Workers stop cooperating. Orders go unenforced. Supporters defect. Institutions begin to fail. The balance of power shifts because the structure loses the **human cooperation required to maintain itself**.

Nonviolent movements can draw from a much wider field of participation because resistance does not require everyone to become a soldier. People can strike, boycott, refuse, withdraw support, provide resources, shelter others, or simply stop cooperating.

The lesson of the 3.5% rule is not that exactly 3.5% of a population can force any government to surrender.

It is that transformation does not require *unanimous awakening*.

Direct Action

Direct action means acting on a problem directly instead of asking an authority to solve it for us. Reform delegates change upward. Direct action keeps agency with the people affected.

What we see is not simply corruption. The system follows the incentives and concentrations of power built into it. Replacing representatives may change decisions, but it leaves the machinery of authority intact. Representative politics buries cause and effect beneath layers of bureaucracy: people act, then wait for institutions to decide what happens. Direct action creates change in the *here and now*. People see the result, test it, and build on it.

Direct action is **permissionless**. People do not need authorization from above to cooperate, solve problems, withdraw support, or create alternatives. Change can begin wherever people already have the capacity to act, then spread through the grassroots as others adopt what works.

The grassroots holds power because hierarchy **cannot operate itself**. Institutions depend on people continuing to work, cooperate, obey, and provide the resources that keep them running. A strike exposes this dependence immediately. A general strike can stop large parts of the machinery at once. A wildcat strike shows that workers can exercise collective power without waiting for authorization from the institutions that represent them.

Direct action turns that dependence into leverage. The distinction is between **opposing a structure** and **removing something it requires to function**. Refusal and withdrawal change the relationship itself. The less labor, resources, dependence, and cooperation hierarchy can command, the weaker its position becomes.

Direct action builds. People meet needs themselves and create alternatives that make hierarchy less necessary. Mutual aid, self sufficiency, independent exchange, cooperatives, and parallel institutions move practical capacity back toward the people using it. Wherever people can keep greater control over their own time, labor, resources, and relationships, they can use that capacity to increase autonomy rather than deepen dependence.

The two sides reinforce each other. **Stop the machinery while building alternatives**. Resistance reduces the capacity of hierarchy. Construction reduces dependence on hierarchy.

People can withdraw obedience while sustaining necessary work through direct cooperation with those who depend on it. **Temporary disruption** can create leverage; **sustained withdrawal** from indispensable functions requires replacement routes or continued access. Resistance that starves its own alternatives strengthens the demand for restored command.

Direct action becomes prefiguration because people build a free world through the relationships and institutions they create now, rather than postponing freedom until after some future victory.

No single action has to transform the whole system. ☒ Each successful act can solve something now, increase autonomy, and make further action possible. As these capacities connect and compound from the grassroots, they shift the balance of power.

The Garden

A free world does **not** need to begin **everywhere at once**. It begins wherever people recover the capacity to provide for themselves and one another. Grow food. Learn useful skills. Share tools. Work with people you trust. Support local producers and cooperatives. Begin with something useful that can endure and spread.

The garden is both literal and structural. A garden turns land, knowledge, labor, and cooperation into something people can use directly. A shared workshop gives people somewhere to make and repair what they need. Farmers markets bring growers and buyers into direct exchange. Each shortens the chain between a need and the people able to meet it. The point is not any particular economic model.

Self sufficiency grows stronger through cooperation, not isolation. One person cannot do everything, nor should they need to. People develop different skills, divide labor, exchange what they produce, and help where their abilities are strongest. As gardens **connect** with kitchens, workshops, cooperatives, local producers, and neighborhood services, isolated projects begin forming a **wider network of practical independence**. The more knowledge, tools, and productive capacity people possess themselves, the more choices they have over the relationships on which their lives depend.

Build locally. Know your neighbors. Make friends by doing useful things together. People can see what is missing, what keeps failing, and what others actually need. Problems are easier to address when those experiencing them can communicate directly with those able to help.

These relationships can grow outward **without** growing upward. Different groups can specialize while remaining autonomous, connecting directly where cooperation helps them. No single organization needs to provide everything or control the whole. A dense field of overlapping associations becomes stronger through its differences: many skills, many relationships, many sources, many paths around failure.

What matters is not whether something calls itself alternative. A cooperative that recreates command has changed little. The test is practical: **can people change how the work is done, refuse its terms, or leave without losing their only way to meet a basic need?**

A garden dependent on one water source remains vulnerable there. A workshop dependent on knowledge held by one person is vulnerable in their absence. Skills that can be taught, methods that can be reproduced, tools that can be shared, and supplies available from more than one source make useful work easier to continue without making anyone indispensable.

No clean separation from the existing world is required. Begin with whatever can be moved closer to direct relationships: one source of food, one skill, one tool, one service, one cooperative project, one stronger friendship. Each transfer is small, but it leaves something behind that the next one can build upon. Over time, isolated projects become networks, networks become resilient, and dependence begins to disperse.

A garden does not need permission to become a forest. It grows where there is space, branches where conditions allow, connects with what is already alive, and produces the seeds of further growth. **Build** a free world the same way: locally, directly, peacefully, and from the grassroots outward.

The Window of Opportunity

A free world is built before the revolutionary moment, not after it.

Removing the people who control centralized institutions does not distribute the capacities those institutions once controlled. Food still has to move. People still need clean water, medicine, shelter, communication, transportation, protection, and ways to resolve conflict. If those capacities remain concentrated, whoever restores them fastest **inherits enormous power**.

The decisive work therefore happens before the apparent turning point.

A free society develops gradually through relationships, skills, institutions, and infrastructure that already function beyond centralized command. Mutual aid networks, local food systems, cooperatives, independent communication, distributed energy, repair capacity, open knowledge, care networks, conflict resolution, and decentralized self defense transfer practical capacity away from centralized institutions and into the hands of the people who depend on it.

This is the strategic meaning of **prefiguration**: building the new within the shell of the old. The visible rupture can arrive suddenly. The **capacity to survive it** develops slowly.

The transition does not require one clean break. Old institutions can remain dominant while new relationships develop alongside them. Some functions can decentralize quickly while others remain centralized for much longer. The emerging world will initially be partial, compromised, and entangled with the one it is replacing.

If an alternative depends on the same centralized institutions it is meant to replace, it can be absorbed without changing the balance of power.

Alternatives can face suppression as they become capable of replacing centralized functions. Where repression can still sever every source of supply, dispersion alone is not protection. Shared knowledge and support across independent networks allow work to continue when a site or organization is lost, leaving **no single structure** whose removal can eliminate the alternative.

The goal is not to create one pure enclave outside society. It is to multiply spaces in which people can solve problems through different relationships, connect those spaces laterally, and gradually transfer more of everyday life into them. Every dependency replaced by a voluntary alternative weakens the old system's leverage. ☐ Every relationship of mutual support increases people's capacity to refuse.

The transition can be *gradual* in construction and **rapid** in consequence.

The **window of opportunity** opens when centralized institutions lose enough capacity or legitimacy that arrangements once treated as permanent become negotiable. This does not require total civilizational collapse. A supply chain breaks. A government loses legitimacy. A corporation abandons a town. A grid fails. A currency becomes unreliable. A strike stops normal services. A monopoly can no longer provide what people depend on. Centralized systems fail unevenly, by place, sector, and function.

Each failure creates an opening where alternatives can absorb part of what the old structure can no longer provide.

These openings can occur repeatedly. Parallel institutions develop during relative stability. A centralized system weakens. Existing alternatives absorb some of its functions. Those alternatives stabilize, learn, connect, and enter the next crisis with greater capacity than before. The old hierarchy may survive, but each cycle can leave people less dependent upon it.

This is not a strategy of *waiting for collapse*. It is preparation for conditions no one can reliably predict.

When centralized institutions weaken, freedom does not automatically emerge. Crisis produces fear, scarcity, uncertainty, and a demand for dependable order. These conditions can strengthen mutual aid, but they can also strengthen fascism, militarism, organized crime, religious authoritarianism, or a new government promising to restore stability.

A power vacuum is a demand for functions no longer being reliably supplied. What fills it depends on who can meet those needs.

Whoever can provide food, medicine, communication, transportation, protection, and working infrastructure gains enormous influence. If only authoritarian organizations possess those capacities, frightened people can accept command because hierarchy appears to be the only structure still functioning.

This is why prefiguration is also **preparation against authoritarian succession**. Parallel institutions developed before crisis leave people with somewhere else to turn. Distributed skills, existing relationships, working networks, and experience cooperating without command reduce the vacuum that centralized collapse would otherwise create.

Without those alternatives, collapse does not abolish dependency. It intensifies it.

Alternatives also have to work. Most people will not adopt a complete philosophy before participating in them. They may join because food is affordable, childcare is dependable, the neighborhood is safer, the repair workshop saves money, or the people involved treat them with dignity. Free association, mutual aid, and spontaneous order become stronger arguments when people can experience them directly.

The measure is practical: does the alternative meet a real need while increasing autonomy and distributing capacity?

A project that cannot function under pressure will not carry people through a crisis. A project that functions by concentrating permanent command can simply become the next hierarchy. The alternative works only when its methods preserve autonomy and free association.

Test replacement before relying on it: can provision continue when funding stops, a supplier fails, or key people leave? Ordinary breakdowns and actual transfers reveal what still depends on **centralized institutions**. Abrupt collapse may arrive before that work is sufficient. Then preserving supplies, maintenance, and care takes precedence over declaring independence; temporary dependence does not create a permanent right to command.

These processes unfold simultaneously: build capacities that meet needs now while using those capacities to reduce dependence upon domination. **Without construction**, resistance can leave a vacuum. **Without resistance**, alternatives can be contained within the existing system.

The objective is therefore not to seize control of centralized institutions and inherit their machinery. It is to make those institutions progressively less necessary.

Functions can migrate one by one. Knowledge can escape centralized control. Temporary mutual aid can become permanent social infrastructure. Informal supply routes can become durable networks. Communities can preserve arrangements that worked during emergencies. Even failed

projects can leave behind skills, relationships, tools, and knowledge that make the next attempt stronger.

Success may not arrive as a government falling or a flag being raised over its buildings. It can appear as a long decline in the importance of centralized institutions as their useful functions move elsewhere.

The decisive victory is **not** seizing the machinery.

It is making the machinery **unnecessary**.

When the next major opening will occur remains uncertain. Systems can survive instability, absorb opposition, change leadership, shift costs, reform, or repress. A strategy dependent on predicting collapse is fragile.

Reconfiguration does not require prediction. If the existing system persists, independent relationships and capacities improve life now. If it decays gradually, alternatives can absorb the functions it abandons. If crises arrive repeatedly, each opening can leave the parallel society stronger. If a larger rupture occurs, networks with supplies, skills, and working relationships already in place give people alternatives capable of preventing the resulting vacuum from being filled by another centralized authority.

The window of opportunity is therefore not something to wait for.

It is something built towards.

A free world grows while hierarchy still appears permanent. Each garden, friendship, cooperative, skill, network, act of mutual aid, and independent source of practical capacity creates another place from which people can act without waiting for permission. As these alternatives connect, dependence disperses and a balance of power takes shape.

When the next window opens, freedom does not have to begin from nothing.

A free world will be waiting.

Vox Libera

The Foundational Baseline

“Nothing is more dangerous than a dogmatic worldview—nothing more constraining, more blinding to innovation, more destructive of openness to novelty.” — Stephen Jay Gould

“It’s important to abolish the unconscious dogmatism that makes people think their way of looking at reality is the only sane way of viewing the world. My goal is to try to get people into a state of generalized agnosticism, not agnosticism about God alone, but agnosticism about everything. If one can only see things according to one’s own belief system, one is destined to become virtually deaf, dumb, and blind. It’s only possible to see people when one is able to see the world as others see it. That’s what guerrilla ontology is — breaking down this one-model view and giving people a multi-model perspective.” — Robert Anton Wilson, “Searching for Cosmic Intelligence” interview with Jeffrey Elliot (1980)

“Certain terms and ideas can be identified as ‘anti-concepts’. Terms that actually function to obscure our understanding, rather than facilitating it, making it harder for us to grasp other legitimate concepts. One important category of anti-concepts is what is called the ‘package deal’, referring to any term whose meaning conceals an implicit presupposition that certain things go together but in actuality do not.” — Roderick T. Long

Incentive Structure

“Man, like all living beings, adapts and habituates himself to the conditions in which he lives, and transmits by inheritance his acquired habits. Thus being born and having lived in bondage, being the descendant of a long line of slaves, man, when he began to think, believed that slavery was an essential condition of life; and liberty seemed to him an impossible thing.” — Errico Malatesta

☒ “So far, we have been analyzing incentives through the lens of public choice theory, which assumes that individuals in the political arena are fundamentally the same as those outside the political arena. But this assumption may ultimately be too optimistic about politics. This is because the institutional filters of politics ultimately select for those who find positions of power attractive. Decent, humane people will not want to work as overseers on a slave plantation. For the same reason, those who spend their careers as prison guards, police officers, prosecutors, Border Patrol agents, generals, and presidents will tend to be those who are comfortable wielding discretionary power and violent authority over others. Even if principled people occupy these positions for a while, they are likely to be quickly replaced by ambitious people willing to bend their morals in order to obtain and hold positions of power. As a result, systems of power create institutional filters and selection effects with one simple and devastating consequence: the worst get on top.” — Nathan Goodman, *Abolition: An Economist’s Perspective* ☒

“Workers today are handicapped by an array of regulations, taxes, intellectual-property laws, and business subsidies that on net impede entry to potential alternative employers and self-employment.” — Sheldon Richman

“In reality the capitalist system is defined by the structural presence of state-sanctioned monopolies.” — Eric Fleischmann

“Further, the monopoly of the medium of exchange by government is the power to use debt instead of solvency as an instrument of credit to facilitate exchange, and through and by this monopoly empowered to prevent exchanges until privileged exactions are first met.” — Dyer D. Lum

“By a continuing process of inflation, governments can confiscate, secretly and unobserved, an important part of the wealth of their citizens. By this method they not only confiscate, but they confiscate arbitrarily; and, while the process impoverishes many, it actually enriches some.” — John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*

“Capitalism is the same everywhere. In order to survive and prosper it needs a permanent situation of partial scarcity: it needs it to maintain its prices and to create hungry masses to work under any conditions.” — Errico Malatesta

“I am, somehow, less interested in the weight and convolutions of Einstein’s brain than in the near certainty that people of equal talent have lived and died in cotton fields and sweatshops.” — Stephen Jay Gould

“For what are called criminals nowadays are not criminals at all. Starvation, and not sin, is the parent of modern crime.” — Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*

“Slavery, protection, and monopoly find defenders, not only in those who profit by them, but in those who suffer by them.” — Frédéric Bastiat

“The class which has the power to rob upon a large scale has also the power to control the government and legalize their robbery.” — Eugene Debs

“When plunder becomes a way of life for a group of men in a society, over the course of time they create for themselves a legal system that authorizes it and a moral code that glorifies it.” — Frédéric Bastiat

“Now, legal plunder can be committed in an infinite number of ways. Thus we have an infinite number of plans for organizing it: tariffs, protection, benefits, subsidies, encouragements, progressive taxation, public schools, guaranteed jobs, guaranteed profits, minimum wages, a right to relief, a right to the tools of labor, free credit, and so on, and so on.” — Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*

Hierarchy

☒ “Most authority commences as the raw power of the gangster and evolves into the ‘legitimate’ authority of tacit acquiescence. This is certainly the history of the nation state. Fried observes that legitimacy is the means by which ideology is blended with power. The function of legitimacy is ‘to explain and justify the existence of concentrated social power wielded by a portion of the community and to offer similar support to specific social orders, that is, specific ways of apportioning and directing the flow of social power’” — Harold Barclay, *People without Government* ☒

“To abolish authority or government does not mean to destroy the individual or collective forces, which are at work in society, nor the influence men exert over one another. That would be to reduce humanity to an aggregate of inert and separate atoms; an impossibility which, if it could be performed, would be the destruction of any society, the death blow to mankind. To abolish authority, means to abolish the monopoly of force and of influence. It means to abolish that state of things by which social force, that is, the collective force of all in a society, is made the instrument of the thought, will and interests of a small number of individuals. These, by means of the collective force, suppress the liberty of every one else, to the advantage of their own ideas. In other words, it means to destroy a mode of organization by means of which the future is exploited, between one revolution and another, to the profit of those who have been the victors of the moment.” — Errico Malatesta

“Where there is authority, there is no freedom.” — Pyotr Kropotkin

“When Warren and Proudhon, in prosecuting their search for justice to labor, came face to face with the obstacle of class monopolies, they saw that these monopolies rested upon Authority, and concluded that the thing to be done was, not to strengthen this Authority and thus make monopoly universal, but to utterly uproot Authority and give full sway to the opposite principle, Liberty.” — Benjamin R. Tucker

“Hierarchical organizations are designed to impose correlations in human behavior primarily through the influence of the hierarchical control structure. In an ideal hierarchy all influences/communications between two ‘workers’ must travel through a common manager. As the complexity of collective behavior increases, the number of independent influences increases, and a manager becomes unable to process/communicate all of them. Increasing the number of managers and decreasing the branching ratio (the number of individuals supervised by one manager) helps. However, this strategy is defeated when the complexity of collective behavior increases beyond the complexity of an individual. Networks allowing more direct lateral interactions

do not suffer from this limitation. When the complexity of collective behaviors increases beyond that of an individual human being then hierarchical controls become ineffective. Hierarchically controlled systems must yield to networked systems. At the point at which the collective complexity reaches the complexity of an individual, the process of complexity increase encounters the limitations of hierarchical structures. Hierarchical structures are not able to provide a higher complexity and must give way to structures that are dominated by lateral interactions. Lateral interactions that replace the control function have been present in hierarchical structures, however, they become necessary when the hierarchical control structure fails due to the high complexity of collective behavior.” — Complexity Rising: From Human Beings to Human Civilization, a Complexity Profile

“A civilization based on authority-and-submission is a civilization without the means of self-correction. Effective communication flows only one way: from master-group to servile-group. Any cyberneticist knows that such a one-way communication channel lacks feedback and cannot behave intelligently.” — Robert Anton Wilson, “Thirteen Choruses for the Divine Marquis,” quoted by Kevin Carson in *The Desktop Regulatory State*

“The individual act of obedience is the cornerstone not only of the strength of authoritarian society but also of its weakness.” — Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson, *The Illuminatus! Trilogy*

“The oppressor would not be so strong if he did not have accomplices among the oppressed.” — Simone de Beauvoir

“If men use their liberty in such a way as to surrender their liberty, are they thereafter any the less slaves? If people by a plebiscite elect a man despot over them, do they remain free because the despotism was of their own making? Are the coercive edicts issued by him to be regarded as legitimate because they are the ultimate outcome of their own votes? As well might it be argued that the East African, who breaks a spear in another’s presence that he may so become bondsman to him, still retains his liberty because he freely chose his master.” — Herbert Spencer, *The Man Versus the State*

“A man is no less a slave because he is allowed to choose a new master once in a term of years.” — Lysander Spooner, *No Treason No. VI: The Constitution of No Authority*

“Free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves. Free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear—that is, if they sustain alienation. And the spontaneous reproduction of superimposed needs by the individual does not establish autonomy; it only testifies to the efficacy of the controls.” — Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*

“He who attempts to control another is a governor, an aggressor, an invader; and the nature of such invasion is not changed, whether it is made by one man upon another

man, after the manner of the ordinary criminal, or by one man upon all other men, after the manner of an absolute monarch, or by all other men upon one man, after the manner of a modern democracy.” — Benjamin R. Tucker, 1890

“No one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means, it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship.” — O’Brien in George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Government

✠ “It is unfortunately none too well understood that, just as the State has no money of its own, so it has no power of its own. All the power it has is what society gives it, plus what it confiscates from time to time on one pretext or another; there is no other source from which State power can be drawn. Therefore every assumption of State power, whether by gift or seizure, leaves society with so much less power. There is never, nor can there be, any strengthening of State power without a corresponding and roughly equivalent depletion of social power.” — Albert J. Nock ✠

“Government, when it is examined, turns out to be nothing more nor less than a group of fallible men with the political force to act as though they were infallible.” — Robert LeFevre

“There is the difference, and a very important one. We admit the imperfections of human nature, but we make no exception for the rulers. They make it although sometimes unconsciously, and because we make no such exception, they say we are dreamers, ‘unpractical men.’” — Pyotr Kropotkin

“If the natural tendencies of mankind are so bad that it is not safe to permit people to be free, how is it that the tendencies of these organizers are always good? Do not the legislators and their appointed agents also belong to the human race? Or do they believe that they themselves are made of a finer clay than the rest of mankind?” — Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*

“The danger is not that a particular class is unfit to govern. Every class is unfit to govern.” — Lord Acton, letter to Mary Gladstone (1881)

“But what reason is there for the existence of government? Why abdicate one’s own liberty, one’s own initiative in favor of other individuals? Why give them the power to be the masters, with or against the wish of each, to dispose of the forces of all in their own way? Are the governors such exceptionally gifted men as to enable them, with some show of reason, to represent the masses and act in the interests of all men better than all men would be able to act for themselves? Are they so infallible and incorruptible that one can confide to them, with any semblance of prudence, the fate of each and all, trusting to their knowledge and goodness? And even if there existed men of infinite goodness and knowledge, even if we assume what has never happened in history and what we believe could never happen, namely, that the government might devolve upon the ablest and best, would the possession of government power add anything to their beneficent influence? Would they not rather paralyze or destroy it? For those who govern find it necessary to occupy themselves with things

which they do not understand, and, above all, to waste the greater part of their energy in keeping themselves in power, striving to satisfy their friends, holding the discontented in check, and mastering the rebellious.” — Errico Malatesta

“Government is the great fiction, through which everybody endeavors to live at the expense of everybody else.” — Frédéric Bastiat, “Government”

“Those persons who believe in the sharpest distinction between democracy and monarchy can scarcely appreciate how a political institution may go through so many transformations and yet remain the same. Yet a swift glance must show us that in all the evolution of the English monarchy, with all its broadenings and its revolutions, and even with its jump across the sea into a colony which became an independent nation and then a powerful State, the same State functions and attitudes have been preserved essentially unchanged.” — Randolph Bourne, *The State*

“The state is nothing more than the sum total of the liberties denied to the individual by a society.” — Mikhail Bakunin

“The individual cannot bargain with the State. The State recognizes no coinage but power: and it issues the coins itself.” — Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (1974)

“Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron’s cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.” — C. S. Lewis, *The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment* (1949)

“The law in its magnificent equality forbids rich and poor alike from sleeping under bridges, begging in the streets, and stealing bread.” — Anatole France

“The principle that the majority have a right to rule the minority, practically resolves all government into a mere contest between two bodies of men, as to which of them shall be masters, and which of them slaves; a contest, that—however bloody—can, in the nature of things, never be finally closed, so long as man refuses to be a slave.” — Lysander Spooner, *No Treason*

“All modes of government are failures. Despotism is unjust to everybody, including the despot, who was probably made for better things. Oligarchies are unjust to the many, and ochlocracies are unjust to the few. High hopes were once formed of democracy; but democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people. It has been found out. I must say that it was high time, for all authority is quite degrading. It degrades those who exercise it, and degrades those over whom it is exercised.” — Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*

“...consider the tens of thousands who have been burned, and hanged, and boiled, and otherwise put to death for witchcraft; the millions for heresy; the thousands of noble victims who have suffered for treason; the victims of fire, of torture, of scaffold, of rack and of dungeon, for all the conceivable crimes since time began...

Let him consider the oceans of blood and rivers of tears shed by the force and brutality of the rulers of the world; the cruelty, torture and suffering heaped upon the helpless, the weak, the unfortunate; and then ask himself if he believes that punishment is good. Even could violence ever prevent crime, the brutality, suffering, blood and crime of the rulers has towered mountain high above that of the weak and obscure victims whose wrongs they have pretended to avenge. And this cruelty does not abate.

It is simple madness that doubts the justice of past condemnations and believes in the righteous judgments of today. No condemnation is just, and no judgment is righteous. All violence and force are cruel, unjust and barbarous, and cannot be sustained by the judgment of men.” — Clarence Darrow, *Resist Not Evil*

“A government cannot want society to break up, for it would mean that it and the dominant class would be deprived of the sources of exploitation; nor can it leave society to maintain itself without official intervention, for then the people would soon realise that government serves only to defend the property owners who keep them in conditions of starvation, and they would hasten to rid themselves of both the government and the property owners.” — Errico Malatesta

“Why are the people starving? Because the rulers eat up the money in taxes. Therefore the people are starving. Why are the people rebellious? Because the rulers interfere too much. Therefore they are rebellious. Why do the people think so little of death? Because the rulers demand too much of life. Therefore the people take death lightly. Having little to live on, one knows better than to value life too much.” — Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 75, trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English

“For this reason, whoever desires liberty, should understand these vital facts, viz.: 1. That every man who puts money into the hands of a ‘government’ (so called), puts into its hands a sword which will be used against himself, to extort more money from him, and also to keep him in subjection to its arbitrary will. 2. That those who will take his money, without his consent, in the first place, will use it for his further robbery and enslavement, if he presumes to resist their demands in the future.” — Lysander Spooner, *No Treason*

“The law perverted! And the police powers of the state perverted along with it! The law, I say, not only turned from its proper purpose but made to follow an entirely contrary purpose! The law become the weapon of every kind of greed! Instead of checking crime, the law itself guilty of the evils it is supposed to punish!” — Frédéric Bastiat

“We may conclude without fear that the revolutionary formula cannot be Direct Legislation, nor Direct Government, nor Simplified Government, that it is No Government. Neither monarchy, nor aristocracy, nor even democracy itself, in so far as it may imply any government at all, even though acting in the name of the people, and calling itself the people. No authority, no government, not even popular, that

is the Revolution. Direct legislation, direct government, simplified government, are ancient lies, which they try in vain to rejuvenate. Direct or indirect, simple or complex, governing the people will always be swindling the people. It is always man giving orders to man, the fiction which makes an end to liberty; brute force which cuts questions short, in the place of justice, which alone can answer them; obstinate ambition, which makes a stepping stone of devotion and credulity..." — Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *The General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (1851)

"Even if the absence of government really did mean anarchy in a negative, disorderly sense—which is far from being the case—even then, no anarchical disorder could be worse than the position to which government has led humanity." — Leo Tolstoy, *Patriotism and Government*

"What is the thing we call government? Is it anything but organized violence? The law orders you to obey, and if you don't obey, it will compel you by force — all governments, all law and authority finally rest on force and violence, on punishment or fear of punishment." — Alexander Berkman

"The state calls its own violence law, but that of the individual, crime." — Max Stirner, *The Unique and Its Own*

"Once crime was as solitary as a cry of protest; now it is as universal as science. Yesterday it was put on trial; today it determines the law." — Albert Camus, *The Rebel*

"You don't question the right of the government to kill, to confiscate and imprison. If a private person should be guilty of the things the government is doing all the time, you'd brand him a murderer, thief and scoundrel. But as long as the violence committed is 'lawful,' you approve of it and submit to it. So it is not really violence that you object to, but to people using violence 'unlawfully.'" — Alexander Berkman

"It is forbidden to kill; therefore all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to the sound of trumpets." — Voltaire

"To be GOVERNED is to be watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so. To be GOVERNED is to be at every operation, at every transaction noted, registered, counted, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, prevented, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished. It is, under pretext of public utility, and in the name of the general interest, to be place[d] under contribution, drilled, fleeced, exploited, monopolized, extorted from, squeezed, hoaxed, robbed; then, at the slightest resistance, the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, vilified, harassed, hunted down, abused, clubbed, disarmed, bound, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed; and to crown all, mocked, ridiculed, derided, outraged, dishonored. That is government; that is its justice; that is its morality." — Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

“Government is the most dangerous institution known to man. Throughout history it has violated the rights of men more than any individual or group of individuals could do: it has killed people, enslaved them, sent them to forced labor and concentration camps, and regularly robbed and pillaged them of the fruits of their expended labor. Unlike individual criminals, government has the power to arrest and try; unlike individual criminals, it can surround and encompass a person totally, dominating every aspect of one’s life, so that one has no recourse from it but to leave the country (and in totalitarian nations even that is prohibited).” — John Hospers

Balance of Power

✠ “I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free. The freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation.” — Mikhail Bakunin ✠

“The argument for liberty is not an argument against organization, which is one of the most powerful tools human reason can employ, but an argument against all exclusive, privileged, monopolistic organization, against the use of coercion to prevent others from doing better.” — Friedrich August von Hayek

“Decentralization implies autonomy—the ability to act freely on one’s own initiative. Autonomy can apply at any level of scale—a single person, a neighborhood, a movement, an entire region. To be free, you need control over your immediate surroundings and the details of your daily life; the more self-sufficient you are, the more secure your autonomy is. This needn’t mean meeting all your needs independently; it could also mean the kind of interdependence that gives you leverage on the people you depend on. No single institution should be able to monopolize access to resources or social relations. A society that promotes autonomy requires what an engineer would call redundancy: a wide range of options and possibilities in every aspect of life.” — CrimethInc., *From Democracy to Freedom*

“Increasing power of a growing administrative organization is accompanied by decreasing power of the rest of the society to resist its further growth and control.” — Herbert Spencer, *The Man Versus the State*

“The synergy produced by the sharing of knowledge by the network is—in both senses of the word—a property of the network. This has had revolutionary implications for the balance of power between networks and hierarchies, and almost unimaginably empowered individuals and small groups against large organizations. In a hierarchy, all communications between members or between local nodes must pass through a limited number of central nodes. The only communications which are allowed to pass from one member or local node to another are those which meet the standards for distribution of those who control the central nodes. Only a few nodes within a hierarchy have the power to transmit; hence the use of the phrase ‘one-to-many’ to describe its topology. But in a distributed network, every node has the power to transmit, and any two nodes can communicate directly with each other without passing through a central node or obtaining the approval of whoever controls that node. Instead of the individual members simply selecting who controls the central nodes, ‘[s]omeone makes a proposal and everyone who wishes to join in can

do so. The range of the action in question will depend on the degree to which the proposal is accepted.' Majoritarian democracy is a 'scarcity system' in which decision making power is rivalrous: 'the collective must face an either/or choice, between one filter and another, between one representative and another.' In a distributed network, on the other hand, decision-making power is non-rivalrous. Each individual's decision affects only herself, and does not impede the ability of others to do likewise. 'Even if the majority not only disagreed with a proposal, but also acted against it, it wouldn't be able to prevent the proposal from being carried out.'" — Kevin Carson, *The Desktop Regulatory State*

"There is an inverse correlation between the two: the strength of one is the weakness of the other. If we want to strengthen society we must weaken the state. Totalitarians of all kinds realise this; which is why they invariably seek to destroy those social institutions which they cannot dominate." — Colin Ward, *The State and Society*

"There are key asymmetries at work which yield huge advantages to the state's opponents. Yes, states possess powerful surveillance capabilities, but those capabilities are centrally and hierarchically directed, and accessible only through relatively small and somewhat identifiable forces of operators. And they attempt to seek out and surveill what amount to straw-colored needles in a haystack of seven billion humans. The world's networked resistance movements are those needles. It's much easier for the needle to see and identify the guy with the pitchfork than it is for the guy with the pitchfork to see and identify the needle. There are a lot more needles than there are guys with pitchforks. And the needles have access to their own set of tools—tools which are cheap, easy to use, and available to nearly anyone (including those aforementioned operators!) who might decide, at any time and for any reason, to become a needle." — Thomas Knapp, quoted by Kevin Carson

"As the first step in achieving their objectives, decentralists encourage dispersion of production. They therefore foster the productive home wherein can be produced—with modern small-scale tools and machines—all or a very large part of the family's basic needs" — Mildred Loomis

"If you took the most ardent revolutionary, vested him in absolute power, within a year he would be worse than the Tsar himself." — Mikhail Bakunin

"That's surely the way the "State" begins on earth. I believe that that fantasy has been done away with which sees the beginning of the state in some "contract." The man who can command, who is naturally a "master," who comes forward with violence in his actions and gestures—what has a man like that to do with making contracts! We cannot negotiate with such beings." — Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*

"The ever-growing power of a soulless political bureaucracy which supervises and safeguards the life of man from the cradle to the grave is putting ever-greater obstacles in the way of co-operation among human beings. A system which in every act of its life sacrifices the welfare of large sections of the people, of whole nations. to

the selfish lust for power and the economic interests of small minorities must necessarily dissolve the social ties and lead to a constant war of each against all. This system has merely been the pacemaker for the great intellectual and social reaction which finds its expression today in modern Fascism and the idea of the totalitarian state, far surpassing the obsession for power of the absolute monarchy of past centuries and seeking to bring every sphere of human activity under the control of the state. 'All for the state; all through the state; nothing without the state!' became the leitmotiv of a new political theology which has its various systems of ecclesiastical theology God is everything and man nothing, so for this modern political creed the state is everything and the citizen nothing. And just as the words the 'will of God' were used to justify the will of privileged castes, so today there hides behind the will of the state only the selfish interests of those who feel called upon to interpret this will in their own sense and to force it upon the people." — Rudolf Rocker

Spontaneous Order

“Liberty is not the Daughter but the Mother of Order.” — Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

“If you want to be a great leader, you must learn to follow the Tao. Stop trying to control. Let go of fixed plans and concepts, and the world will govern itself. The more laws and restrictions there are, the poorer people become. The more weapons you have, the less secure people will be. The more subsidies you have, the less self-reliant people will be. The more rules and regulations, the more thieves and robbers. Therefore the Master says: I let go of the law, and people become honest. I let go of economics, and people become prosperous. I let go of religion, and people become serene. I let go of all desire for the common good, and the good becomes common as grass.” — Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 57

“The fundamental principle that in the ordering of our affairs we should make as much use as possible of the spontaneous forces of society, and resort as little as possible to coercion, is capable of an infinite variety of applications.” — Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*

“If we can agree that the economic problem of society is mainly one of rapid adaptation to changes in the particular circumstances of time and place, it would seem to follow that the ultimate decisions must be left to the people who are familiar with these circumstances, who know directly of the relevant changes and of the resources immediately available to meet them.” — Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Use of Knowledge in Society*

“The traditional argument for a spontaneous order over centralized design is that, under conditions of dispersed knowledge, only a decentralized and evolutionary process leads to the discovery of the relevant knowledge. In other words: a spontaneous order is able “[...] to make use of knowledge which nobody possesses as a whole” — F. A. Hayek, (Law, Legislation and Liberty, Volume 1: Rules and Order)

“To the naive mind that can conceive of order only as the product of deliberate arrangement, it may seem absurd that in complex conditions order, and adaptation to the unknown, can be achieved more effectively by decentralizing decisions and that a division of authority will actually extend the possibility of overall order. Yet that decentralization actually leads to more information being taken into account.” — Friedrich Hayek

“Spontaneous orders arise from networks of independent equals whose actions generate positive and negative feedback that help guide future actors in pursuing their

own independently conceived plans, thereby continuing the feedback process. Each person is a node within a network and is linked by feedback, with each node free to act on its own. The feedback they generate minimizes the knowledge anyone needs about the system as a whole in order to succeed within it.” — Gus diZerega, quoted by Kevin Carson in *The Desktop Regulatory State*

“As a sociological term stigmergy refers primarily to the kinds of networked organization associated with wikis, group blogs, and ‘leaderless’ organizations configured along the lines of networked cells. When stigmergic collaboration is extended by computing and digital networks, a considerable augmentation of processing capacity takes place. Stigmergy permits collaboration on an unlimited scale by individuals acting independently.

Stigmergy is not ‘collectivist’ in the traditional sense, as it was understood in the days when a common effort on any significant scale required a large organization to represent the collective, and the administrative coordination of individual efforts through a hierarchy. But it is the ultimate realization of collectivism, in that it removes the transaction cost of concerted action by many individuals. It is the ultimate in individualism because all actions are the free actions of individuals, and the ‘collective’ is simply the sum total of individual actions. Every individual is free to formulate any innovation she sees fit, without any need for permission from the collective, and everyone is free to adopt it or not. Stigmergy removes the need for any individual to be bound by the group will and reduces the unit of governance to the individual, fully realizing the ideal of consent.

☐ Stigmergic organization results in modular, building-block architectures. Such structures are ubiquitous because a modular structure transforms a system’s ability to learn, evolve and adapt. A small number of building blocks can be shuffled and recombined to make a huge number of complex systems. If you start with a large number of modular individuals, each capable of interacting with a few other individuals, and acting on other individuals according to a simple grammar of a few rules, under the right circumstances the modular individuals can undergo a rapid phase transition.” — Kevin Carson, *The Desktop Regulatory State* ☐

“In order to understand how society could exist without a government, it is sufficient to turn our attention for a short space to what actually goes on in our present society. We shall see that in reality the most important functions are fulfilled even nowadays outside the intervention of government. Also that government only interferes to exploit the masses, or defend the privileged, or, lastly, to sanction, most unnecessarily, all that has been done without its aid, often in spite of and opposition to it. Men work, exchange, study, travel, follow as they choose the current rules of morality or hygiene; they profit by the progress of science and art, have numberless mutual interests without ever feeling the need of any one to direct them how to conduct themselves in regard to these matters. On the contrary, it is just those things in which no governmental interference that prosper best and give rise to the least

contention, being unconsciously adapted to the wish of all in the way found most useful and agreeable.” — Errico Malatesta

“With the abolition of this negative potency constituting government, society will become that which it can be, with the given forces and capabilities of the moment. If there are educated men desirous of spreading education, they will organize the schools, and will be constrained to make the use and enjoyment to be derived from education felt. And if there are no such men, or only a few of them, a government cannot create them. All it can do, as in fact it does nowadays, is to take these few away from practical, fruitful work in the sphere of education, and put them to direct from above what has to be imposed by the help of a police system. So they make out of intelligent and impassionate teachers mere politicians, who become useless parasites, entirely absorbed in imposing their own hobbies, and in maintaining themselves in power.” — Errico Malatesta

“Beneath the governmental machinery, in the shadow of political institutions, out of the sight of statesmen and priests, society is producing its own organism, slowly and silently; and constructing a new order, the expression of its vitality and autonomy... We may conclude without fear that the revolutionary formula cannot be Direct Legislation, nor Direct Government, nor Simplified Government, that it is NO GOVERNMENT.” — P.J. Proudhon, 1851

“When the hated power of the state will no longer force individuals, associations, communes, regions, and areas to live together, they will be much more closely connected and form much more alive, more real, more powerful unity than those that they are forced to form today under the equally oppressive and exhausting yoke of the state.” — Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

“Chaotic decision-making fosters the recognition that society can function spontaneously as a decentralized network, permits conflict as a healthy force in our lives, encourages a multiplicity of decision-making spaces pervading all moments of life, well beyond the formal, masculine sphere of the congress or the dictat, and allows different, even conflicting, decisions to be made at different points in the human network, while encouraging a collective consciousness so all decision-makers can maximize their intelligence and accordingly harmonize. Humans have an evolutionarily tested ability to utilize chaotic decision-making at a macro scale, and the only people who dispute this are those who wish to permanently infantilize their compatriots so as to control them by monopolizing decision-making in unitary structures.” — Peter Gelderloos, *Worshipping Power*

“Either the State for ever, crushing individual and local life, taking over in all fields of human activity, bringing with it its wars and its domestic struggles for power, its palace revolutions which only replace one tyrant by another, and inevitably at the end of this development there is ... death! Or the destruction of States, and new life starting again in thousands of centers on the principle of the lively initiative of the individual and groups and that of free agreement.” — Pyotr Kropotkin

Free Association

✠ “Now, you must admit, either that there will be under freedom, different social arrangements in different societies, some Communistic, others quite the reverse, and that competition will necessarily rise between them, leaving to results to determine which is the best, or you must crush competition, institute Communism, deny freedom, and fly in the face of progress. What the world needs, my friend, is not new methods of instituting things, but abolition of restrictions upon opportunity.” — Voltairine de Cleyre, *The Individualist and the Communist* ✠

“Liberty is not a box into which people are to be forced. Liberty is a space in which people may live. It does not tell you how they will live. It says, eternally, only that we can.” — Karl Hess

“Do I belong to myself or to somebody else, or something else? Are my social obligations to the many informal and overlapping social groups to which I adhere of my own volition and can withdraw from if I wish, or to an entity which I have not joined...” — Colin Ward, *The State and Society*

“The freedom we want, for ourselves and for others, is not an absolute metaphysical, abstract freedom which in practice is inevitably translated into the oppression of the weak; but it is real freedom, possible freedom, which is the conscious community of interests, voluntary solidarity.” — Errico Malatesta

“After having tried all kinds of government, and endeavored to solve the insoluble problem of having a government ‘which might compel the individual to obedience, without escaping itself from obedience to collectivity,’ humanity is trying now to free itself from the bonds of any government whatever, and to respond to its needs of organization by the free understanding between individuals pursuing the same common aims.” — Pyotr Kropotkin

“Acknowledging, as a fact, the equal rights of all its members to the treasures accumulated in the past, it no longer recognizes a division between exploited and exploiters, governed and governors, dominated and dominators, and it seeks to establish a certain harmonious compatibility in its midst-not by subjecting all its members to an authority that is fictitiously supposed to represent society, not by trying to establish uniformity, but by urging all men to develop free initiative, free action, free association. It seeks the most complete development of individuality combined with the highest development of voluntary association in all its aspects, in all possible degrees, for all imaginable aims; ever changing, ever modified associations which carry in themselves the elements of their durability and constantly assume new forms, which answer best to the multiple aspirations of all.” — Peter Kropotkin

“Thus, a free and easy change from one variety of Communism to another, thence to any variety of Individualism, and so on, would be the most obvious and elementary thing in a really free society; and if any group of people tried to check this, to make one system predominant, they would be as bitterly fought as revolutionists fight the present system.” — Max Nettlau

“The theory of Mutualism maintains that the interests of society at large are best served by the same means which go farthest to promote the interests of the individual: freedom from restraint, as long as the individual’s activities are non-invasive; elimination of all factors which artificially limit man’s opportunities; voluntary organization of society into associations as the need for them arises in order to carry on such activities as are beyond the power of the single individual; in short, a voluntary creation and mutual exchange of commodities under conditions which exclude special privileges and state-protected monopolies.” — Clarence Lee Swartz, *What Is Mutualism?*

“Libertarianism cannot be imposed from the top down. Failure to impose libertarianism is, in fact, a measure of success of libertarianism.” — Samuel E. Konkin III

“That I may remain free; that I may not have to submit to any law but my own, and that I may govern myself, the authority of the suffrage must be renounced: we must give up the vote, as well as representation and monarchy. In a word, everything in the government of society which rests on the divine must be suppressed, and the whole rebuilt upon the human idea of contract. When I agree with one or more of my fellow citizens for any object whatever, it is clear that my own will is my law; it is I myself, who, in fulfilling my obligation, am my own government.I should be sure that the law thus made on all questions in the Republic, from millions of different initiatives, would never be anything but my law; and if this new order of things were called government, it would be my government.” — Proudhon, *The general idea of the revolution in the 19th century*

Mutual Aid

☒ “Friendship can’t scale up to swallow the planet. Friendship remains forever small, personal, intimate, deliberate, voluntary, decentralized. This is a feature, not a bug. Friendship allows you to associate and disassociate with others at will, while always maintaining your individuality, the sanctuary of your headspace and the clarity of knowing who you are and what you need. The dictates of anonymous wider society and the supposed common good needn’t cloud your mind when you form friendships rather than build communities.” — Against Community Building, Towards Friendship ☒

“It is evident that it would be quite contrary to all that we know of nature if men were an exception to so general a rule: if a creature so defenceless as man was at his beginnings should have found his protection and his way to progress, not in mutual support, like other animals, but in a reckless competition for personal advantages, with no regard to the interests of the species. To a mind accustomed to the idea of unity in nature, such a proposition appears utterly indefensible. And yet, improbable and unphilosophical as it is, it has never found a lack of supporters. There always were writers who took a pessimistic view of mankind. They knew it, more or less superficially, through their own limited experience; they knew of history what the annalists, always watchful of wars, cruelty, and oppression, told of it, and little more besides; and they concluded that mankind is nothing but a loose aggregation of beings, always ready to fight with each other, and only prevented from so doing by the intervention of some authority.” — Pyotr Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*

“Solidarity is, in some ways, the opposite of charity. Charity is a way of providing aid that reinforces the hierarchical relationship between groups. Rich people donating money to charity makes poor people even more dependent upon the rich. Poor people, however, organizing to share resources as equals, are acting out of solidarity.” — Life Without Law

“Solidarity is thus the means by which we can obtain and ensure our own freedom. We agree to work together so that we will not have to work for another. By agreeing to share with each other we increase our options so that we may enjoy more, not less. Mutual aid is in my self-interest — that is, I see that it is to my advantage to reach agreements with others based on mutual respect and social equality; for if I dominate someone, this means that the conditions exist which allow domination, and so in all probability I too will be dominated in turn.” — An Anarchist FAQ

“Before our white brothers came to civilize us we had no jails. Therefore we had no criminals. We had no locks or keys, and so we had no thieves. If a man was so

poor that he had no horse, tipi or blanket, someone gave him these things. We were too uncivilized to set much value on personal belongings. We wanted to have things only in order to give them away. We had no money, and therefore a man's worth couldn't be measured by it." — John Fire Lane Deer, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*

"The criminalization of poverty through police harassment and city ordinances is counter productive towards the effort to help the displaced and poor that are struggling each day to get back on their feet. To further promote equality within our society we will continue to share food in our communities building solidarity with the homeless and other organizations seeking a better future." — Food Not Bombs

"What wonderful results this unique force of man's individuality has achieved when strengthened by co-operation with other individualities ... co-operation — as opposed to internecine strife and struggle — has worked for the survival and evolution of the species ... only mutual aid and voluntary co-operation ... can create the basis for a free individual and associational life." — Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks*, p. 118

"Worker ownership & consumer co-ops are part of the market; mutual aid associations & free clinics are part of the market; so are voluntary labor unions, consensual communes, & countless other alternatives to the capitalist status quo." — Charles Johnson, *Markets Not Capitalism*

"Vertical agorism would include participating in and creating community exchange networks, urban farming, backyard gardening, farmers market, supporting alternatives to the police, and supporting peer to peer decentralized technologies. While these vertical steps could potentially involve the use of the state's currency (and therefore not completely counter-economic) they are still significant for challenging the dependency on the state and corporate classes. Other vertical steps may not directly involve exchanging currency but still work against dependency. This could include moral support and promotion of technologies that disrupt the status quo and foster stronger relationships among community members." — Derrick Broze, *Vertical and Horizontal Agorism*

"In this way would develop 'independent Communes for the territorial groupings, and vast federations of trade unions for groupings by social functions — the two interwoven and providing support to each to meet the needs of society'. Added to these are the 'groupings by personal affinities — groupings without number, infinitely varied, long-lasting or fleeting, emerging according to the needs of the moment for all possible purposes'. These 'three kinds of groupings' would ensure 'the satisfaction of all social needs: consumption, production and exchange, communications, sanitary arrangements, education, mutual protection against aggression, mutual aid, territorial defence; the satisfaction, finally, of scientific, artistic, literacy, entertainment needs.'" — Pyotr Kropotkin

Nonviolence

✠ “To give hope to the many oppressed and fear to the few oppressors, that is our business; if we do the first and give hope to the many, the few must be frightened by their hope. Otherwise, we do not want to frighten them; it is not revenge we want for poor people, but happiness; indeed, what revenge can be taken for all the thousands of years of the sufferings of the poor?” — William Morris ✠

“Nonviolent action as a method is compatible with the goal of a nonviolent society. Using methods that reflect the goal is called prefiguration: the methods prefigure — in other words, anticipate or replicate in advance — the goal. Prefiguration provides training and experience in what is being sought. It helps create an element of the goal, even if a campaign is unsuccessful. And it helps keep efforts on track. If the goal is a society without organised violence, nonviolent action has all these prefigurative advantages. It provides experiences in living without using violence; it reduces immediate violence in the here and now, even when campaigns fail; and it ensures that efforts are in a nonviolent direction.” — How Nonviolence is Misrepresented

“Violence (physical force) used to another’s hurt, which is the most brutal form of struggle between men can assume, is eminently corrupting. It tends, by its very nature, to suffocate the best sentiments of man, and to develop all the antisocial qualities, ferocity, hatred, revenge, the spirit of domination and tyranny, contempt of the weak, servility towards the strong. And this harmful tendency arises also when violence is used for a good end. [...] Anarchists who rebel against every sort of oppression and struggle for the integral liberty of each and who ought thus to shrink instinctively from all acts of violence which cease to be mere resistance to oppression and become oppressive in their turn are also liable to fall into the abyss of brutal force. [...]” — Errico Malatesta, *Violence as a Social Factor* (1895)

“To condone ferocious anti-human feelings and raise them to the level of principle as a tactic for a movement... is both evil and counter-revolutionary.” — Errico Malatesta

“According to a University of South Carolina study, violence in America rose 42 percent during the Vietnam War. This is hardly surprising. Our leaders are lawless, so why not we? If the government threatens other countries with the bomb, why not threaten one another with handguns? If our leaders are raping the planet, why not our neighbors? Our leaders create a climate of fear and violence. Why do they appear shocked when Americans kill, rob, and maim one another?” — Philip Berrigan, *Fighting the Lamb’s War: Skirmishes with the American Empire* (1996)

“The state holds together through police power, against the citizenry. The state, conceived in violence, and backed by violence, will never achieve true peace.” — Philip Berrigan, *Fighting the Lamb’s War: Skirmishes with the American Empire* (1996)

“Historically, the most terrible things—war, genocide, and slavery—have resulted not from disobedience, but from obedience.” — Howard Zinn, *Declarations of Independence: Cross-Examining American Ideology*

“The greatest crimes in the world are not committed by people breaking the rules but by people following the rules. It’s people who follow orders that drop bombs and massacre villages.” — Banksy, *Wall and Piece*

“The ability of the government to use violence greatly exceeds that of the rebels. Indeed, violent rebellion often strengthens oppressive regimes which can plausibly claim that rebel violence necessitates repression. Government’s comparative advantage lies in violent action. The comparative advantage of the people, in contrast, lies in their ability to deny their cooperation without which it is nearly impossible for government to persist. Consider the deadliness to a government of tax strikes, boycotts, general strikes, and widespread refusal to obey the law. While these tactics are nonviolent, their universal and unyielding use should terrify any government. Non-violence has other advantages as well. Because it seems less dangerous and radical than violence, it more easily ... wins broad public support. The costs of participation are lower, so more people are likely to participate. Traditional non-combatants like children, women, and the old can effectively participate in nonviolent struggle. It is more likely to convert opponents and produce internal disagreement within the ruling class. It generally leads to far fewer casualties and material losses than violence. And since it is more decentralized than violent action, it is less likely to give rise to an even more oppressive state if it succeeds.” — Bryan Caplan, “The Literature of Nonviolent Resistance and Civilian-Based Defense”

“The government assures the people that they are in danger from the invasion of another nation, or from foes in their midst, and that the only way to escape this danger is by the slavish obedience of the people to their government. This fact is seen most prominently during revolutions and dictatorships, but it exists always and everywhere that the power of the government exists. Every government explains its existence, and justifies its deeds of violence, by the argument that if it did not exist the condition of things would be very much worse. After assuring the people of its danger the government subordinates it to control, and when in this condition compels it to attack some other nation. And thus the assurance of the government is corroborated in the eyes of the people, as to the danger of attack from other nations.” — Leo Tolstoy, *Christianity and Patriotism* (1895)

“When it gets down to having to use violence, then you are playing the system’s game. The establishment will irritate you – pull your beard, flick your face – to make you fight. Because once they’ve got you violent, then they know how to handle you. The only thing they don’t know how to handle is non-violence and humor.” — John Lennon

“We cannot and we do not desire to employ violence, except in the defence of ourselves and others against oppression.” — Errico Malatesta

“So we build community defense networks rather than armies. We build trust rather than power. We merge joyful play and defiant revolt. We show our love through solidarity and we betray our collective identities and geographic loyalty through blasphemous acts of audacious curiosity, striving, and friendship. We build living networks, not cliques. And even when we feel alone, we are embedded in a quilt of radicalism. Through our actions and our thoughts, our resistance large and small, we are building something very special. So while the pain and struggles you face are deadly real, so are our bonds. Try as they may, anarchism can never be killed. So we can take courage, even as hope becomes ever more expensive. You are not alone.” — *Stigmergic Parity and Revolt*

Direct Action

☒ “People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do.” — Dorothy Day ☒

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” — Margaret Mead

“The world is changed by your example, not by your opinion.” — Paulo Coelho

“Unjust laws exist; shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and do better than it would have them?” — Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*

“Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man’s original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion.” — Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*

“They must learn that their power does not lie in their voting strength, that their power lies in their ability to stop production.” — Voltairine de Cleyre, *Direct Action*

“The primary function of union bureaucracies, under the new order, was to suppress wildcat action by their rank and file, to suppress direct action on the job, and to limit labor action to declared strikes under NLRB rules.” — Kevin Carson

“Agorism believes gradual withdrawal of state support through what Konkin described as ‘Profitable Civil Disobedience.’ Starving the state of its revenue and purpose by transferring these responsibilities over to decentralized institutions is the most feasible way to achieve free markets according to agorism.” — “Agorism,” *Encyclopedia*, describing Konkin’s strategy

“I am writing this preliminary statement of my reasons for not paying taxes ahead of time, as I was recently informed by your office that I would be imprisoned for my constant refusal to pay taxes. Upon my arrest I will give you the correct report of my earnings to date in 1948. My belief in the iniquity of government, which exists primarily to wage war, has been stated this last six years in my statement to your department when I refused to pay any tax, and also in articles in the *Catholic Worker*.”
— Ammon Hennacy

“If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, ‘But what shall I do?’ my answer is, ‘If you really wish to do anything, resign your office.’ When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished. But even suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man’s real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now.” — Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*

“The greatest change we need to make is from consumption to production, even if on a small scale, in our own gardens. If only ten per cent of us do this, there is enough for everyone. Hence the futility of revolutionaries who have no gardens, who depend on the very system they attack, and who produce words and bullets, not food and shelter.” — Bill Mollison

“If it’s inaccessible to the poor, it’s neither radical nor revolutionary.” — Anonymous

“I never expect men to give us liberty. No, women, we are not worth it until we take it.” — Voltairine de Cleyre, *Gates of Freedom*

“Can you imagine slaves on a plantation sitting around voting for masters and spending their energy on campaigning and candidates when they could be heading for the ‘underground railway?’ Surely they would choose the counter-economic alternative; surely Dr. Rothbard would urge them to do so and not be seduced into remaining on the plantation until the Abolitionist Slavemasters’ Party is elected.” — SEK III

“Never be deceived that the rich will allow you to vote away their wealth.” — Lucy Parsons

“No great idea in its beginning can ever be within the law. How can it be within the law? The law is stationary. The law is fixed. The law is a chariot wheel which binds us all regardless of conditions or place or time.” — Emma Goldman, 1917

The Window of Opportunity

☒ “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” — Buckminster Fuller ☒

“The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.” — Gustav Landauer, quoted by Colin Ward in *The State and Society*

“To dissolve, submerge, and cause to disappear the political or governmental system in the economic system by reducing, simplifying, decentralizing and suppressing, one after another, all the wheels of this great machine, which is called the Government or the State.” — Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*

“Humanity is going to need to make a major shift toward a cooperative, decentralized, and flexible mode of production to ensure its continued existence on this planet.” — Eric Fleischmann

“Dual power is the idea that the embryo of the new world must be created while fighting the current one; ‘building the new in the shell of the old’. It means encouraging working class organs of self-management, where we can exercise our autonomy and restrict the power of boss and government until such time as we can confront and abolish both. A dual power strategy is one that directly challenges institutions of power and at the same time, in some way, prefigures the new institutions we envision. Therefore, it not only opposes the state, it also prepares for the difficult confrontations and questions that will arise in a revolutionary situation.” — Beyond Resistance

Writers like James Livingston and Michel Bauwens have explicitly drawn on previous transitions as models for the hierarchy-network transition. Although our political culture, both Right and Left, envisions a post-capitalist transition through the lens of the French and Russian revolutions—abrupt, insurrectionary, and equated largely to the seizure of the state—there’s no reason to assume it will be. It could just as easily be a decades-long, relatively gradual process like the decay of the Western Roman Empire and of feudalism.

[...]

The 500-odd-year-old capitalist system, like previous historic systems, is not a monolithic unity, but a collection of mutually interacting social formations—some in ascendancy, some in decline. It follows that the supplanting of capitalism need not

involve a dramatic rupture on the part of a monolithic unity of progressive forces. As Eugene Holland argues,

the requirement of such a radical systemic break is necessary only when you conceive of a society or mode of production as a total system in the first place. [...] Construing such elements in terms of dominant, residual, and emergent improves utopian prospects considerably, inasmuch as there would presumably be positive elements to affirm (the “emergent” ones) alongside the negative ones to critique and reject (presumably all the “dominant” ones). [...]

Ultimately the situation is resolved when the forces of the old order attempt—and fail—to thwart the transition.

[...] our current situation is propitious [...] because the constituent power of the multitude has matured to such an extent that it is becoming able, through its networks of communication and cooperation, through its production of the common, to sustain an alternative democratic society on its own. Here is where the question of time becomes essential. When does the moment of rupture come? [...]

Revolutionary politics must grasp, in the movement of the multitudes and through the accumulation of common and cooperative decisions, the moment of rupture [...] that can create a new world.

But however abrupt and dramatic the final rupture may seem, it is only the culmination of a long preexisting process of “building the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.”

[...]

John Holloway argues similarly that the post-capitalist transition will be an “interstitial process” like that from feudalism to capitalism.

[...]

Commons-based peer production, as an alternative to both the capitalist corporation and the state, enables

the direct social production of use value, through new life practices that are largely outside the control of capital, and with means of production which have been socialized to a very significant degree. These new processes are post-capitalist rather than capitalist, in the sense that they no longer need any specific role of capital for their reproduction.

— Kevin Carson, *The Desktop Regulatory State*, “The Transition from Hierarchies to Networks”

“If it proves impossible legally to compel the ruling power to change the ways it governs us, and if for various reasons those who reject this power cannot or do not wish to overthrow it by force, then the creation of an independent or alternative

or parallel [society] is the only dignified solution.” — Ivan Jirous, *Parallel Polis: An Inquiry*, as quoted by Academy of Ideas

“Economic counter-institutions, unfortunately, work within the framework of a larger corporate capitalist economy. They compete in markets in which the institutional culture of the dominant firms is top-down and hierarchical, and are in great danger of absorbing this institutional culture themselves. That’s why you have a non-profit and cooperative sector whose management is indistinguishable from its capitalist counterparts: prestige salaries, middle management featherbedding, bureaucratic irrationality, and slavish adherence to the latest motivational/management theory dogma. The problem is exacerbated by a capitalist financial system, which extends positive reinforcement (in the form of credit) to firms following an orthodox organizational model (even when bottom-up organization is far more efficient).” — Kevin Carson, *Building the Structure of the New Society Within the Shell of the Old*

“Horizontal, networked communications technologies enable unprecedented speeds of phase transition in public consciousness. Doug McAdam coined the term ‘Cognitive Liberation’ for ‘a process in which people suddenly and collectively decide that they are no longer afraid, that their recent fear or apathy was based on lies, and that there is no going back to the old ways of thinking.’ Once a critical mass of the public decides that change is inevitable, it is. And with networked communications technology, that critical mass may coalesce suddenly and unexpectedly.” — Kevin Carson, *The Desktop Regulatory State: The Question of Repression*

“It is a tragic irony that the most deadly mass killings in human history have been motivated by the desire to create a radically different and better society. The attempt to engineer Utopia has been used to justify some of the world’s most horrendous crimes.” — Benjamin A. Valentino

“The most radical revolutionary will become a conservative the day after the revolution.” — Hannah Arendt

“All modern revolutions have ended in a reinforcement of the power of the State. 1789 brings Napoleon; 1848, Napoleon III; 1917, Stalin; the Italian disturbances of the twenties, Mussolini; the Weimar Republic, Hitler. These revolutions, particularly after the First World War had liquidated the vestiges of divine right, still proposed, with increasing audacity, to build the city of humanity and of authentic freedom. The growing omnipotence of the State sanctioned this ambition on each occasion. It would be erroneous to say that this was bound to happen. But it is possible to examine how it did happen; and perhaps the lesson will follow. Apart from a few explanations that are not the subject of this essay, the strange and terrifying growth of the modern State can be considered as the logical conclusion of inordinate technical and philosophical ambitions, foreign to the true spirit of rebellion, but which nevertheless gave birth to the revolutionary spirit of our time. The prophetic dream of Marx and the over-inspired predictions of Hegel or of Nietzsche ended by conjuring

up, after the city of God had been razed to the ground, a rational or irrational State, which in both cases, however, was founded on terror.” — Albert Camus, *The Rebel*

“...it is impossible to achieve such a revolution by means of dictatorship and state power. Without a widespread reconstruction coming from below—put into practice by the workers and peasants themselves, the social revolution is condemned to bankruptcy.... [W]e must hope that... serious efforts will be made to create within the working class—peasants, workers and intellectuals—the personnel of a future revolution which will not obey orders from above but will be capable of elaborating for itself the free forms of the whole new economic life.” — Pyotr Kropotkin

“The Earth is littered with the ruins of empires that believed they were eternal.” — Camille Paglia

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