

Shoplifting ethics

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*WARNING: This article **calls** the reader to theft, crime and terror! The author claims all the responsibility! Any similarity to names or incidents is entirely intentional! Share this file P2P. Read this to a songie.*

Shoplifting is the most effective protest against all these objectionable attributes of modern corporations...

— *Why I Love Shoplifting, CrimethInc.*

Shoplifting from the bourgeoisie is ethical — not because I said so, but because I can prove it. If a hundred euros were stolen from you, would it be ethical to steal ten back? Returning your own money, and not even the full amount — that's not even *stealing!*

In fact, shoplifting (or any other theft from the super-rich) is just such an expropriation of your own property. Even stealing from stores every day, you will never fully compensate for the amount stolen from you and never start stealing someone else's money, although that would be still OK with the super-rich.

But at what point did the rich steal from us, so we don't notice it? When a thief takes a bill out of our wallet — this is theft at the micro level, and it is noticeable: now you don't have a bill no more. Macro-level theft works on a trickier way:

A. You're being stolen from at work.

Mega-corporations are taking away our surplus value (in a nutshell, that's when you produce \$20 worth in an hour, but get paid \$9/hr wages), suppress our protests for better working conditions, deny exemptions, avoid paying taxes, inhumanely exploit the labor of the poorest among us in third world countries, sometimes without pay, using open slavery or our own children, and the salaries of the top earners are up to **five hundred thousand** times the median wage.

Even in Scandinavian countries you will work one and a half days a week, or 16 years of your life, without pay — to make the business owner richer. **Wage theft exceeds all other theft combined** — employers find every way to avoid paying fair (and legal!) wages to the tune of \$50 billion (1,2,3), likely even more.

Stealing from mega-corporations is claiming the entire amount you earned, not just a portion of it. Steal at Work!

B. You are being stolen from in consumption.

Mega-corporations charge high markups, sometimes selling even cheap life-saving drugs at ten, or even fifty, or even two hundred times the cost! (For example, a recent study found that a drug for diabetics costing up to \$1,000 is produced for as little as \$5.)

They manipulate marketing, artificially induce consumption (e.g., in health care), or create artificial needs to exaggerate their income (e.g., Coca-Cola privatized bodies of water so massively that in some areas of Mexico, water cost almost more than a bottle of Coke).

At the end of the '90s, the World Bank threatened not to renew a major loan on which the Bolivian government depended if they did not agree to privatize all water

services in the city of Cochabamba. The government conceded and signed a contract with a consortium headed up by corporations from England, Italy, Spain, the US, and Bolivia. The water consortium, lacking knowledge of local conditions, immediately raised the rates, to the point where many families had to pay a fifth of their monthly earnings just for water. On top of this they enforced a policy of shutting off the water of any household that did not pay. In January 2000, major protests erupted against the water privatization.

— *Anarchy works*, Peter Gelderloos.

They design goods so that they break or wear out quickly, cause monstrous suffering to sentient beings in the production of meat products and eggs. They resort to pinkwashing, blackwashing, greenwashing, trends and fashions, symbol consumption, compassion exploitation, and a host of other tricks and psychological manipulations to get you to buy what you don't need, what you don't want, and what you wouldn't choose if you had all the information. Entire staffs of psychologists are thinking of ways to get you to buy things more and more often.

Stealing from mega-corporations is just a small reduction in prices to a fairer level.

C. Alternatives are being stolen from you.

Mega-corporations are destroying small and alternative businesses that offer fairer rates through monopolies, dumping, exclusive contracts, lobbying, taking over advertising space, and harassment through the courts.

They are not interested in the health of the consumer — let their product kill you, if you buy more of the product, even just for compensating its own side effects.

They don't care about the environment — the world can burn to the ground if they have money for a spaceship with a green garden, zoo and aquariums.

Stealing from mega-corporations is a protest against the intrusion into our lives. Imagine stealing from the military budget of someone attacking your country.

Indeed, centralized governments (...) are more inclined to ignore signs of the onset of ecological catastrophe by hiding behind the interests of so-called national welfare or even openly recognizing the interests of corporations.

— *Anarchism and Ecology*, George Woodcock.

D. Equal opportunities are being stolen from you.

While some people have hundreds of billions that they use to multiply their capital all the more, others don't have enough money for doctors, good housing, clothes, or even food.

Many people live below the poverty line and stores throw away tons of goods. At least 100 million people die avoidable deaths every five years under capitalism, and wall clocks worth millions of euros are made for the rich. Yes, those who own money are skillful at using it in a way that makes them feel good — but they are utterly inept at using it in a way that makes everyone feel good: even if it would not worsen but improve their personal fortunes.

We have already outlived the age when we believed that democracy was harmful and resources should be at the mercy of the aristocracy. A huge pile of available money could go to downplaying suffering for all sentient beings, fighting depression, anxiety and addictions, greening cities, downplaying impending catastrophes....

Stealing from mega-corporations is a redistribution of resources to society. If you wish, donate half or all of the money you save on stealing to a grassroots organization that supports the poorest and most oppressed, and you will have done two good things at once.

If you don't let a person eat for any reason, you are encouraging them to steal and commit other crimes — and thus creating the need for courts, lawyers, judges, and guards, and their maintenance will be a far greater burden than providing food for the offenders. And these latter you will still have to feed, even if you throw them in jail.

— *The ABCs of Anarchism, Alexander Berkman.*

E. Your human rights are being stolen from you.

Shouldn't basic needs be a right? We tend to accept the conditions of society without criticism, but if you think about it: are we really okay with the fact that in our country (as long as you don't live in an anarchist territory) food, clothing, housing — and maybe even creativity and the internet — are paid for?

It's not about stealing jewelry (although that's justified by other arguments, too). Let's be realistic: no country in the world would go bankrupt if everyone had the *right* to a few meals a day — at the expense of those who have as many meals as the whole of humanity combined could not ever finish.

Under Anarchism it would be considered a great crime if one had more than one could spend in several lifetimes, and one's neighbors did not have enough bread to feed their children.

— *ABC of Anarchism, Alexander Berkman.*

Stealing from mega-corporations is a claim to rights that cannot be unheard.

F. You've already been stolen for your yet-not-perfect thievery!

In the past the loss associated with stolen merchandise was deducted from store employee bonuses. But today, the potential loss is simply included in the price of the merchandise. And this may be the craziest argument in favor of shoplifting: you have ALREADY paying for your thefts.

All your life, you've been overpaying for goods simply because corporations feared you might steal something. Imagine if you were beaten daily by the police simply because POSSIBLY you're the first to beat up police officers on a daily basis — wouldn't that mean they were asking for conflict themselves?

There's no way to give up that kind of surcharge, so shoplifting only "evens out" the purchase amount. And if you think of how much stuff you've already managed to buy in your lifetime without stealing...

Stealing from mega-corporations — because they don't expect anything else from us.

"But aren't the stolen goods deducted from the salaries of the workers?", your friend will ask. First of all — no, today, as it has already been said, today theft is most often paid for by the consumer (1,2).

Secondly, our theft goes hand-in-hand with labor resistance. We can't refuse, for example, to take destructive action against a police station because the costs will fall on the taxpayers, can we? Or from resisting a military invasion because we'll have to kill (often) innocent, forcibly conscripted men? No, we need to attack and incite resistance from all those who have to pay for other people's mistakes. (But even if that doesn't work out, or we don't do it, we can't forbid ourselves from resisting the oppressor because "they might start oppressing others", for we are not responsible for their actions.)

Third, to any workers/people whose wages have been cut, we suggest joining shoplifting. We will do this until there is no one left to cut from, and the bourgeoisie will have to start taking responsibility for their own sins. After all, everyone who is a worker in the morning is a consumer in the evening.

"If this is really so, why is stealing considered bad?", your friend will ask. There are two reasons. First, there are two kinds of stealing: from the people and from the bourgeoisie. The first is not permissible under any circumstances. This means stealing from friends, neighbors, strangers, and often even small businesses! But stealing from the megacorporations cannot be compared to this for all the reasons described above.

Second, shoplifting scares the hell out of the bourgeoisie. If we all engage in it, we will gain economic independence, learn to demand what is rightfully ours and protest against oppression. What next? We will demand the abolition of neo-colonialism? We will demand cutting off forced taxes, just like forced surcharges? We will demand that factories be given to those who work in them and care for them, and houses to those who live in them? We will demand that we stop being ruled and prefer self-organization to the parasitism of the authorities?

You've been stolen five times — but do thieves go on trial? Grandmothers who don't have enough in their pensions to buy groceries will; college girls who steal cosmetics will; non-white immigrants who aren't hired because of the color of their skin will; unemployed people looking for sustenance for their families will; alcoholics addicted to the bottle will; homeless people looking for new clothes will; generally anyone will but those who should.

Families, schools, cops, authoritarian churches, the media, and the masses are all shouting that their theft is moral and ours is immoral. It may be immoral. **But it's definitely ethical!**

Ethics is radically different from morality. Morality is something that is set from the outside, content that is not elaborated, but accepted through coercion or just mindlessly observed. In contrast, ethics is something that comes from within, something that is worked through, thought through without coercion, and then guides behavior. Morality can be seen as a victory over the individual, while ethics is a "victory with"

the individual, and the behavior guided by ethics is the result of the development and elaboration of concepts.

— *Especifist Anarchism, Filipe Correa.*

Start shoplifting today!

Read **HOW to shoplift** in this repository of different guides, books and articles: <https://cryptpad.fr/file/#/2/file/IAcxd1V+wCbhr-JJJ0N9AbTB/>

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