

The Life and Joy of Insubordination

Flower Bomb

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In this essay I substitute “wage-slave” for “worker” since there are many different ideas of what “work” could mean. I am also considering the fact that “worker” is socially loaded with congratulatory appraisal as it conceals the true nature of it’s meaning: slave. Here I criticize “wage-slave” as a role and identity assigned to individuals by a system that requires their physical and mental subjugation en masse. The “wage-slave” is only such, as long as one fulfills that role and identity. Beneath that role and identity is a chaotic uniqueness which arms the individual with emancipatory potential.

When people ask “What is “anarchy”?”, my answer is rarely a reference to the popular philosophers of history who define it academically as an “ism”. My personal relationship to anarchy is one of constant exploration and discovery. For me, what differentiates anarchy from any other political idea is the antipolitics of its practice. As an anarchist, I have no inclination to recruit a mass of people to overthrow the establishment. I have no desire to construct persuasive programs encouraging the “worker” to join a party, vote, fight for better wages - let alone remain as a wage-slave. All I have is an anarchist project of my own: the reclaiming of my life from wage-slavery and social control. It is a project of self-preservation armed with hostility to all that attempts to categorize, confine, and control me.

Things we come to familiarize ourselves with like presidential elections, the police, banks, and wage-slavery are all social systems constructed to maintain order – an order maintained through coercion, disempowerment, and fear. Together these things make up the governmental establishment which occupies and applies ownership to geographical locations. The maintaining of this occupation relies heavily on an apparatus that monopolizes violent force, as well as the subjugation of any persons residing in these locations. The subjugation of a population of people wouldn’t succeed without the normalized logic of submission and psychological warfare. In order to gain access to the monopolized resources needed to survive, the conquered population of people are forced to reproduce and maintain the establishment through wage-slavery: enslavement in exchange for a monetary wage. At the root of this social control is the domination of the individual – a domination which reinforces the logic of individual submission to the group. For the sake of the leftist wet-dream, imagine every individual wage-slave deciding to quit their job, all at once, and all those who didn’t have a job deciding against getting one. Those few who monopolize resources would quickly lose everything and everyone they needed to protect them. With the expropriation of violent force, these individuals could unite and destroy those maintaining

hierarchical power. But as years have shown, the continuity of capitalism and the slave-master relationship is complex and reinforced in a variety of ways.

As an anarchist against work, I will still validate the wage-slave's stress and fear of poverty, their personal justifications for submitting to slavery and the the colossal misery that accompanies these things. I can not deny the power of materialist accumulation, consumerism, and the toxic escapism which acts to distract and pacify outrage. I have seen apathy personalized as a lifelong commitment, embraced by those too emotionally defeated to break the chains of capitalism's captivity. The idea of mass revolt would be ideal, but is unfortunately utopian. The workplace is constantly evolving to be more accommodating to the wage-slave. This includes, but not limited to, serving as a remedy for boredom, a platform for social networking and emotional comfort through economic security. These small personal relationships with work play a big role in stunting efforts to organize mass worker revolt. In other words, many people enjoy wage-slavery, and will even sabotage efforts to organize against it.

It is inaccurate to assume people are one monolithic mass willing to rise up against the establishment. But rather than relying on a mass revolt, there is the power of uncontrollable, unpredictable individual revolt. These revolts are composed of cells or "lone wolf" individuals who make revolt a daily practice rather than a future phenomena to wait for. As an ex-wage-slave, I will validate the unique history and personhood of a wage-slaving individual, their desire for freedom and the suppressed rage that accompanies their contempt for what they do. I will validate their hatred for every social construct of domination that compresses them. I will validate a wildness they keep caged up in fear of being called "crazy" or "weird". I will validate a behavioural uniqueness they possess which society would attempt to pathologize and eliminate to maintain psychiatric standardization.

So many norms, roles, and identities shoved down our throats from birth - is it really a surprise that the oppressed "workers of the world" haven't smashed capitalism to pieces by now? Where in the prison of society do we find the encouragement to not only be our unique wild selves, but to also weaponize our hostility towards the societal apparatus of control? Individuality, often promoted within the confinement of a pre-constructed identity - one assigned at birth and necessary for the functioning of capitalist society - is defined by society rather than the chaos of indefinite, ungoverned self-discovery. Due to the anthropocentric lens through which we view the world, wildness is moralized as an evil savagery in need of domesticating and management. Wildness is the enemy of the technological colonization of the natural world. So what does anarchist wildness look like? Anarchy as wildness refuses the control and domination of socially constructed systems which subjugate individuality. Where ever there is social constructs attempting to subjugate individual uniqueness, there is a politicized program at play. This program (which often attempts to acquire a dominating position) is responsible for normalizing a standardized way of life in which individual people are reduced from complex ever-changing beings to the identity of "worker", or - for the sake of this essay - "wage-slave".

What does it mean to be ungovernable? Within ungoverned self-discovery come questions of survival. Without the instinct of survival, the capitalists who profit from the products of my labor would have no leverage to enslave me. Food, shelter, etc. are essentials that require the labor of others to maintain. Under systems that require a mass of people to maintain, individuals are discouraged from finding the power to acquire their own food and/or create their own shelter. Today, shelter (industrial buildings fixed up with plumbing, electricity, etc) are manufactured by one group of people (wage-slaves) and sold to, and occupied by others (consumers). Alienation

can be found here where those purchasing or renting space have no direct connection to its construction. Just the same as when people purchase food in grocery stores, they are disconnected from the true source of that food (slaughterhouses, for example) since someone else puts in the work to harvest, process, and package it. The leverage capitalist society maintains over every individual is that of survival. Through monopolizing resources, those with the most can enslave those with the least. So what way do anarchists survive if they refuse the role and identity of “wage-slave”? If an individual decides to arm their desires with action, how does that individual refuse enslavement to a boss or master and continue maintaining access to resources? Under capitalism, the expropriation of resources from those who monopolize them is considered illegal. This is where anarchism breaks away from the civilized notions of social reform and finds affinity with illegality.

I can only speak for myself when I talk about illegalist anarchy since for every individual, their interpretation will be influenced by circumstances unique to their experience. There is also an entire history rich with illegalist anarchy taking place in the early 1900s around the globe, and continuing on today. For the purpose of this particular essay I will be focusing on illegality related to resource expropriation as an argument against wage-slavery. So from this perspective, illegalist anarchy is the refusal to confine my anarchist activity to an above-ground, liberalized, mass-appeal activity. It is the daily practice of experimenting with methods of survival that refuse the limiting moral code of law and order. It is the weaponizing of chaos from which I find courage and strength in joyfully discovering new ways of surviving – all of which circumnavigate wage-slavery. I have grown sick and tired of bosses, workplaces, and forcing my body to wake up with the sound of a blaring alarm. I am in full retirement from wage-slavery at the age of thirty-three, and I have absolutely no desire to turn back. So, how do I eat? How do I survive without a paycheck from a workplace to sell my labor? A reality that is often difficult to remember is that everything one needs to survive already exists all around. In addition to poly-crop guerrilla gardening and foraging, food is stockpiled high in grocery stores. Tools for creativity and sabotage are hoarded by hardware stores. Dumpsters are filled to the brim with a variety of resources. What has been stolen from the individual is a sense of direct connection to these resources. Through learned consumerism, people see themselves as merely consumers- basically, “If I don’t have the money for this food, I just go hungry tonight.”. Through fear, capitalism along with the state has pacified a healthy outrage that could motivate us to take the resources needed to survive. This is another form of alienation – but one that keeps the consumer passive: if you make something with your own hands, you feel more connection to it as yours. But when someone else makes it and you see it in a store window, there is no direct connection. Therefore, there is less emotional justification for outrage or motivation to break the barrier of law and fear. Similar to the factory jobs I worked where a single product was put together by multiple people. If each person is only responsible for producing a piece of the whole product, there is no direct connection between the production of that product as a whole, and the individual worker. Therefore, the wage-slave doesn’t develop a relationship with what they produce, because a single product is produced by multiple people. Rather than celebrating individualism, this process glorifies workplace collectivism- a useful tool in encouraging productivity and unifying “workers” for the common good of capitalism.

What is socially discouraged in the individual is a creative rebellion that crafts plans and ideas on how to undermine the security apparatus that protects resources. Store cameras, Loss Prevention officers (or as some of us call them for short “LP’s”), magnetic security devices attached

to items, etc. While one individual spends their time and energy at work and maybe planning what bills to pay next, the ex- wage-slave individual has the opportunity to utilize free time to experiment with different ideas on how to get shit for free. Eight hours of committed work at a factory (or grocery store, office place, etc.) could be eight hours of strategic planning, assessing, and experimenting with illegalist activity.

Another opportunity is the wage-slaving individual experimenting with illegalist activity within the workplace. Of course, the stakes are a little higher since the individual would have surrendered personal information to obtain the job, but an inside-the-workplace perspective can offer an opportunity to exploit weaknesses in work-place security. Though, personally, I haven't met many people who take much advantage of this. And this is probably due to the fact that they depend on the job in a way that outweighs any advantages of work-place theft.

Coming back to the anti-work perspective on illegalism, when it comes to the resources of survival, the time not surrendered to wage-slavery can be time put towards careful planning, personal fear-assessment, and target seeking.

As society forces us into schools to begin the indoctrination sequence of behavioural conformity and obedience, we have very little opportunity to learn about ourselves and our capabilities. Between school and our homes, playgrounds and neighbourhood streets, we're allowed a regulated time-frame of play. From my own perspective, play is the materialization of imaginative desire, exploration, and discovery. Each of these are fundamental tools necessary in observing and comprehending one's environment and their relationship to it. Embedded in that relationship is a "self" that is composed of experiences and personal desires. But with such a narrow time-frame, a young individual only has a limited scope of exploration and instead, with development, begins internalizing the rhetoric of consumerist, productive, and responsible adulthood.

For real though - what can most people say about themselves and the lives they live? Aside from a few forms of escapism or maybe hobby activities that stem from personal desire, many peoples lives are just wage-slavery, paying bills, paying for materialist shit and wage-slave some more to stockpile (save) money. Shit, people spend most of their lives using the present to prepare or secure a future- the existence of a future which is often taken for granted in the first place. So how much can one know about their self when so much of the "self" is being constricted, conditioned, and defined in terms of wage-slave productivity? Whether class or social, the status of an individual under capitalism is determined by their access to, and relationship with, materialism. But what about a "self" unbound by capitalism, and insubordinate to materialist representation? Or a "self" that refuses the traditional categorical assignments of social constructs and embraces life as anarchistic existence? A life of illegalist anarchy then allows for the limitless possibilities of creating one's self day by day.

In my opinion, refusing the wage-slave role and identity destabilizes social control on an individual level. Since it is a firm work ethic that must be drilled into the individual to secure the foundation of capitalism (or any system that requires massified subjugation for its sustainability), individuals who refuse wage-slavery are subjected to a variety of social pressures including personal judgement, ridicule and the threat of poverty. To build up a confidence in one's self that is immune to the social pressures of being talked down to (as well as a confidence in ones creative, determined self to avoid poverty), is to reclaim power as an individual. It is a power that reclaims "self" from the role and identity of "proletariat", "worker", or "wage-slave".

Like chaotic negation to all socially fixed identities, there is power in contradicting the social identity and expectation of the "wage-slave". This power also undermines the assumption that

“the group” (or formalized organization, society, the masses etc.) is stronger than the individual. If “the group” is unable to subjugate an individual, that individual carries the potential to inspire the emancipation of other individuals from “the group”. A group, or systemic establishment, is only as powerful as the subservience of the individuals who comprise it. Without subservient individuals to reinforce the power of “the group”, there is no group - only empowered individuals.

The power of presidents, politicians, the police, and the military industrial complex, economic systems of every form and social constructs require the subservience of individuals. Without individual participation, the continuity of any system unravels. This is what makes individuality not only important but also powerful. Under capitalism, refusing wage-slavery requires courage; assimilatory subservience is psychologically coerced with the threat of starvation and poverty. The logic of submission is only negated through a fearless self-confidence and the desire to become socially ungovernable.

Could an individualist anarchist change the world? As unlikely as it seems, who am I to say no? Different people are inspired by different things. To some, a personal relationship with someone else’s words can shatter a worldview. Those same words armed with the actions of an individual could spark flames of social insubordination, possibly multiplying into spontaneous fires of joyful emancipation. It is not the leadership of deceptive, double speaking academics or committees (invisible or not), political schemes, or popular catch phrases that ignite personal rebellion. In my opinion and experience, it is the discovery and re-claiming of “self” as powerful, unique, and wild. From this perspective, anarchist illegality negates the domesticated conformity of internalized workerism. Illegalist anarchy confronts law and order with insurgency, preserving wild chaos as individuality against the homogenizing effect of society. To reclaim and reinvent one’s life as a daily exploration of personal adventure is anarchy against the socialized guilt and pressure to abandon rebellious youth.

Wage-slavery is the enemy of play, individuality, and freedom. Social systems require the subjugation of individuality to either homogenized membership or fixed group-identities in order to maintain their existence. With all social systems the formula is similar: individuality is surrendered to the group in order to be granted access to resources. Under capitalism, the wage-slave - or in Marxist terms, “the proletariat” - is an identity pre-configured with the role of reproducing capitalist society. This includes an individual surrendering their mind and body to a master in exchange for a wage that serves as the permission slip to access resources. But to the anarchist individual armed with the illegality of resource expropriation, anarchy is survival without permission.

Anarchy can not be experienced through history books, the reformation of work places nor the confines of a new societal system. Anarchy breathes with the rhythm of the wild in constant flux, ungoverned by anthropocentric laws and order. I rejoice my anarchy in the transformative abandonment of the role and identity of “the proletariat”. There is no great future revolution on the horizon to organize or wait for. There is only today, with no guarantee of tomorrow. There are no charismatic leaders to open the door to freedom. There is only the power of anarchist individuality defined by the liberating ammunition of desire.

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