

The Criminal Bee

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February 1993

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Nietzsche says somewhere that the true, free spirit will not wish to see the laws of the herd abolished, lest there exist nothing to struggle against and overcome. Little danger of such an abolishment at this point, one might suppose. Since Nietzsche's time law has perhaps mutated from a complex but many-dimensional tool of the oppressor class to the subtle, fatal, all-pervasive self-image of the spectacle. Law simulates the dictatorship of community forever promising & forever withdrawing the utopia of justice. Our founding myths here in America, which take the form of such texts as a *declaration of independence* or a bill of rights etc. prove so infinitely flexible as to become, like all myths, their opposites. The law no longer seems like a dialectical edge as it was for Nietzsche, but rather a viral ooze, infecting the very fabric of language & thought. One can no longer distinguish between cops & cop culture. The media-induced hallucination of a society defined by its lawyers & police. Ten minutes in a video store should convince any impartial observer that we live in a police state of consciousness, far more pervasive than the Nazis, those crude pioneers of amphetamine television & ballistics. What, for example, would a UFO alien visitor think of a planet whose favorite icon appeared to consist of an angry law enforcement officer pointing a gun at the observer? Some few subjects may free their minds for brief moments from the flickering omnipresence of this one true axiomatic image of *our moment in time* as Nixon used to call the present. No doubt they will at once begin to wonder about the possibility of overcoming the law, both as a social code which labels our desires as forbidden, and as an ectoplasmic super ego, or cop of the inner landscape suffocating us with the fear of our own passions.

The first step in any real utopia is to look in the mirror and demand to know my true desire, an action which already presupposes at least temporary overcoming of unconditional anxiety, of the fear that a daemon may appear in the glass, or a daemonic cop. Now what do I see? The first image to float to the surface of the scry stone, the magick mirror, is the criminal: my desires are illegal. My manias are forbidden in civilization. The moral code, embedded within the legal code defines my appetites as injury. Fourier & Nietzsche both defined the criminal as a natural insurrectionary spirit in revolt against the stifling repression of the social consensus. The criminal's tragedy, however, lies in being nearly the opposite of the cop: a mirror image, and therefore equally an image, a trap, a definition imposed within the language of control. And in any case, the deeper I look in the glass, the less I see any desires which I myself might label *wrong*, according to my own personal code of ethics. **Wrong** for me means counterproductive and ultimately self-immiserating. I don't want to realize my desires at the expense of other people's misery. Not because such action would be immoral but because it would be psychically self-defeating: misery breeds misery. Those caught in the trap of trying to realize their desires by hurting others are all, in my experience, themselves psychically poor. Crime in this sense of the word pays, but it doesn't pay enough! I reject it for purely selfish reasons – to realize my desires, I must overcome or even break the law, but I do not to do wrong according to my own light, nor will I accept the consensus label of criminal.

This explains why fascism is not an answer. Fascism is a desiring-machine but only for an amoral elite who achieve their goals through the creation & destruction of enemies and victims, as in Marquis de Sade. Fourier, however, asserts that desire itself remains impossible unless all desires are possible. That passion involves the Other, and therefore defines the only possible or real society. This realization draws the boundary between Fascism and Anarchism.

Gazing deeper into the mirror, in fact, I begin to see that I am not alone there. That the Self implies others, that we are co-implicated in each other's desires. And here we come to a stage higher,

in Nietzsche's view, than mere criminality: the society of free spirits, or as Max Sterner called it **The union of Self-owning Ones**. A form of organization exists which evades the murderous dialectic of institutions, the paradoxical counter-productivity of institutions as Ivan Illich calls it. This different kind of group might be identified with Fourier's passionate series, the psychically linked number of humans needed to express and realize a shared or common passionate goal. Such harmonic associations are prevented from coming into being, Fourier insisted, by civilization itself, which is founded on mass immiseration. He believed that Utopia would first have to be established in order for true series to form spontaneously out of various passions, for sensual & sexual fulfillment, for attractive labor, and for the total physical & psychic realization of the individual in society. In other words, Fourier made an absolute category of society just as Nietzsche & Sterner made an absolute category of the individual. Our task is **not** to follow either of these ideas, but to deconstruct, synthesize & reconstruct. Out of this process, we hope to see arise not merely another ideology or another no-place (U-topos)- which is what Utopia means – however brilliant or imaginably stimulating; rather, we hope to create a praxis, a mode of action for realizing the series and manifesting its passion here and now or so close to hear and now that we can taste it.

Elsewhere I have considered a number of possible forms for such groups, including the loosest, most temporary and ad hoc organizational agglomerations. Here however, I want to consider only one aspect of such groupings, that is their illegality. I will argue that illegality means more than mere law-breaking. Illegality, as a positive attribute of the Temporary Autonomous Zone implies that the very structure or the deepest motivation of the TAZ group contravenes or necessitates the overcoming of consensus values. And that this is true even when no statute or regulation has been broken. But in order to avoid as much metaphysics as possible here we can discuss some actual existing groups or situations which approximate the TAZ concept to some degree. (And by criticizing their shortcomings perhaps we can arrive at a clearer view of possibilities for the immediate future.)

The web work

Computer hacking has so far turned up nothing that has enhanced my life. Nor can I detect much enhancement in the lives of the hackers themselves. The goal of liberating all information is noble but ludicrously unobtainable. This should by now be obvious to all those who watched while the state smashed to a pulp a few hapless liberators of a few bits of information. The potential for liberation inherent in the BBS as a tool for social projects has not yet been realized. The BBS Meganet involves untold thousands of e-mail enthusiasts who have so far not sent or received one real good.

Someone please tell me I'm wrong (Audience: You're wrong!)O.K., we can talk about that afterwards. I would like to hear it. I really want to be told I'm wrong. But 99% is idle chatter, 1% maybe interesting information. But no chicken stew, no orgies and no enlightenment (Audience: Orgies ...) Orgies ? Where, on the computer network ? Give me a break. Now at last hackers have begun to experiment with cryptology – cypherpunks boast that soon secure networks will be available to e-mail users. One might issue the hackers a challenge: deliver to me one thing which is illegal and which I want, and which I could not have obtained so easily or at all without a computer network. I'd even accept a nice bit of high resolution pornography. Prove that computers can

supply, or at least expedite something more than publishing or creepy sounding synthetic music (Laughs). I demand secrets and I'm getting bored with waiting, thanks to a lifetime spent reading science fiction.

The Gathering

Considered as a TAZ. The gathering can be called and held without any computer assistance which is indeed fortunate because the gathering is a vital necessity. Now, today. And it is already evolving spontaneously, out of this need. A number of kind of gatherings aspire to manifest as TAZ: the neo-pagan festivals, the Rainbow camps, collaborative art events, open conspiracies such as Queer Nation or WACK, Raves, anarchist collectives, hypercultural international communities, secret societies meeting for risky or illegal or insurrectionary goals etc., drug dealers.

These groups or gatherings constitute the only viable immediate means of realizing passional series in real-time, every day life. In opposition to the forces of dissipation, alienation and suffocation by which the consensus viscates & dissolves all human aspiration to solidarity & festal values. Any critique leveled at these existing groups or gatherings therefore is meant as constructive in every sense of the word. The problems lie in 2 areas: philosophical & organizational. Some groups fail to realize the full implications of their reaction against the spectacle, which remains instinctual & hence philosophically unsound. For example, the 1960's delusion that we can use the media for our own ends still persists so that many groups are ruined by the very publicity they thought they needed in order to attain their goals. Once such a group allows itself to become recuperated as part of the spectacle of counterculture dissent, the Punch & Judy Show, starts.

An understanding of the dialectics of media should enable the group to devise a strategy of organization & praxis based on evasive or nomadic models of resistance rather than the old New Left shibboleths of "confrontation & seizing the media." On levels of tactics of organizational detail and specific projects, this philosophical preparedness should result in more effective means for expression, realization, manifestation of desire on the level of every day life. Publicity is a bad tactic, while tact & virtual clandestinity are good tactics....

Converts attracted by the media are usual summer soldiers & neurotics & if the wrong politician happens to catch your broadcast you may end up as the next bad example. Crushed beneath the boot of history, for all to see, live at 5. "It's your world, get this close," as the ads for PBS so breathlessly express it. "Let Geraldo rattle your cage." Maybe you haven't heard that slogan out here. To give an example of some organizations: NAMBLA & NORML have both had their membership lists seized by the police, the price of 60's media idealism. NAMBLA & NORML have achieved absolutely nothing of their reformist goals & may have done damage to their own causes through their misunderstanding of the media.

This is not the 1960's when the CIA could still lose control to LSD to a bunch of hippie publicists or television inadvertently contribute to anti-war sentiment by neglecting to censor the body bag count. We've had decades of Republican intelligence late capitalist control conspiracy power mongering since then. Communism is dead & now YOU'RE the enemy. Wake up. Wise up. Most of the world has sunk deep in media trance — they can't wake up and smell the coffee because the coffee has no smell. It's become pure image. Television is the real world. Real thing now. And if you don't believe it you're outside reality. This is far worse than being a criminal. At least the criminal has some relationship with the consensus. One must pity the radicals whose plans

of battle always include open boastings about their intransigent opposition to all establishment values, alerting the enemy as if only 5 seconds on the evening news or the “lifestyle report” could possibly validate their revolutionary ideas and their pathetic personalities. Once and for all, insurrection is not a commodity, my desires are not a commodity. And the media cannot reproduce them, much less satisfy them. One doesn’t need to be a media ecologist, recommending a media fast to see that all the big media must be understood, criticized & overcome or at least evaded if we’re to get anywhere with our project.

The Insurrection.

I’d like to answer those critics who’ve accused the TAZ of being an evasion or a postponement or a substitute for the insurrection or even for the revolution. In part these criticisms come from Latin American comrades who seem to be uneasy about the adventurous aspect of the TAZ and from North Americans who called it “anarchist Club Med.” Both critiques are important. The TAZ is not an idea or an ideology but something that is happening: as such, it needs good criticism. On the contrary, I’ve tried to emphasize over & over again: the TAZ is another way of building the kernel of the new society within the shell of the old (as the Wobblies used to say). And that the TAZ should serve as the matrix for the emergence of a Sorelian model of uprising (Georges Sorel, I highly recommend it).

However, it must be also repeated that the USA, at any rate, can scarcely be described in 1993 as a pre-revolutionary society. The election of a corrupt, venal pseudo-liberal regime which will smooth over the few rough spots in the spectacle while the Republicans reorganize to continue building the New World Order in 1996 makes the possibility of an American uprising even less likely. Are we to postpone all liberatory action until things get worse again? This would scarcely be logical or creditable. Those of us who feel so irrationally unhappy with the wonderful world of commodities & neo-puritan reaction cannot justly be denied the chance of local & transient experiments of Utopian realization now, or as soon as possible. In our lifetimes, in our lives. And this struggle is not without relevance to those people elsewhere in the world whom we may consider our natural allies, such as indigenous & tribal groups or revolutionary movements. In this sense the Temporary Autonomous Zone is like a pre-echo of the insurrection. A foretaste of its great liberatory energies and can even be seen as a necessary step toward the revolution which will realize the Utopia.

Thus it should be emphasized that the TAZ has not only a festaludic, celebratory or material bodily principle in view, but also like yang to yin, an inevitable measure of insurrectionary risk and intention to remake the world. The TAZ cannot be realized solely as a hedonic exercise (any more than the revolution can be realized without dancing, as Emma Goldman put it) which would lead to just charges of Club Med-ism or even crypto-fascism. The TAZ goes beyond the merely hedonic because it wants to expand & multiply until it infects or even becomes the social. And therefore even though the TAZ may be secret & closed & intensely pleasurable for its members, it must be seen as a struggle which opens itself potentially to all kindred spirits & fellow warriors. Most of the TAZ-like groups, gatherings known to me fail to measure up in one or other of these areas. The political groups have still not mastered the pleasure principle, while the lifestyle groups have still not mastered politics. Political praxis of some sort of course adds to the risk involved in the TAZ, and therefore increases the need for tact. But it also increases the pleasure.

The group jouissance, the group coming, within TAZ — this pleasure results from the very sense of overcoming, first mentioned by Nietzsche, when he spoke of the free spirits' joy at evading the law of the herd. And if this sounds elitist, remember, from the anarchist point of view, the herd consists precisely of those who agree to be herded. After the revolution, no doubt, free spirits would find some other sources for overcoming.

However, until then, the law still exists as an edge to sharpen our lives. But revolution in a certain sense can be said not to exist, since it has not happened within the history it wishes to claim as its field of activity. As for the law, it exists only as spectacle and as a pattern of spasms of terror. But the TAZ is rooted, however evanescently, within the life we live, within the material and imaginal world which WE have our genuine being, however fragmentary and even tragic. And within the celebratory mode of pleasure enhanced by doubling and redoubling which is the only excuse for society we know. Rather than crime, it might make more sense, or better poetry, to speak to sorcery which has all the connotations of secrecy and power we desire for the emerging TAZ. An air of menace, of invisibility & of the realization of desire. As for illegality, well, a quilting bee is not illegal yet it can be a perfect TAZ. Sooner or later, however, even a quilting bee runs the danger of becoming the object of tourism. It will become a banal imitation of itself, unless it can create, at least for a moment, an economy of life capable of persisting even if only briefly outside the prison of work, consume, die. And that economy by its very nature threatens the spoof world of control. Eventually the bee will be illegal, since it's already considered insane. And so the... quilting bee should begin now to act as if it's already illegal, to embrace a philosophy of illegalism. Today quilt, tomorrow, perhaps the uprising. Our kind of bee might be devoted to sex, info exchange, tax evasion, hashish farming or even to orgies, credit scams or gun running. It will still have the structure of the... quilting bee. And so the ... quilting bee should already anticipate a possibility to run guns or stage orgies. It should be prepared to act within the cracks of the monolith of simulation like a true gang of Johnsons. Like a swamp of Callahads. Like conspirators whose purpose is really to breathe together. Like criminals for the human race. Like pirate Utopians for peace. Like guerillas for harmony.

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Transcribed by Ovid from the Tribal Donut #5 cassette which contains a recording of a
performance in San Francisco, Feb. 1993.

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