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White Market Agorism

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Within any political movement set on radically changing society, there always comes a debate on how best to achieve those goals. Should we unionize towards a general strike? Should we withdraw from the prevailing system by living on scavenged, stolen, and scammed resources in the fashion of classic CrimethInc. propaganda? Should we build cooperatives and collectives in the spirit of venture communism? Should we go the route of propaganda of the deed and start blowing up government buildings and assassinating politicians? How about some combination of the above?

Well agorism seems to be just such a combination. Combining elements of illegalism, dual power theory, economic secession, syndicalism, and freed market anti-capitalism (but without many of the extremes of propaganda of the deed), agorism proposes a strategy of utilizing counter-economics as a way of achieving an anarchist society. But what is counter-economics?

Samuel Edward Konkin III, the founder of agorism, defines counter-economics in his work *Counter-Economics: what it is, how it works*:

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The Counter-Economy is the sum of all non-aggressive Human Action which is forbidden by the State. Counter-economics is the study of the Counter-Economy and its practices. The Counter-Economy includes the free market, the Black Market, the “underground economy,” all acts of civil and social disobedience, all acts of forbidden association (sexual, racial, cross-religious), and anything else the State, at any place or time, chooses to prohibit, control, regulate, tax, or tariff. The Counter-Economy excludes all State-approved action (the “White Market”) and the Red Market (violence and theft not approved by the State).

This is the basic definition agorists have worked with ever since and thus agorism has always been tied to the black and gray markets to the exclusion of the white, red, and pink (violence and theft approved by the state) markets. Or has it? Because in the reality of things, it seems that “white market agorism” is a lot more common and less contradictory than one might think.

To quote Konkin once more:

As more people reject the State’s mystifications — nationalism, pseudo-Economics, false threats, and betrayed political promises — the Counter- Economy grows both vertically and horizontally. Horizontally, it involves more and more people who turn more and more of their activities toward the counter-economic; vertically, it means new structures (businesses and services) grow specifically to serve the Counter-Economy (safe communication links, arbitrators, insurance for specifically “illegal” activities, early forms of protection technology, and even guards and protectors).

Derrick Broze defines the concepts of horizontal and vertical agorism in more detail in his essay, aptly titled *Vertical and Horizontal Agorism*. In that essay, he explains that horizontal agorism, “is related to the bold choice to pursue action that the State considers to be illegal or immoral. By venturing into this territory you are joining the ranks of the bootlegger, the moonshiner, the cannabis dealer, the guerilla gardener, the unlicensed lawn mower, food vendor or barber, the weapons dealer, and the crypto-anarchists.” This is essentially agorism as Konkin defined it but since then it has become so much more.

It is in vertical agorism that we discover a departure from the traditional agorist rejections of the white market. Vertical agorism is heavily inspired by the work of Karl Hess, such as his experiments in sustainability on the neighborhood level and his books summarizing those experiences, *Community Technology* and *Neighborhood Power*. As such, the focus is on sustainability and community self-reliance and is not restricted to only the black and grey markets.

Later in his essay, Broze goes on to explain that:

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.

Now I venture to disagree with Broze that these actions are not counter-economic merely because they do not utilize the black and gray markets as he states earlier in his essay. Of course, he clarifies that even if not counter-economic, “vertical actions are extremely

valuable and necessary.” But if these tactics directly challenge state and corporate power than how are they not counter-economic?

So what is “white market agorism” then?

Well, it includes many of the things Broze already listed when describing vertical agorism: community exchange networks, urban farming, backyard gardening, farmers markets, alternatives to the police, and p2p decentralized technologies. But it is so much more than that.

Cryptocurrency is largely a white market venture and yet it is championed as a prime example of agorism. The Industrial Workers of the World is lauded by Konkin himself as a perfect example of an agorist labor union and yet they are legally registered with the state and more often than not organize within the law. Decentralized social networking sites such as Minds and Steemit, decentralized renewable energy sources, biohacking, permaculture, hacker/makerspaces, community sharing programs, alternative models of exchange including gift economies, local exchange trading systems (LETS), mutual banking, labor notes, and precious metals, alternative and complementary medicines, unschooling/homeschooling, Tor, free stores, alternative media, and worker-owned businesses are all examples of white market agorism.

And yes, some forms of white market agorism can overlap with gray market agorism and can help to facilitate black market agorism. After all, the counter-economy must work together to overthrow the state and corporate control. In fact, we should push many of these white market ventures towards grey and black market actions where appropriate, such as promoting those ventures to go unpermitted or to not report all income made to the state, but we shouldn't exclude these actions as counter-economic when they fail to do so.

Counter-economics is about running counter to the power structures at hand. So in an economic system of bosses and wage slavery, worker-run businesses and grassroots democratic labor unions are counter-economic. In a food system largely monopo-

lized by a handful of corporations who utilize harmful practices associated with factory farming and industrial agriculture, growing your own food or buying from local farmers is counter-economic. In a media landscape largely dominated by a handful of news corporations, independent media is counter-economic. In a technological landscape dominated by only a few tech businesses, free and open source technology is counter-economic.

Just because it isn't gray or black market, doesn't mean it isn't counter-economic and it damn sure doesn't mean it's not agorist. It is about time we openly embrace and discuss the potential that white market agorism has to aid our cause.