

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Exclusive Interview of David Graeber

Yiannis Aktimon

13 May 2010

Void Network: Dear David Graeber, good afternoon from Exarchia area, Athens Greece. Here there are some questions that you might try to answer, so we can publish them in the pre b-fest Babylonia issue.

So ;How can you define the antiauthoritarian,movement and attitude of today? Do you think that we are facing a major turning point that somehow is showing the limits, of ideology in contradiction with an antiauthoritarian view,free from ideological obstacles?

D.G.: If by “ideology” you mean the idea that one needs to establish a global analysis before taking action (which inevitably leads to the assumption that an intellectual vanguard must necessarily play leadership role in any popular political movement) then I think, yes, we do see a gradual movement away from that. Much of my last ten years of intellectual life has been trying to think about ways in which intellectuals can play a useful role without descending into ideologists. There are no obvious answers though. I think we have come to a broad consensus about the fact that a diversity of

Yiannis Aktimon
Exclusive Interview of David Graeber
13 May 2010

Retrieved on 6th March 2021 from voidnetwork.blogspot.com
From Void Network for the Bfest issue of antiauthoritarian
newspaper Babylonia

theanarchistlibrary.org

perspectives, even incommensurable perspectives, is not a problem but actually a resource for our movements — since if the operative question is not “how do we define the situation” but “how shall we act together to further our common goals?” — that is, if it’s practical problem-solving, then obviously a group of people with diverse perspectives will have more useful insights and ideas than a group of people who all think exactly the same. This is an important breakthrough. But it still leaves some questions unanswered: you can’t just start, as John Holloway says, with “the scream”, the instinctive feeling that capitalism isn’t right, and then move to action — the very fact that you identify “capitalism” as the problem means there is some shared analysis, or else, there’d be no reason for us not to be working with fascists, nationalists, sexists, or for that matter the capitalists themselves. No one has quite resolved all of these questions but my impression is we’ve made a lot of progress — much more, in fact, in the last ten years than in whole fifty years previous to that.

Void Network: Is there really anarchy, an open social movement or some of the most advanced fractions of it turned to be more and more abstract, in the area of theory losing themselves inside an avant-gardism of activism, only compared in the past, by marxist-leninist views?

D.G. : By “advanced” I guess you mean “self-conscious?” I once wrote a little propaganda pamphlet called “Are you an Anarchist? The answer may surprise you!” I think most people share anarchist values and even practice anarchism (direct action, mutual aid, voluntary association) most of the time. I’d actually go even further. Most human activity, on the micro-level, is essentially communistic, in that it’s cooperative, and/or based on some variation of the principle “from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs.” Even bankers act this way with each other, and so do the people who clean the bank. Capitalism is built on endless diffuse forms of communism and always has been. I think one prob-

riously in trying to reimagine revolutionary strategy, but also to understand how it has been developing, in the places I was most familiar with (US, Canada, UK...) and I’d be very interested to see what would come of a similar project in a very different environment like Greece.

Thank you for your time, and I hope you will send me some answers as soon as it is possible!

by governments who borrow the money to create the means of coercion, then allow the bankers to lend that debt to everyone else — and use the means of coercion to enforce the debts. This is the regime under which all labor now operates.)

Void Network: what could be the basic forms of the new movement in the next 10 years? Is there any possibility of prediction? Is it necessary a kind of prediction, just to make somebody be more convincing?

D.G. : Someone once said history is made up of those events that couldn't have been predicted before they happened. I think we're due for a lot of history quite soon.

Void Network: revolution in reverse? How about that? How can reality and fantasy be melting and merging together, towards a new moment of social and rebellious clarity?

D.G. : Well, I wrote that piece in part to point out that the imagination has always been the center of our very idea of the left, the necessary tension between imagination and violence, but also, to highlight the role of feminism in throwing all our received assumptions about what a revolution would even be like into disarray. It was a way to understand a particular historical moment, but also to understand what it reveals about things that have always been happening and that, in the past, perhaps we could not directly see. Nothing is more important than feminism in opening our eyes to things that were sitting right in front of us but that we — or at least, we as men, though to some degree everyone — just couldn't identify. In rethinking tactics and strategies in Greece now, I think it might be very useful to start from a similar place of analysis. I mean, I can't tell you where it should take you. It's not my part to tell other people what to do. I can just say what I've seen that seems to have worked in the past and speculate about how such lessons might be applied to other problems. But what I was trying to do in that essay was take some of the insights of feminism se-

lem with the sort of self-conscious, revolutionary activist elites you are talking about is that they sometimes lose track of that, and fall into a certain elitism. This in turn renders much of their activism ineffective as they seem ridiculous to most of the people that they would like to bring into their movement. In America, for instance, there's a huge debate about "activist culture" — which is treated, especially by groups representing people of color, poor people, black people, immigrants, the truly oppressed, as a bad thing, a form of white privilege, or middle class privilege, in itself. There's a terrible paradox here. Once we reject the old, depressing Stalinist ideal of the grim, calculating revolutionary who denies him or herself everything because of their dedication to the revolution — since such people, even if they win, are unlikely to create a world anyone would want to live in — then we've got to accept that personal liberation, the creation of experiments in life, free communities, has to go hand-in hand with the work of fighting capitalism. But somehow our very attempts to create fragments of what a free society might be like make us seem absurd, even monstrous, to many of those we see as our natural allies — and makes us incapable of seeing that to some degree, they are already doing the very things we think we're inventing (consensus decision-making, alternative economies). So I take your question in that way: we develop not a theoretical avant garde, so much as a practical one. Now, something like that is probably inevitable: how to make alliances between those people whose main problem is oppression, and those whose main problem is alienation? In a way that's the ultimate revolutionary problem. We shouldn't blame ourselves — actually, I think that's part of the problem. Blaming ourselves means thinking about ourselves and if there's one absolutely legitimate grievance people have against these self-appointed activist elite it's that they are a little self-obsessed, which is, of course, the ultimate bourgeois vice. Thinking about your own privilege is still just thinking about yourself. We need to learn how to stop thinking about ourselves and to think about other people more.

Void Network: How much the great social movements of today, like the emigration movement and the current ecological movement, have anything to do with the infiltrations of antiauthoritarian ideas into them?

D.G. : I have only had the opportunity to observe in detail what's happened in North America, and to some degree in the UK, but my impression is that anti-authoritarian forms of process have had an enormous impact and it's really one of our greatest accomplishments. I was in the NYC Direct Action Network from 2000–2003, when it broke up, and we always said we didn't want to last forever – we were primarily a way of disseminating a certain set of principles of democratic process, showing how self-organization could, effectively, work, and much better than the forms of authoritarian dictat or top down phony “democracy” we were up against. The remarkable thing is how fast this happened. Much faster than we anticipated. True, there's a lot of debate now about moving away from a pure network model and towards more permanent forms of organization, and this is a healthy debate, we need a wide range of institutional forms here too, but the whole field of debate has shifted dramatically in an anti-authoritarian direction.

Void Network: what are the major challenges of antiauthoritarian movement of today? Is there really a revolution to be waited for, or in truth, the radical procedure of presnet, has to do with the ideas and forces of a general daily reformation of life?

D.G.: Globally, I think we are at a turning point, but that turning point has been, as it were, endlessly suspended. One reason the alter-globalization movement slowed down so in the second half of the '00s was not just the lingering effects of the war on terror and resultant stepping up of repression, but the fact that the other side simply couldn't get their act together. They were faced with enormous structural crises, really, the effects of the same broad diffuse popular resistance of which are movements were perhaps the most self-conscious, explicit, and articulate form. Yet all they did

Void Network: what is your present attitude about the end of traditional labour? Would you like to give us some more analysis of your current approach?

D.G. : Well, our horizon has to be the abolition of work in its conventional form. For me, I again find myself both agreeing and disagreeing with the Italians who say the production of value is now dispersed through all forms of social life, so we need to think about a social wage. My objection is they seem to think there's something new here, that “immaterial labor” or the dominance of such is a new development. I find this racist and sexist. They seem to think that in the 19th century, value was produced exclusively by factory work, or anyway paid employment, but that now, especially since the '70s, the real cutting-edge is the production of the informational and stylistic content, and context, or commodities – “immaterial labor” (a stupid phrase, it's not immaterial in any sense). Why? Well, when looking at such analysis, the way to understand it, I always say, is to follow a simple principle: “follow the white guys.” Was there no one working outside the factory on the informational or stylistic or cultural aspects of the commodity, etc? Of course. But they were mostly women, so they say, well, who cares, that's not part of the production of value, it all in the factories where the white guys are. Now, most factory work is being done by women and/or people of color so suddenly, factory work is unimportant and it's the white guys working on computers, etc, who really producing value. Nonsense. What we need to start thinking about is how all these new forms of labor, and some very old ones, draw on one another. For every person who can push a button and instantaneously do a transaction with Japan that would have taken weeks in the past, there's some guy in Brazil or Pakistan who has to work twice as many hours or spend hours more on the bus just getting to work so he can do it. We need to look at the world as a whole. We also need to understand that war and imperial extraction still operate and how, which brings us back to the money system again (modern credit money is basically war debt created

say, 300 BC, before even the Taoists, and in many ways remarkably similar to what we see now. Jim Scott has recently written an anarchist history of Southeast Asia, pointing out that a vast majority of what are called “tribal” societies are really people fleeing from and consciously defining themselves against the state — and this was by far the majority of the population through most of South-east Asian history. Even the Islamic tradition is deeply hostile to the state; if you look at the history of the Caliphate, states had to end up using slaves as soldiers because ordinary people refused to fight in wars with other Muslims, even the legal system developed independently of the state which meant the economy came to be seen as this weird mix of free market and mutual aid, which were seen as ultimately the same thing. Obviously some of this changed with the Ottomans for instance but my point is it’s all much more complicated a history than we know and all traditions have their anarchistic strains and history. To expect Chinese or Persian people start from Godwin or Proudhon or Bakunin is of course silly, and it might well be that whatever develops — is developing — in such places won’t use the name “anarchism” but something else. But names are unimportant. The principles are always there.

Void Network: can absolute and immediate democracy, be combined with some radical and militant parts of antiauthoritarian approach, as it exists now?

D.G.: Through decentralization. People forget that the very idea of consensus decision making, which is designed to be the form that can work when you don’t have the means to compel a minority to accept a majority view, only really works if combined with radical decentralization and local or small-group autonomy. In a more complex society of course there would be endless overlapping and cross-cutting small group networks which would prevent things reverting to any sort of tribalism or local chauvinism. But that’s long-term — I assume you’re referring to more immediate strategic and tactical concerns.

was bicker with each other at their summits — they didn’t really seem to have a strategy, and thus, it was very hard to come up with a strategy of opposition. This might be changing now. As for the grand strategic question: well, I don’t think the transformation of daily life, and the larger question of revolution, can any longer be clearly separated. How might radical transformation happen? We can’t know. We’re really flying blind. But I also think we’ve been working with a very limited set of historical analogies: the history of revolutionary movements first in Europe in the 18th and 19th century, then globally in the 20th, but that’s it. It’s a tiny tiny slice of human history. There have been hundreds of successful revolutions in world history we don’t even know how to see. It’s quite likely that many of the “primitive communists” in say, the Eastern Woodlands of North America that so inspired Engels, or in Amazonia, weren’t primitive at all, but the descendants of revolutionaries, of people who had overthrown earlier centralized states. The world is much more complicated, and the history of resistance much deeper than we have been taught to imagine. Or another way of making the same point: we have come to accept, over the last couple hundred years, since the Enlightenment basically, that there is only one paradigm for fundamental social change, “the transition from feudalism to capitalism” — which must then be the model for the next one, “the transition from capitalism to socialism” (or whatever). It’s becoming screamingly obvious that the transition to whatever comes next is not going to look like that. So people think no revolutionary change is possible at all. Nonsense. Capitalism is unsustainable. Something will replace it. For me, I think a more useful paradigm right now is the transition from slavery to feudalism, at least in Europe. Remember, under Rome, huge percentages of the population of the empire were outright chattel slaves (maybe a third, even, and much more if you count the coloni and debt-peons and so on who were effectively slaves). A few hundreds years later, the number of slaves in Europe was almost none. This was one of the greatest liberations in human his-

tory (and similar things did happen in India and China around the same time.) How did it happen? How were all the slaves freed? Well, since we're only used to seeing it from an elite perspective as "the decline and fall of the Roman empire" and can't see any explicit anti-slavery movements, we're unable to write the history at all, but it happened. Will wage-slavery be eliminated in a similar apparently catastrophic and confused moment? It's possible. But it could only happen the first because of pressure from below, based on certain egalitarian values that were always there, all operating below the historical radar screen. Obviously, there were also horrific thugs taking advantage of the chaos, as there will be now too. But we need to think about how to mobilize similar bottom-up alliances when things start breaking down.

Void Network: Is there really a national and international debt? What would you like to put as a small analysis of what it seems to be the greek paradigm in the great saga of domino financial collapse of many countries economies after the 2008 broke of international crisis?

D.G.: Money nowadays is a purely political instrument. Some people — central bankers, to some degree ordinary banks and even the financial divisions of large firms — have the right to generate it, to make up money, relatively as they wish. Banks after all don't mostly lend money they actually have, they lend money they just made up — if under certain constraints. So the rhetoric people use, that "there's only so much money" is nonsense. Money isn't like oil, it's not even like bananas, you can't actually run out of it. So the scam is to allow some people to just whisk it into existence and then, even more importantly, to say that other people can't. In a way banks ability to make money is not so outrageous since money is basically debt, it's an IOU, a promise, and in a free society everyone should have the right to make promises. In a way that's what being "free" means. The problem is in our society, the only really important promises are financial, and some people are granted the

Void Network: How much can be concluded according to Zapatista paradigm?

D.G. : The Zapatistas are exciting because they have come up with a viable dual-power strategy, one which shows that even people in very marginal situations can use the threat of violence — the ability and willingness to employ violence if you absolutely have to — to create zones where, in fact, you don't have to use violence, to create spaces of peaceful autonomy. They balanced that perfectly, using just exactly as much force as they had to to win the right not to have to use force, without ever romanticizing violence for its own sake. They also show a lot of other useful things: how to break out of the identity trap, for instance. They are overwhelmingly Maya Indians but for the first time a group of Maya insurrectionaries have managed to neither reject their traditions, as the Marxists used to, _or_ make claims as Mayas, but rather shown how even ancient traditions are vital, growing, potentially revolutionary things that can make solid contributions to contemporary world politics as equal interlocutors rather than as objects to be protected. These are just a few ways I think the Zapatistas are important. They are a zone of experiment, which actually there are lots of zones of such autonomous experiment around the world, but they are also very unusual in that they are open about it — most such zones survive because no one knows about them.

Void Network: Can anarchism, overpass the limitations of being a mainly western based attitude and movement? How much can be the effective part of it (always speaking in a large scale) inside societies with completely different cultural environment, like lets say, a part of the islamic world?

D.G. : I have never thought anarchism to be a western-based attitude and movement to be honest, because I don't think it's an intellectual tradition, in the same sense as say Marxism, but rather, a set of orientations and attitudes and forms of practice that have always existed. There were major anarchist movements in China in,

Void Network: what does the greek antiauthoritarian example, with the large spread activism, and the many social centers, squats, and affinity groups, can give to the general radical attitude?

D.G.: Well, I will have to go to Greece and see things for myself — I don't really feel I have much authority to pronounce on such matters myself. What do I know?

Void Network: Are there any values that have to be defended against the formulated extremity of extreme nihilism and elitism?

D.G.: Someone once said that the ultimate stakes of any political struggle is the ability to define what value is. Autonomy does not just mean making up one's own rules, as Castoriadis says, though that's important — it also means being free to collectively establish what you think value is. In that way, any enclave that preserves a system of value even relatively autonomous from capital is a form of freedom that should be defended. One of the terrible mistakes of old-fashioned socialism was to subordinate everything to the revolution in the same way that capitalists subordinate everything to profit. It's funny because I'm often accused of criticizing anthropologists and academics for not helping radical social movements. That's not true at all. I think it's a scandal that many seem actively opposed, or pretend to be leaders when they're not, or refuse to engage with people who want their help. But I also think that it's absolutely great that there are people who get to spend their lives thinking about, I don't know, Medieval Provençal musical instruments as an end in themselves. I call this the utopian moment in academia. Don't we want people to be able to do this? Anyway, for me, a free society is one where there are endless varieties of forms of value, and people can decide for themselves which they wish to pursue. Therefore the key social question is "how do we provide people with sufficient life security, in a free society, that they are able to be as free as possible to pursue those forms of value (moral, artistic, spiritual, hedonistic, communal, etc, etc) they feel to be the most important — whatever these may be."

political right to make as many of these as they like, with no little or responsibility for keeping them, and others (the politically powerless) are not, and everyone acts as if the most important moral responsibility everyone has is to pay back money that others were allowed to simply make up. This is particularly ridiculous in the case of governments, who grant the banks the right to make up the money, and then act as if they have no choice but to honor their commitments to these same people. It's all nonsense. But it's just a new variant of an age-old pattern. Conquerors, tyrants, powerful lords throughout human history have always tried to convince their subjects or those they conquer that they owe them something, at the very least, that they owe them their life, for not having massacred them all. It's basically the logic of slavery (I could have killed you, I didn't, now you owe me everything) but it's also the foundation of what we like to call "sovereignty." The unusual thing about the present day is just that this sovereignty has been transferred from states to this semi-independent financial establishment as a way of undercutting any notion that sovereignty any longer belongs with what they used to call "the people."

Void Network: what can the real meaning apart from false controlled media analysis of the major role, that IMF, and hedge funds played and continue playing in the growth of the crisis?

D.G.: Well, that question can be asked on many different levels. In terms of the specifics, yes, all that we're seeing is the runoff of a huge housing bubble, centered on the US, but global in its scope, that opened the door for an almost unimaginable succession of financial scams, in fact, the most extraordinary and all-encompassing set of financial scams in the history of the world. Yet the perpetrators of these scams — the international banking class — are still being treated as the arbiters of economic morality. How did we end up here? Why is anyone taking the pronouncements of these crooks in any way seriously? That's the question we should

be asking. I have something of an answer perhaps. I think that US capitalism (like German capitalism, but unlike British in its heyday) has always been essentially bureaucratic. Hence after the question of who was going to replace Great Britain as the dominant capitalist power (the US or Germany) was resolved, the US started setting up global bureaucracies: the Bretton Woods institutions, the UN... But at first these were weak, with limited enforcement mechanisms. In part of course this was because of the Cold War. It's only under neoliberal capitalism though that we have the first effective, global administrative system — one that can level real, devastating sanctions at governments that refuse to cooperate, as the IMF showed so clearly in the '80s and '90s. That bureaucracy is semi-public and semi-private, just like the central banks that were in a way its paradigm. Or anyway it's made up of more public, and more "private" elements. I would see the financial system as part of this bureaucracy, and after that, the trade bureaucracies (WTO, IMF, NAFTA, EU, etc etc), the transnationals, and finally, the NGOs, which form the equivalent of what Bourdieu liked to call the "left hand of the state." All sorts of bizarre rhetoric was used to justify this, like that of "civil society", which was deployed for any organization independent of government, so if a group based in Chicago or Geneva was designing agrarian policy for Nepal, this could be treated as more democratic than if local Nepali authorities, who at least had to occasionally face judgment of the voters, had anything to do with it. Anyway, there have been two open, difficult unresolved questions about the ultimate nature of this global bureaucracy (I am taking the perspective of the rulers here): (1) what is ultimately sovereign here? the financial markets? the legal structures? the bureaucratic class themselves? (2) what is the ultimate locus of the organized violence needed to enforce bureaucratic decisions — the kind of "human rights imperialism" based in the UN we saw in Kosovo? the more pure national imperialism, backed up with mercenary armies, that Bush promoted? attempts to subordinate national or local security forces directly to the control of

ple recognize it if the media isn't allowed to cover events only as "violence." This is not to say that militant tactics have no place, but I think we have to learn how to integrate them with everything else in a way that continually surprises the other side, who really do have just one trick, which is violence.

So I guess I'm saying two things. One is that the very idea that we could repeat Seattle is part of the problem. For a movement, repetition is decay and death. The other is that the war on terror managed to allow the bureaucrats (government and capitalist) to move things back into the domain of violence, which of course they prefer, and to change the rules of engagement in a way to make it much harder to apply the principle of diversity of tactics and the festive element of things that was so important to the success of Seattle. But these rules are quite possibly shifting back now and I think we can take advantage of this.

Void Network: How much ready is the new anarchist movement to speak about effective, political and economical structures beyond the collapsing, socialist and capitalist paradigms? I am referring of course in the large scale economy's examples.

D.G. : Well, as I said earlier, I think we're closer than we think. In some sense we do already live in communism, not in the sense people like Negri propose, that this is something new born of biopower or the internet or postmodern capitalism or what have you, but because we always have. In many ways capitalism has always been just a bad way or organizing communism. We need to think harder about what's already there. It's the capitalists who want us to think that capital is such an all-powerful form of contagion that anything that touches it or helps to reproduce it in any way somehow is capitalism. It's not. Once we open our eyes we can start to see that pieces of what could be a new world exist already all around us.

ferent. How these rules are negotiated is for me, as an anthropologist, a fascinating question. Sometimes it's quite direct, as it was in Italy with Ya Basta up until Genoa. Usually, it's indirect, through the media, but also through social mobilization, dissemination, legal and rights groups, covert private or government propaganda operations, and so forth and so on. And also, of course, the structure of alliances: unions, NGOs, political parties... Obviously, after Seattle, in the US, certain alliances were shattered, and the other side managed to gradually move the rules of engagement to the point where arbitrary mass arrest and torture of even completely non-violent activists became acceptable, with the additional danger of directing terrorism conspiracy charges, which was designed to undercut, and very effectively undercut, the ability to do the sort of vast democratic coordination of real direct action that we used to in the Seattle-style spokescouncils. On the other hand, more secretive styles of "security culture" that replaced it proved utterly ineffective in creating meaningful mass mobilizations that could achieve much of anything in the new environment, which led to a constant feeling of failure and frustration — and of course opened the door to more old-fashioned reformists, socialists, who at least could put a lot of people in the streets even if those people didn't then really do anything. In Europe this was perhaps less so since institutionalized violence on the part of protestors is seen as acceptable, but there was a similar shifting of the rules against us I think. Clearly we need new tactics — or even better, new ways to integrate tactics with one another. We need more creative forms that make the government look increasingly ridiculous. What was so magnificent about the big mobilizations was the effectiveness of the principle of "diversity of tactics" — our ability to shift the terms of engagement on the field, so that a Black Bloc action could give away to a crazy, goofy circus, or to a solemn pagan or indigenous ritual, or to a Gandhian CD, or artistic event, etc etc. Ultimately our great advantage is that we have more imagination and humor than the other side. We're just better people. That shows and peo-

international bodies? Some combination? The current moment we seem to be seeing the financial elites (referred to, disingenuously, as "the market") establishing themselves, through the very crisis they caused, even more firmly in the control of the apparatus, and a shift away — but not totally away — from the Bush paradigm to the idea that local security forces ultimately work for the financial bureaucrats. This is happening all of the world. The case of recent events in Madagascar, a country I know particularly well, is a great example actually — the army refused to cooperate with a plan to sell a large part of the country to a Korean transnational and went over to the side of the protestors, and the country is now under enormous sanctions, as if to make it abundantly clear to everyone that armies are not ultimately to consider themselves loyal to "the people" but to the sovereignty of financial bureaucratic elites — but that's just one case. Similar things are happening I suspect in Greece.

Void Network: what could be the attitude of a winning social and basically antiauthoritarian movement? You are also using in some of your critiques the paradigms, of sixties, seventies, and late nineties early zeroes movements, giving some emphasis in the antiglobalisation one?

D.G.: oh, you mean in the Shock of Victory? Well, yes, as you can see, I always try to put things in longterm perspective. One of the vices of academia, and to some degree it washes over into the intellectual life of social movements, is this obsession with rupture, this giddy presentism, this absolute assumption that whatever is happening now is utterly new and unprecedented and marks a fundamental break with the rest of history and human experience. At this point it grows genuinely tiresome. I guess my earlier comments about the fall of Rome could be thought of as a partial answer. Victory will probably not look like what we have been brought up to expect. It will be long and messy and may well be for many, ugly and disastrous (though of course for many, things could not be

much more ugly and disastrous than they are already.) Once you eliminate the idea of taking control of the state and systematically destroying the opposition through terror and brutality, well, it's hard to see how things could be anything but uneven and messy, because everyone is not going to come over to us voluntarily right away. However, in the long run, our best weapon is our ability to provide examples of what a more free, caring, decent, and fulfilling life could be like. If the world ends up a checkerboard of enclaves, where are the people having the most fun? Again, to move back to historical analogies: if you look at the history of North America, well, the European settlers won by brute force of numbers, and willingness to employ extraordinary genocidal violence. But if they hadn't had that advantage, if the question was who could provide the more desirable existence, they would have totally lost. At least half of the war captives, settlers captured by Indians, who then were incorporated into (stateless, relatively nonalienated, egalitarian...) native American societies, refused to return to settler society even when they had the opportunity. There are about zero examples of that on the other side. Every Native American who was kidnapped or taken in war or otherwise adopted into settler society, even if treated by settler society's terms very well (given land and education), escaped at the first opportunity. That should be our ace in the hole: our ability to provide a better life. It's clear the powers that be suspect we can, that's why they are so desperate to destroy experiments and make sure people don't know about them. In part, I guess, the real problem is the middle class. These are the people who mostly don't even like capitalism very much, but are obsessed with stability, and are endlessly taught that no alternative is possible. Therefore when capitalism starts breaking down, as it does every decade or two, they're the people who have to effectively hold their noses and put it all back together again, somehow, even though mostly they don't even like the system particularly. The moment it doesn't seem like their only option, the moment other systems actually look viable, the fact that those other sys-

tems are more fulfilling will make a huge difference. I mean, look at the Great Depression. Why did a typical capitalist bust lead to a decade-long crisis? What was different about the '30s? Clearly it was the existence of the USSR, which was growing at a huge rate, and which people (largely based on false information, it's true) believed marked a fundamental break with capitalist values. The moment an alternative seems possible it becomes very hard to put the pieces back again. The question now is: how to create a similar vision of other possibilities that people will take seriously. If we can, then the other more tactical questions (how to convince the cops and army not to shoot at us when they are ordered to do so) become much easier to conceive.

Void Network: Is there any chance of surpassing the non effective anymore, specially after the start of the so called "war on terror", Seattle example? It seems that the western oligarchies, have been creating strong counter measures against the repetition of such a paradigm.

D.G.: Well, it's critical to constantly be able to change your tactics. Ideally, you should do the same thing twice. One thing a lot of US anarchists wonder about the Greek movement, or Athens anyway, is the impression that they too have basically one set of tactics, endlessly deployed. I don't know if that impression is justified — I suspect there's much more going on than most people in the US or UK are aware of.

In general, I think mass direct action, even non-violent mass direct action, is best seen as a form of war. I mean that literally. War is never a free-for-all, the untrammled use of force, because armies that play without rules turn into marauding bands and when they meet real armies, they always lose. There are always rules of engagement — it's just in direct actions, the rules are different, the types and levels of violence (not to mention rules about who's a combatant and who isn't, prisoners, envoys, medics, all those things there always have to be agreement about in wars) are dif-