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## Same Children Playing Revolution in the Park?

Epiphany

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Spring 2002

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of revolution” and it won’t be long before our enemy has us in a check-mate position.

As pressing as the critique of symbolic thought and the promotion of “anarchist-leaning” archaeological data might be to the more academic wings of our movement, it is important to prioritize our resistance to and understanding of other systems of political control and domination, of terrorization and brutality, before largely abstract and intellectual forms of oppression. The endless discussion and debate over such tactically less important topics can happen when we’re all serving life sentences under the new anti-terrorism laws. But if our goal is to remain free and build a genuine revolutionary movement (to survive the collapse of civilization and possibly be agents of the chaos that will cause such a collapse), time and energy could be better spent analyzing and preparing for civilization’s recently declared “war on terrorism.”

The anarchist intelligentsia has been very effective in creating labels and fostering ideological divisiveness, but regardless of the suffix we attach to our “anarchism” we all have one thing in common: the state would like to kill us. It wants to kill us because we often openly declare that we stand in opposition to it and have dedicated our lives to its destruction. History has taught us that no delusion of invincibility and no reliance on the first amendment or other “constitutionalities” have saved those targeted by the state either for neutralization or assassination. The idea that we have any “rights” or that the state is not a ruthless killing machine is a liberal illusion that is shockingly still prevalent in our movement.

An international witch-hunt and clampdown is already underway and will most likely intensify in the years to come. This war on terrorism is focused not only on “rogue nations,” it is also focused on rogue individuals within the walls of its empire. No privileges or “rights” as “Americans” exempt any domestic dissident from imprisonment or neutralization should they become a noticeable annoyance to the state. Historically both the most radical dissidents and the most vocal reformists to speak against the state have been murdered and incarcerated. Its not

speculative to say that the state will do anything to maintain its power, or the mass acceptance of the *illusion* of its power. As anarchists, we should be experiencing no confusion over how empires function and perpetuate their existence, i.e. complete annihilation of effective resistance.

The following thoughts have been articulated in this forum to provide a wake-up call to those anarchists that *a)* think the state isn't fully committed to destroying our movement (by any means necessary) and/or *b)* think that the state will fall peacefully.

## Revolutionary Naiveté Revolutionary Amnesia

### The Game of the Spectacle

The Situationists have offered an effective analytical framework to understand what they have termed, "the society of the spectacle." This "theory" explains that under the current order of modern civilization, the perception of the self, the world, and passing events is shaped by a seamlessly projected one-dimensional image, alienated, mediated and external from the individual and society. This concept of spectacle can be used to explain the ways in which such institutions as the mass media assimilate radical politics and transform them into products for the mass consciousness to consume. Further, it provides an understanding of the ways in which acclimatization to the consumption of understanding through the spectacle conditions us to believe that if revolutionary activity is not visible and perceptible - through the projected image of the spectacle - it is somehow not real. Both the fact that the spectacle assimilates movements by default (for a more comprehensive look at this phenomenon see *On the Poverty of Hip Life*, reprinted in *Disorderly Conduct #4*) and the fact that it has convinced many

coming back. According to Chief Plenty-Coups of the Crow Nation, in a prophecy he shared with his people in 1909 at the Little Bighorn council grounds in Montana, "*Long after the other animals join the Red Man in oblivion, Coyote will survive. Coyote the resourceful, the tough, the enduring, will enjoy the last taunting howl when all the rest is silenced.*" This is the type of *dynamic elasticity* that we as revolutionaries need to cultivate, since so much depends on the success of our struggle. We need to become Tricksters ourselves, and know when it is strategically advantageous to attack our enemy, and when it is more in our interest to *circumvent* our enemy, by crawling around them on our bellies through the bushes.

No, we are not suggesting in any way that people back down or run scared. We understand that any revolutionary movement needs a wide range of approaches and tactics, but we should at least take the struggle serious enough to understand what we are up against, to take the necessary precautions to prolong our participation in the struggle, and be willing to constantly reassess and readjust our activities. The anarchist movement needs to become more adaptable in its thinking, strategizing, and methods of resistance. We should regard all of our projects - be they infoshops, zine publishing, guerrilla media, the establishment of squats, etc. - as tools or weapons that we are utilizing in our struggle for *as long as they are effective*, and while they may be effective now, we should be prepared to toss them aside (making sure that they have been carefully dusted of all fingerprints) when it is necessary to do so, and then proceed to carry on our struggle in other ways. There may come a time in the near future when newspapers such as this one will be outlawed by the State, and in that situation, those of us involved in this project will have to *adapt*, and continue to fight the State on other fronts, using other weapons and approaches. These are the types of long-term survival questions that the anarchist movement now needs to be asking itself. If we're unwilling to do so, then we're merely playing the "game

This is known as warning, or aposematic, coloration. An inexperienced toad, stung by a hornet for the first time, will remember the insect's black-and-yellow banding, associate that color pattern with the painful experience, and avoid insects so marked in the future.

The effectiveness of aposematic coloration has led nature further in evolving one of her most deceptive survival tricks: true mimicry. A good example of this can be found in the Amazonian jungles where the brightly colored, Heliconiid Butterflies, which are unpalatable to birds, are very closely imitated by certain Pieridae, which birds find very much to their taste.

But probably the most impressive survival strategy at work in the natural world (and the one that contemporary anarchists most need to incorporate into their struggle) is *adaptability*, the quality of quickly and creatively responding to new threats and conditions. In North America, it was the large mammals like the wolf and the bison, who had very set and inflexible patterns of behavior, who were easily hunted to near extinction, while the more adaptable and opportunistic species like the coyote were able to take advantage of this situation and step in to fill the ecological void that was created by the virtual eradication of these other life forms. With the death of leftism, a huge void has been created on the political landscape and the anarchist movement has an opportunity to exploit this opening, but we need to do so wisely and intelligently, with all the craftiness and guile of animals like the coyote, making sure that we don't play our hand prematurely, and thus, betray our own cause.

In Native American myth, Coyote is known as a trickster, a mirthful, mischievous figure who hunts more by wit than by brawn, and tales of his ingenuity and craftiness in securing his food, told not just by Indians, but by "objective" Anglo observers, are legion. Related to Coyote's resourcefulness and adaptability is his indestructibility - or more accurately, his powers of resurrection. In story after story he is burned, drowned, starved, smothered or crushed to death, and he keeps

within the anarchist/activist movements to legitimize its existence, point to the conclusion that the spectacle's mediating, filtering effect has led many on a treacherous path towards not only ineffectiveness, but also defenselessness against the state. Despite the number of anarchists who cite the Situationists as an influence on their politics, the Spectacle still seems to exert a hypnotic, mesmerizing hold over many of us; to the point where we are more obsessed with the appearance of revolution than with the actuality of revolution. Large portions of the anarchist movement continue to practice and advocate tactics that may have been appropriate two years ago, but now only contribute to the Spectacularization of our struggle, and make us easier targets for state repression. This is no longer an intellectual game being played out in the pages of our academic underground journals, nor a media game of rebel stardom, nor a game of Russian roulette. It is serious, and therefore, warrants strategic thinking. The following are a few examples of the ways in which our movement in large has acted as though its engagement in revolutionary struggle has been a game, both before and after September 11th:

Street demonstrations that serve no strategic purpose, sacrificing our anonymity (arguably one of our most valuable assets) senselessly through self-deceptive "use" of the Spectacle, posturing, hollow rhetoric, rigid inflexible attachment to certain tactics, and the unwillingness on the part of many "revolutionaries" to educate themselves about how the state really operates.

## Unquestioned Liberal Tendencies

While not so much a game, though certainly a part of the process of legitimizing the Spectacle, the liberal tendencies of appealing to a non-existent category of safety in the realm of the "above ground" and the myth of civil liberties protected by the constitution are both chilling examples of revolutionary

naiveté. The self-deceptive myth of the safe category of constitutionally protected “legal above ground activism” should be rapidly evaporating as the state continually demonstrates that it perceives no such line and intends to provide no safety or immunity to those it perceives as anti-American. One pathological example of this mindset is the delusional belief that publicly declaring your “war” against the system is protected by the first amendment. A serious response to the state’s war on terrorism would be to make oneself less visible, less identifiable, and more difficult for authorities to track, but this would require us to challenge our limited conception of revolution as *Spectacular activism*.

Another disturbing example of liberal tendencies within the anarchist movement is the specter of amnesia surrounding the history of political struggle in the United States and the State’s methodical and homicidal response to it. All the new “anti-terrorist” legislation that the State is now passing - ranging from the Homeland Security Act to the Patriot Act - is being passed for a reason, and that reason should be obvious to anyone with a revolutionary analysis of the system we live under. The Espionage Act of 1917 provided penalties of up to 20 years in prison to anyone who publicly discouraged participation in World War 1 and was used by the ruling class of the time to jail Eugene Debs and other socialist organizers for almost ten years, effectively ending their movement. The Espionage Act was also used by the State to crush the I.W.W. and to deport 4,000 anarchists from the U.S. (this law is still on the books by the way, and has been constantly in force since 1950, because the United States has been legally in a “state of emergency” since the Korean War). Is it really that difficult for anarchists to see who all the new “anti-terrorist” and “eco-terrorist” legislation is directed towards? Already, one activist in New York has been charged under the new Anti-Terrorism laws, for allegedly buying a can of gasoline. Paranoia occurs when we do not understand the real threats we are under, so as revolution-

ers that separate us. This is perhaps the most challenging, and yet most *necessary aspect*, of building a revolutionary movement.

### **Looking Beyond Humyn Political Struggles: Survival Strategies In The Non-Human World**

There are also many analogies to be drawn from observing the survival strategies of non-humyn species in the wild, analogies that can be directly applied to both above-ground and underground political movements. Let’s start with *Mimesis and Mimicry*. At almost every level along the food chain, organisms attempt to remain unobserved by their predators or prey, or if that is impossible, to appear to be something other than what they really are. Invertebrates, particularly insects, have developed camouflage and masquerade into a fine art. They have adopted their colors, patterns and shapes to copy with amazing precision particular elements of their environments, such as dead leaves, berries or flowers. Certain caterpillars, such as that of an Arizona giant Swallowtail butterfly, look precisely like bird droppings.

Cryptic coloration operates as a first line of defense in the natural world. When a predator threatens to breach this line, when it sees through the insects camouflage and prepares to attack, there are quite a few animals (certain mantises, beetles, butterflies, and moths) who are equipped with a secondary defense system. In contrast to those animals that try to remain inconspicuous, many animals are so gaudily colored that they positively invite detection. Brightly painted butterflies; shiny, metallic-hued beetles; rainbow-banded snakes; and gaily colored reef fishes, are clearly visible to potential predators, many of whom - amphibians, lizards, birds, fish - have good-to-excellent color vision. This bright coloration serves a strong survival purpose: it advertises to would-be predators that the gaudily decorated animal is ill tasting or venomous.



### ***Knowing how to check ego:***

The Kung! have a deep understanding of the dangerous development of ego. They take many precautions to keep ego in check. For example, when a hunter makes a large kill, when the carcass is brought back to the camp, the hunter will deny that it was their arrow that killed it, or they will say that it was luck, or that it really is not that big of a kill. For, if they brag about the kill, they will surely be laughed at for seeming so important above the others. Ego must also be kept in check by our movement. We must establish more effective mechanisms to deal with it, both for security reasons and so that we can work together.

### ***Knowing the landscape:***

In foraging societies, the land is not only sacred, it is understood beyond any science of geography or topography. All food comes from the landscape, all water, all shelter, all medicine, everything. What indigenous resistance movements have always had that made them successful is the belief in the sacredness of their bioregion, and their knowledge of their bioregion. While many of us are not indigenous to the bioregions we inhabit, we must know the landscape, then hold the landscape as sacred and integral to our survival.

### ***Knowing each other:***

All foraging societies live as bands of no more than 25-100 people. Most of the people they know or will ever know they have spent most - if not all - of their whole life with. Building trust, communicating, being honest, being committed to each other and "having each other's backs" has evolved far past the fleeting, ego tainted, doubtful, self-conscious and suspicious relations most "revolutionaries" have cultivated with each other. We can effectively survive only as a group, we can only effectively resist as a cell. Getting to know each other on deep, intimate levels - where indestructible bonds of trust and solidarity can be formed between us - requires that we engage in the revolutionary deconstruction of all the fear-based walls and barriers

ary anarchists, we need to better understand the "War on Terrorism" and the state apparatus as a whole. It's only through "knowing our enemy" that we have a chance of defeating them.

It is long past the time for our movement to become more serious. . . so let's take it to the next level!

## **Adaptability As An Ecological Survival Strategy**

Our species has inhabited the planet for 3 million years in groups of hunter/gatherers living in the wild. The reason we have survived and found niches in all terrestrial ecosystems from the highest mountains, to the coldest arctic regions, to the most barren deserts, is that we have adapted to adverse conditions. Whether it was surviving climate change or surviving "competition" with new fellow top of the food chain megafauna, our wild foraging ancestors adapted and survived. Always in the wild, there is a need to be prepared to adapt. And always, without exception, all successful species *must* adapt. While most humans now live in what is called civilization, trapped in an artificial, technologically-mediated environment that our senses were not designated to navigate, we are none-the-less still animals, still alive, and still engaged in the struggle to survive. Whereas the adverse conditions in the wild were limited to such things as climate change, scarcity, and predators, the adverse conditions today are that we have been severed from nature, trapped in cages, and enslaved by a new kind of predator - an energy predator that feeds on the life of this planet without respect and reverence for its "competitors" on the landscape, as we all once did, as wolves and tigers do; a predator that exists and kills not for its sustenance, rather it exists and kills towards the ends of satiating a pathological aberration of the brain, the manufactured motives of ego and greed. If we conceive of our existence as though we are animals, we

should see ourselves as animals resisting predation by this new crazy predator that kills not for survival or to feed its young, but kills just to kill.

In order to survive, we must adapt to the introduction of this new species of predator, for it already has us stalked, has many of us killed, and many of us are caught in its teeth. This diseased animal has also amassed powers, technological powers that we do not possess or even understand, and it uses them to its advantage. We must adapt not only to its very presence, but its ever-evolving ways of hunting us and the tools it uses to find and kill us. We must adapt, we must draw upon the strength and wisdom of our ancestors and of those in the fourth world still fighting to retain their autonomy. There are several notable elements that have kept our species alive under all previous adverse conditions. The following are a few examples that may help us now.

## Nomadism vs. Sedentism: Mobility As A Basic Guerrilla Concept

### *Knowing when to engage in mortal combat:*

All species in the wild have limitations on their resources, all populations are interlinked. Humans in the wild, also having limited resources, have plenty of food but still a finite amount of resources and a finite amount of people the resources can be used by. As no one is expendable, battling to the point of death is not an efficient strategy. Combat, potentially mortal combat with other species, must be wisely engaged in, people's lives cannot be squandered for the sake of martyrdom or ego. When the animal or species you are engaged with senses that it can overpower you it will, and if it is capable of killing you it will if it feels it must, albeit for entirely different reasons than that of the state (the predator); none-the-less, the behavior is the same, and thus the adaptive strategy must be the same. We must re-

spond as we would in the wild, choose our battles wisely, and make sure that if we are going to engage in potentially mortal combat, that we match the enemy, because, as in the wild, none of us are expendable.

### *Knowing when to shift tactics when fighting a predator:*

Many primate species use the tactic of creating the illusion of strength and ferocity by picking up brush and broken branches and waving them while screaming "wildly." This will sometimes scare off the opponent, though often the main response will be the activation of a survival instinct, something the predator we are up against has destroyed in itself - it has replaced its natural wisdom with artificial knowledge and storage of memories using countless technological mnemonic devices. The predator we now fight can sense our weaknesses, it can quickly realize when we are projecting a "front," and learns quickly from its mistakes, all the while taking careful note of ours. The predator we now shake sticks at and scream at will no longer run from our half-witted attempts to bluff it, it will now maul us.

We must adapt to this predator and become aware of the fact that it has caught on to our rhetoric, and thus it is time for new tactics (that is, if we want our struggle to continue).

### *Knowing the behavior of a predator:*

All foraging societies alive today and that have ever lived understand the details of other animal behavior better perhaps than most modern parents understand the behavior of their children. In Kung! bands, hunting trips can last up to four days out in the bush, hunters may track an animal for days. They know how soon the animal will die of a poison arrow, how their prints indicate the stage of poison absorption into the blood stream, how to sleep and wake up without losing the trail, etc.

They know what animals are potential threats to their lives as well, and how to engage and disengage with those animals so that they either kill or escape the situation. We must have an equal understanding of our own predator.