

Anarcho-Autism



Anarchism

&

Autism Acceptance

By Detroit Leprechaun

Second Edition

Dedication:

This one is for every autistic who's ever hated themselves. We gon' be alright.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank my friend ewokABdevito, my friend Wu Kang, my friend MalcolmFleX, my friend Reilly, my brother from another mother D'shon, my friend John, my friend Mike, my professor KDK, all my friends who have helped me survive, and all the comrades who have taught me through the years.

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My Qualifications

I am a political science and urban studies major, not a psychologist, psychiatrist, or neuroscientist. As such, this book will be written from a primarily political perspective. However, as an autistic and an anarchist, I believe that I am still an authority on this. Classical anarchist political theory is something of a Special Interest of mine and neurodiversity matters to me, so I felt compelled to write this.

In no way, shape, or form do I represent all anarchists, all autistics, or all autistic anarchists. I am an agender, nebularomantic, neuro-demisexual, neptunic, Irish-American, working class, autistic, disabled, mentally ill, deist from a mixed Jewish and Catholic upbringing, anarcho-communist. That should about surmise my social identity.

An Introduction of Sorts

In this work, I will attempt to incorporate neurodiversity into anarchist thought. I hope to show what it means to be autistic, what the anarchist cause is, what anarchism offers for autistics, an application of anarchist thought to neurodiversity, why anarchism requires neurodiversity, and describe the experience of being an autistic anarchist. To be autistic is more than merely a neurological condition; it is a political identity.

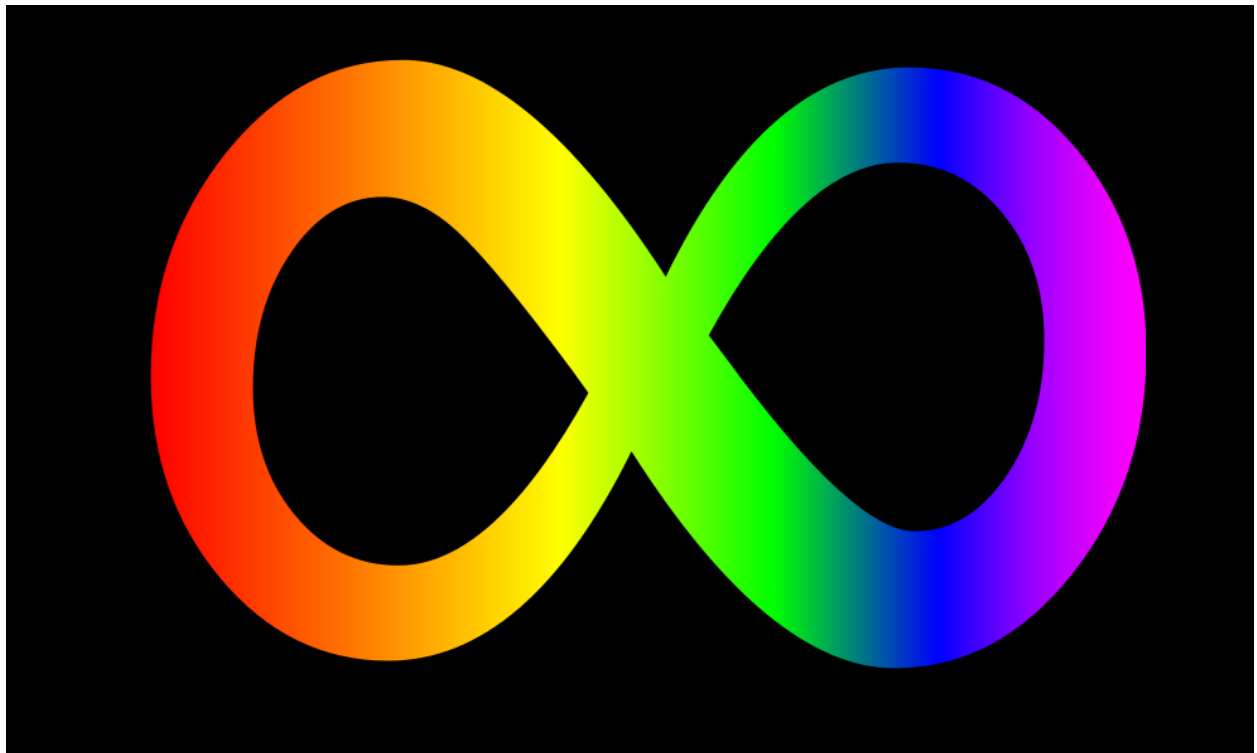
I will be using they/them pronouns as a gender neutral singular pronoun. I will be including trigger/content warnings (tw's/cw's) at the beginnings of chapters. I will be including image descriptions. While I will use autistic and anarchist terminology as is relevant, I aim to write this so that it is accessible to the non-academics of the world. The left needs to reach people, and autistics need to reach the left. I hope to create a comprehensive framework for autistic anarchism in the social anarchist tradition.

This is deeply personal to me. We're talking about the life experiences of autistics, so this work will not pretend that I am not a human being writing it. I will talk about my personal knowledge and story, as well as those of people I know. Let's get free.

Second Edition: I have updated this work to be more accurate and to include articles I have written that articulate points I was not yet able to make when the first edition was written. Many of the changes will involve better integrating philosophy with politics, particularly the works of Max Stirner.

Framework

In this section I will establish the very basics of what we're working with. I will explain the basic fundamental idea of anarchism, I will explain what autism is, and I will explain the main ideological struggle for autism, that of cure culture against neurodiversity.



[image description: the rainbow infinity symbol for neurodiversity is layered over a black rectangle, the black flag being a symbol of anarchism]

Anarchism Is

Anarchism is the political theory which holds that authority is not inherently justified and that if authority is neither just nor necessary, then it should be dismantled. Anarchism opposes authority and hierarchy and seeks to replace these with liberty, equality, and solidarity. Historically functioning as a movement rather than a set of rigid policies, Anarcha-Feminist Emma Goldman (1869-1940) described anarchism, “Anarchism is the great liberator of man from the phantoms that have held him captive.” Anarchists seek to liberate people from all forms of unjust oppression, authority, and hierarchy. While anarchists throughout history have advocated various different economic systems, Anarcho-Syndicalist Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958) noted, “common to all Anarchists is the desire to free society of all political and social coercive institutions which stand in the way of the development of a free humanity.”

While we find that anarchist ideals are a natural part of the human spirit and can be found throughout history, the social anarchist tradition developed alongside the socialist tradition in the 19th century. The first person to call themselves an anarchist was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), who theorized a socialist economic system called mutualism in which every adult would own their own private property in a market economy. Building off of his work, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) developed a system called collectivism in which workers would collectively own private property and money would be replaced with labor notes. When a worker spends a labor note, the labor note does not then transfer to whichever collective shop it was spent at. The labor note is done. Anarcho-collectivism envisions a non-market economy. Bakunin also helped free anarchism from Proudhon’s rampant misogyny. Building on the work of Bakunin (and leaving Bakunin’s anti-semitism behind), Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) established that communism is the natural extrapolation of anarchism and conceived of an anarcho-communist society.

While these three theorists have contributed much, anarchist thought has no decisive theorist, no authoritative idol. Anarchism has always been democratic, of the people, in its form, and millions upon millions of people, from Proudhon to the peasants of Anarchist Spain to the Zapatistas to this anarchist writing in their bedroom have contributed to its ideas and practices.

Anarcho-Communism, also known as anarchist-communism, seeks to create a stateless, classless society in which human organization is based upon free association, direct democracy, and mutual aid. Peter Kropotkin, the father of anarcho-communism, envisioned such an equal society that resources would be distributed “to every [person] according to [their] needs.” For anarchist communists, one’s ability and willingness to produce resources is not a consideration for resource distribution.

Most of the classical anarchist theory used in this book comes from white people, particularly European men. This is partially a result of my only being fluent in English. Modern takes and analysis used in this book does not share this flaw with the classic theory used.

Nick Walker's "What Is Autism?"

For a concise and scientific description of autism before I go into my own more detailed explanation, I offer autistic activist and blogger Nick Walker's short piece on it:

Autism is a genetically-based human neurological variant. The complex set of interrelated characteristics that distinguish autistic neurology from non-autistic neurology is not yet fully understood, but current evidence indicates that the central distinction is that autistic brains are characterized by particularly high levels of synaptic connectivity and responsiveness. This tends to make the autistic individual's subjective experience more intense and chaotic than that of non-autistic individuals: on both the sensorimotor and cognitive levels, the autistic mind tends to register more information, and the impact of each bit of information tends to be both stronger and less predictable.

Autism is a developmental phenomenon, meaning that it begins in utero and has a pervasive influence on development, on multiple levels, throughout the lifespan. Autism produces distinctive, atypical ways of thinking, moving, interaction, and sensory and cognitive processing. One analogy that has often been made is that autistic individuals have a different neurological "operating system" than non-autistic individuals.

According to current estimates, somewhere between one percent and two percent of the world's population is autistic. While the number of individuals diagnosed as autistic has increased continually over the past few decades, evidence suggests that this increase in diagnosis is the result of increased public and professional awareness, rather than an actual increase in the prevalence of autism.

Despite underlying neurological commonalities, autistic individuals are vastly different from one another. Some autistic individuals exhibit exceptional cognitive talents. However, in the context of a society designed around the sensory, cognitive, developmental, and social needs of non-autistic individuals, autistic individuals are almost always disabled to some degree – sometimes quite obviously, and sometimes more subtly.

The realm of social interaction is one context in which autistic individuals tend to consistently be disabled. An autistic child's sensory experience of the world is more intense and chaotic than that of a non-autistic child, and the ongoing task of navigating and integrating that experience thus occupies more of the autistic child's attention and energy. This means the autistic child has less attention and energy available to focus on the subtleties of social interaction. Difficulty meeting the social expectations of non-autistics often results in social rejection, which further compounds social difficulties and impedes social development. For this reason, autism has been frequently misconstrued as being essentially a set of "social and communication deficits," by those who are unaware that the social challenges faced by autistic individuals are just by-products of the intense and chaotic nature of autistic sensory and cognitive experience.

Autism is still widely regarded as a "disorder," but this view has been challenged in recent years by proponents of the neurodiversity model, which holds that autism and other

neurocognitive variants are simply part of the natural spectrum of human biodiversity, like variations in ethnicity or sexual orientation (which have also been pathologized in the past). Ultimately, to describe autism as a disorder represents a value judgment rather than a scientific fact.

Autism Is

cw: ableism, functioning labels, person-first language, cure culture

Here I will explain some of the most common and distinct aspects of autism. This chapter is primarily concerned with the biological experience of autism, with the “Struggles of Autistics” chapter handling the social experience.

Contrary to popular belief, autism is not a disease, and not something to be cured. Autism is a neurotype, a brain type, of which there are several, including: dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, and ADHD. Those without a neurological condition, without an atypical neurotype, are called neurologically typical, neurotypical, or NT for short. Autism is an “atypical neurology (brain wiring), leading to atypical processing, cognitive functioning, communication, social interaction, and sensory sensitivity.” Around 1 in 68 people are autistic. Before going over the medical definitions and classifications of autism, I would like to note that nearly all the professional research about autism is done by non-autistic (the term for this is allistic) people, and thus shows a bias in favor of allism over autism.

[image description: a white outline of a lightbulb with an orange background. To the left of the lightbulb is white text that reads, “Proud member of the autism epidemic,” a sarcastic expression]



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a development disorder characterized by “deficits in social communication and social interaction” and “restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities.” This does not tell you much, but it should provide a base understanding of autism. The National Autistic Society of the UK offers a somewhat negative, but mostly accurate description, “Autism is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them.” With autism, atypical development leads to atypical functioning.

You may be familiar with what has been called aspergers syndrome, which is commonly thought of as smart people with bad social skills. This is an outdated diagnosis and is no longer officially used in the United States. All people who would’ve been diagnosed with aspergers are diagnosed as having an Autism Spectrum Disorder. You may think that these people are on one extreme end of the spectrum (what may be called “high-functioning”) and that what you may think of as ‘classically autistic’ people (what may be called “low-functioning”) are on the other end. This is incorrect. Autism is a multi-dimensional spectrum and affects all autistic people differently. “Functioning labels” are also highly ableist, and are considered demeaning, derogatory, and dehumanizing by the autistic community.

Most autistic people prefer what's called identity-first language. I am autistic, an autistic, an autistic person, not a person *with autism*. To call an autistic a person "with autism," person-first language, implies that you can separate the autism from the person, which is false. Being an autistic is an integral piece of who I am. I think autistically, act autistically, feel autistically, sense autistically, and experience the world autistically. Many autistics find person-first language gross. While many allistics may intend to use person-first language to remind themselves that autistics are people, the notion that you need to clarify that an autistic is a person is frankly insulting. Unless an autistic person explicitly prefers that you refer to them with person-first language (which you should always respect), always default to identity-first language. Other terms autistics may use to refer to themselves include *autist*, *autie*, and *aspie*, although these terms are rarely used by allistics. *Aspie*, deriving from *aspergers*, should not be used by allistics.

Autistic people process things differently, atypically, from allistics. We often have very different abilities from allistics, and commonly have comorbid conditions. Many autistics have motor dyspraxia, which can result in "clumsiness, or issues with fine motor control." Some have central auditory processing disorder, atypical processing of verbal communication. Some have verbal dyspraxia and are thus non-verbal. All of us have sensory issues.

All autistics have sensory integration issues, often manifesting in what is called Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD). This means that autistics will often not process external stimuli on senses the same way an allistic would. An autistic may be over, under, or both over and under sensitive to something like bright light, loud noise, color, textures, or temperature. Autistics also have an increased sense of touch, able to both appreciate textures to a greater degree and to be incapable of handling others. This applies to food, as well. The majority of autistics, myself included, cannot eat many foods on the basis of texture. Due to these sensory issues, many autistics will develop Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID), a reluctance to try new foods.

When an autistic is exposed to external sensory stimuli beyond what they can handle, compounded with senses like emotions, they are faced with sensory overload. Sensory overload is difficult to explain, but from personal experience I can testify to how incredibly overwhelming of the body it is. Often compounded by social anxiety, when autistics are pushed beyond their limits, they may experience autistic burnout, at which point they need to rest and not do anything, or have an autistic meltdown, a physiological fight or flight response in the body.

In order to combat sensory overload and anxiety, autistics engage in self-stimulation, or *stimming*, "habitual, repetitive movements that provide comfort, and/or stimulation." *Stimming* is one of the most characteristically autistic behaviors. When *stimming*, an autistic will stimulate one of their senses on their own in order to combat external sensory stimuli. This may mean bouncing their leg, touching soft things, rubbing their arms, rocking or spinning, listening to comforting sounds, watching comforting visuals, flapping their hands, and other such self-induced stimulation. Important to understanding *stimming* is the prominence of two more senses in addition to the standard five: touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing. These are the vestibular sense, the perception of our body in relation to gravity, and proprioception, our sense of where we and our body parts are relative to other things. *Stimming* is highly discouraged by many

allistic parents and by public allistic culture. Many autistics will prevent themselves from stimming so as to avoid being perceived as “weird” in our ableist society where “disability is considered kind of shameful and bad.”



[image description: a scale labeled “Autism Level Today” that progresses as follows: Cool autistic, Cooler autistic, Super autistic, Stimlord, Stimgod, Stimtastic]

Autistic people struggle with social interactions as a result of atypical development. Janine Booth explains, “typically-developing people learn social conventions through social interaction, from childhood, from the people around them. Autistic people may not do so, and may only learn social ‘rules’ by being taught, by themselves or others.” Autistics may also have difficulty reading facial expressions. Autistics may not know how to read social cues, such as “when to speak, when to stop speaking, when a conversation is over, how close to stand to someone.” Booth points out that these are all social rules, and therefore what autistics really struggle with is knowing what society expects of us. Autistics may also not grasp unwritten social rules and not know what those rules are.

Autistics tend to have a liking for “structure and dependability.” We want things such as rules to be explicit and clear. Many of us rely heavily on routine and “like to do certain things in certain ways and do not like this to be obstructed.” Additionally, we have a preference for a predictable schedule. We “like to know what [we] will be doing, when, and for that to happen as planned.”

Autistics tend to think literally. We tend to prefer that things are expressed explicitly rather than implicitly. Booth offers a list of things that neurotypicals tend to say or do that can throw off our literal mindset:

- Say things that they don’t mean
- Tell you to do things they don’t want you to do
- Ask questions but don’t want an answer
- Ask questions but don’t want an honest answer (e.g. how are you?)
- Answer a question with an answer to a different question
- Use figures of speech (e.g. ants in your pants)
- Don’t say things they do mean (e.g. they don’t express their disinterest)
- Say things in an illogical order
- Laugh when there is no obvious joke
- Think you have said things that you haven’t
- Say the opposite of what they mean (sarcasm)

To top all this confusion off, neurotypicals expect autistics to know that they are doing these things.

Autistics frequently engage in what is called echolalia: repeating sounds, words, and phrases that they're heard. There are two primary forms of echolalia: immediate and delayed. With immediate echolalia, an autistic may immediately repeat something they've just heard. This may be a way to stall response in a conversation to allow us to process information. Immediate echolalia can also function as a way to easily interact and affirm your mutual presence. With delayed echolalia, they may repeat something they heard before. For example, I sometimes repeat and imitate the adlibs from the Cam'ron song "Oh Boy." Echolalia can be used as a means of expression and also as a form of stimming.

In conjunction with echolalia, autistics often depend on and utilize scripting as a means of communication (scripting can also be stimmy.) When referring to autistic behavior, scripting can mean two things: echolalial scripting and social scripting. In echolalial scripting, extended segments of various media forms are recited. Such scripts can be used as a method of expression, and also wonderfully connect things and ideas into new contexts, developing a deeper, more cohesive, and more comprehensive understanding of the world built on the stable things an autistic already knows. With social scripting, an autistic will learn and develop words, phrases, and ways of speaking based on the world around them and integrate them into their catalog of expression. This language is cut and pasted in the brain to create verbal expression. An autistic may refer to a social script in a situation as the answer, the correct response, to what's going on. For example, an autistic may greet people the same way every morning. Both these forms of scripting enable us to reference what we know and increase comfort, security, and structure in the social life of an autistic.

People on the autism spectrum communicate differently from neurotypical people on a scale of verbal to non-verbal. About 2 in 10 autistic people are non-verbal and will never speak with their mouth parts. Some autistics begin to speak slightly later than allistics, and may only begin speaking at age 3, 5, or maybe 10. Most non-verbal autistics can learn sign language, however, and there are also many technological innovations such as text-to-speak apps, the rapid prompting method, and Advanced Audio Coding (AAC), or even simple methods like pointing to a letter board, so non-verbal autistics are still able to communicate and live a wonderful life.

Autistics are different from allistics, and it's important to recognize us as such. We have different needs, we think differently, we develop differently, and we experience the world differently. Unfortunately, in the world we live in today, autistics are not faring well. Janine Booth concludes that it is little wonder that autistics have poor mental health today with the compounded effects of "communication barriers, misunderstandings, sensory sensitivity, sensory overload, unexpected changes, rules being broken, discrimination, and prejudice."

Cure Culture

cw: ableism, eugenics, filicide

One of the entry-level enemies of autistics is cure culture. Autism is often spoken of as a disease that people suffer from, a problem to be cured. Advocates of searching for a “cure,” of which there is none, range from people who “love the person but hate the autism,” a notion that denies that being autistic is an integral part of who an autistic is, to anti-vaccination advocates who cite a fraudulent study that claimed that vaccines cause autism, people who would rather risk their child dying of a preventable disease like polio than their child be autistic. To those who advocate cure culture, autism is an epidemic on the rise.

The most visible organization dedicated to issues surrounding autism is Autism Speaks. We like to stylize the name as Autism \$peaks. A\$ is, to put it bluntly, a hate group. Only 4% of its budget goes toward “family services,” actually helping autistics and their families, whereas 21% went for advertising, 22% for fundraising, and 5% for administrative costs (executive pay being well over \$400,000 a year). 44% of their budget went toward research, primarily researching for prevention and cures. Their marketing campaign describes autism as a disease and includes triggering videos designed to horrify people about living life as an autistic. One documentary they sponsored even showed sympathy for parents who wanted to murder their autistic child. They want to make it clear that to be autistic is bad. Autism \$peaks also has zero autistics in positions of high decision-making. To put that into perspective, imagine if the NAACP was ran by all white people or the National Women’s Organization was composed of all men. To even my surprise, A\$ even partnered with literal Nazis in Toronto in January 2017. It is clear to me and to many other autistics that Autism \$peaks is running a eugenics campaign against us.

[image description: Professor Farnsworth of the show Futurama stands with chalk in hand in front of a chalkboard that reads, “Good News, Everyone! Most autistic people don’t want to be cured!”]



Neurodiversity Is

Autistics are all neurodivergent. To be neurodivergent means “having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of ‘normal.’” Neurodivergence is a broad concept and encompasses all divergent neurotypes and personality disorders, some of them being ADHD, dyslexia, PTSD, and Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Some forms of neurodivergence are innate, such as autism and ADHD, while others come about through experience, as is the case of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Nick Walker explains the three ways the term neurodiversity is used well. Neurodiversity, similarly to any other form of diversity such as ethnic, religious, and gender diversity, is the presence of multiple neurotypes within a group. Neurodiversity is “the diversity of human brains and minds.” Neurodiversity is a biological fact.

The neurodiversity paradigm is a perspective that holds that neurodiversity is natural, there is no one correct neurotype, and that “The social dynamics that manifest in regard to neurodiversity are similar to the social dynamics that manifest in regard to other forms of human diversity... These dynamics include the dynamics of social power inequalities, and also the dynamics by which diversity, when embraced, acts as a source of creative potential.”

Among the more integral forms of neurodivergence, what’s called neuroatypicality, refers to having a neurotype different from the norm, as is the case in being autistic. There are also many forms of neurodivergence that are not integral to who a person is and some neurodivergent people do not desire their particular neurodivergence. The neurodiversity paradigm does not reject that these people may want to be rid of their neurodivergence, only that this should only be done consensually.

A branch of the disability rights movement, the neurodiversity movement can be described as the “social justice movement that seeks civil rights, equality, respect, and full societal inclusion for the neurodivergent.” There is a great deal of overlap with the autism-rights movement, but the neurodiversity movement is distinct and broader. Even broader than the neurodiversity movement is the disability rights movement. I will contrast the goal of neurodiversity with the term neurosupremacy, the dominance and favoritism of the neurotypical neurotype.

Because of my own lack of knowledge on other forms of neurodivergence, I will chiefly be talking about neurodiversity for autistics, although I hope my framework will be applicable for other neurodivergents. I do not believe that the liberation of autistics is more important than that of our fellow neurodivergents, but it is best to speak on what one knows.

The Struggles of Anarchism

In this section, I will explain the essence of anarchism and some of the main forms of oppression that classical anarchism has historically opposed.



[image description: a rectangular black and red bisected flag, the flag of anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-communism]

Authority

The word anarchy comes from the Greek ἀναρχία (anarchia), which translates to a combination of “not, without” and “ruler, leader, authority.” Thus the essence of anarchism is not no rules, but no rulers. Anarchism is a rejection of authority, rulership, and domination. Anarchists seek to create a world in which people organize together not as inferior and superior, but as equals. Anarchists recognize that hierarchy, vertical organization, authority is in itself oppressive and creates and enhances other forms of oppression. It seems only natural to believe that when a person or group holds authority over the organizations that dominate our lives, they will use that authority to their advantage. Anarchists hold autonomy to be a human right and the true expression of freedom.

Emma Goldman described the liberatory nature of anarchism,

“Anarchism, then, really stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; liberation from the shackles and restraints of government. Anarchism stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth; an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations.”

Anarchism champions democracy, freedom, and life. We long for a world in which people will not be subjects of the church, of the privatization of the earth and collective humanity’s resources, of white supremacy, of the patriarchy, and of an institution through which a select minority reigns supreme over the toiling masses. I would like to note that anarchism and religion are not incompatible, however. Renowned author Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), for example, was a devoutly Christian anarchist. It is the anti-human doctrines and practices that religious organizations have historically presented that we all oppose, as it is the anti-freedom aspects of organization, gender, and production today that we oppose, not the things in themselves. In the following chapters, I will explain some of these key authorities that anarchists seek to dismantle.



[image description: people hold a black banner with white circle-A (anarchy) and circle-E (equality) symbols and white text that reads, “Whoever they vote for, we are ungovernable”]

Anarchism sees hierarchy as a cause for oppression. When people are ruled, they are unequal. While one individual or group has authority over another, it is inevitable that those without power will be suppressed. To be ordered by another person is a demeaning experience. Socialist educator Paulo Freire (1921-1997) explained, “to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects.” In order to liberate the oppressed, we must create a world in which people are free to make their own decisions and direct their own lives.

Anarchists do not reject the influence one person may have on another. A free association of equals entails human organization, and people in an anarchist society will continue to reflect and recreate each other in pursuit of their passions and ideals. In the words of Italian anarcho-communist Errico Malatesta (1853-1932):

“The abolition of this mutual influence would be death. And when we vindicate the freedom of the masses, we are by no means suggesting the abolition of any of the natural influences that individuals or groups of individuals exert on them; what we want is the abolition of influences which are artificial, privileged, legal, official.”

Neither do we reject the authoritative stature of specialists. There is a difference between being an authority and possessing authority, “We must make a very precise distinction between the official and consequently dictatorial prerogatives of society organized as a state, and of the natural influence and action of the members of a non-official, non-artificial society.” As elegantly explained in Mikhail Bakunin’s classic *God and the State*:

“Does it follow that I reject all authority? Far from me such a thought. In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or engineer. For such or such special knowledge I apply to such or such a savant. But I allow neither the bootmaker nor the architect nor the engineer nor the savant to impose his authority upon me. I listen to them freely and with all respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure... I bow before the authority of special men because it is imposed upon me by my own reason.”

The same reasoning by which Bakunin defers to the authority of these specialists is why he rejected a “fixed, constant, and universal authority.” No one is capable of having all the knowledge, wisdom, and ethics required to make the correct decisions all of the time. Even when authority is derived from universal suffrage, from voting for the ruler, we anarchists are “convinced that it can turn only to the advantage of a dominant minority of exploiters against the interests of the immense majority in subjection to them.” In order to eliminate this exploitation, we must eliminate positions of authority.

Capitalism

cw: slavery, dehumanization, mental health, cartoon animals

Anarchists are anti-capitalists. Capitalism is an economic system defined by three conditions: private ownership of the means of production, a market economy, and wage labor. I will break this down for you. Individuals and groups will have exclusive property ownership of the capital, the resources required to produce things: the fields, the factories, the workshops, the mines, the offices, the restaurants, etc. In this ownership, it is the owners who control and manage the means of production, not the workers. In a market economy, goods and services will be bought and sold for some form of currency. In capitalism, that means money. And finally, under capitalism, workers will rent themselves and their labor to a boss in exchange for a wage. In this chapter I will explain anarchist critiques of private ownership of the means of production and of wage labor, as it is possible to be both anti-capitalist and in favor of a market economy.

To understand capitalism, we have to understand class. As economist Karl Marx (1818-1883) wrote in “The Communist Manifesto,” “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed.” This class struggle continues in capitalist society. In capitalism, under classical socialist theory, there are two primary classes. One is the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class, the owners of the means of production. The other is the proletariat, the working class, those who sell their labor for a wage. The capitalist class is the oppressor, those with authority, and the working class is the oppressed, those who are ruled. A more critical class analysis would place greater emphasis not on the workers in very formalized class relations as described above, but as Twitter user @DCgadfly proposes, “those who are neither compensated nor paid for their work, those who are disparaged and criminalized for the work they do, those who cannot work, and those who wish to work, but are barred or kept from working or can't access it.” This would extend to many non-men, disabled people, and marginalized folks living on the outskirts of capitalist society that have been excluded from the formal economy.

Capitalism is not voluntary, but rather a combination of hierarchy and coercion. In capitalism, resources are hoarded, controlled, and managed by a select minority while the working class has next to no possessions in comparison. By denying the workers access to the materials necessary to earn a living, through the private ownership of the means of production, the capitalist class denies freedom to the working class. It is made necessary to the very survival of the worker to rent themselves to a boss. Workers are presented with a choice that is no choice at all: work or starve. This coercion has led anti-capitalists to condemn capitalism as not far different from chattel slavery. Capitalism is wage slavery.

“Property is theft!” So declared Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first person to label themselves an anarchist. This seemingly contradictory statement has some merit to it. Under capitalism, a worker must produce more value than they are paid by necessity in order to make a profit for their boss. Private property, by which we mean private ownership of the means of production, extracts value from wage laborers and thus steals from them. It is private property

that maintains the worker-boss relationship, as, if the means of production were instead owned and managed by the workers themselves, they would not be renting themselves to bosses and being stolen from. Private property denies the masses their equal claim to the accumulated wealth of humanity. In defense of his anti-capitalist stance, Proudhon wrote, "I seek the end of privilege, the abolition of slavery, equality of rights, the rule of law. Justice; nothing but justice."

It is important here to make a distinction between private and personal property. Anti-capitalists do not believe that you cannot own your computer, your bicycle, your house, or your toothbrush. These are examples of personal property, items that you personally use to enrich your own life. Anti-capitalists oppose private property, the ownership of the large means of production created by the accumulated wealth of humanity that should instead be collectively owned and operated. Proudhon explained the point at which an owner of personal possessions becomes an owner of private property, "The proprietor is a man who, having absolute control of an instrument of production, claims the right to enjoy the product of the instrument without using it himself. To this end he lends it." A person can own a personal woodshop to create their own crafts but cannot own an entire logging operation in which the labor of others is employed.

Anarchists take democracy seriously. If we are to take democracy seriously, then our democracy must extend beyond what we now call the public sector. In capitalism, there are vastly powerful institutions and enterprises with immense amounts of power that internally operate as total oligarchies. Anarchist YouTuber and blogger anarchopac explains the anti-democratic nature of the modern corporate structure:

"In a corporation power is strictly top down from the board of directors to managers to lower managers and ultimately to people on the shop floor. There is no flow of power or planning from the bottom up. The structure of power is fundamentally linear from the top to the bottom. A corporation is therefore an organised system of command and obedience and all those in a position of hierarchical control within a corporation are in authority since those below them in the hierarchy are subject to control from above. Speaking more generally, anarchists view all forms of hierarchical organisation as being organised systems of command and obedience."

If we are to believe that the will and freedom of all people is important, then our democracy must extend to economic institutions. For this, anarchists propose socialism: the



[image description: cartoon rabbits hold a banner that reads, "We don't want a bigger piece of the piece of the pie, we want the whole fluffing bakery." One rabbit holds black flag and another holds a sign that says "General strike"]

collective ownership and management of the means of production and resource distribution. Without socialism, there is no equality. It is impossible to seriously believe that a poor coal miner in Kentucky has an equal say in how society functions as billionaires like the Koch brothers. Noting the importance of democracy in all aspects of political organization, Mikhail Bakunin said, “We are convinced that freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice, and that Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality.”

Capitalism does more than simply exploit and oppress people. It is a war against the human spirit and wreaks havoc on the mental health of billions upon billions. It commodifies people and reduces them to cogs in a machine that they do not control. Capitalism must be dismantled if we are to protect the health of all. As Karl Marx explained, capitalists

“...mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they distort the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness.”

Socialism is imperative in order to restore the worker to a life of dignity. In order to end capitalism and establish socialism, anarchists propose self-liberation. Freedom was never voluntarily granted to the oppressed by their oppressors. As Emma Goldman wrote, "History tells us that every oppressed class [or group or individual] gained true liberation from its masters by its own efforts." The working class must organize itself against the capitalist class.

An integral component to anarchists overthrowing capitalism is syndicalism: revolutionary unionism aiming to create workers' control of the economy. Syndicalists aim to create workers' unions in which workers practice self-management and collective decision making. Anarcho-Syndicalist Rudolf Rocker described, “For the Anarcho-Syndicalists the trade union is by no means a mere transitory phenomenon bound up with the duration of capitalist society, it is the germ of the Socialist economy of the future, the elementary school of Socialism in general.” Anarcho-Syndicalism aims to seize the means of production and create socialism through organizations that are organized along the lines of socialism itself and thus create a new world in the shell of the old.

Anarcho-Syndicalist unions aim to achieve socialism through direct action. Rocker writes, “by direct action the Anarcho-Syndicalists mean every method of immediate warfare by the workers against their economic and political oppressors.” Direct action is spontaneous, meaning it is unmediated by hierarchal institutions and originates from the workers. Rather than beg, plea, and work through the government, the syndicalists aim to exercise their free will and emancipate themselves.

Anarchists recognize capitalism as a hierarchal, exploitative, damaging, and unjust system that must be replaced with democracy. To achieve this, we must use institutions that are organized similarly to the world we want to see. We want to create a world where people will feel meaningfully connected to their labor and will be free from the tyranny of bosses.

The State

cw: propaganda, fire, violence, oppression

Perhaps most notably, anarchists are opposed to the state. While there are semantic arguments over using the word ‘government’ as a synonym for the state, it is important to note that anarchists do not oppose human social organization, only the form that it has taken. Definitions of the state vary, but a general anarchist description goes: a vertically hierarchal exploitative and oppressive institution with a monopoly on the legitimate (publicly accepted) use of violence used for the class rule of a minority to oppress the majority. An article from libcom offers a more concrete visualization of the way this abstract institution manifests, “the ability within a given area to make political and legal decisions – and to enforce them, with violence if necessary – is the basic characteristic of all states. Crucially, the state claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, within its territory and without.” Elaborating, Errico Malatesta wrote that anarchists

"have used the word State, and still do, to mean the sum total of the political, legislative, judiciary, military and financial institutions through which the management of their own affairs, the control over their personal behaviour, the responsibility for their personal safety, are taken away from the people and entrusted to others who, by usurpation or delegation, are vested with the power to make laws for everything and everybody, and to oblige the people to observe them, if need be, by the use of collective force."

The state thus is what some may today call government. The state is how the rulers rule the ruled. It is the public bureaucracy in which power and authority are centralized at the top. It is an institution that exists over and above the control of the individual. It is an anti-democratic organization through which the few rule over the many that exists “over and separate from the people it governs.” And this institution is how the ruling class uses violence to keep the oppressed from creating a better world.

This crucial function of the state, the monopoly on violence, is how smashing a Starbucks window is labeled as violent but millions of people dying because they are denied health insurance is not. To quote egoist anarchist Max Stirner (1806-1856), “The State calls its own violence law, but that of the individual, crime.” This is because the state, in the age of capitalism, functions to serve and protect the ruling class by defending private property. As Emma Goldman expressed, “In fact, there is hardly a modern thinker who does not agree that government, organized authority, or the State, is necessary only to maintain or protect property and monopoly. It has proven efficient in that function only.” The state and the bourgeoisie are tightly intertwined. Since the dawn of the industrial age, the capitalist class has used the state as a means to dominate the working class. As Karl Marx wrote in the Communist Manifesto, “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.” It is an anarchist belief that capitalism and the state are but two sides of the same coin.

It is through examining the state that we see the full effects of authority and hierarchy. The nature of the state is hegemony, preponderant influence or authority over others, in every

form possible. The state, by the very nature of its organization, will accumulate power and crush those that challenge. In the words of Bakunin:

“The supreme law of the State is self-preservation at any cost. And since all States, ever since they came to exist upon the earth, have been condemned to perpetual struggle — a struggle against their own populations, whom they oppress and ruin, a struggle against all foreign States, every one of which can be strong only if the others are weak — and since the States cannot hold their own in this struggle unless they constantly keep on augmenting their power against their own subjects as well as against the neighborhood States — it follows that the supreme law of the State is the augmentation of its power to the detriment of internal liberty and external justice.”

You may wonder how a state can be anti-democratic, in “a struggle against their own populations,” if we vote for our public officials. Quite simply, what is called ‘representative democracy,’ voting for our rulers, is not democracy. Only what is called ‘direct democracy’ qualifies as democracy. In both the economic and political realm, liberal capitalism equates to nothing more than the right to choose your master from options you didn’t even choose.

Representative democracy is oligarchy, rule by the few. Direct democracy is redundant. Anarcho-Syndicalist Benjamin Smith breaks down the basis of democracy via its Greek roots, “Democracy is when the people, the demos, have a direct grasp on power. Cratos in democratos means precisely this: to grasp, and to have a grasp means to be present. If a smaller class of representatives holds deliberate power in the absence of the demos whom they are supposed to represent, then the people are actually absent from the picture and we can no longer speak of democracy in this situation.” Representative democracy involves the absence of the people in decision-making process.

[image description: Dick Cheney, Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, George W. Bush, and Paul Ryan all laugh in front of an American flag where the stars are replaced by company logos. Below them is text that reads, “Oligarchy: it’s [a] very exclusive club and you’re not a member.” The O and R have been replaced with Obama and Romney’s presidential campaign logos]



Rather than represent the people, representatives must of necessity represent the interests of the ruling class. For example, in the representative democracy of the United States, “the leading nonpartisan organization that reports money-in-politics found that in the 2008 elections, 93% of the House of Representative races and 94% of the Senate were won by the candidate who spent the most money.” As anarchist YouTuber the Left-Libertarian reasons, even merely looking at representative democracy from a financial standpoint, it is clear that the myth of “one person, one vote” is completely illusory, “it is money, not people, who decide the fate of elections and our lives.” Of representatives, “this one person is supposed to represent the public

will and make decisions for every human being that they represent.” No matter who people vote for, “they will have to submit themselves to the rule of this human being who they have never met and will never meet.” Politicians exist as a class above the people. They are not working class. They are not like us, “It’s easy to see that our politicians are anything but representative of the makeup of our society. Aside from the obvious race and gender gap, these people do not live in the same economic bracket as the rest of society... they do not understand the daily suffering of ordinary Americans.” They do not understand the plight of the oppressed. Representatives are to make decisions on everything, but they cannot possibly understand all of the issues they are voting on, let alone understand how the people they are supposed to represent feel.

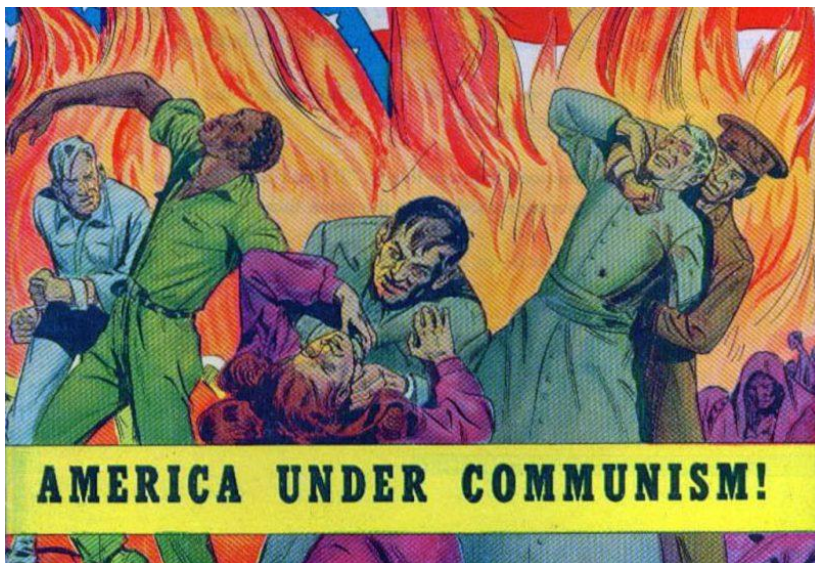
“It has long been known that the Soviet style of economics does not work because a small group of elites cannot know all the intricacies and interactions of an entire functioning economy and society... Only the people on the ground can have any true understanding of the needs and wants to fulfill their lives and thereby create a society that will fulfill the public’s wishes. Our style of democracy shares the same dysfunctional nature as the Soviets.” -The Left-Libertarian

It is important to not think of the state as a purely abstract organization, but as an institution that has a real impact on people’s day-to-day lives. The state has both political effects and cultural effects, demanding a spiritual submission of those living under its rule. The state bends people to think in a way that helps preserve the state and its masters. The values of the state, such as racism, sexism, ableism, and classism, are reinforced both directly and indirectly. As anarchist Murray Bookchin (1921-2006) wrote:

“the State is not merely a constellation of bureaucratic and coercive institutions. It is also a state of mind, an instilled mentality for ordering reality . . . Its capacity to rule by brute force has always been limited . . . Without a high degree of co-operation from even the most victimised classes of society such as chattel slaves and serfs, its authority would eventually dissipate. Awe and apathy in the face of State power are products of social conditioning that renders this very power possible.”

Public education, for example, is a direct form of the state’s propaganda system. In what radical educator Paulo Freire referred to as the banking model of education, students are considered empty vassals to absorb knowledge like a sponge from their teachers and then are to regurgitate it in order to prove their worth. With more nuance, institutions such as the media are instruments of thought control in liberal capitalist societies. The media, through filters such as ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and anti-communism and fear, defines the acceptable spectrum of political debate and political thought to make sure certain issues are not raised and considered. In the case of the US, this means the spectrum from Democrat to Republican. As professors Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky concluded in their analysis of the political economy of the American mass media, “In sum, the mass media of the United States are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without significant overt coercion.” Hierarchical institutions, epitomized in the state, reproduce their ideology in their actions and press their values upon the people at their mercy. We are socialized by these institutions. In the words of the Left-Libertarian, “authority flows downward to shape

people's thoughts, hopes, attitudes, and beliefs. Politicians tell people what they should think, dream, and who they should hate, fear, and worship. They shape who we are instead of the other way around."

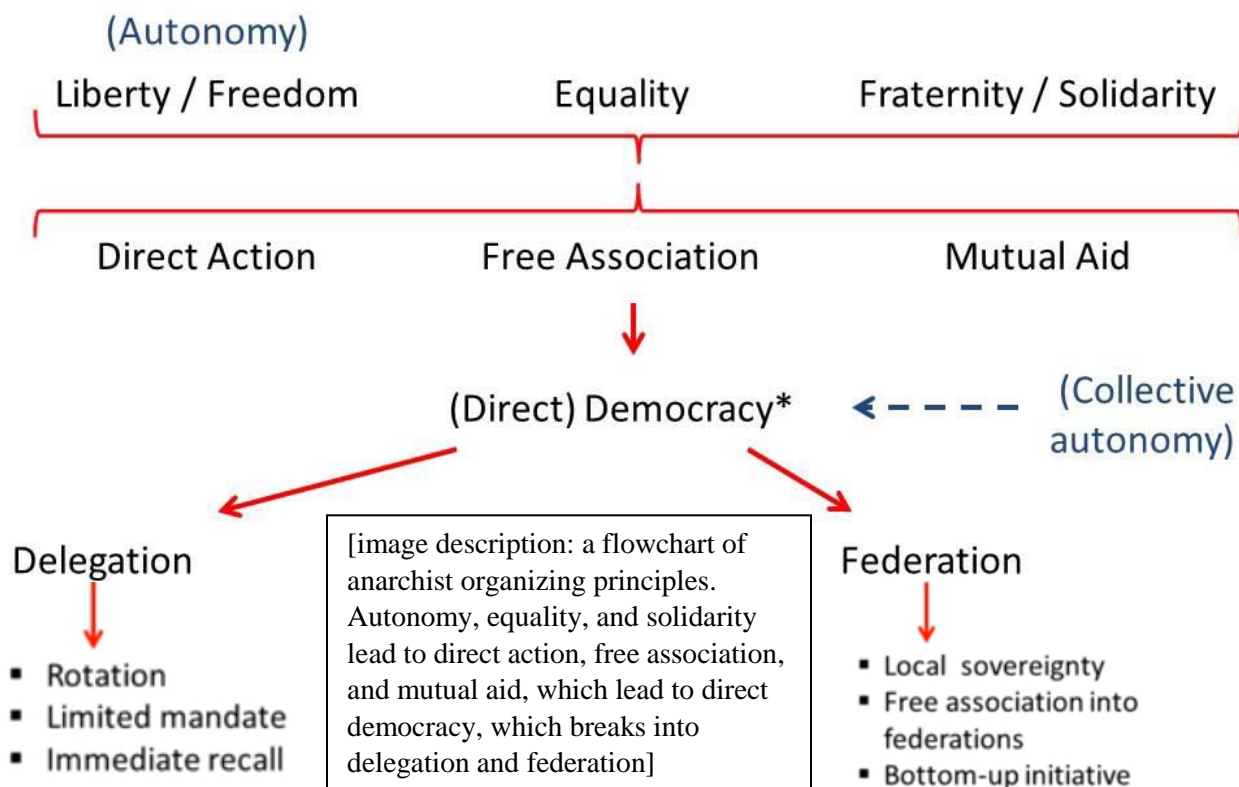


[image description: American anti-communist propaganda image in which people act violently with a fire in the background. A banner of text near the bottom reads, "America under communism!"]

The state oppresses people in as many ways possible. Naturally, anarchists are opposed to this, and want to destroy the state. However, no action is purely destructive, but simultaneously destroys something and proposes the creation of something new in its place, hence the famous Bakunin quotation, "the urge to destroy is also a creative urge." Anarchists urge to destroy the state so that we can create a freer world. The anarchist position, well summed up by Bakunin, goes, "Do you want to make it impossible for anyone to oppress [their] fellow-[hu]man? Then make sure that no one shall possess power." Anarchists seek to dismantle the state and replace it with horizontal organization. In place of bureaucracy, a world of free association in which people engage with each other as equals rather than superior and inferior. Anarchists have a vision for ordered society, and I will take the time to present a clear breakdown of how that functions.

Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation member Benjamin Smith's presentation on anarcho-syndicalist principles explains the ideal organization of an anarchist society concisely. Anarchists want a society built on freedom, equality, solidarity, direct action, free association, and mutual aid. The first three of these values are representative of socialism, while the latter three are representative of anarchist applications of the socialist values. Socialism and anarchism are thus complementary in shaping how anarchists aim to order the world. These values are to be expressed through "direct democratic collective self-management and bottom-up organizing." Anarchists seek autonomy of the individual through the autonomy of the collective, as, "if a decision-making process affects more than one person, our individual autonomy can only be affirmed by and expressed through active participation in collective decision-making." Inversely, collective autonomy requires individual autonomy and "requires participating directly in deliberating on the issues of the day rather than voting for representatives that would deliberate in your absence." Anarchist organization is thus committed to direct democracy with a dedication to discussion and aspiration for consensus.

But anarchists are realistic about democracy, and acknowledge the challenges of scope and size. Anarchist organization “needs a common understanding of what issues are common and what counts as individual choice.” We also can only include so many people in any given meeting. But anarchists have thought of how to tackle these hurdles, “Anarchism’s answer to the problems of scope and size that democracy faces involve these two concepts: delegation and federation.”



*Autonomy has two aspects – individual and collective

Delegation is the democratic alternative to representation. Rather than a representative, a collective has a delegate, “delegation means entrusting some decision-making power to a member of your group, usually for a specific project or responsibility, and it solves the issue of how much of the group’s time and attention needs to be spent on detail and minor decisions.” Delegation makes democracy efficient. Delegates are distinct from representatives as they come from the group rather than permanently existing above the group, they exist for very specific roles rather than broad things, and their role can be revoked by their group if they act against the will of the collective. That is, they exist in rotation, they have a limited mandate, and can be immediately recalled. The specifically mandated delegate role is usually taken in rotation by members of the collective. By a specific mandate, we mean that the “particular roles are defined by the group and that they have limits that are agreed by the group.” The ability to be immediately recalled holds delegates accountable to their groups, and ensures that “the group has the power to countermand decisions made by a delegate, should the delegate exceed [their] mandate, and, indeed, replace [them] immediately should they lack confidence the delegate is

performing [their] mandated role diligently.” Delegates are of the group rather than over the group.

In order for anarchist organization to scale, anarchists employ federation. “Federation solves the problem of wider coordination through the practice of free association between groups on the basis of affinity or need, but in a way that formalizes these relationships under conditions of mutual reciprocity.” The combination of federation and the use of delegates in periodical conferences for these federations addresses the issue of scale with democracy. The federation is not a decision-making institution, but the institution through which local groups cooperate.

“Federalism is premised on the idea that sovereignty cannot be separated from local assemblies. While free association into federations facilitates communication, cooperation, and coordination, responsibility for decision-making always stays with local assemblies. This is what is meant by bottom-up organizing. While proposals for initiatives might be put forward in the agenda for federal congress, these proposals originate at the local level, and after the agenda is circulated, are debated at the local level with the voters of member sections, not of individuals, being communicated and tallied at congress.” -Benjamin Smith

Federalism rejects centralism in that it denies the larger federation the authority to make decisions for local assemblies. While local organizations are bound to the decisions of its federation, power is derived from the people at the lowest level and cannot be imposed from above, so federalism includes the local ratification of federal processes. Federalism requires a balance between local sovereignty and responsibility to federal commitments. Thus local organizations must ratify that the procedures of federal congress were acceptable and fair.

Federation is the natural form of anarchist organization, and it is with a confederation, a federation of federations, that anarchists seek to replace the state. As Smith concludes, “Federation is a mode of organizing that allows for extended participation on the basis of equality, and this equality is assured by structures that guarantee its transparency to all who participate in them.” With the ideal form of organization in mind, we have to consider how to get there.

Anarchists do not seek to seize control of the state, but to replace the state. Thus anarchists are not reformists, but revolutionaries. To aspire to control the state is mere rebellion, aiming to use the same structures with different policies. As French philosopher and syndicalist Albert Camus (1913-1960) differentiated in his essay *The Rebel*, “Rebellion is, by nature, limited in scope. It is no more than an incoherent pronouncement.” Rebellion thus is but a spirit of struggle and conflict, while “Revolution, on the contrary, originates in the realm of ideas.” Being revolutionary, anarchism has ideas on how society should be arranged. Camus continues his distinction between rebellion and revolution by quoting the first self-proclaimed anarchist, “government and revolution are incompatible in the direct sense. ‘It implies a contradiction,’ says Proudhon, ‘that a government could ever be revolutionary, for the very simple reason that it is the government.’” The state, being the body that regulates and controls society as is, the organization that by its nature strives for more and more power, is the antithesis of revolutionary. For anarchism to succeed, anarchists must operate beyond the state.

A key anarchist idea is prefiguration, that is, that the institutions we seek to change the world with should reflect the world we want to see. As Benjamin Smith expressed, “To create institutions that have a direct democratic character and to extend direct democracy to every institution of society, this is the destruction of the state.” We touched on prefiguration in the previous chapter when discussing anarcho-syndicalism. Anarchists aim to dismantle capitalism and smash the state through institutions that are organized directly democratically and without hierarchy. Putting prefiguration into practice, forms of direct action called “dual power” try to build organizations that will replace capitalism.

- A “Syndicalist” approach seeks to build revolutionary unions which will control production in the workplace to make immediate gains. These are meant to be run by direct democracy, giving workers experience with forging decisions and organizing.
- A “Mutualist” approach seeks to build an entire infrastructure outside of capitalism.
- A “Municipalist” approach seeks to build communities or local assemblies to enforce local decisions.

Anarchists have also theorized more specifically on how to organize our efforts. In the year 1926, a group of exiled anarchists, among them Nestor Makhno, published “The Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists,” referred to as “The Platform.” With this, they cohesively expressed what is called platformism, which puts “forward specific suggestions on the nature which anarchist organisation should take.” The Platform proposes four main organizational features:

1. Theoretical Unity: “if you don’t agree with someone, don’t be in a political group with them!”
2. Tactical Unity: “members of an organisation should struggle together as an organised force rather than as individuals.”
3. Collective Responsibility: “This means that each member should take part in the collective decision-making process and respect the decisions of the collective.”
4. Federalism: “All decisions are made by those effected by them as opposed to centralism, where decisions are made by a central committee for those effected by them.”

With the introduction of platformism, anarchist organization to change the world enables single-issue focused groups, highly revolutionary organizations, and more specific direct action to effectively respond to the needs of humanity. For just one example, Antifa, anti-fascist organizations, take to the streets in resistance against fascism and to protect the vulnerable.

Again, the words of Bakunin ring true, “We are convinced that freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice, and that Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality.” The destruction of the state and the destruction of capitalism are the same struggle and are thus inseparable. If freedom, justice, and equality are values we hold dear, then our transitional organizations cannot take a form that crushes freedom, produces injustice, and is thoroughly unequal.

However, anarchism is not merely a question of structural organization. Anarchism cannot be reduced to democracy. As anarcho-syndicalist Noam Chomsky has argued, an

anarchist society needs anarchists. The world cannot be anarchist if its inhabitants are not anarchists. Anarchism asks for the destruction of economic, political, and social hierarchies, and it is the social hierarchies that are forgotten if one were to reduce anarchism to the principles of its organizations.



[image description: a cartoon image of a white castle tower on fire and breaking apart, featuring red fire and black smoke]

Anarcha-Feminism

cw: genitalia mention, sexuality, cartoon animals

Anarchists are feminists, and feminism is a necessary extension of the class struggle. Many acclaimed feminists through history have been anarchists and every major male anarchist thinker (with the exception of Proudhon) has supported equality for women. If we are to oppose unjust authority and support equality, this must extend to the patriarchy and the equality of all genders. Anarcha-Feminism differs from some other forms of feminism by recognizing that gender struggles cannot be separated from class struggle. Forms of oppression are intersectional, meaning that the oppression of groups combine to create a full system of oppression in which one's oppressed identities cannot be separated. All hierarchies are intertwined. With an understanding of intersectionality, a working class black woman is not oppressed as a worker, as black, and as a woman, but as a working class black woman. And still, she is affected by oppression she may not be the targeted group of, like homophobia and ableism. Anarcha-Feminists claim that gender equality requires the abolition of class society.



Feminism is the equality of genders. Today, we live in a patriarchy, meaning we live in a society in which men, patriarchs, hold power over non-men. This patriarchy, in addition to having men in positions of power over non-men, also places authority in the hands of the heterosexual and the cisgender. We thus live in a “cishet patriarchy.” This hierarchy naturally leads to sexism (gender oppression, discrimination on the basis of gender), homophobia (discrimination against homosexuality), and transphobia (discrimination against transgender people). However, cishet patriarchy also has negative effects on cisgender heterosexual men. I believe that in no realm more than that of gender politics is the following Mikhail Bakunin quote more relevant: “the freedom of all is essential to my freedom.” Gender oppression is intersectional, and justice for all genders demands feminism.

Patriarchy, like the state, reproduces its ideology through its institutions. Among these institutions are the state, capitalist businesses, and all others that are dominated by cisgender, heterosexual men, and all run by people who believe in patriarchal ideas and values. Cishet

patriarchy has real effects on people's health and beliefs. Women are trained to be weak, subservient, and nurturing. Men are taught to be aggressive, emotionless, and violent. Non-binary people are taught to not exist. Heterosexuality is considered the norm. Gayness is equated with weakness. Bisexuality is taught to not exist. Cisnormativity is taught, the assertion that it is only natural to identify with the gender one is assigned at birth. Generally, we are taught by the powers that be to deny life. Intersectional feminist author bell hooks wrote on the beginnings of patriarchy among cis boys and cis girls,

“the wounded child inside many males is a boy who, when he first spoke his truths, was silenced by paternal sadism, by a patriarchal world that did not want him to claim his true feelings. The wounded child inside many females is a girl who was taught from early childhood that she must become something other than herself, deny her true feelings, in order to attract and please others. When men and women punish each other for truth telling, we reinforce the notion that lies are better. To be loving we willingly hear the other's truth, and most important, we affirm the value of truth telling. Lies may make people feel better, but they do not help them to know love.”

Like capitalism and the state, cishet patriarchy once again arms itself as a war against the human spirit. Patriarchy, an ideological hierarchy reinforced by its concentration of power and popular support, especially from cisgender men, encourages violence. Cishet patriarchy fosters self-hatred and social repercussions for those whose self-hatred fails to make them follow protocol of patriarchal gender norms. And the most vehement defenders of patriarchy are perhaps among its first victims. Gender oppression is a negation of self.

“The first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence toward women. Instead patriarchy demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves. If an individual is not successful in emotionally crippling himself, he can count on patriarchal men to enact rituals of power that will assault his self-esteem.” -bell hooks

Egoist anarchist Max Stirner proposed that most of the social institutions that we commonly accept, among them the idea of the state and the notion of property rights, are just illusions. He refers to these illusions as “phantasms,” as ghosts in our minds. Expanding his idea, many feminists have concluded the gender roles, and even gender itself, are phantasms. This entails that gender is not a fixed, concrete concept, but a fluid and malleable idea. Gender does not have to exist the way it has been defined by most people thus far. Gender exists as a personal and social identity, and gender is absurd. Gender is what you make of it. Here we have the basic outline of what I call gender absurdism: gender has no inherent meaning, but people should seek extrinsic meaning in their gender identity. We have been taught a gender binary, another phantasm, this one false, that all people are either men or women and that there are certain ways that these people must act. These genders are assigned at birth to people based upon their physical genitalia.

While gender may be a phantasm, it is a phantasm that we can refurbish. Rather than gender abolitionism, the elimination of genders, agender and pansexual anarchist blogger and

YouTuber anarchopac suggests, “the abolition of gender as a class-system does not look like gender becoming less and less important, but instead takes the form of gender fundamentally changing into something wonderful.” Gender can be an integral piece of a person’s identity, an expression of self. For example, transgender and non-binary people have rejected that their social identity should depend upon their physical genitalia at birth and have rebranded themselves in a way that better depicts who they are as a person. Rather than abolition of gender, our feminism should seek to humanize and empower the humanity of the oppressed genders and sexualities and those absent of gender and sexuality. Let’s make gender a good phantasm, *our* phantasm.



[image description: a 3 by 3 table of sexualities and genders represented by puns featuring an animal]

“Peace or harmony between the sexes and individuals does not necessarily depend on a superficial equalization of human beings; nor does it call for the elimination of individual traits and peculiarities. The problem that confronts us today, and which the nearest future is to solve, is how to be one’s self and yet in oneness with others, to feel deeply with all human beings and still retain one’s own characteristic qualities... Emancipation should make it possible for woman to be human in the truest sense.” -Emma Goldman

Anarchists seek to dismantle the hierarchies, both structural and cultural, that place cisgender, heterosexual men and masculine characteristics above transgender folks, gay/bisexual/pansexual/asexual people, and non-men and feminine characteristics. We want to eliminate the values and norms of our society that oppress people.

Anarchist feminism thus involves a two-pronged approach. With one prong, we aim to eliminate the gender roles and norms that unjustly chain humans. With the other, we aim to unlock gender so as to allow people to identify as whichever gender they feel describes who they are, absent the harmful chains that have plagued gender through history. Both of these fronts work towards creating gender freedom.

Key to the anarchist approach to gender politics is that our feminism must be for all, not White Feminism for upper middle-class cisgender white women. Our feminism attempts to address the extended class struggle of oppressed genders and races. This goes beyond the universal suffrage of First Wave Feminism or the so-called ‘right to work’ of Second Wave Feminism. As Emma Goldman sarcastically expressed in the early 20th century, to trade the tyranny of the husband for the tyranny of the boss is not freedom:

“Six million women wage-earners; six million women, who have the equal right with men to be exploited, to be robbed, to go on strike; aye, to starve, even. Anything more, my lord? Yes, six million age-workers in every walk of life, from the highest brain work to the most difficult menial labor in the mines and on the railroad tracks; yes, even detectives and policemen. Surely, the emancipation is complete.”

Out of the fire and into the frying pan is not freedom. To experience the despair, dehumanization, and oppression of capitalism cannot be the goal of feminism if feminism is to empower people of all genders and orientations to live life to its fullest. More broadly, that is the anarchist goal: to enable all to live their lives to their fullest.

The authority of men is evident in the wage gap. We live in a world where women, especially women of color, have significantly less power and less wealth than men. In 1980, women were compensated about 64% of what men were in the workplace. In 2015, Pew Research Center estimated that on average, women earned 84% of what men earn. Thankfully, this gap is closing, with young women earning about 93% of what men earn.

For an insight as to the demographics of the top of the ruling class, Gawker analyzed the members of the Forbes list of the 400 richest Americans in 2010. Included were 1 black person, 3 gay people, 4 Indian people, 6 non-Indian Asian people, and 34 women. Women are about 51.5% of the population but only about 8.5% of the richest Americans and less than 24% of Congress members. It is evident that men, particularly heterosexual white men, hold the authority in the most powerful country in the world.

[image description: the top text reads, “If I had a hammer... I’d smash white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy.” Below, an east Asian female-passing person holds a hammer and says, “I found it!”]



Further revealing the interwoven nature of the class struggle and gender politics is the poverty of transgender people. As anarchists, we strive to create a world that does better for our transgender comrades.

“According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, transgender people are four times as likely to have a household income under \$10,000 and twice as likely to be unemployed as the typical person in the U.S. Ninety percent of those surveyed reported

experiencing harassment, mistreatment, or discrimination on the job. Almost one in five reported being homeless at some point in their lives.” -Sears & Badgett, UCLA School of Law, 2012

Transgender people are struggling in more ways than just financially. Through a combination of forces like poverty, discrimination, transphobia, stigma, abuse, and the regular dehumanization and degrading of transgender people, trans folks have extremely poor mental health.

“Individuals who identify as transgender tend to experience higher rates of mental health issues than the general population. While approximately 6.7 percent of the general United States population suffers from depression and 18 percent grapple with some iteration of an anxiety disorder, nearly half of all individuals who identify as transgender experience these issues. What's more, over 41 percent of trans men and women are estimated to have attempted suicide — a rate that's nearly nine times as high as the rate of cisgender Americans.” -Katherine Schreiber, Psychology Today

Anarchists aim to accomplish the goals of feminism not through the state, but through the organization and direct action of oppressed gender identities and sexualities themselves. The state and capitalism are indeed contributors to the status of the gender phantasm today and continuously reinforce the phantasm in its present, oppressive form. For revolutionary change, revolutionary groups are necessary.

While the means of dismantling cishet patriarchy are more difficult to grasp, we can imagine a rough outline. Only anarchism identifies hierarchy as central to oppression and thus only anarchism fosters the self-liberation of the oppressed through institutions that do not perpetuate oppression. Only anarchist organization facilitates organization that encourages life rather than negating it. Through institutions like platformist organizations, women’s cooperatives, and LGBTQIA+ collectives, the oppressed can begin to define themselves rather than have their lives and identities defined by economic, political, and social oligarchs and hierarchies.

[image description: a galaxy brain meme depicts enhancing understanding in stages from ‘there are only two genders’ to ‘there are multiple genders’ to ‘gender is a spectrum’ to ‘gender is a heckin phantasm.’]



Anti-Racism

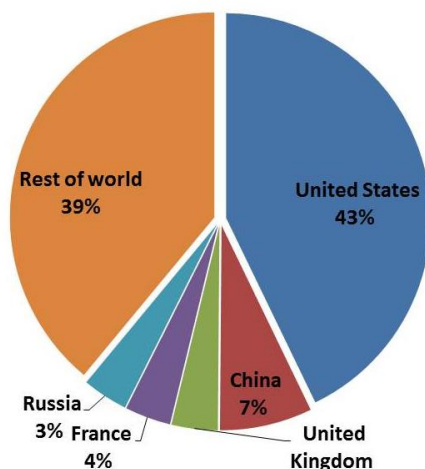
cw: racism, slavery, imperialism, anti-immigration, fascism, Trump, police, knife, drugs, murder

Any political analysis of society would be grossly incomplete without an analysis of racism. As a disclaimer, as I stated in my introduction, I am a white person living in a settler colonial state, and I am not qualified to truly give this form of oppression the thorough view it deserves. Additionally, as an American, understanding who my audience will likely be, my focus is centered on the United States, but I consider that acceptable, given that is where I have the power to change things. Alas, here it goes.

Racism is perpetuated by institutions and individuals. Racism has largely come about as a result of hierarchical power dynamics. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the Forbes list of the 400 richest Americans in 2010 were 1 black person, 4 Indian people, 6 non-Indian Asian people. Black people, who make up 12.6% of the US population, make up only 0.25% of the 400 richest Americans. That one person is Oprah Winfrey. Not a single Latino or Latina person made the list, despite comprising 16.3% of the population. 81% of the current 115th United States Congress is white, while only 62% of the population is. And that's a record level of ethnic diversity for Congress. A December 2014 article from the Pew Research Center showed that the median net worth of white households was 13 times greater than that of black households and 10 times greater than that of Hispanic households. Globally, the countries with the highest GDP per capita, a standard measure of the power of a country's economy are nearly all either majority white or fueled by oil barons (such as Qatar). Looking at 2015 military spending by country, the United States dwarfs all countries with a budget of \$596 billion. It's clear that white people have more authority than people of color, and thus have hierarchical authority over people of color. Anarchists are anti-racist.

Percent of global military expenditure

[image description: a pie chart breakdown of countries' percent of global military expenditure in the year 2010. The United States has the greatest share at 43%, while China is a distant second at 7%]



While earlier civilizations, such as the classical empires of Greece and Rome, certainly had xenophobia, a fear of others, they had no concept of race. Race is a strictly modern concept. Race as a concept did not begin in history until around the 16th century, the era when empires became global, “The first clear evidence of racism occurred at the end of the 16th century with the start of the slave trade from Africa to Britain and to America.” Race is a purely social

construct with no intrinsic meaning. As I will go into in the following chapter, it co-opts one part of the working class against another. It has functioned as an excuse for oppression, specifically, the oppression of people unlike the ruling class. Racism, sexism, and homophobia are all similar in these roots, as an *Anarchist FAQ* states, “The primary cause of these evil attitudes is the need for ideologies that justify domination and exploitation, which are inherent in hierarchy -- in other words, ‘theories’ that ‘justify’ and ‘explain’ oppression and injustice.” Racist ideology is a mental defense of oppression. People are socialized to be racist by racist institutions that reproduce their ideology. Racism, like sexism, is a form of oppression that is socialized into people. And, as seen from its beginnings, racism, systematic discrimination and prejudice towards people on the basis of race or ethnicity, is a global phenomenon.

Racism generally holds that some biological characteristics render the ethnicity of a powerful state as better than those of less powerful societies. Most notably, white people, especially Anglo-Saxons, have been held in higher regard than non-white people, a category that has become more specific over time. Generally, people who look like the people who globally rule the world, white people, have a hierarchical status above those who do not, people of color, and especially dark-skinned people. There have been alternative systems of racism, however, such as the significant blood-type based racism in Japanese history. Racism thus is a hierarchy of ethnicities and fuels the exploitation of the oppressed. Racism has a class character to it. Racism has played a strong role in the justification of atrocities. Such atrocities include the colonization and destruction of indigenous peoples, enslavement, imperialism, and genocide. Broadly speaking,

“From an economic standpoint, racism is associated with the exploitation of cheap labour at home and imperialism abroad. Indeed, early capitalist development in both America and Europe was strengthened by the bondage of people, particularly those of African descent. In the Americas, Australia and other parts of the world the slaughter of the original inhabitants and the expropriation of their land was also a key aspect in the growth of capitalism. As the subordination of foreign nations proceeds by force, it appears to the dominant nation that it owes its mastery to its special natural qualities, in other words to its ‘racial’ characteristics. Thus imperialists have frequently appealed to the Darwinian doctrine of ‘Survival of the Fittest’ to give their racism a basis in ‘nature.’” -An Anarchist FAQ

Why is racist ideology necessary in order for these atrocities against other people? It takes a lot of indoctrination, training, pedagogy, and propaganda for a human to completely disregard any compassion, any mutual aid, and any solidarity with their fellow human. While the agency and complacency of racist white people cannot and should not be dismissed, time and time again, it is important to note that racism has proven an effective divide and conquer strategy for the ruling class, “In many industrialised countries, bosses used workers of different nationalities and races against each other as scabs to undermine strikes, and attack wages and conditions of all workers, while at the same time aggravating racism in those who blamed their fellow workers rather than the manipulative bosses.” Racism does not exist separate from capitalism and the state, but has coexisted with these hierarchies. And, indeed, racism has convinced the white portion of the working class to turn their backs on their fellow workers and

in turn bolster their own political and economic oppression in exchange for a place above workers of color. It's the classic trend of the oppressed putting down the more oppressed. And with all hierarchies supporting each other, that entails the oppressed oppressing themselves.

While many of the bluntest attitudes of racism have been effectively combatted, the brutal history of racial oppression continues to have an impact today. Oftentimes, in practice, rather than being overtly bigoted, racism takes on a mask of structure. That is, much racism materializes as institutional racism, which Black Panther Stokely Carmichael defined as "the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin." A racist white person, may, for example, not express that we should cut funding for schools that teach African-American children, but express that we should cut funding for schools in urban areas like Detroit because the schoolboard is 'corrupt' and the students are a 'waste' of money. Thus rather than outwardly saying we should support policies that hurt black people, they may support policies that *just so happen* to disproportionately hurt black people.

A common attitude among white people is that racism is dead. That's far from the truth, but suppose we pretended that people no longer held racist beliefs. That wouldn't reset the history of capital accumulation in which white Americans have hundreds of years of a head start. The effects of racism are intergenerational; they are inherited. In the words of Malcolm X, "If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, that's not progress. The progress is healing the wound that the blow made. They won't even admit the knife is there." The knife is there. The stereotypes are in people's minds. We all know the routine. Racism tells us that black people and Latinos and Latinas are lazy, unintelligent, unethical, selfish, helpless, and violent, that Arabs are religious extremist terrorists, that Asians are nerdy, servile, and uncool. Meanwhile, white people are saviors, civilized, peaceful, and 'normal.' Turning to Malcolm X again, "If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing." While I won't be breaking down all the manifestations of this knife, I will highlight a handful of major examples of institutional racism.

[image description: a circle with the text "good night white pride" around the edge. In the center, a figure with a Pepe face holds down and punches a white figure with Nazi imagery on their jacket]



Among the most prominent examples of institutional racism in the United States today is the mass incarceration of people of color, especially black men. We live in a police state, a state

in which brutal economic violence is reinforced through the might of armed bureaucrats: cops. As the anarchists expression goes: All Cops Are Bastards. They exist to serve and protect the ruling class, and are class traitors who enforce the injustice of the state. Cops prowl the black and Latino neighborhoods. People of color are thus disproportionately incarcerated for victimless drug crimes, and in addition to being coerced under control, they have their labor exploited for wages far below the national minimum wage. Because of this, the prison-industrial complex is often regarded as legalized slavery.

Anarchists have long recognized that prisons neither reform inmates nor deter crime. Rather, they are instruments of power, domination, and exploitation. Anarchists are prison abolitionists. Peter Kropotkin, himself an inmate for many years, wrote in his book *In Russian and French Prisons*, “Prisons are universities of crime, maintained by the state.” Prisons do not exist to better the prisoner. Rather, they destroy them, “The prisoner is no longer a man in whom any feeling of self-respect is permitted to exist. He is a thing, a mere number B 24, and he will be treated as a numbered thing. No animal could bear such treatment year after year without being utterly abashed; but those human beings, who in a few years ought to become useful members of society, are treated in this way.” No, crime is not combatted by incarcerating millions of minorities. Crime is a product of poverty, a natural result of a lifetime of dehumanizing indoctrination and abysmal living conditions. Crime is punished by the racist state with desolation of the human spirit.

“Let us organize our society so as to assure to everybody the possibility of regular work for the benefit of the commonwealth and that means of course a thorough transformation of the present relations between work and capital; let us assure to every child a sound education and instruction, both in manual labour and science, so as to permit him to acquire, during the first twenty years of his life, the knowledge and habits of earnest work and we shall be in no more need of dungeons and jails, of judges and hangmen. Man is a result of those conditions in which he has grown up. Let him grow in habits of useful work; let him be brought by his earlier life to consider humanity as one great family, no member of which can be injured without the injury being felt by a wide circle of his fellows, and ultimately by the whole of society; let him acquire a taste for the highest enjoyments of science and art much more lofty and durable than those given by the satisfaction of lower passions, and we may be sure that we shall not have many breaches of those laws of morality which are an unconscious affirmation of the best conditions for life in society.” -Peter Kropotkin

The police state, a functioning cooperation of cops, prisons, and capitalist economics, is thus a violent system of oppression that pretends to be moral. We’re told that the scary black and Latino drug dealers are coming to get at our kids, and thus we need to incarcerate millions of them in order to reform them into better people. Really what’s happening is a brutal suppression of some of society’s most marginalized members. The hook to hip-hop duo dead prez’s 2002 song “Police State” summarizes the phenomenon well.

“The average Black male

Live a third of his life in a jail cell

Cause the world is controlled by the white male

And the people don't never get justice

And the women don't never get respected

And the problems don't never get solved

And the jobs don' never pay enough

So the rent always be late

Can you relate?

We living in a police state”

[image description: black and white image of black birds using bolt cutters to dismantle a barbed wire fence (image from Community Action on Prison Expansion)]



These patterns of ideological warfare and institutional hegemony are a staple of racism. Globally, racism takes the shape of imperialism, the process by which one country dominates another directly, by political means, or indirectly, by economic means, in order to steal its wealth. Vladimir Lenin argued that imperialism is the height of capitalism, and it is hard to disagree. Imperialism exports the patterns of capitalism to a global scale: the masses toil away while their human and natural resources are extracted by the ruling few into the neighborhoods of the ruling few, and little of this wealth trickles down to bettering the life of a working class human. And through the indoctrination, through racist socialization via means like the media and schools, people in the imperialist world powers are taught that their state has noble intentions. Wars of conquest are framed as humanitarian intervention, as ‘the white man’s burden.’

"we find wars of extermination, wars among races and nations; wars of conquest, wars to maintain equilibrium, political and religious wars, wars waged in the name of 'great ideas', ... patriotic wars for greater national unity . . . And what do we find beneath all that, beneath all the hypocritical phrases used in order to give these wars the appearance of humanity and right? Always the same economic phenomenon: the tendency on the part of some to live and prosper at the expense of others. All the rest is mere humbug. The ignorant and naive, and the fools are entrapped by it, but the strong men who direct the destinies of the State know only too well that

underlying all those wars there is only one motive: pillage, the seizing of someone else's wealth and the enslavement of someone else's labour." -Mikhail Bakunin

Imperialism has several routes of economic exploitation and oppression. These include “allowing the import of cheaper raw materials and goods; the export of goods to markets sheltered from foreign competitors; the export of capital from capital-rich areas to capital-poor areas as the investing of capital in less industrially developed countries allows the capitalists in question to benefit from lower wages; relocating factories to countries with fewer (or no) social and environmental laws, controls or regulations. All these allow profits to be gathered at the expense of the working people of the oppressed nation.” Some lands have seen their indigenous populations destroyed and dominated by a later-arriving state power. Such settler colonial states include the United States, Canada, Australia, and South Africa. From Ireland to the Caribbean to South America to Africa to Asia to the Philippines, much of the world was colonized by powerful European states.



[image description: color-coded map of colonial claims of European countries and the United States in the eastern hemisphere in the year 1900]

Imperialism today takes a more sophisticated form than the old standard of colonization. In place of a rigid command economy, free market economics are employed. With the imperialist nations having far more advanced technology, their economic ruling classes are able to easily dominate the market in the poor countries they abuse. Capitalist business owners, looking to sell the product they cannot sell so profitably in domestic markets, employ the state to create favorable trade conditions so that they can make extraordinary profits internationally. And while wars may be expensive, that cost gets dumped on taxpayers, while the profits go to the businesses. As the old aphorism goes, privatize the profits, socialize the costs. Anarchists are against colonialism in any form. Self-determination is a human right, and autonomy, anarchism's top value, is its ultimate expression.

"The relationship of these global corporations with the poorer countries had long been an exploiting one . . . Whereas U.S. corporations in Europe between 1950 and 1965 invested \$8.1 billion and made \$5.5 billion in profits, in Latin America they invested \$3.8 billion and made \$11.2 billion in profits, and in Africa they invested \$5.2 billion and made \$14.3 billion in profits." -Howard Zinn, A People's History of the United States

In history, at the height of white imperialism, racism formed a new dimension: anti-immigrant racism. Whereas other manifestations of racism have been used primarily to justify the oppression of others, this form is clearly used as a red herring to distract the white workers from the true causes of their misery, "This form of racism has been fueled by economic crisis and by capitalism's need to find a convenient scapegoat for unemployment, housing shortages and every other problem which the current crisis of capitalism has thrown up." This is an especially popular tactic by demagogues such as Donald Trump. Anarchists are against the existence of borders, and recognize that they are the unjust products of states' monopoly of violence within their territory. "No Borders, No Nations," so the slogan goes. Borders deny our inalienable right to travel and deny people their equal claim to the natural resources of the planet and the accumulated wealth of humanity. Immigrants are welcome to any anarchist commune.



[image description: a wooden fence with a dashed line outline and cartoon scissors drawn on it]

On the rise of Trump's popularity, Noam Chomsky remarked of his poor white supporters, "[They] are sinking into hopelessness, despair and anger — not directed so much against the institutions that are the agents of the dissolution of their lives and world, but against those who are even more harshly victimized. Signs are familiar, and here it does evoke some memories of the rise of European fascism." A combination of racism and discontent with the status quo has time and time again lead to fascism – a product of the failure of capitalism, the failure of liberals to tame the angry, and also the failure of the left to sew class consciousness among the white portion of the working class.

The struggle against racism will be intersectional. As the Black Panther Fred Hampton said, "We don't think you fight fire with fire best; we think you fight fire with water best. We're going to fight racism not with racism, but we're going to fight with solidarity. We say we're not going to fight capitalism with black capitalism, but we're going to fight it with socialism." While racism has strong material roots, anti-racism demands more than just material responses. To the

surprise of new non-white people, socialism will not solve racism. And capitalism certainly won't. Anti-racism requires that the material needs of people of color are met, and that racist ideology is actively combatted. That means white people supporting efforts of self-liberation organized by people of color, and using their position as white people to change the minds of other white people. Through solidarity and socialism, the racist patriarchal capitalist state can be toppled.

I read an article recently titled "The Anarchism of Blackness." The collective authors argue that the gains of African-Americans have been through anarchistic struggles and anarchistic sort of organization beyond the state.

"Those gains were not a product of any illusion of American exceptionalism or melting pots, but rather through blood, sweat and community self-defense. Our organization can be as effective now as it has been in the past, serving every locality and community based on their needs and determinations..."

... Blackness is, in so many ways, anarchistic. African-Americans, as an ethno-social identity comprised of descendants from enslaved Africans, have innovated new cultures and social organizations much like anarchism would require us to do outside of state structures. Black radical formations are themselves fundamentally anti-fascist despite functioning outside of 'conventional' Antifa spaces, and Black people have engaged in anarchistic resistances since our very arrival in the Americas...

... assertions of Black personhood, humanity and liberation have necessarily called into question both the foundations and legitimacy of the American state."

I find this last sentence reflective of the struggles of all specially oppressed peoples. To live, to survive, to be an oppressed person who affirms their humanity rather than submitting and denying it to the yoke of authority, is a direct blow against authority. Authority exists over and above the oppressed, and there will be no integration with authority.

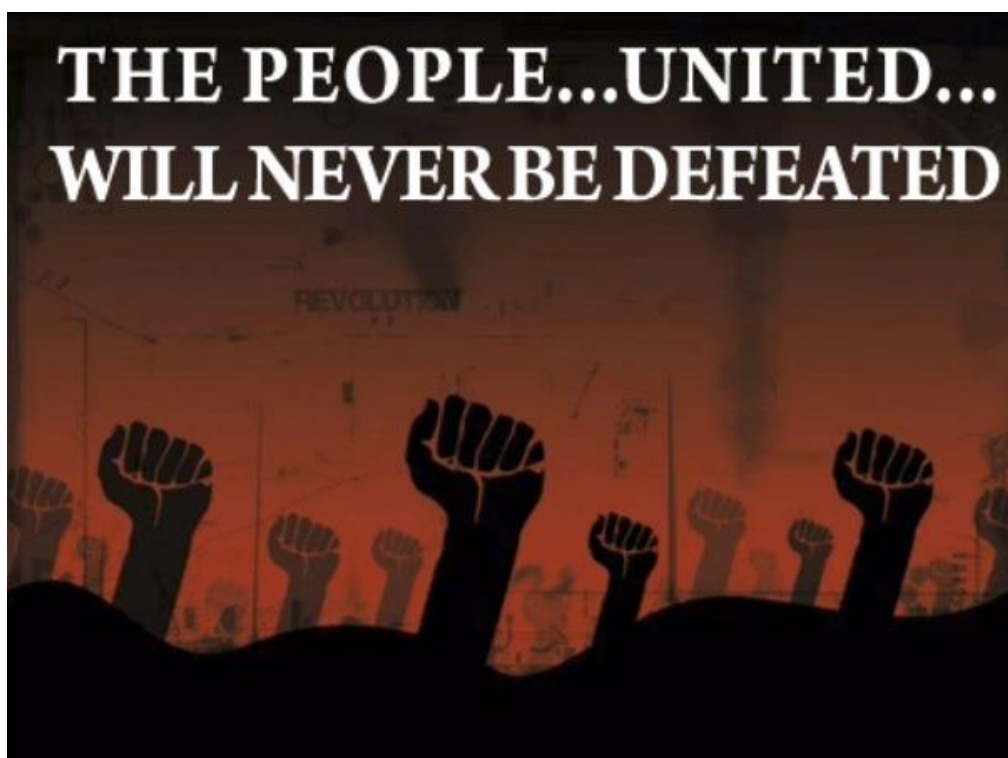
"The sooner Black America in particular begins to understand our position as an inherently anarchistic element of the United States, the more realistically we will be able to organize. Moving beyond the misnomer of chaos, the elements that make us such are the very tools we should utilize to achieve our liberation. This burning house cannot be reformed to appropriately include us, nor should we want to share a painful death perishing in the flames. A better society has to be written through our inalienable self-determinations, and that will only happen when we realize we are holding the pen."

Racism defines people's lives not by who they are, but what they are. Racism impoverishes people, racism psychologically damages people, racism dehumanizes people, racism controls people, and racism kills people. Racism denies people's autonomy. Racism dictates how people of color live, and racism is trained into every single white person in the United States. Racism is the antithesis of freedom, and anti-racism is a cornerstone of anarchist philosophy. It is impossible for me, as a white person, to fully grasp the magnitude of racism, but I'm doing my best to listen to my friends of color, to diversify both my learning and my action,

to be wary of my internal prejudices and to put my friends in line when they say or do anything oppressive or discriminatory. I fight the good fight.

Politics is fundamentally about how resources are distributed, how decisions are made, and how people interact with each other. Authority, capitalism, the state, gender oppression, and racism have strong roles in shaping politics. They determine whose ideas matter and what those ideas are. These forces all interact together, determining how it is that we live our lives. Anarchism seeks to change the dominating forces from oppressive ones to ones that affirm life in the individual.

“Anarchism is the abolition of exploitation and oppression of [human] by [human,] that is, the abolition of private property and government; Anarchism is the destruction of misery, of superstitions, of hatred. Therefore, every blow given to the institutions of private property and to the government, every exaltation of the conscience of man, every disruption of the present conditions, every lie unmasked, every part of human activity taken away from the control of the authorities, every augmentation of the spirit of solidarity and initiative, is a step towards Anarchism.” -Errico Malatesta



[image description: large black fists are raised out of hills amid a red light. Above them is white text that reads, “the people... united... will never be defeated”]

The Abolition of Whiteness: An Irish-American Anarchist Perspective

An article I wrote on 8/22/17. While this is a detour from the structure of this book, I felt like the previous chapter was not satisfactory in the first edition. Further, the depths of the contents of this article could not be simply woven into the previous chapter. As such, I determined it best to reproduce the article in full right here to better explain the complex relationship between class, race, and the anarchist revolution.

I have spent much time this year attempting to reconnect with my Irish ethnicity and to foster a re-discovered sense of Irishness. Many of the internal struggles I've had lurked in my poem "Tiocfaidh ár lá," which I will quote in this article.

As an Irish-American whose most recent immigrant ancestor was my Quebec-born grandfather, my ties to Irishness have historically been very plastic. I was a plastic paddy, knowing little of Irish culture beyond my immediate family's love of Irish alcohol, the Irish Rovers, and a still burning disdain for all things English and Protestant. I distinctly remember my father insisting to me that the Irish had it the worst of any people who ever crossed the Atlantic and how the Ku Klux Klan's greatest target was Catholics. Here we have the seeds of an ideology that amounts to the Great White Hope of racism. That is, whataboutism with the detracting interjection of "but the Irish were persecuted, too" whenever confronted with the oppression of people of color. Anglo-Saxons who pull such a move should just shut up, to be honest, but for my fellow Irish-Americans, who number in the tens of millions, I believe that an honest analysis of the history of the Irish people in our native homeland and in the United States offers some pivotal insights about racism, our relationship to racism, and where we can go from here.

As an adolescent, growing out of the neoconservatism of my family into right-leaning libertarianism, I began to reject the label of Irish. I thought of my ancestry as nothing but a cop-out. I thought of myself as nothing but white, something I was by virtue of how others saw and interacted with me. As I later blossomed into a staunchly socialist anarchist, sentiments of anti-nationalism also contributed to my personal rejection of Irishness. But my developing interest in the dynamics of nationalism, combined with studies of Irish history, James Connolly, and Lorenzo Komba'Ervin's manifesto "Anarchism and the Black Revolution," has led me to believe that Irishness is something I must reclaim. I must understand my place in the world. Now reconnected with genuinely Irish culture, I am no plastic paddy, and I am ready for a revolutionary proposition: the abolition of whiteness.

The abolition of whiteness is a concept I was first introduced to by Noel Ignatiev, author of the scalding book, "How the Irish Became White." Art MacDonald's article reflecting on Ignatiev's works inspired my poem "Tiocfaidh ár lá," with his bold conclusion, "So perhaps we Irish in America must reclaim our greenness and, perhaps, our anti-racism trainers are right that we all must reclaim our cultural heritage and bring it to the multicultural table. The only stipulation is that we do it in a decidedly anti-racist manner and in solidarity with oppressed classes of people." The latter part of that sentence is essential, or else we get ideologies like that of my father. Reacting to racist plastic Irishness led me to hide behind the white curtain.

What is whiteness and how did the Irish become white? Whiteness, the idea of the white race, is a social construct produced by capitalist society to employ the tactic of divide and conquer among the poor workers of the world. Lorenzo Komboa'Ervin writes, "when European indentured servants joined with Blacks to rebel against their lot in the late 1600s, the propertied class decided to "free" them by giving them a special status as "whites" and thus a stake in the system of oppression... The Capitalists didn't want white labour united with Blacks against their rule and the system of exploitation of labour. The invention of the "white race" was a scam to facilitate this exploitation. White workers were bought off to allow their own wage slavery and the African's super-exploitation."

The Irish, arriving in the U.S. in droves from their occupied homeland due to poverty, and especially the genocidal potato famine from 1845-1852 (which caused one million to die and another million to flee Ireland), were not granted whiteness when they arrived. Why? The Irish were the poorest of the poor, with no political organization, and their homeland had been colonized and dominated by the English for over 650 years already. The Irish were "the black [people] of Europe," the most oppressed and impoverished. The Irish became white in the United States through massive political organization and involvement in brutal racism against black people. They took the same trade the Anglo-Saxons had taken hundreds of years earlier, assimilating into a system that would continue to destroy them. And in the process of becoming white, they lost their Irishness. To quote my poem, "Like a rainbow capitalism, the Irish assimilated; inheriting poverty and psychological trauma without a culture to liberate."

The Irish moved behind the white curtain, a pseudo-solidarity of white ethnicities in defense of white supremacism and hierarchy over people of color. The abolition of whiteness, the crashing of the white curtain, is a crucial component for dismantling the entire system of white supremacism. How do we move beyond the white curtain? Lorenzo Komboa'Ervin suggests, "The fight against white skin privilege also requires the rejection of the vicious identification of North Americans as "white" people, rather than as Welsh, German, Irish, etc. as their national origin. This "white race" designation is a contrived super-nationality designed to inflate the social importance of European ethnics and to enlist them as tools in the Capitalist system of exploitation." The abolition of whiteness is essential for realizing the pipe-dream of united class warfare that Irish-Americans like myself and Art MacDonald wish had happened in the 19th century, with the poor Irish working with black folks towards better lives for both groups.

But we cannot deny the existence of white privilege and that white supremacist capitalism sees us as white. I have taken great interest in developing a lexicon of terminology that prepares us to develop a greater understanding of and a greater existence within the world. We need language to push for the abolition of whiteness and to prefigure for a world without whiteness. How do we avoid so-called "race-blindness" while also moving beyond the white curtain? Komboa'Ervin proposes "North Americans" as a substitute for white, but this isolates whiteness in the American continent and continues to lump all European peoples together. Rather, I suggest we should simply self-identify as our ethnicity e.g. Irish, and acknowledge that that ethnicity has been granted access to whiteness. This feels like an approach that would make

Max Stirner proud, as we have freed ourselves from the phantom of the mind that is whiteness, while still being cognizant of the influence this phantasm plays.

Reclaiming our ethnic backgrounds poses the potential issue of being white nationalism in disguise, exposing the need for anarchism to be intersectional and to position anti-whiteness within a wider analysis of society. The prospect of post-white nationalism, already somewhat present in the ideologies of Irish-Americans like my father, is complex, and will deserve more analysis as the death of whiteness draws closer. The Irish Republican socialist James Connolly's writing on nationalism seems a good place to start, "Now traditions may, and frequently do, provide materials for a glorious martyrdom, but can never be strong enough to ride the storm of a successful revolution. If the national movement of our day is not merely to re-enact the old sad tragedies of our past history, it must show itself capable of rising to the exigencies of the moment."

I am Irish. I will not fall for the proxy-nationalism many fellow Irish-Americans do, nor will I live behind the white curtain. Embracing my Irishness, and understanding what that means, is key for me to become a true race traitor. The Irish are a people who have faced imperialism, cultural hegemony, genocide, famine, and other various manifestations of racism. The solidarity for people of color that flows from a profound sense of Irishness makes anti-whiteness all the more rewarding. In Noel Ignatiev's words, "Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity." An injury to one is an injury to all. I leave you with four lines from my poem:

"No true Irishman capes for the rulers of those before him.

Let the Irish be Irish again, the Irish they were never allowed to be.

We are the fighting Irish: white genocide, let us be green.

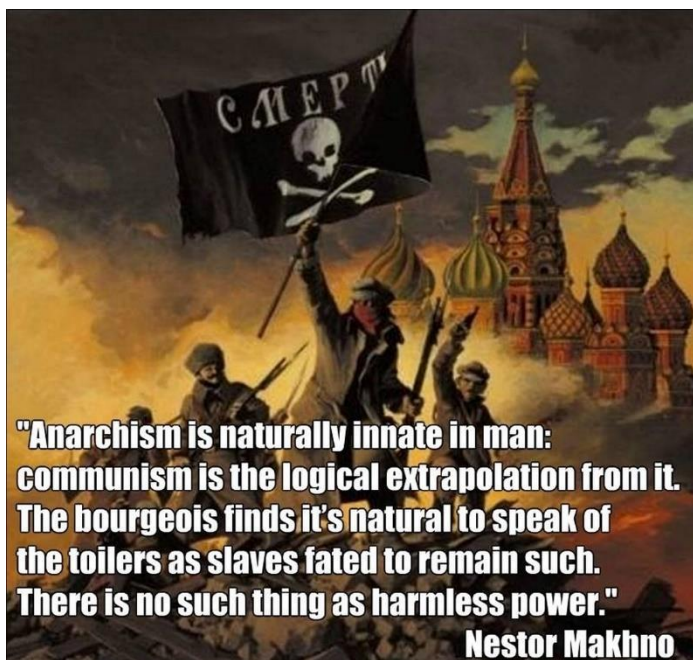
Death to America, Erin Go Bragh!"

The Natural Extrapolation: Communism

cw: food, bread, slaves mention

Anarchism has always been anti-capitalist, but it was not until near the end of the 19th century that it developed communism. Proudhon envisioned a system of mutualism, a society in which everyone has access to their own property and minimum-interest loans through a community credit union. Mutualism in anarchist thought was largely replaced by Bakunin's system of collectivism. Under collectivism, workers collectively own and manage the means of production and distribute labor notes to workers depending on some combination of the time and strain of their labor. Under both mutualism and collectivism, the goal is to end the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class. These socialist systems aim to ensure that the worker gets the full value of their labor. This is a producer-side approach to resource distribution, as is capitalism. Socialism's principle is to "each according to [their] deeds." Communism differs radically from socialism. In communism, resources are distributed "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs," a consumer-side approach.

[image description: soldiers with the flag of the Free Territory of Ukraine march toward a palace. At the bottom is a quotation from Nestor Makhno, "Anarchism is naturally innate in man: communism is the logical extrapolation from it. The bourgeois find it's natural to speak of the toilers as slaves fated to remain such."]



As stated in the above quotation from anarcho-communist Nestor Makhno (1888-1934), communism is the natural extrapolation from anarchism. If we are to take the ideals of anarchism seriously, if we are to believe in full autonomy, we must believe in communism. In his classic "The Conquest of Bread," anarcho-communist Peter Kropotkin declared "that all have a right to bread, that there is bread enough for all." Only communism promises the right to live, which is essential for freedom from the coercion of society to work. Only communism guarantees the right *not* to work. By guaranteeing the physical necessities of life, communism protects individualism. Communal control of resources safeguards independence of personality.

To the objections of liberals who exclaimed at the audacity of his vision of the future, Kropotkin responded, “That we are utopians is well known. So Utopian are we that we go the length of believing that the Revolution can and ought to assure shelter, food, and clothes to all — an idea extremely displeasing to middle-class citizens, whatever their party colour, for they are quite alive to the fact that it is not easy to keep the upper hand of a people whose hunger is satisfied.” Our utopian resource distribution scares the capitalists because it means the workers would no longer be forced to choose between starvation/poverty and exploitation under capitalism. The same reasoning that finds capitalism coercive renders socialism also coercive. Kropotkin argued that collectivism maintains authority in the hands of those who determine how labor notes are distributed, but even more important for the purposes of this book is the unjust authority of the ruling masses, the workers’ collectives, over the individual.

Kropotkin was also concerned with how the value of labor was determined. He concluded that such a measurement was impossible. I agree, for the value created by a person is not merely their production. Everyone produces personal, social value. Everyone is entitled to the collective wealth of humanity, and this is essential to their freedom.

“The means of production being the collective work of humanity, the product should be the collective property of the race. Individual appropriation is neither just nor serviceable. All belongs to all. All things are for all men, since all men have need of them, since all men have worked in the measure of their strength to produce them, and since it is not possible to evaluate every one's part in the production of the world's wealth...”

All is for all! If the man and the woman bear their fair share of work, they have a right to their fair share of all that is produced by all, and that share is enough to secure them well-being. No more of such vague formulas as "The Right to work," or "To each the whole result of his labour." What we proclaim is The Right to Well-Being: Well-Being for All!” -Peter Kropotkin

The social revolution must guarantee daily bread to all.



After bread has been secured, leisure is the supreme aim.

[image description: Bread loaves have been shaped into loafers. the top text reads, “The social revolution must guarantee daily bread to all.” The bottom text reads, “after bread has been secured, leisure is the supreme aim.”]

Well-being for all is the communist expression of anarchist autonomy. Equality in this sense is necessary for autonomy, and the denial of well-being for all when we are perfectly capable of providing well-being for all is an act of violence. Even examining earlier times in

which scarcity may have been a legitimate problem, we see inequality imposed by property laws. The classical liberal thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) described in his book *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* the absurdity of private property, "The first man who, having fenced off a plot of land, thought of saying, 'This is mine' and found people simple enough to believe him was the real founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, how many miseries and horrors might the human race had been spared by the one who, upon pulling up the stakes or filling in the ditch, had shouted to his fellow men: 'Beware of listening to this impostor; you are lost if you forget the fruits of the earth belong to all and that the earth belongs to no one.'" Communism restores everyone's equal claim to the fruits of the earth. Rousseau's answer as to what is the origin of inequality goes, "the first stage was the establishment of the law and of the right of property... Thus the class of the rich and poor was authorized by the first epoch." Communism restores the natural equality of individuals, with the combination of modern technological advancements enabling an equality of opportunity for all to thrive being who they are.

In place of competition, communism promises a world fueled by mutual aid, compassion, and cooperation organized by free association of equals, a confederation of federations. As Kropotkin wrote, "Competition is the law of the jungle, but cooperation is the law of civilization." While we cannot subject the peoples of the future to our constricted ideas of the what their forms of organization should take, the anarchist principles are clear.



The Struggles of Autistics

cw: anxiety, suicide, death

In this section I hope to give an idea of what it is like to be autistic in an allistic world. The world has been shaped for people who are not like us. We are looked down on, talked over, infantilized, abused, and sanctioned.

To give an idea how rough the world can be for autistics today, I need only offer an insight as to the state of our mental health. Studies indicate that somewhere between 11% and 84% of autistics have some form of anxiety. The wide range comes from differences in how the studies were conducted. Two highly reputable studies offer figures like 55% meeting the criteria for at least one anxiety disorder, and an anxiety diagnosis rate of 44%. We're very anxious. Autistics without learning disabilities are nine times as likely to die from suicide than the general population. We're dying. Our life expectancy is also 16 years less than that of the general population, and for some groups of us, the difference is more like 30 years. We're dying fast. Things need to change.



[image description: a black background with white top text that reads, "Days without allistic nonsense" and center text of a large white zero (0)]

Ableism

cw: ableist slurs, ableism, ableist meme, genitalia mention, abuse, discrimination, hate crime, gruesome destruction of objects of emotional value

Ableism is defined as “discrimination or prejudice against people with disabilities.” Ableism is rampant throughout the world today. All disabled people from those with physical disabilities to those with debilitating mental illnesses to those with atypical neurotypes face ableism. Autistics, like all neurodivergents, also face ableism.

You may wonder how neurodivergents can face ableism when neurodiversity is something to be celebrated. The question is raised, are autistics disabled? While some autistics may like to think of themselves as differently abled rather than disabled, I hold that autistics are indeed disabled, but by a different model of disability than most are familiar with.

Amythest Schaber, an autistic YouTuber, activist, public speaker, and blogger, has an excellent video on the question of whether or not autism is a disability, and it is from this video that I draw these models of disability. The most used model of disability, the one that doctors and professionals use, is the medical model of disability. This asserts two things: that any deviation from the norm is bad and must be corrected, and the physician is central to the whole process. By this model of disability, I would believe that autistics are not disabled. However, in the context of neurodiversity, I prefer to use the social model of disability. This model also asserts two things. Firstly, while a person may have an impairment, it is not the impairment but society that disables them. “It is society’s exclusion of and failure to think of and accommodate for people’s impairments that disables people.” Secondly, it is the disabled and ill people who should be the center of the discussion, not the physicians. By the social model of disability, I hold that I am, like all other autistics, disabled. As autistic activist Lydia X.Z. Brown explains, “the experience of disability and being disabled is the result of the *interaction* of a person’s inherent differences *with* a society and its attitudes and policies.”

Ableism manifests itself in many forms. For example, one could be openly bigoted against disabled people. One could more subtly imply that non-disabled people are superior to disabled people. One could believe that deviation from the able norm is unnatural. Or more structurally, one could fail to meet or even attempt to meet the needs of disabled people.

Ableism in our culture begins with using disability as an insult. Beyond the r-word, people have taken to using all sorts of intellectual, physical, and mental disabilities as ways to attack people. This includes using “autistic” as an insult. They use the word “autistic” to describe something they find illogical, silly, or often that they just disagree with. In doing so, they imply that autistics cannot think coherently, that all of us have intellectual disabilities (it still being grossly ableist to make fun of those with intellectual disabilities), and that those with opinions different from theirs cannot be neurotypical. This is a common practice, especially online, frequently done in such places as YouTube comment sections and Reddit thread. Similar ableist jokes include saying that various nouns “gave” people autism and the use of “reeeeeeee,” an onomatopoeia of screeching, as a way to describe someone’s frustration. Users of these sorts of jokes believe that making fun of disabilities is funny, as disabled people act in ways that are

weird to them. To these people, being autistic is a disease and thus to them autistics are less than them.

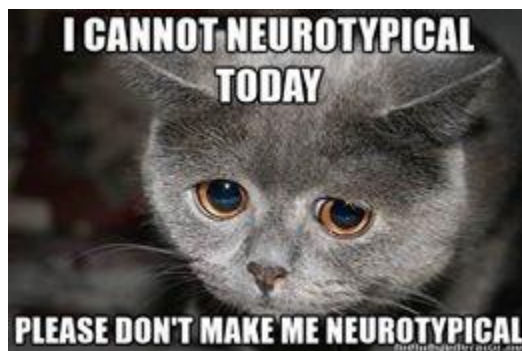


[image description: two figures in business attire shake hands while a figure crouching with angry eyes is labeled with “*autistic screeching*”]

[image description: the *autistic screeching* figure is edited to have a smiley face and text that reads, “I’m autistic” in black and “you’re boring” in pink cursive]

Even for those who do not use autism as an insult, autistic behaviors are taboo. To act autistically, for example, by stimming, can result in social repercussions. For many of us autistics, we must act in a plainly neurotypical fashion and hide our autistic behaviors in order to be taken seriously and avoid ableist criticism. It is extremely strenuous to attempt to “pass” as neurotypical and bury who you are.

The need to act neurotypical coincides with the one-size-fits-all cultural norm. For example, when a well-meaning allistic learns that someone is autistic, they will commonly respond with something along the lines of, “I won’t treat you differently.” What this means is that they will treat an autistic person as if they are neurotypical rather than being accommodating of their autistic needs.



[image description: a sad cat with top text that reads, “I cannot neurotypical today” and bottom text that reads, “please don’t make me neurotypical”]

A key piece to understanding ableism in the context of neurodiversity is that the neurotypical neurotype is held as the norm. Neurotypicals are considered to be normal while neurodivergents are considered to be abnormal at the least, diseased on the other side of the ableist spectrum. Similar to how one’s gender is assumed to correlate with one’s genitalia at birth, one’s neurotypical identity is usually assigned as neurotypical barring autistic behaviors that are obvious enough to tip off one’s parents/guardians. As a result of this, neurodivergents are othered, they become people with something wrong with them rather than people who are

different. For many, this leads to them yearning to be neurotypical and chasing after a societal standard that they cannot achieve. This is somewhat analogous with the scenario where a person of color wishes that they were white because that is what society values.

As a result of being assigned the neurotypical neurotype despite being autistic, many non-diagnosed autistic children are raised as if they are neurotypical and held to neurotypical standards of behavior. This can be damaging. I will go into detail on parenting of autistics in the next chapter, but the effects of living life believing one is neurotypical extend beyond the home. Having lived well into my teen years not knowing that I'm autistic, I can attest to how grueling it was. It felt like I was an alien. I seemed very different from others with completely different experiences and had no answers as to why. This is a standard experience for un-diagnosed autistic kids.



[image description: an "un-diagnosed autistic kid starter pack" of cliché things people say to un-diagnosed autistic kids]

Discovering that I am autistic was an extremely relieving experience. Suddenly everything made sense. It's nice to know why you are the way you are, that you're not alone, and that there is nothing wrong with you. It feels validating to know that you're not weird, stubborn, lazy, and selfish, but that you have actual, legitimate, different needs from most people. You can research and uncover new things about yourself and techniques for people like you on how to survive and thrive in a difficult, neurotypical world. Discovering their neurotype has led many autistics to start exploring pieces of themselves they'd never conceived of before. Years after my revelation, I'm still unravelling and beginning to understand the events and feelings of my youth. Knowledge of one's neurotype also enables autistics to connect with fellow autistics and feel at home in a community of their peers who understand and accept who they are. If the neurodiversity agenda succeeds, people will not be assumed to be neurotypical, and hopefully this understanding, accommodation, and community can be there for autistics starting at their youth, and the self-hatred, despair, and confusion can be avoided.

On top of the jokes and the othering of autistics is the discrimination. We face discrimination in the home (we'll talk in detail about parental abuse in the next chapter), in the workplace, in the media, and in society in general. We are picked on, targeted, and relegated to the role of objects in a world of allistic agents. There are countless examples of antagonism and hate crimes against us. For one horrifying story, Lydia X.Z. Brown wrote about the discrimination and abuse faced by an autistic person named Michael Bistreich, who was serving as the legislative and budget director of New York City Councilman Vincent J. Gentile, a supposed "ally" of autistics, from 2014 to 2016. Michael was severely bullied for being autistic, and it's difficult for me not to tear up reading this description:

"Among other things reported in various news sources reporting on the lawsuit he's just filed, the chief of staff once locked Michael in a basement; the councilman repeatedly asked him if he could look into 'upping your medications' to stop 'twitching' because 'you annoy me' and 'when you twitch like that, it's annoying to people;' Gentile laughed openly at another employee's joke that they should 'test the doors' in case Michael would 'elope;' and staff coordinated a mass decapitation of his stuffed animals (teddy bears) that he kept on his desk for comfort (the ones he told his fellow co-workers he 'identified with and emotionally valued'), even impaling one's head on a flagpole and 'a stuffed animal dog that was gutted and impaled and had red coloring around its slit stomach, mouth and eyes to resemble blood' -- which left Michael in the conference room for an hour in shock and horror."

The media degrades disabled people all the way around. As autistic writer Amy Sequenzia explained, "Even the way we choose to refer to ourselves is denied to us. For the ones among us who are Disabled and proud, and identify as such – in my case Disabled, Autistic and proud – we are constantly chastised for not using "person-first language". It is as if being Disabled is shameful and demeaning, as if it is not obvious that we are people, human beings." On portrayal in the media, Sequenzia wrote, "When disabilities are portrayed in the media, it is usually to blame Disabled people for murders – even our own." Our murderers get sympathy – us, the victims, get none. Disabled people are considered the bad people who don't matter so much and might be out to get you.

The needs of autistics are not met. Our human needs are derided as 'special needs,' needs of lesser importance, and policies and programs that help us healthily function in society today are largely considered unnecessary by allistics and go unapplied and unfunded. Just one example of this can be found in health care being inaccessible. As autistic writer Cynthia Kim of Autism Women's Network wrote, "For autistic adults, the barriers to accessing health care can be substantial. Not only are autistic adults more likely to live in poverty and less likely to have access to quality medical care, they may face practical barriers such as lack of transportation to appointments and difficulty in navigating a healthcare system that relies heavily on verbal communication." Even our very basic need of healthcare goes unmet because of the way we are treated in society. Naturally, then, the inadequacy of society to create and embrace the life of autistics extends to means of communication, social interaction, sensory experiences, eye contact, therapy, and advocacy. We deserve to live our lives to the fullest, and right now, that's not happening.

On April 1, 2015, two human rights experts, Catalina Devandas Aguilar of Costa Rica and Dainius Pūras of Lithuania presented to the United Nations and called for an end to the systemic discrimination against autistic people and a promotion of neurodiversity. Their words are powerful enough to merit not only to be quoted at length, but to conclude this chapter:

“As part of human diversity, autistic persons should be embraced, celebrated and respected. However, discrimination against autistic children and adults is more the rule rather than the exception.

In many countries, autistic persons lack access to services which would support, on an equal basis with others, their right to health, education, employment, and living in the community. When available, services are too often far from human rights friendly or evidence-based.

Autistic persons are particularly exposed to professional approaches and medical practices which are unacceptable from a human rights point of view. Such practices – justified many times as treatment or protection measures – violate their basic rights, undermine their dignity, and go against scientific evidence.

Autistic children and adults face the proliferation of medicalized approaches relying on the over-prescription of psychotropic medications, their placement in psychiatric hospitals and long-term care institutions, the use of physical or chemical restraint, electro-impulsive therapy, etc. This may be particularly harmful and lead to the deterioration of their condition. All too often, such practices amount to ill-treatment or torture.

The autism spectrum should be understood from a broader perspective, including in research. We call for caution about enthusiastic attempts to find the causes of autism and ways to ‘cure’ autism through sophisticated but not necessarily ethical research. Autism as a condition is a critical challenge for modern health systems, in which we need to ensure that the practice and science of medicine is never again used to cause the suffering of people.

More investment is needed in services and research into removing societal barriers and misconceptions about autism. Autistics persons should be recognized as the main experts on autism and on their own needs, and funding should be allocated to peer-support projects run by and for autistic persons.

It is about providing individuals and families with the necessary skills and support to have choice and control over their lives. It is also about equal opportunities, access to inclusive education and mainstream employment to achieve equality and rights enjoyment by autistic persons. It is about promoting their independence and respecting their dignity.

Autistic persons should be respected, accepted and valued in our societies, and this can only be achieved by respecting, protecting and fulfilling their basic rights and freedoms.”

Parental Abuse

cw: abuse, filicide, A\$, food, ABA, homophobia, cancer, sex offender mention, MMS, self-injury

Autistic children are very frequently the victims of parental abuse. This can range from standard ableism to abusive “therapy” to murder.

Much of parental abuse begins with wanting to raise an autistic child as neurotypical. Un-diagnosed or self-diagnosed autistics are especially at risk for this, as their guardians likely do not recognize them as autistic. However, even a professionally-diagnosed autistic may be raised as neurotypical through a denial by their guardian(s) that they are autistic. For example, a common sentiment, one that my own mother has expressed, is “labels are for soup cans.” This is an erasure of a person’s autistic identity and means that the autistic person will not be accommodated for their autism-specific needs.

While admittedly much of the abuse autistic children face also qualifies as abuse for neurotypical children, some forms of abuse are distinct and many are exacerbated by being autistic. For an example of abuse specific to autistics, a parent or guardian may force a young autistic to make eye contact with them for extended periods of time (more on this in the chapter “Eye Contact”). For an example of abuse that is even worse for autistics, a parent may yell loudly in anger at child. While no kid should ever be harassed for such a behavior, an autistic with sensory processing disorder and a sensitivity to loud noises especially should not.

An autistic raised as if they are neurotypical may see their behaviors frowned upon, discouraged, or forcibly eliminated. But an un-diagnosed autistic will almost always feel lost, alone, scared, confused, and without much understanding of who they are. When an autistic is raised as neurotypical, they may lose out on exploring part of the autistic experience, their autistic identity, and the autistic community. On top of all of this, they will not know how to handle being autistic in an allistic world.

Autism \$peaks has a heavy hand in parental abuse. As discussed in the chapter “Cure Culture,” A\$ is a hate group. As such, the most internationally recognized group about autism perpetuates cure culture and the myth that autism as a disease. A\$ promotes the medical model of disability and ABA. Autism \$peaks wants to eradicate autistic behavior, and their desires often reach the ears of allistic parents of autistic children who are looking for answers on how to parent an autistic kid.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), is a so-called “therapy” method for autistics. Coming from a school of psychology known as behaviorism, an authority uses bribes and punishments as a means of shaping an autistic’s behavior, “which consists of commands an Autistic child must follow to exhaustion, responses an Autistic child must give ‘correctly’, even if the answers don’t match the child’s feelings or preferences, and the repression of movements that Autistics use to regulate their own bodies.” This practice involves sessions with an ABA “therapist,” but the routine extends into parenting in the home.

The goal of ABA is to crush the autistic behaviors, which to abusive parents means the autism, out of the autistic child. An autistic child is coerced, manipulated, and forced to do things

that are painful and unnatural for them for the sake of behaving like a neurotypical child. Among the behaviors that the ABA approach seeks to suppress are stimming, echolalia, scripting, repetitive behaviors, aversion to eye contact, Special Interests, aversion to physical contact, following routines, and anything else obviously autistic or too deviant from the neurotypical norm.



[Three people are pictured. The two on the left have the rainbow-infinity neurodivergent symbol as heads and are dressed in business suits. They are shaking hands and one says, "I don't need to be cured and I am comfortable being me." The other replies, "same here." On the right, a person has the Autism Speaks puzzle piece for a head, and a blue shirt which reads "cure autism". This person has their arms in the air, and above them it says "allistic screeching"]

The similarities to “conversion therapy” for gay people are apparent for many. Ivar Lovaas, the inventor of ABA, supposedly even conceived of it by applying ideas he learned studying conversion therapy...and did that he thought autistic men were either gay or potentially trans (autistic women not existing). And yet ABA remains both popular and with mainstream, regular support. Amy Sequenzia from Autism Women’s Network writes:

“Can you imagine people saying, today, that homosexuals should be abused until they became heterosexual, and such practices being openly advertised, mainstreamed, praised and covered by insurance? That’s what ABA does to Autistics: it advertises a ‘treatment’ to make us ‘better’, to ‘recover’ us from the ‘tragedy’ of being neurodivergent, and ‘experts’ praise this as if it is not abuse, while parents fight for insurers to pay for such abuse.”

ABA attempts to strip autistics of their identity, of their personality, of what makes them who they are. ABA ‘therapists’ look to render an autistic child devoid of any individuality, to mold them into what our extremely ableist society wants: an obedient autistic who will not annoy or inconvenience bigoted allistics. Amy Sequenzia, a survivor of ABA, is proud of having ‘failed’ the program, “I am, though, a very disabled Autistic who needs a lot of support, but who is completely independent in what I believe matters most: my thinking, my ideas, my decisions, my identity.”

The ABA mentality extends into home parenting. Many parents, wishing their child were neurotypical, attempt to train the autistic behaviors out of their child. They may discourage Special Interests, repeatedly prevent their child from stimming, condemn echolalia and scripting, scold their kid for playing with their toys ‘wrong,’ etc.

Allistic parents of autistics often discourage echolalia and scripting, which can be vital tools for an autistic person’s communication. Amythest Schaber phrases the options well, “do you want your autistic child to say socially acceptable things or do you want them to express themselves?” All too often, the parents’ answer is the first option. Another atypical behavior may be an autistic child turning their toy car upside and spinning the wheels, or lining all of their toy cars up instead of having them race each other. Allistic parents, identifying these behaviors as things that would be considered unusual for an allistic child, often attempt to change their autistic child’s behavior. Really, this is the goal of all of this wrongful parent: to change allistic parents’ fate from parents who have a had a ‘real’ child ‘stolen’ from them into a ‘success story’ of ‘intervention’ in which their autistic child performs neurotypical enough for their parents’ satisfaction.

Among the false, pseudo-scientific theories out there about what ‘causes autism’ is that autism is ‘caused’ by eating various foods, among them types of food coloring and gluten. Abusive parents will thus deny these foods to their autistic child in hopes to prevent them from ‘becoming more autistic’ (that’s not how it works.) Even worse than this, however, are the theories that autism is ‘caused’ by bacteria in the stomach. The response by abusive parents who believe this theory is Miracle Mineral Supplement (MMS), which basically means they force their child to drink bleach. Another abusive practice is the use of chemical castration, a horrific use of drugs that is intended for purposes such as treating cancer patients and castrating sex offenders. There are several more similar abusive ‘cures’ for autism. Not only are all of these ‘treatments’ lacking any scientific evidence, but they also rely on the belief that any of these things are better than their child being autistic.

Disabled people are all too often the victims of filicide, when a family member or caregiver deliberately kills the person they’re supposed to take care of. According to a February 2017 article from the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, “In the past five years, over four hundred people with disabilities have been murdered by their parents, relatives or caregivers.” Disabled people are viewed as less than human, a sentiment reinforced by rampant ableism, organizations like Autism Speaks, the mass media, and even the legal system, “The criminal justice system has continued to give lighter sentences to parents and caregivers who murder disabled children. And we have seen both news and entertainment media continue to portray these murders in a

sympathetic light.” Disabled people are regularly murdered and their murderers receive more empathy than the disabled person does.

Autistics need to be recognized as equal people to neurotypicals, and our harmless and special behaviors should not be discouraged. However, there are many autistics who could use some help. There are positive, healthy therapies for autistics who may struggle with something like a self-injurious stim. One positive therapy that has been recommended by Amythest Schaber is the Greenspan Floortime Approach, developed by Dr. Stanley Greenspan. With Floortime, a facilitator, which can be a trained professional, a parent, or really anyone, gets down on the floor and plays with an autistic child, while also working toward helping the child build more skills by utilizing more senses and motor functioning. The facilitator enters the autistic child’s world and learns from them rather than trying to ‘normalize’ them. This approach can be “a fun and engaging way to play with a child while at the same time giving them therapy. And the floor time would meet them where they are and build on the strengths the child already has, following their interests and leading them into further development at their own pace.” The autistic child is gently challenged to be spontaneously creative in an effort to explore. Floortime, in stark contrast to ABA, is thus a creative, personal, warm, engaging, and pleasant experience for an autistic child. The Floortime approach helps an autistic child to grow and develop skills while embracing their own passions, Special Interests, and desires. The autistic person is the focus and the goal is to make them happier and healthier rather than trying to mold them into a neurotypical.

For autistics, parental abuse is the rule rather than the exception. The abuse varies in degree, but it seems almost inevitable that an autistic child of allistic parents will be treated systematically treated unfairly by their parents. Parents should not be able to legally abuse their children, especially not be subsidized to do so (there is government funding for ABA). More than that, a fundamental shift in mentality is required. We need to stop using the medical model of disability and trying to bend autistic people into proto-neurotypicals, and instead we should embrace the social model of disability. Rather than the raising of autistic children being directed toward the goal of satisfying their allistic parents, it should be directed toward bettering the lives of autistics and striving to provide them with a happy, healthy life in which they love themselves. Stop trying to ‘cure’ us and start helping us be us.

Autism Moms™

cw: abuse, talking over, invalidation, functioning labels

There exist a group of people referred to as Autism Moms™, or more broadly, Autism Parents. These allistic parents of autistic children engage in self-flattery and have a sense of martyrdom in regards to parenting their kid. They are highly ableist and support cure culture and Autism \$peaks.

Autism Moms believe that autism is a tragedy in their child. Sometimes they publicly post videos, photos, and written descriptions of their child's struggles as a way to get sympathy. They see themselves as brave warriors and heroes for being a parent of an autistic child. They will often use person-first language, which enables them to say, "love the person, hate the autism." They wish their kid would act more like a neurotypical child and they abuse them in pursuit of this goal. Autism Moms fail to raise their autistic children well and seriously hurt their children.

Below is a bingo sheet meme of things they are likely to express. I have personally seen at least twelve of these.

B I N G O (Autism Mom Edition)				
"We have him on a gluten-free diet"	"I blogged/recorded this meltdown so people could know what it's like"	"You're obviously high-functioning"	"ABA really helped him!"	"Our homeopath suggested..."
"My brother/cousin/pet lizard is autistic"	"I'm an autistic parent..."	"I feel so helpless when she has meltdowns"	Puzzle-piece profile picture/ bumper sticker/ magnet/etc.	"I cured my child of autism"
"Vaccine-injured"	"These clothes have a pocket for a GPS tracker!"	Free Space	"My child will never hug me"	It's PERSON with autism. Put people first!"
Autism Speaks	"You're not like my child"	"I'd cure him if I could"	*Shares inspiration porn*	"But you don't LOOK autistic!"
"She can't use the bathroom by herself"	"I'd give anything for her to say 'I love you!'"	#Autism Awareness	"You don't know how hard it is to raise a child with autism"	"My child will never live independently"

Autism Moms also consider themselves, along with medical professionals, to be the most qualified people to talk about autistic issues. For example, in a Facebook comment-section, I witnessed an Autism Mom state, "I don't care if you're autistic person, unless you are a parent of

an autistic person you have no business dictating what does or doesn't harm them!" They believe that parents of autistics have more authority to speak on what does or doesn't harm autistic children than actual autistics do. They want allistics to make all the decisions concerning autistic children. From an anarchist perspective, Autism Moms want allistics to rule over autistics.

And when we say we don't want to be ruled, and we get angry at those who want to rule over us, we are told to "make nice." Autistic blogger and Deputy Executive Director for the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) Julia Bascom wrote a glorious response to the sentiment from Autism Parents that we should stop criticizing them (edited stylization):

I am not going to 'make nice.' It's a common directive. 'We all want the same things. How can we ever expect anyone to listen to us when we can't disagree respectfully amongst ourselves?'

I am not going to pretend that a power imbalance doesn't exist. I am not going to pretend that when non-disabled people attempt to end a discussion with self-advocates they did not enjoy, it is with chastisements and pleas to 'just get along' which hit about a million times harder when aimed at someone who's been taught to have 'quiet hands' and who's first sentence was 'I wantball PLEASE' and who, when they were bullied, was sent to social skills training while their abusers were left roaming in powerful packs of friends.

*(In no other minority community is this level of power-play tolerated. You are not our voices, we are not the same, we do not want the same things, and if you aren't disabled? **Then by definition you are not a member of the disability community.**) You have the power. If you do indeed, as you claim, want to be allies, then I suggest you start acting like it."*

The views of autistic people are more important on the topic of autistic issues than the views of our allistic family members and peers. We're the ones who live through it. If we are to try to actually improve the quality of life and the freedom of autistics, it is the voices of autistics that have the authority to speak out on what we want, not allistics who want to make our needs less of an inconvenience to them.

Gatekeepers

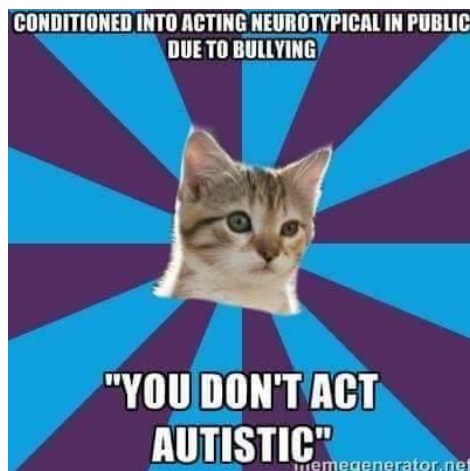
cw: invalidation

Many allistics have a very fixed idea of what an autistic person must be like. This leads autistics to both go undiagnosed and for allistics to deny and invalidate our autistic identity.

Many autistics, myself included, are self-diagnosed. Autism being diagnosed on the basis of symptoms, a lack of qualified professionals, financial barriers to accessing the qualified professionals that exist, and gross ignorance and stereotyping by what are considered to be qualified professionals all contribute to the lack of professional diagnosis. This is all in addition to parents not knowing some autistic symptoms and thus not seeking a diagnosis. If we are to have equality between neurotypes, then we cannot merely assume that any given child is neurotypical. As discussed in the earlier chapter “Ableism,” to treat an autistic as if they are neurotypical is both unfair and damaging. To raise an autistic child, an autistic at their most vulnerable stage in life, can be especially painful.

Many people do not support self-diagnosis. I take several issues with this. This is first and foremost classist because of the financial, social, and geographic requirements to obtain a professional diagnosis. An autism evaluation can cost between \$1500 and \$3000 in the US. Secondly, this entails that the neurotypical neurotype is the norm and that everyone is neurotypical unless claimed otherwise by a medical professional. Thirdly, this places the authority over one’s autistic identity in the hands of the overwhelmingly ableist and neurotypical swarm of medical professionals. Some results of putting down self-diagnosis is that multiply oppressed peoples are further oppressed through the invalidation of their autistic identity, the neurotypical neurotype is held to be ‘normal,’ and autistics are left at the mercy of gatekeepers in the form of narrow-minded doctors. To suppress self-diagnosis of having the autistic neurotype is to deny people who they are at a level as fundamental as their brain wiring.

Autistics face gatekeepers, people they deny that we are autistic. Gatekeepers’ line of argument usually goes along the lines of “you’re not like the autistic kid I know.” They generalize what autistics are like and then tell autistics that they are not autistic. While this is more harmful for self-diagnosed autistics, professionally diagnosed autistics are not immune from these attacks.



[image description: a kitten’s face with alternating and spiraling purple and blue stripes behind it with top text that reads, “conditioned into acting neurotypical in public due to bullying” and bottom text that reads, “You don’t act autistic”]

One effect of gatekeepers is a constant war of doubt and insecurity within autistics. In abusive terminology, this is referred to as gaslighting. It is not uncommon for someone to identify as autistic for years and yet be denied a professional diagnosis by a medical professional. I know of one autistic who was not diagnosed because, despite listing all of the numerous reasons they felt they are autistic, the professional said that they cannot be autistic because they made eye contact and had facial expressions. They were denied their autistic identity by someone professionally qualified to diagnose autism because they had developed neurotypical behaviors as a survival mechanism in a hostile, neurotypical world. Another autistic's doctor told them, "you can't be autistic, you've held a job and you've been married." Doctors don't often think very highly of us.

A more political effect of gatekeepers is that it maintains the authority on autistic issues in the hands of Autism Moms and medical professionals. When an autistic speaks up for the rights and dignity of another autistic, especially an autistic kid, and claims that their neurotype makes them more qualified, denying their autism is an easy way to shut that conversation down.

Gatekeepers prevent autistics from knowing who they are, from validating who they are, and from speaking up for each other. Gatekeepers keep us from being properly accommodated, from understanding ourselves, and from defending ourselves.

[image description: a cartoon in which a deer functions as a gatekeeper against a toad when the toad attempts to speak on amphibian issues raised to salamanders, both being amphibians]



Infantilization & Inspiration Porn

cw: ableism, person-first language, functioning scale, neurosupremacy, dehumanization

Autistics are infantilized and our successes are exploited as inspiration porn for neurotypicals. Both of these trends are part of the regular dehumanization of autistics and further render us powerless.

For starters, the needs of autistic adults are ignored. All of Autism Speaks's focus, and thus the focus of Autism Moms, is on autistic children. When coupled with the labeling of autism as a developmental disorder, the myth that autistic adults do not exist or even grow out of their autism is born. For example, autistic adults who may be perceived as aspies are expected to function like neurotypical adults. The needs of autistics are also regarded as childish. A need for stim toys, stimming, routine, picky eating, not following adult cultural norms, and other such autistic behavior is associated with the behavior of neurotypical children.

As a result of infantilization, the needs of autistics are not taken seriously. Additionally, our ideas, thoughts, and feelings are dismissed. When neurotypicals see us as children, they see us as lesser than them. In this sense, they are neurosupremacists. By labeling us as child-like, they make us unable to advocate for ourselves and legitimize efforts to hold authority over us.



[image description: clouds with a pinkish glow with centered text that reads, “not your inspiration porn”]

Success stories of autistics are regularly exploited as “inspiration porn” for neurotypicals. Some pseudo-scientific theories concerning things like autistic indigo/crystal children here to better the rest of humanity exist, but inspiration porn more frequently comes in the form of news. For example, an autistic may win an athletic event, and rather than just covering the story as a person winning such event, the headline will likely go something along the lines of “Person with Autism Wins Athletic Event.” CNN published a video recently about an autistic couple featuring a neurotypical narrator that similarly attempts to exploit the success and achievements of autistics as a source of joy for neurotypicals. What such stories require is that our success is viewed as unusual. It gives neurotypicals the feeling that they can do anything if an autistic can do it. This is partly enabled by infantilization because autistics are viewed as sub-humans. Neurodivergents do not exist to make neurotypicals feel better about themselves.

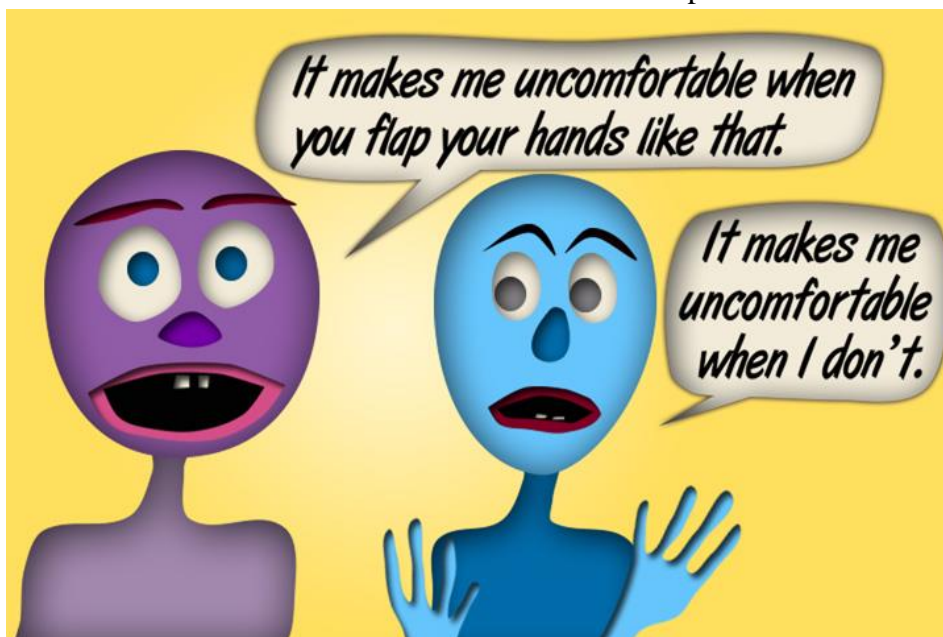
Through the social patterns of infantilization and inspiration porn, autistics are relegated to a position of inferiority and subservience. These are just two more factors required in the ableist mindset in order to justify their neurosupremacy, their prioritization of the desires of neurotypical family members and peers over the needs of autistics, and their cultural hegemony of autistics.

Sensory Problems

cw: sensory overload, violent description, anti-stimming

There is a lot of sensory stimulation in our society today. Especially for people who live in urbanized areas, public places are very loud, very bright, and very stimulating, and while most neurotypicals have no issues with this, for autistics and people with sensory processing disorder, this can be overwhelming. The world we live in has been shaped by and made for people with typical sensory experiences, and consequently does not accommodate people with sensory processing disorder.

In conjunction with the prevalence of anxiety in the autistic population, sensory problems can prevent autistic people from being safe, healthy, and comfortable in public places. Going out to eat at a restaurant, eating lunch in the school cafeteria, going grocery shopping, walking down the street, attending a class, all of these can be overstimulating and draining, leading to sensory overload. Some autistics may wear noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs, but these are limited in scope. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, “Autism Is,” autistics often combat external stimuli by stimming. Stimming, however, is a social taboo. There are serious social repercussions for stimming, for taking proper care of yourself. When stimming, an autistic may be judged, may be told they should have ‘quiet hands,’ may be told by an allistic that their stimming makes the allistic uncomfortable, or may even be forcibly prevented from stimming by an allistic. Suppression of stimming by neurotypical culture, parental authority, and programs like ABA can deter an autistic from stimming and thus leave them even more vulnerable to harsh sensory environments. Autistics thus can lose their go-to coping mechanism. Even when stimming is an option, it is still limited in effectiveness and external stimuli can be painful.



[image description: there is a purple figure and a blue figure. The purple one says, “it makes me uncomfortable when you flap your hands like that.” The blue one responds, “It makes me uncomfortable when I don’t.” Created by Landon Bryce]

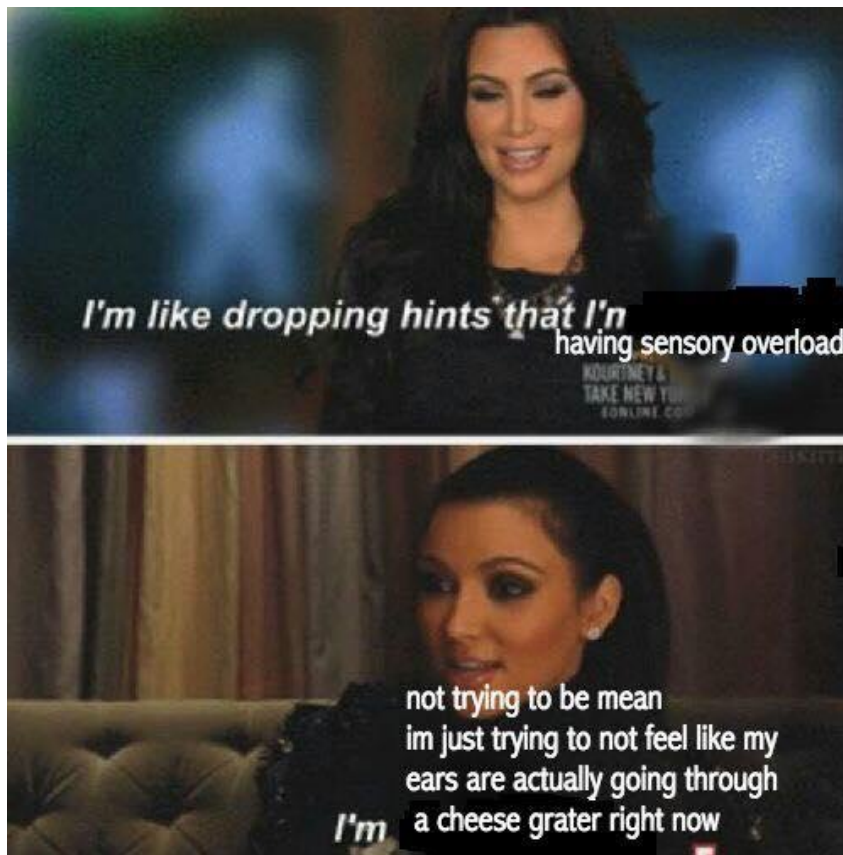
Some businesses have made some efforts to be more accommodating, such as Chuck E. Cheese hosting two “sensory-free” hours on Sunday mornings during which their locations “will be dimming the lights and turning down the tunes, allow outside food to accommodate kids with

dietary restrictions, and have specially trained staff on hand. The restaurant also says its usual costumed characters won't be roaming the floors during the 'sensory-free' hours.” Admirable as these efforts may be, they are few, far between, and require autistics to have schedules that line up correctly with the hours that stores go “sensory-free.”

But it doesn't have to be this way. As neurotypicals do fine in places organized by fellow neurotypicals, people with atypical sensory experiences can also do just fine in places organized by those with similarly atypical sensory experiences. It is the failure to accommodate the specific sensory needs of disabled people that renders them disabled on account of their sensory experiences. As Lydia X.Z. Brown explains:

“In communities where everyone or nearly everyone shares the same sensory, physical, cognitive, or emotional experiences, such differences that might in mainstream society be considered to be deficits or disability are not, in fact, disabling at all. While divergent and diverse neurologies and physicalities exist in nature and in isolation of cultural, sociological, historical, and political context, disability does not exist in the absence of a society’s rhetorical and discursive constructions of it that create attitudinal, systemic, and institutionalized barriers to access for those whose neurological and physical variances are atypical.”

Sensory issues thus become barriers to accessing public places because these places are only tailored to accommodate people with neurotypical sensory experiences. In order to accommodate autistic people with sensory problems, social environments and norms must be accommodating and understanding of our needs.



[image description: a meme of Kim Kardashian in which the subtitles of her speaking have been edited to describe an experience of sensory overload]

Social Interaction and Communication

cw: distress, non-verbalism

All autistics will struggle with social interactions. For those who are perceived as aspies, this may be the only autistic trait that allistics believe they have. Autistics are frequently described as “socially awkward” or as having a deficit of social skills. We generally improve in this area as we get older, but the characteristic remains with us our entire lives.

Autistic people often experience difficulties communicating with allistic people. This is universal, but the forms these difficulties take are different for every autistic. Much of this is due to differences in sensory and information processing. Concretely, autistic Amythest Schaber describes, “things like tone of voice, or sarcasm, or sarcastic joking can really throw us off.” Some of us have difficulties with facial expressions, which can also change very quickly, “and so it can be difficult to keep up while also keeping up with all the other sensory input and information in the environment.” There are a lot of external things to absorb and process, and thus we can miss out on some details that may play a large role in a person’s expression.

In addition to missing social cues, we can struggle with spontaneous conversation. While the prevalence of anxiety in the autistic community undoubtedly contributes to this, we often have a hard time talking to people we don’t know and about things we cannot predict or are uncertain of. These uncertain people and topics can make us uncomfortable. We want to use , a developed expression archive we are comfortable with: scripting. Scripting, plays a large role in autistic communication. Overall, we want to have a sense of direction in our conversations and know what to say in various scenarios. Thus while we may struggle with small-talk, many of us could have long and detailed conversations about our Special Interests. Our SI’s are things that we are experts about, confident about and have developed our thoughts on into expressions and scripts. We want to be explicit, direct, and comfortable with our social communication, and when these aren’t available, we may opt for echolalia or non-verbalism.

[image description: Banana Man from the show Adventure Time expresses confusion and says, “It’s like there’s this instruction manual that explains how to talk to people and everyone in the world got a copy except me”]



Non-verbalism is common among autistics, and many autistics will also become significantly less verbal or totally non-verbal in times of intense distress. Verbal communication, communication with the mouth parts, is very demanding. The vast majority of autistics, myself included, strongly prefer and are more comfortable with written communication. Unfortunately, non-verbal communication, like echolalia, is devalued. Verbal communication is the standard form of communication in-person, and failure to follow this norm has social repercussions.

The autistic approach and feelings in regards to communication are not like the neurotypical mindset. Neurotypicals often rather enjoy small talk, they use and rely on facial expressions and tone of voice, they expect you to make eye contact (discussed in detail in the next chapter), they expect you to process and respond quickly and verbally, and, as discussed in the chapter “Autism Is,” they expect you to know when what they’re saying is not what they mean. These are unfair standards and expectations for autistics.

Let’s return to egoist anarchist Max Stirner’s concept of phantasms. Among the commonly accepted social institutions that he called phantasms was the very idea of society. Society is a phantasm, a ghost of the mind, a concept that exists only in our minds. In place of a phantasm society, Stirner claimed that “the individuals are its reality.” Society is an abstract figment of imagination, individuals are concrete reality. With this reconceptualization of society as a social construct, it naturally holds true that the unwritten rules of society are, as well. Social norms are a phantasm.

Continuing this line of thinking, we can develop the theory that autistics’ difficulties with social interaction and communication could be a fabrication. Perhaps this supposedly autistic trait is merely a phantasm. A 2017 research study offers evidence to support such a theory. This study changed standard survey questions that inquire about supposedly autistic traits regarding chatting with others, being around other people, etc. by adding context to the questions: whether this activity was with autistic people or with non-autistic people. Their findings went:

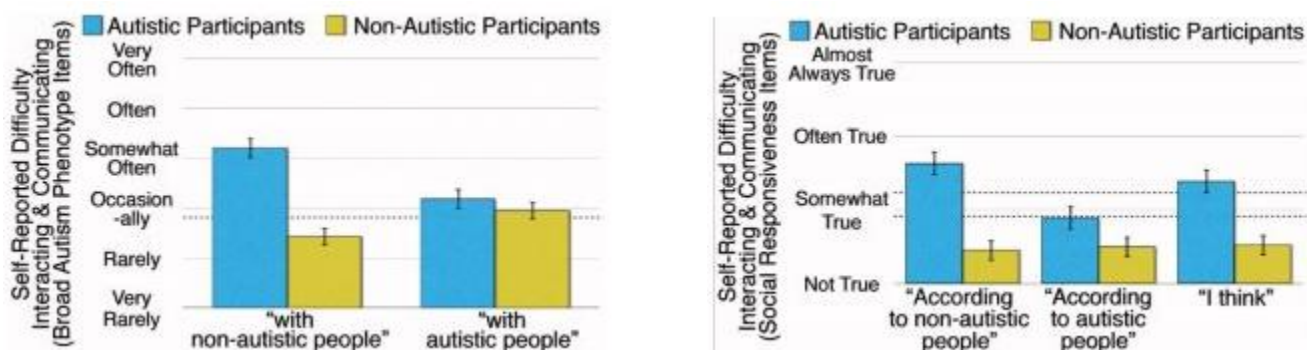
“We predicted, and we found, that autistic participants report having fewer autistic traits (i.e., less difficulty interacting and communicating) when the items are contextualized as ‘with autistic persons’ than when the items are contextualized as ‘with non-autistic persons.’ For non-autistic participants, we predicted and we found just the opposite: They report having more autistic traits (i.e., more difficulty interacting and communicating) when the items are contextualized as “with autistic persons” than when the items are contextualized as ‘with non-autistic persons’” -Morton Ann Gernsbacher, PhD.

Autistics demonstrate less communication difficulty, less atypical and so-labelled “autistic traits” in the company of other autistics. Conversely, it is the allistics who struggle in the company of autistics. These results reinforce the social model of disability: it is society that disables people. The characteristics of the individuals we interact with that determines our social communication skills.

This study continued its research by changing the reference point. The questions asked, according to autistic people, non-autistic people, or to you, if various statements were true about yourself. Their findings went:

“We predicted, and we found, that autistic participants report having fewer autistic traits when the reference group is other autistic people (e.g., ‘According to autistic people, I behave in ways that seem strange or bizarre’). Autistic participants report having more autistic traits when the reference group is non-autistic people (e.g., ‘According to non-autistic people, I behave in ways that seem strange or bizarre’), and autistic participants report having a medium amount of autistic traits when the reference group is themselves (‘I think that I behave in ways that seem strange or bizarre’). But non-autistic participants seem impervious to reference group.”

These results indicate that autistic people also feel more accepted by other autistics. Autistics believe that other autistics understand who they are, but that allistics do not. Additionally, allistics feel that they are the norm and that their behavior is considered normal by everyone. Here we see neurosupremacy at work: the ruling allistic class believes itself normal and the ruled autistic class believes that only fellow autistics consider themselves close to normalcy anywhere close to relative to allistics’ self-beliefs about their normalcy.



From this information, we can deduce that the social neurotype hierarchy, sprouting from the phantasm of society and the phantasm of social norms, is present in the minds of individuals. This effectively results in autistics often struggling with social interaction & communication and feeling weird and perceived as weird. Consequently, the social impairment that all autistics suffer through is socially constructed, and we are capable of reducing and eliminating this suffering.



[image description: a Tumblr post in response to the claim that “autistic people are too sensitive.” The post lists social behaviors that often offend allistic people]

Eye Contact

cw: abuse, forced eye contact

While the role of eye contact is just another social norm, its significance and prevalence earns it a separate chapter. This chapter mostly applies to the West, particularly North America, but eye contact's huge status in North America commands this much attention.

Many of us live in a society that places a lot of importance on eye contact. To make eye contact is considered a mark of respect and as an indicator of honesty and trustworthiness. It is considered an integral and meaningful part of social connection. Despite the body parts needed for verbal conversation being the mouth and the ears, there is a social rule that eye contact is necessary and a mark of respect. Autistic people, however, hate eye contact. Eye contact can be uncomfortable, unsettling, distracting, painful, and/or difficult for an autistic. Autistic activist Amythest Schaber offers two explanations for why autistics dislike eye contact: sensory overload and atypical processing.

Allistics are constantly scanning people's faces for fine microexpressions, which involves taking in a lot of information and attempting to process it. Eyes are the pinnacle of such expressions, "A person's eyes particularly convey a lot of emotion, they can convey thoughts, and that's why in our culture eye contact is considered to be so special and valuable and a sign of intimacy between two people. And for autistic people, and people with sensory processing disorder, all that information, particularly in the eye area, is overwhelming." Eye contact is an extremely intense experience for many autistics. As the metaphor goes, "the eyes are the windows of the soul," and it's not easy to handle and process a soul during conversation. Eye contact is overstimulating and painful for many of us.

Autistics have different cognitive processing than allistics. Eye contact demands a lot of attention and focus, so it's harder to process information while locking eyes. It is difficult for many autistics to both make eye contact and have a conversation at the same time. So for the autistics that do not face the sensory overload dilemma, the ultimatum is often between looking the speaker in the eye's and actually listening to, processing, and understanding what that person is saying.



[image description: the Socially Awkward Penguin meme in which the top half of the penguin faces one direction and the bottom half faces the opposite way. The top text reads, "make eye contact while someone is talking to you" and the bottom text reads, "don't listen, just think about the eye contact"]

You should never force an autistic to make eye contact. While an allistic may be put off by a lack of eye contact, particularly an allistic parent of an autistic child, it is seriously demanding and potentially abusive to force an autistic to make eye contact. Let autistics be autistic and don't expect them to perform like an allistic. For equality between neurotypes, for neurodiversity, the reign of eye contact must end. Eye contact, an allistic behavior, cannot be valued as an indicator of and as a part of an autistic's personal character.

Physical Contact

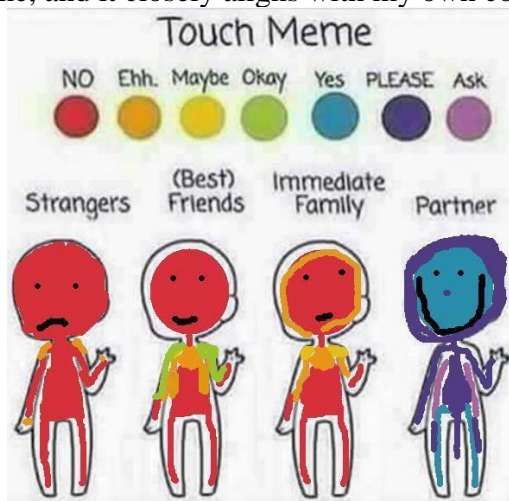
cw: discomfort, violation, police, abuse mention, death

Many autistics are uncomfortable with various forms of physical contact. Our level of comfort with various forms of touching have both physical and social components. That is, our preferences may vary on the basis of what the touching is like, where the touching is, and who is touching us. Our touch preferences can go against commonly-accepted social norms and may not be respected by other people.

A psychotherapist who works with neurodivergent individuals, Stephen Borgman of Psychology Today, inquired of many autistics to share their feelings and experiences with physical contact. He found three standardly reported issues in regards to touch:

- light touch, in general, seemed to be more unpleasant than deep touch
- unexpected touch, even from a loved one, could be very unpleasant
- touch from distant acquaintances or from strangers, even if meant to be reassuring, is not.

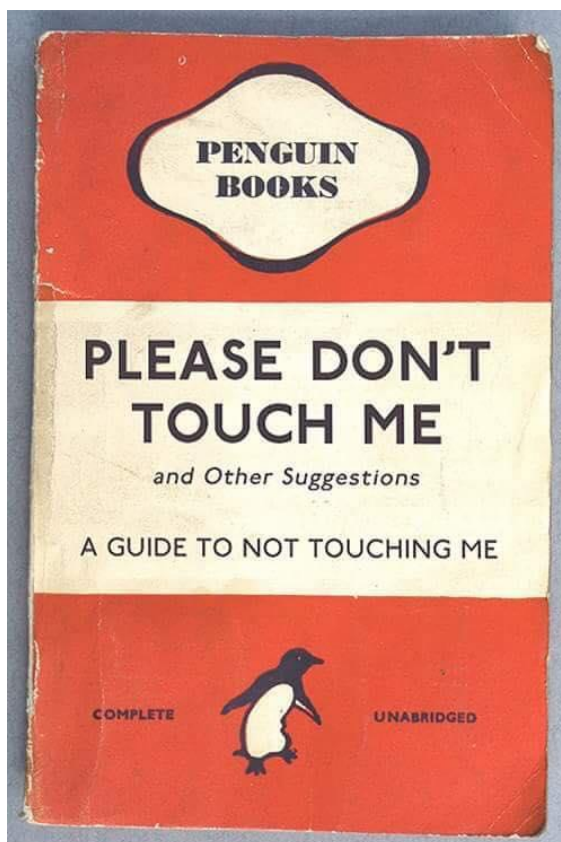
For a demonstration of how these touch preferences can manifest, the illustration below is a filled-out form on where one is comfortable being touched by who. This response was done by a fellow autistic friend of mine, and it closely aligns with my own comfort levels.



These aversions to various forms of physical contact can have meaningful impacts in the life of an autistic. For example, to show affection, an allistic partner of an autistic may lightly brush their hand against their autistic partner's arm. This may, however, be discomforting for the autistic partner. That example can at least be mitigated with proper communication. With slightly more serious implications, however, an autistic's friend may suddenly tap them on the arm to get their attention or punch them in a playful way. I, like many other autistics, would find this disturbing and jolting. As for touch from acquaintances, this can become problematic when a distant friend attempts to hug an autistic. If successful, the autistic person may feel violated. If physically rejected by the autistic, the allistic may find this off-putting and disrespectful. Alternatively, at a family event with extended family members, an allistic parent may force their autistic child to touch and hug an uncle they saw once in their life when they were only five years old.

What can happen to an autistic whose touch preferences do not align with those with typical sensory experiences? Fairly regular experiences of discomfort from unwarranted physical contact, social awkwardness, and routine violation of your personal space. These dangers become more dangerous in scenarios featuring disrespectful authority figures such as an abusive parent, a sports coach, or a police officer. In these situations, an autistic's atypical touch preferences may lead to condemnation, punishment, or even death.

People should stop touching people without permission. That's a conclusion that many neurotypicals have come to without consideration for neurodivergents, but it's a necessary cultural shift in order to respect neurodiversity. While this may seem like a simple shift in people's beliefs, the application gets a little messier. This policy requires change at the institutional level to stop practices of involuntary physical contact. Such changes to an institution like the police, the class traitors that enforce the rule of the state, may be impossible.



[image description: an edited image in which an old Penguin Books publication has had its title changed to "Please don't touch me and other suggestions: a guide to not touching me"]

The Autistic Experience

It's a tough world for an autistic. Existing institutions and attitudes look at you as a stranger at best and do not function in ways that help you live a meaningful life. The autistic experience can be not only daunting, but demeaning. Being an autistic, the world tells you that you are a burden. People say that you are a defect, a flaw in the genetic code, that your parents were cheated of a real kid, that you cannot advocate for yourself, that you aren't really autistic, that you shouldn't be upset, that you shouldn't be offended, that you should get over yourself and adapt to live the way ableist neurotypicals want you to. It is not autistics that need to change, but the neurotypical world. And you are not a burden.

“Society's burden is to compensate, however slowly, for its long train of abuses, disenfranchisement, marginalization, discrimination, dehumanization, and paternalism perpetrated and perpetuated against those who have been denied power, equal rights, and self-determination. That is the burden that society bears.” -Lydia X.Z. Brown

[image description: a taupe-colored corner puzzle piece with text beneath it that reads, “Allism Shouts” and then “It’s time to tone it down.”]



ALLISM SHOUTS
It's time to tone it down.

There's an unfortunate tendency among some autistics to distance themselves from other disabled people, and in doing so casting other disabled people to the side. That is not what I represent. So maybe you're like me and you're multiply-disabled. Maybe you, too, are depressed, have anxiety, have sensory processing disorder, Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder, hypermobility, existential despair, and struggle every day to take care of yourself. Maybe you will never be able to live independently. Maybe you will always need some help. Maybe it took all you had to just get out of bed this morning. And still, you are not a burden.

Maybe you're like me and don't have very refined conventional social skills. Maybe you also struggle with verbal communication. Maybe we both struggle to find the words that will convey our idea to the other person in a way they will likely understand. Maybe you're scared of other people. Maybe people stand too close to you. Maybe people touch you without permission. Maybe you don't have many friends. Maybe you don't make new friends easily. Maybe you're losing touch with your friends because every day is summarized by the burning sensation in your eyes as your stomach revolts and you stare at your popping veins in your too skinny arms at 4:05 AM on what has now become Tuesday. Maybe you didn't eat enough today. Maybe you're scared because you don't know when this rollercoaster of numbness and pain will end. Maybe you don't know any other autistic people. Maybe you're alone. Maybe you hate yourself and feel

worthless. Maybe allistics tell you that you are worthless. Maybe all you could do today was breathe. Maybe you feel like broken. Still, you are not a burden.



[image description: a chill aesthetic image of a city dimly lit by streetlights and a distant pink sun]

Disabled people do not have special needs. We have human needs. And these needs are not being met. We are different, without a doubt. But what we need is the same respect, decency, and quality of life that abled people receive. Disability is perfectly normal. You are not the Other. To quote Lydia X.Z. Brown, “Ultimately, we need to challenge the constructions and institutions that continue to perpetuate ableism across all facets of society, and we need to promote this radical notion that disability is natural and normal—not something to be feared or pitied, but something to be welcomed and proudly proclaimed.” And you are not a burden.

We’re abused, infantilized, talked over, impoverished, abandoned, degraded, dehumanized, made fun of, discriminated against, ignored, harassed, disrespected, looked down on, and unaccommodated for being autistic. Life is all too frequently brutally difficult for autistics. That needs to change.

Integration

In this section I will establish some groundwork for connecting the struggles of anarchism to the struggles of autistics.



[image description: the black cat, alternatively called the wild cat or the sabot-cat, a symbol of anarcho-syndicalism]

Incorporation of Neurodiversity

With this work, I aim to comprehensively incorporate neurodiversity into the social anarchist tradition, similarly to how feminism and ecologism have been. Emma Goldman and Murray Bookchin are names that come to mind as pioneers expanding the horizons of anarchism to new unjust forms of authority. It is not the case that current anarchist thought is incompatible with neurodiversity, but that anarchist principles must be applied in new ways.

To be a true anarchist, it is insufficient to oppose capitalism and the state. To be an anarchist, one must also be anti-racist. One must be a feminist. One must be a secularist. One must be an ecologist. And I declare that in order to be an anarchist, you must also be anti-ableist and must support neurodiversity.

As Proudhon opposed capitalism and the state, as Bakunin opposed the church and the dictatorship of the proletariat, as Kropotkin opposed wage labor, as Goldman opposed the patriarchy, as Bookchin opposed environmental warfare, I oppose neurosupremacy. If you don't support neurodiversity, you aren't a true anarchist and you aren't a true communist.



[image description: the black and red Antifa flag symbol with the neurodiversity rainbow infinity layered on top. Written on the black ring around the flag are "Neurodiv" and "Antifa"]

The Social Revolution

In 1870, anarcho-collectivist Mikhail Bakunin wrote, “All the German socialists believe that the political revolution must precede the Social Revolution. This is a fatal error.” Bakunin was talking about the German social democrats who were focused on public policy change rather than revolutionary politics, but this quote is perhaps even better applied towards politics of identity, by which I mean politics beyond merely political and economic structure.

As anarchists, we understand that authority and hierarchy create and exacerbate oppression, but the dismantling of these structures is not enough to eradicate oppression. Only in the absence of social hierarchies can anarchy and communism exist. In order to liberate all marginalized identities, we must be both political and cultural anarchists. I return to the quotation from Anarcho-Syndicalist Rudolf Rocker I used in the intro, “common to all Anarchists is the desire to free society of all political and social coercive institutions which stand in the way of the development of a free humanity.” There exist social coercive institutions that directly oppress autistics, and we must dismantle them so that people of all neurotypes can be free.

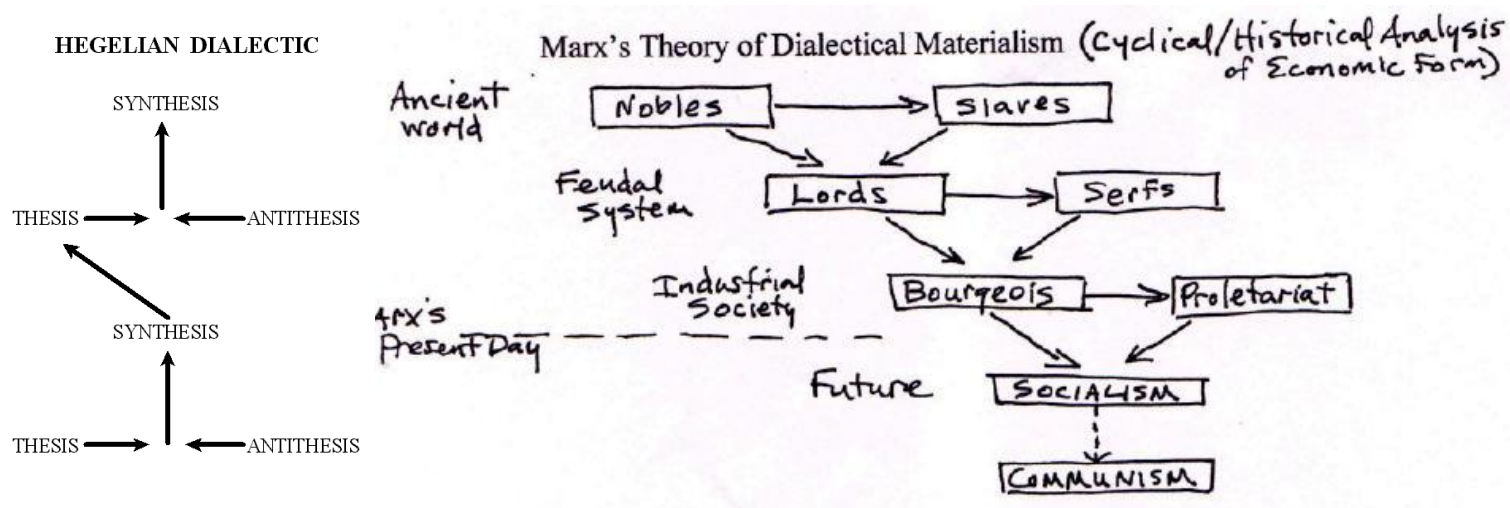
We cannot have social revolution without political revolution, and we cannot have political revolution without social revolution. We must be both political anarchists and cultural anarchists. To make good on our sworn ideals, we must eliminate the cultural norms and beliefs that hold neurotypicals and neurotypical behaviors to be superior to neurodivergents and neurodivergent behaviors. Eye contact cannot be considered a mark of respect, parents of autistics cannot be considered authorities over actual autistics, we cannot deny autistics of their identity, we cannot infantilize autistics or use disabled people as inspiration porn, we cannot obnoxiously wreak havoc on autistic sensory integration, and we cannot force and expect people to make physical contact with each other. We must normalize autistic behaviors and stop placing value on and expecting obedience to neurotypical behaviors. It is time to end the reign of neurotypical norms that render neurodivergents lesser.



[image description: there is a purple triangle refracting light from the shades yellow to purple and stars in outer space in the background. Layered on top are three words, each in a distinct font at a unique angle. The text reads, “Down with neurotypicals.”]

Anarchism comes from the idealist, utopian tradition of socialism. This means that we believe that we can change the world with our ideas, that it is possible to radically alter society through the popularity of an ideal. Marxism stems from the materialist tradition of socialism, holding that it is largely the material conditions of society that shape it. The Marxist conception of history problematically clings deterministically to dialectical materialism, the Marxist idea that history is a synthesis of classes and that society will continue to synthesize classes until

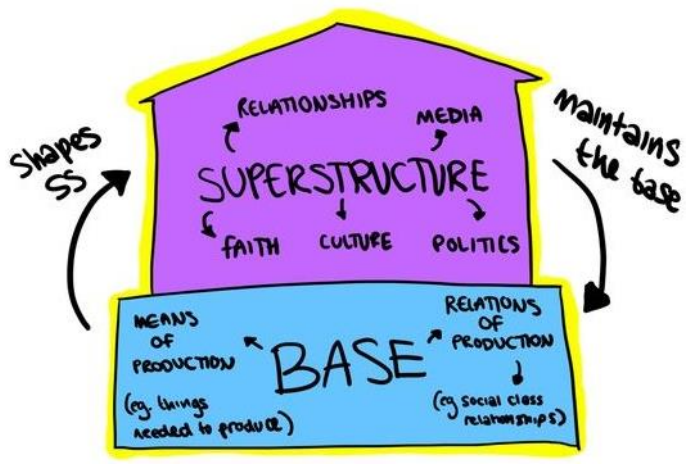
communism is achieved. While anarchists use dialectical materialism as a useful heuristic, a guiding generalization, we reject that material conditions are all that change the world.



Materialism is insufficient for autistics. Materialism lacks the social revolution that we need. While ableism is part of the superstructure, the social relationships and beliefs that reinforce and support the economic base, relationships concerning the means of production, the elimination of the capitalist economic base does not entail the elimination of the ableist superstructure. It is entirely possible for socialism and ableism to coexist, and thus we cannot look to economic socialism as the only factor needed for the liberation of autistics. Our thoughts are not absolutely determined by external reality. There is no synthesis of the neurotypical class and the neurodivergent class. We must actively spread our ideas in order to achieve neurodivergent liberation. For the freedom and equality of autistics, we must be idealists. Only by actively dismantling the cultural authority of the neurotypical neurotype, the ableist superstructure, can the dream of neurodiversity succeed.

MARXIST THEORY OF BASE & SUPERSTRUCTURE

[image description: sketch of basic Marxist theory of base and superstructure in which the economic base shapes the superstructure and the superstructure maintains the base]



Self-Liberation

cw: dogs, A\$, chains, image of gun, A\$ puzzle piece logo

Errico Malatesta described the goal of self-liberation, “We anarchists do not want to emancipate the people; We want the people to emancipate themselves.” Anarchists seek to organize people collectively to create the world they want to see and change the old world in the shell of the new. Anarchism encourages direct action and the liberation of the oppressed by the oppressed, and recognizes that we cannot expect our rulers to be benevolent. As Rudolf Rocker wrote, “The peoples owe all the political rights and privileges which we enjoy today in greater or lesser measure, not to the good will of their governments, but to their own strength.” Our greatest liberties are won by ourselves, and it is only through our own actions that we will attain the greatest liberty imaginable. Liberty cannot be given, as Max Stirner stated, “the man who is set free is nothing but a freed man. . . a dog dragging a piece of chain with him.” If we are to be free from masters, we must loose ourselves of all of our chains. We have to practice our autonomy, our independence, and freedom in order to secure those liberties in both the present and in the future we dream of.



[image description: the red and black flag of anarcho-communism. Crossing in the center are white images of a toothbrush and an AK-47. There is white text that reads, “We are coming.” This is a joke based on capitalist misunderstanding of the difference between personal and private property.]

Anarchists practice self-liberation through their dual power, through prefiguration, through syndicalism, through platformism, through federalism, and through all of their non-hierarchical free associations through which the oppressed better their lives. There are few who recognize the importance of self-liberation more than autistics. Neurodiversity will win because of the bravery, dedication, and kindness of the neurodivergent, supported by the neurotypical. Neurodivergents will organize themselves and bolster each other through mutual aid.

Anarchists reject the practice of populism. Radical educator Paulo Freire referred to populist leaders as an “intermediary between the people and the elites.” Populist leaders function to manipulate the people and reduce revolutionary thought and activity. Freire observed that the populist task of “Manipulation, like the conquest whose objectives it serves, attempts to anesthetize the people so they do not think.” In this sense, allistic-run organizations that serve in the name of autistics are populists.

Our most recognizable efforts towards self-liberation is self-advocacy. Unsurprisingly, the hate group named Autism \$peaks, ran entirely by allistics, is making no progress towards the

liberation of autistics. Many autistics recognize that A\$ is not looking out for them (and actually hates them), and there is a very popular alternative organization: the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN). ASAN's motto goes, "nothing about us without us." ASAN is run by autistics and aims to improve the lives of autistics. Other such organizations include the Autism Women's Network, Stimtastic (a company for autistic-designed chewable jewelry and stim toys), and Twainbow (an organization for LGBTQ+ autistics).

For autistic anarchists, self-advocacy and self-liberation can take a step further. We can replace the hierarchal, allistic and neurotypical-dominated institutions that reproduce hierarchal and neurosupremacist values through their structure and makeup. We can build organizations built on the equality of autistics. With platformism in mind, we can create networks and institutions composed of neurodivergents specifically tailored for radical leftist neurodiversity. We can build organizations of autistic women, of gay autistics, of bi autistics, of pan autistics, of transgender autistics, of non-binary autistics, of black autistics, of autistic people of color, of gay non-binary autistic people of color, of pansexual aromantic transgender autistic black women of color, of all the intersections of the oppressed towards the freedom of the oppressed.

Part of the self-liberation of autistics involves the adoption of the social model of disability. Rather than having authority placed in the hands of a physician who attempts to change the neurodivergent person, the authority is placed in the decentralized hands of the neurodivergent to better their own life.



[image description: Drake expresses disapproval the Autism Speaks puzzle piece logo. Drake then expresses pleasure at the rainbow ring logo of ASAN]

The Authority of Neurotypicals & Neurominority Status

cw: abuse mention, talking over autistics

With an anarchist conception of authority, it is only natural to link the oppression of autistics to the authority of neurotypicals. The neurotypical class has power while the autistic class does not, and thus society is molded to reflect the interests of neurotypicals and not the interests of autistics. An example of this is the authority of Autism Moms. This approach to neurotypical authority is similar to the anarchist approach to the patriarchy, in which the authority of men has made non-men and feminine characteristics suppressed.

Amythest Schaber considers that, following the social model of disability, if autistics were the majority neurotype and allistics were a neurominority, it would be allistics that are disabled. While I doubt that autistics would create such an oppressive world for allistics as faces autistics today, the idea has some merit. Perhaps in an autistic world, allistics would feel alienated for not having special interests. Perhaps they would yearn for loud noises. Perhaps the lack of small talk would discomfort them. Maybe the way they sit would be considered unusual. It seems possible that in an alternate universe, allistic traits would be suppressed.

I 
SOMEONE
WITH
ALLISM

Despite all the challenges!

[image description: the text says “I (heart) someone with allism, despite all the challenges!” The heart is filled in with puzzle pieces of colors that are slightly off from being primary colors]

To better put into context that the neurotypical neurotype is the one that just happens to be the most prevalent and is not superior, let’s examine it the same way autism is examined by researchers today. There are pros and cons to every neurotype. Here is an excerpt of a description of their neurotype written by an autistic:

“Neurotypical individuals show difficulty in forming an individual identity, or in thinking outside of the bounds of the accepted norms of their social groups. This bizarre lack of independence explains the tendency for Neurotypicals to engage in fads of various sorts, or for the existence of certain trends. The overdeveloped social centers of the Neurotypical brain are also responsible for their odd, inefficient communication style. They tend to state things implicitly rather than explicitly, and with a level of vagarity that often results in miscommunication. They are also limited in their capacity to interpret statements directly without trying to find hidden meanings in them...”

...Neurotypicals have a very limited ability to concentrate on one topic for great lengths of time, or repeatedly. The apparent absence of special interests in neurotypicals is notable. Their concentrations on normal areas of interest like computers, machines, scientific interests, history, or other academic subjects, are limited, and are short in duration as well as relatively infrequent. It appears that nearly all neurotypicals share one singular special interest, and that is socializing. This is the only activity that the person with neurotypicality can engage in for more than short periods of time. The stereotyped neurotypical mannerism of 'chatting,' or communicating verbally with others even where no relevant or useful information is exchanged, is notable, and can be observed very often in neurotypicals that are engaging in perseverative social behavior. Why the neurotypical mind is limited in its flexibility insofar as selection of a special interest is not known at this time. This social interest is not terribly useful as far as society in general is concerned, and the neurotypical is unlikely to be capable of significant innovation, or of fostering societal advancement."

If most of the human population were deaf, deafness would not be considered a disability. If most of the human population were blind, blindness would not be considered a disability. If most of the human population were autistic, autism would not be considered a disability.

[image description: from Tone it Down Taupe, a brown toned Rainbow spectrum line with two brown animal characters sitting on either end of the spectrum line. Text reads, "Allism spectrum. Sitting on the low end are the people severely lacking autism. All the way to the high end where the mildly afflicted person is not really Allistic. Remember! Their mild label is a true reflection of their functioning so these people are able to cope without support or assistance."]



In the case of autistics, much of our oppression is at the hands of parental authority. In our society today, our laws are largely built on property rights. This extends into parenting, as children are to an extent considered the property of their parents and guardians. This is a

necessity for allistic parents to put their autistic children through programs like ABA. Anarchism recognizes that children have a greater degree of autonomy and human rights and that those take priority over parental authority. Parental authority is thus often illegitimate, and parents should not have the authority to legally abuse their children.

More broadly, we see both structural authority concentrated in the hands of allistics through the state, capitalism, and organizations like Autism Speaks, and cultural authority and hierarchy in which neurotypicals and their characteristics are held as more desirable, more important and better than autistics. The cultural authorities on autistic issues today are held to be Autism Moms, allistic medical professionals, ABA facilitators, Autism Speaks representatives, and other allistics rather than autistics themselves. We are ruled by allistics, and they are our rulers.



[image description: an edited image of Elmo talking to Julia, the new autistic character on Sesame Street. Elmo asks, “so how did they make sure they got your autism right?” Julia replies, “they asked groups and organizations that want to eliminate autism, professionals and experts who studied us, and parents of autistic children. My muppeteer is even a woman who has an autistic child herself.” Elmo follows up, “And was there any input from actually autistic people?” Julia responds, “Actually autistic people? You must be joking!”]

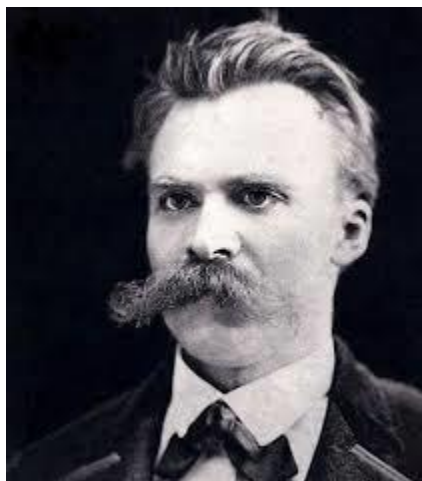
Nietzsche's Übermensch

cw: Nazi mention, ableism, highly technical and academic language, ABA, cure culture, cultural hegemony

While theorists like Kropotkin, Goldman, and Rocker provide excellent examinations of civilization as a whole, our analysis would be incomplete without rebellious individualism. As Albert Camus noted, Bakunin “introduces into the midst of revolution the naked principle of rebellion,” but it is to the rebel of all metaphysical rebels, a true iconoclast, that I turn to for grasping the cultural hegemony of the state against autistics.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a highly controversial German philosopher. He was a vehement opponent of nationalism, herd instinct, slave morality, Christianity, democracy, equality, and the state. Central to Nietzsche’s philosophy is the will to power, the Übermensch, and the rejection of herd instinct.

The will to power is what Nietzsche considered to be the driving force of human nature. It is the drive for ambition and achievement. This is similar to Stirner’s idea of the ego. Nietzsche used the terms herd behavior and herd instinct to describe how people conform together in groups without centralized direction. And the Übermensch, the superman, the overman, is what Nietzsche saw as the goal for humanity. The Übermensch was one who would transcend beyond the morals of Nietzsche’s time, pursuing the will to power fully.



[image description: a black and white photo of Nietzsche in 1875. He is a young white man with a walrus moustache wearing a suit]

Being largely apolitical, his ideas have been appropriated by political ideologies across the spectrum, ranging from a terrible bastardization by the Nazis to anarcho-communists. Spencer Sunshine describes the anarchist attraction to Nietzsche well, “There were many things that drew anarchists to Nietzsche: his hatred of the state; his disgust for the mindless social behavior of ‘herds’; his (almost pathological) anti-Christianity; his distrust of the effect of both the market and the State on cultural production; his desire for an ‘overman’ — that is, for a new human who was to be neither master nor slave; his praise of the ecstatic and creative self, with the artist as his prototype, who could say, ‘Yes’ to the self-creation of a new world on the basis of nothing; and his forwarding of the ‘transvaluation of values’ as source of change, as opposed to a Marxist conception of class struggle and the dialectic of a linear history.” Nietzsche’s philosophy struck against all the oppressive forces of his life, and anarchism is all about opposition to oppression.

To better understand Nietzsche, I turned to a staff member of the online annotation site for lyrics and texts that I am a moderator and editor of, Genius, ewokABdevito, who I consider a friend. Ewok is a scholar and has read every single one of Nietzsche's works, as well as interpretations by philosophy professor Robert C. Solomon and psychologist Carl Jung. Ewok, like many others, including myself, believes that Nietzsche was autistic. His reasoning goes:

“He didn't speak until he was three, but then rapidly learned how to read and write in multiple languages. His self-awareness and perceived awkwardness in relationships put the burden on him to mitigate whatever he saw foresaw as an obstacle. In terms of women this led him to immediately propose for marriage, in terms of friendship this led him to cater to Wagner's every single whim. For someone with such powerful individuality in his writing, he was submissive in social relationships.

His extreme aches and pains (especially tummy aches – autistics literally have different bacteria in their stomachs.) His hypersensitivity, not just aches and pains, but tastes and smells. His ability to make connections is unparalleled, it just wasn't made explicit. We can't see the connections that guide his thought process, only the end results. But how he abstracted the Apollonian and Dionysian into a descriptive philosophy as a result of studying Hellenistic history is absolutely amazing. His obsession with the “mysteries” and ability to philosophically address them in a somewhat codified way so as to be respected by academic peers and those on the fringe was his real gift.” -ewokABdevito

Further evidence towards Nietzsche's autism include a description of him in his youth as a “little preacher,” similar to how many autistics today are called little professors, and being such a passionate opponent of the ideas he opposed that he alienated academia, reminiscent of Special Interests and poor social relations with allistics. Nietzsche's personal tale as a lonely, depressed hermit with fierce passion, kindness, poor social skills, and an ongoing sense of despair hits a little close to home for many autistics. With a perspective of Nietzsche as autistic, a reinterpretation of the Übermensch and Nietzsche's hatred for the herd and democracy seems appropriate. I propose that Nietzsche was wary of democracy because he was concerned that his individuality would be crushed. As a neurominority, this seems a reasonable concern. In a time before autism was known, the social anarchist democratic movement of the time would inevitably be ableist against neurominorities. As Camus explained, “Nietzsche wages war against socialist doctrines in so far as they are moral doctrines.” Nietzsche wanted to be Nietzsche.

Among the anarchists that Nietzsche have influenced is Emma Goldman. Goldman described Nietzsche's defense of hierarchy, “Nietzsche was not a social theorist but a poet, a rebel and innovator. His aristocracy was neither of birth nor of purse; it was of the spirit. In that respect Nietzsche was an anarchist, and all true anarchists were aristocrats.” Nietzsche's spiritual aristocracy can be considered a fight for survival given his status as a neurominority. Nietzsche's aristocracy protected his freedom to pursue his Special Interests and the will to power and be free from the social pressures of the herd. As an autistic, I dearly connect with his sentiment, “The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.”



[image description: there is Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer from the original 1964 movie. There is text that reads, “deviation from the norm will be punished unless it is exploitable”]

In the chapter “The State” we discussed the cultural impact of the state. Nietzsche’s writings about the nature of the state are illustrative of the cultural hegemony committed by the neurotypical state against the autistic individual. He recognized the state as an apparatus of oppression, “State is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters.” He saw this cold monster as an enemy of culture, “Culture and the state – one should not deceive oneself about this – are antagonists.” Nietzsche recognized the state’s function to create conformity, and conformity to an allistic norm entails the oppression of an autistic rebel.

But Nietzsche saw hope for the future. Nietzsche conceptualized a transvaluation of values, a change in cultural values. Faced by a dogmatic culture that he labeled as having “contempt for man,” Nietzsche believed that humans would be able to change the moral values to ones that affirmed life. One line of his writing even reads like a letter of hope to oppressed autistics, “You that are lonely today, you that are withdrawing, you shall one day be the people: out of you, who have chosen yourselves, there shall be a chosen people – and out of them, the overman.” Perhaps the Übermensch is the person who rises above allistic culture.

With forces like ABA, cure culture, and neurotypical authority, autistics are coerced to abandon who they are. I’ve heard from far too many autistics who feel they’ve lost a piece of themselves when an autistic behavior has been trained out of them. In order to liberate autistics, we must abolish the state as a necessary step toward ending the cultural hegemony of neurotypicals. Society is a phantasm, and the state is the phantasm that controls society. The state threatens the autonomy of autistics and attempts to bend us into molds that we are not. The state orchestrates the neurotypical herd instinct that suppresses the neurodivergent will to power, the will to be one’s self. “Become who you are!” Autistic freedom demands that we not be ruled by allistics. “Where the state ends – look there, my brothers! Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the overman?”

Disability, Freedom, and Rebellion

An article I wrote on 8/2/17

Among anarchists who are not merely socialists with a preference for democracy, who instead draw individualist inspiration from the libertarian likes of Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Stirner, there is an extended sense of freedom. For many, myself included, freedom cannot hold a solely reactionary meaning, it cannot be confined to ‘freedom from,’ akin to the liberal conception of liberty. That would hardly constitute a goal to strive for, and such an ideal strikes me as little more than a collectivist spook that plasters humans as little more than a paste of identities and material conditions.

Such conceptions fail to offer any vision of what could be. No, the Nietzschean anarchists, the Stirnerite libertarians, the iconoclastic rebels dare to dream of personal autonomy, a freedom to be. To fulfill one’s ego, the will to power, to become who you are, these are the positive freedoms that revolutionaries such as myself aspire for.

And yet as an autistic and disabled person, I must be very realistic that there are many things I am not good at and even cannot do. Many autistic and disabled anarchists sense a contradiction within themselves wherein they feel unable to dive into the beautiful chaos expressed in their comrades’ aesthetics. The philosopher Albert Camus beheld the raw rebellion of anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who “introduces into the midst of revolution the naked principle of rebellion. ‘The tempest and life, that is what we need. A new world, without laws, and consequently free.’” Described even more boldly is Stirner, “and with him all the nihilist rebels, rush to the utmost limits, drunk with destruction.” And yet somehow we find temperance in Nietzsche of all thinkers, as the very next sentence in Camus’s *The Rebel* reads, “After which, when the desert has been disclosed, the next step is to learn how to live there. Nietzsche’s exhaustive search then begins.” Even positive freedom lacks any real plan on how one actually be the person they seek to be. “Become who you are!” But how can this be a reality?

This radical notion of freedom is far from a cruel aristocratic ideology of eugenicists, as some dishonest ideologues would have you believe, but rather is the flame of the revolution. One need not live wildly to live in an anarchist fashion. One need not sever any and all forms of dependence on others in order to live in an anarchist fashion. Not only is this unnecessary to live freely, but to destroy yourself by doing so is the antithesis of anarchism.

No, do not destroy yourself, but live, create yourself! The relationships we form with others are part of who we are. Stirner would dub these voluntary, mutually-beneficial bonds a union of egoists, and “Only in the union can you assert yourself as unique, because the union does not possess you, but you possess it or make it of use to you.” Thus is an understanding of the will to power that fosters no self-hatred among those with needs that must be met. “Nietzsche’s message is summed up in the word creation, with the ambiguous meaning it has assumed. Nietzsche’s sole admiration was for the egotism and severity proper to all creators.”

For the disabled, who may require a friend to do their housework, a helper for self-care, or even an authority to create structure in their life, we must strive to make amends in our ideals.

I, like many other autistic people, need structure in my life in order to be remotely healthy. I will not allow executive dysfunction to be the bane of my existence. If I need yield some abstract ‘freedom from’ and empower another through authority to boost my ‘freedom to be,’ so be it! To stamp the legitimacy of this vision, I offer perhaps the finest words Mikhail Bakunin ever wrote:

“Does it follow that I reject all authority? Far from me such a thought. In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or engineer. For such or such special knowledge I apply to such or such a savant. But I allow neither the bootmaker nor the architect nor the engineer nor the savant to impose his authority upon me. I listen to them freely and with all respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure... I bow before the authority of special men because it is imposed upon me by my own reason.”

Peter Kropotkin may have been correct in saying “variety is life; uniformity is death,” but only in respect to variety among the population of people. In terms of how I must live my life, I scorn the aphorism and will continue with the personal conservation I require in order to become who I am.

Application

In this section I will explain the intersectional struggles of autistics and what it means to be an autistic anarchist. It is the anarchist belief that all struggles are intertwined, and I hope to explain how the autistic struggle relates to class struggle, gender struggle, racial struggle, and imperialist struggle.

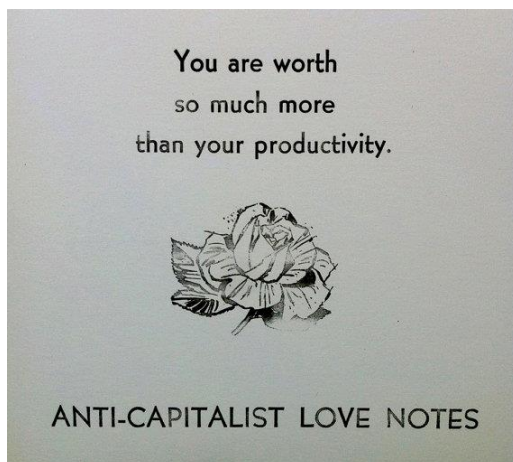


[image description: American-Egyptian Coptic actor Rami Malek plays Elliot Alderson in the show Mr. Robot. With a somber expression on his face, Elliot is asked, “What is it about society that disappoints you so much?”]

The Ableism of Capitalism

Capitalism is inherently ableist. While your likelihood to be in the capitalist class and not have to rent yourself to a boss for your very livelihood is almost entirely dependent on your birth class, among the proletariat, it is largely your ability to produce wealth for your employers that determines your value to them and thus your own income. This is obvious. Those better able and willing to produce for their employer will enjoy a greater income than those who are less able. However, the ableism of capitalism goes beyond this.

In addition to your ability to produce, it is your ability to fit the societal standards of good that determine your socioeconomic position. Capitalism is a one-size-fits-all economic system. Similar to how masculine characteristics are preferred in positions of power over feminine characteristics, neurotypical characteristics are preferred over autistic ones. On top of this, while the workplace still dehumanizes and destroys the soul of neurotypical workers, the capitalist workplace is designed for the neurotypical worker to operate. I will go into this in more depth in the following chapter titled “Employment.”



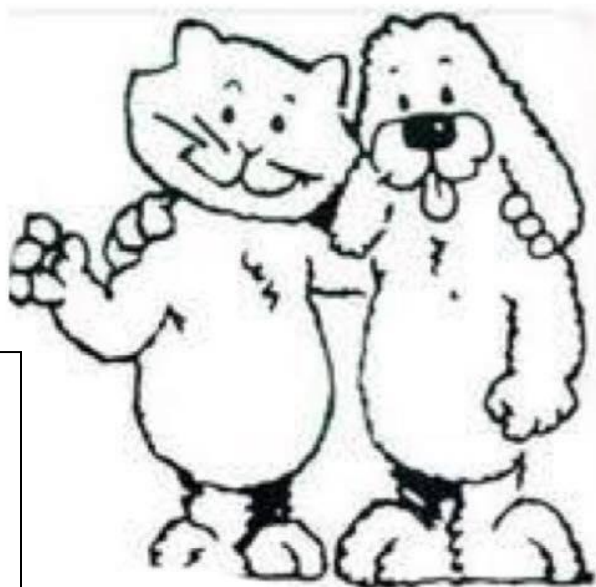
[image description: a typed note with an image of a flower in the center. The top text reads, “You are worth so much more than your productivity.” The bottom text reads, “Anti-capitalist love notes”]

As Amythest Schaber said, under the social model of disability, “It is society’s exclusion of and failure to think of and accommodate for people’s impairments that disables people.” To take this to its natural political context, an autistic Marxist named Janine Booth claims that “Capitalism disables autistic people.” Amythest extrapolated the social model of disability to claim that it is because we live in a world run by allistics that autistics are disabled. I hold this claim to be very anarchistic in nature, but, as we anarchists have done throughout history, the incorporation of Marxist economics helps us to better understand the nature of the oppression beyond the question of who has power. It is not only the reign of the neurotypicals that disables autistics, but the reign of a socio-economic system that terrorizes autistics. Under capitalism, the one-size-fits-all workplace fails to accommodate autistics, and autistic equality is expensive for capitalism, as extreme specialization keeps costs down.

Following a more Marxist, dialectical take on history, Booth proposes that while capitalism brought about knowledge of autism and some technology to handle being autistic in an allistic world, capitalism’s industrial revolution brought about an urbanization that increases both social pressure and sensory stimulation. Neurotypical capitalism has created structural,

infrastructural human organization that is terrible for autistics. Had autistics been the ruling neurotype and allistics the neurominority out of power, perhaps human civilization would have made things quieter and less socially demanding.

Communism is the only economic system that can successfully accommodate the needs of today's disabled. In all other economic systems, the distribution of goods and services depends on what one can produce within the existent system. Even with socialism, with workers collectively owning and managing the means of production, the need to conform and to produce will exist, and ableism will persist. Only communism guarantees the freedom, equality, and accommodation needed by today's disabled. Only when the economy is organized by the guiding principle "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs" will today's disabled no longer be dangerously disabled by society.



[image description: a cat and dog have their arms over each other's shoulders. Beneath them is text that reads, "Born stim, world is too loud, misinterpret em all 1989, I am autism man, 26372882,373627 shaky legs"]

***BORN TO STIM
world is too loud
misinterpret em all 1989
i am autism man
26372882, 373627 SHAKY LEGS***

Employment

cw: person-first language, exploitation

Autistic people are at a disadvantage in employment. We are seriously unemployed and underemployed. In the United States, unemployment and underemployment for young autistic adults is around 90%. One 2012 study even says that autistic people have a worse “no participation” rate of unemployment than any other disability group. A 2015 Huffington Post article examined several studies on autistic unemployment, and found that,

“According to a 2013 report published in the Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, the underemployment starts early. Just over 50 percent of young adults with ASD worked for pay outside the home within eight years after they finished high school. And when they did, the work was part-time and low-paying more often than not. Only about 20 percent of young adults with ASD worked full-time at either a current or a most-recent job, and their average pay was just \$8.10 an hour.” -Joseph Erbentraut, Huffington Post

It is clear that in our capitalist economy, autistics are not faring well. In autistic Marxist Janine Booth’s presentation “Autism and Marxism,” they give several explanations as to why this is the case. First off, insecure employment, unstable hours, zero-hours contracts, and similar practices disproportionately harm autistics whose minds often depend on predictability and routine. In recent years, we’ve also seen a shift in employment towards favoring customer service. These jobs require the social skills that are socially defined in our neurotypical-dominated society. Such sought after social skills are frequently not well developed in an autistic individual. Many autistics have far sharper technical skills than social skills, but even in technical fields, social skills are still in higher and higher demand.

[image description: three people sit in front of a projected PowerPoint slide. The slide has text that reads, “Marxism and Autism: There is a spectrum haunting Europe,” a play on the opening words of Karl Marx’s Communist Manifesto. There is an image of Karl Marx on the slide]



Some companies have looked to take advantage of autistics’ special talents and abilities. The profitable aspects of our neurotype have been commodified. For example, the Huffington Post article I quoted above is titled, “How These 4 Major Companies Are Tackling The Autism Unemployment Rate.” The diversity manager of the company at the top of the list, a mortgage-finance firm, spoke of the advantages of having people able to think differently. The third

company on the list, a German software company, also boasts of the value of autistics' unique skills. While they commend the attempts by some employers to increase neurodiversity in their workforce, Janine Booth sees such patterns as an effort to take advantage of the productivity of select autistics rather than truly valuing neurodiversity. Deviation from the norm will be punished unless it is exploitable.

Booth asserts that such problems in employment largely result from the private ownership of the means of production. In capitalism, the workplace is "regimented" and "provides no scope for people who think differently." One size must fit all. Booth claims to integral to better the lives of autistics is to recognize that what needs to change is for the most part not autistic workers, but neurotypical work. Booth sees this as a call for socialism, positing that with workers' control over the means of production and therefore control over the work environment could have positive effects for autistics by enabling an accommodating sensory environment and work process.

It is evident that neurotypical capitalism has horribly failed working class autistics. Our mental health is poor and our socioeconomic class is just as poor. The poverty of autistics is reflective of the conformity and ableism of capitalism. If we are to make the world an equal place for neurodivergents, we're going to have to make our economic system more accommodating of neurodiversity.

Autism and Gender

cw: medical transphobic terminology, sexism, racism

Autism and gender have a complicated relationship. To start with, there is a bias in the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Men are diagnosed with autism around 4.5 times as often as women. There is also a significant, but less sharp difference in diagnosis between ethnicities in the US, with the highest frequency in whites (15.2 per 1000), then non-Hispanic black people (13.2 per 1000), then Hispanics (10.1 per 1000). These statistics reveal a bias in diagnosis that many autistics believe to be caused by the stereotyping of autism to fit a specific upper class white male autistic stereotype. It is believed that if an autistic does not match this stereotype, then the medical professional will either not believe the autistic is autistic or will not diagnose them. It is also widely believed by allistic medical professionals that autism is an enhancement of masculine characteristics, called the extreme male brain theory.

With the diagnostic frequencies established, let's examine gender. Gender, a social construct, is a form of identity usually thrust upon children at birth. From then on, a person is expected to generally act and operate in a fashion associated with the assigned gender. It is expected to thus perform according to culturally established gender roles and conform to gender norms. Autistics do not conform well to the rigid social norms established by allistics as a whole, so it seems only natural that we also do not handle gender norms the same way allistics do.

Autistics are significantly more likely than allistics to be transgender. Before going into the medical research, I warn that their publications use technical jargon and terminology neither preferred nor accepted by transgender people. They use biological sex to refer to gender assigned at birth and gender dysphoria to describe feelings of discomfort with one's assigned gender identity. One study found that among "children and adolescents admitted to a gender identity clinic in the Netherlands... almost 8 percent of subjects were also diagnosed with ASD." One study shows that autistic individuals are "nearly 8 times more likely to express a desire to be other than their biological sex," a figure roughly quadruple the general population according to the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention). A study by British scientists declared that "female-to-male (FTM) transgender people have higher rates of autistic features than do male-to-female (MTF) transgender people or cisgender males and females." Several doctors underwent a "systematic literature search" for articles from between 1966 and 2015 concluded that studies show an increase prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder among children with gender dysphoria, that one article shows an increase in atypical gender among autistic adults, and overall that "there is an increasing amount of evidence that suggests a co-occurrence between gender dysphoria and ASD." It is apparent that trans rights and autistic rights are highly inseparable.

Among the theories for why this is include the controversial and dubious 'extreme male brain' theory, but also that autistics are already used to not submitting to societal norms. These social norms extended to our gendered experience. Quoting a non-binary autistic activist Lydia X.Z. Brown, "Many of us are used to being outcasts for our atypical communication, sensory experiences, emotional expressions, and behavior. For some of us autistic people, that constant outsider status makes it easier to figure out that we fall somewhere along the transgender or

genderqueer spectrum since we're already used to not fitting in, or at least, it's harder for us to hide outward gender non-conformity." Autistics are used to not fitting in, so it can be easier for some of us to recognize and express themselves as who they really are.

In a Facebook group for autistics of which I am a member, someone once posted asking if anyone was "transgender/genderqueer/genderfluid/anything other than cisgender." In a group that had slightly over 1000 members, this post received well over 100 replies. There were numerous responses of members announcing themselves to fit just such a description. A later poll of 191 members consisted of only 20.41% cisgender folks. In the autistic community, based on the experience of myself and several other autistics, it appears that to be cisgender and heterosexual is unusual. My own reply went as follows:

"I've never been quite the super macho man that seemed expected of me growing up (especially in sports culture) but these days I just feel comfortable the way I'm perceived. For me personally, I just don't tend to think much about what it means to be a man, I'm just going with it."

One person expressed a sentiment that somewhat matched mine, "...I never realized that other people think about their gender. I have no feelings, other than the feeling that I am supposed to have feeling." Another member chimed in with a brief description of a term I had never heard of before, "gendervague is an identity for neurodivergent folk who feel that their neurodivergence affects their understanding of gender." Following up my experience on this Facebook post, I came across an article on the subject by Lydia X.Z. Brown, who is something of a celebrity within the autistic and disabled communities. Lydia hit the nail on the head, "For many of us, gender mostly impacts our lives when projected onto us through other people's assumptions, but holds little intrinsic meaning." Until discovering I am agender, this meant I was going with my gender assigned at birth, the easy gender, my gender of least resistance.



[image description: a diagonally-oriented rendition of the blue, pink, and white transgender flag. Layered on top in the center is the rainbow infinity symbol of neurodiversity]

The autistic experience in regards to gender is different. Many of us do not fit in with the gender we've been assigned, and some of us cannot understand gender. Gender does not exist independent of neurotype. The concept of gender thus far is not only a phantasm, but a neurotypical phantasm, constructed by a neurotypical world. Gender has been defined by the neurotypical experience, with stereotypical gender norms being representative of neurotypical behaviors, and cisnormativity is neurotypical. I am expected to act not only like a stereotypical male and as a neurotypical, but as a stereotypically male neurotypical. Gender and neurodivergence are both integral components of a person's personal identity. Indeed, there are several 'neurogender' identities, such as gendervague, autismgender, and bordergender, that posit that their gender and neurodivergence are inseparable. Their intersection can seem infinite, so for many the question is asked, "where does my gender end and my neurodivergence begin?"

The autistic struggle cannot be separated from the feminist struggle, from gay liberation, or from trans liberation, and none of these struggles can be separated from the class struggle. It is imperative that we crush both the neurotypical and gender social norms that oppress us, that we change the phantasms that define our existence.

At the social level, anarchist communism, through its free association, achieves the transformation of all human relations into Stirner's union of egoists. These terms express the highest form of positive freedom in which people interact with those whom they wish to interact with. At the individual level, anarchism empowers individuals to become who they are and pursue their will to power.

Anarchist gender absurdism is necessary to transform all social relations into unions of egoists, crucial in empowering a myriad of transgender people to become who they are. Gender absurdism allows people to control their own gender identity and therefore their own identity and terms of social relations, essential to genuine free association and unions of egoists.

[image description: a character from Sailor Moon is shown with the words "You can deconstruct gender and still respect gender identity" written over them.]



Gender absurdism is particularly potent for agender, genderflux, and other genderless people, but is also key to the liberation of another demographic: neurodivergent people. One is neurodivergent if one's brain functions in ways significantly differently from dominant societal

stands of normality. Autism is one specific form of neurodivergence with which gender absurdism often intersects.

Us autistic people must be allowed to define our own gender identities free from the looming cultural hegemony of the neurotypical. This includes the legitimization and equalization of neurogenders. Neurogenders, a wedding of gender and neurodivergence, are an example of the individual exploring their own meaning. Further, neurogenders create meaning from the absurdity of gender through synthesis with the corporeality, the materiality, of neurodivergence. Gender absurdism allows a theoretical framework for such terminology as gendervague to flourish, critically examining the relationship between the individual and the external world.

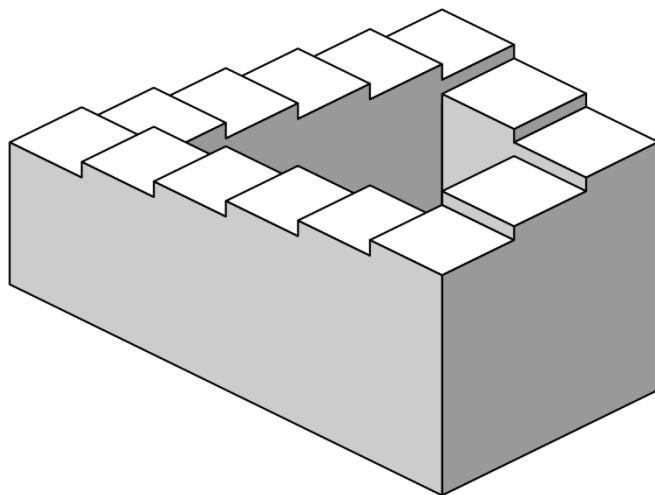
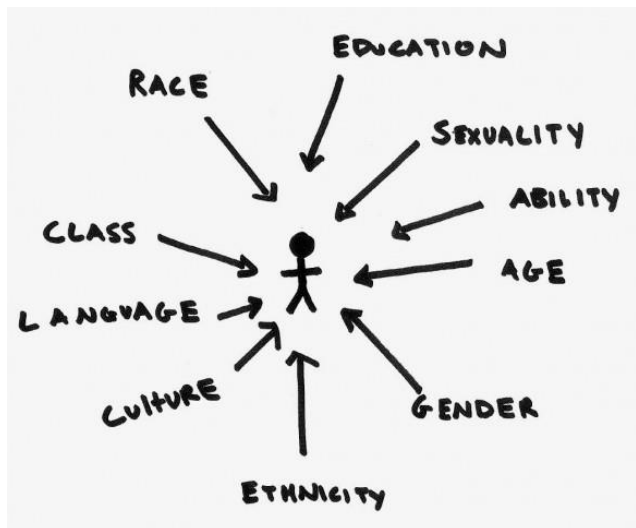
Racism and Autism

cw: police, police brutality, violence, guns

Racism and ableism have a history together. Anarchist intersectionality theory proposes that forms of oppression do not merely coexist, overlap, or stack, but that they reinforce, support, and perpetuate each other. This is an improved alternative to the Marxist theories of base and superstructure, which generally holds the economic base to be dominant. Rather than idealist oppression reinforcing material oppression, all forms of hierarchy lead to one another.

This idea of intersectionality is well-represented by the below figures. An individual is constantly impacted by all forms of oppression. We see in the Penrose stairs a model in which no hierarchy stands above the others, but instead each hierarchy leads to the others. As discussed in the chapter “The Ableism of Capitalism,” ableism functions as a floor for capitalism.

Discrimination against the disabled is a necessary component to sustain capitalism. And as discussed in the chapter “Anti-Racism,” racism also performs as a floor for capitalism, inciting white workers to support the oppression of workers of color. Ableism is also a floor for racism and sexism. People of color and non-men are stereotyped as weak, lazy, unintelligent, and overall incapable of being an equal member of society, the ideal member of society being held as a cishet abled white man. This degradation is usually done with slurs rather than the lighter terms I’ve just used. The use of ableism to drag down non-men and people of color is reflective of intersectionality. Oppression stands on the shoulders of oppression, hierarchy leads into hierarchy.



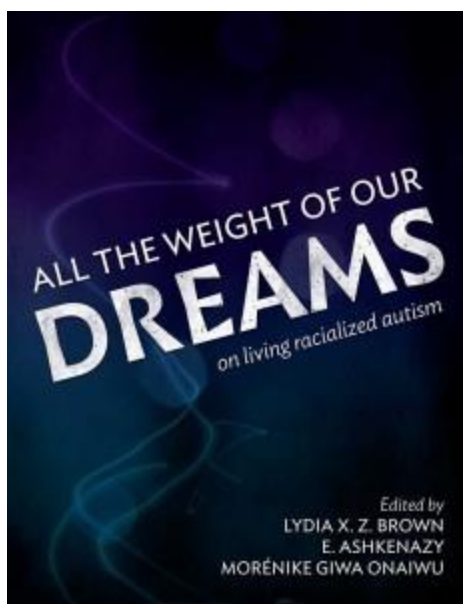
For an autistic individual, intersectionality entails that all elements of one’s identity, not just their neurodivergency, are at play at all times. The question of “where does my gender end and my neurodivergence begin” becomes “where does any piece of who I am end and another piece begin?” A blogger by the name of Morénike Giwa Onaiwu wrote of the intersectionality of the human experience. Critically, they asked the question, “how do I know where blackness ends and neurodivergence begins?” It’s often impossible to tell.

“Whether x is good or x is bad, you have to wonder if x is all that it appears to be. Or perhaps at least partially did x happen the way it did because I'm female presenting? Or because I'm black? Because I'm black AND female presenting? Or maybe none of those, but it was more due to autistic mannerisms? Or perhaps it was a cultural thing instead, something that would have made sense to "real" Americans - not new ones like myself and my family? Or maybe I'm misreading all of it and it was really more of a conservative Christian thing and that's why I'm lost, since I'm not one (a conservative)?

... I don't know where my blackness stops and my femaleness begins. I don't know where my femaleness stops and my Christianity begins. I don't know where my role as a disabled adult stops and where my role as a parent begins. I don't know when my role as a parent stops and my autisticness begins. I don't know where my autisticness stops and my blackness begins...

I need solutions, policies, ideas, images, writing, research, etc to be intersectional. I need them to address all of me. All of me.” -Morénike Giwa Onaiwu

[image description: the cover of the book titled “All the Weight of Our Dreams: on living racialized autism” edited by Lydia X.Z. Brown, E. Ashkenazy, and Morénike Giwa Onaiwu]



Autistic people of color face difficulties only faced by autistic people of color. As stated in the previous chapter on gender, white children are statistically more likely to be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder than children of color. The stereotypical conception of an autistic individual held by medical professionals (and society in general) matches that of a cishet upper middle-class white man. The previous chapter also established how the gender binary and cisnormativity are reflective of neurotypical standards of behavior. On top of that, stereotypical gender norms are also reflective of white ‘culture.’ Stereotypical gender norms reflect the standards of behavior of whoever is considered white in the era. Today that generally means people of European descent with pale skin. These phantasms of social norms, traditional gender norms and white supremacy, interact with ableism against autistic people in unique ways. Autistic people of color, especially autistic non-men of color, are not likely to be granted even the small amounts of consideration granted to white autistic people. For example, the infantilization and getting spoken over gets worse, but a stereotype of being dangerous is added by the element of racism. More and more factors compound one’s likelihood of living in poverty.

And especially for people living in the colonized world, lands victimized by imperialism, knowledge of autism is less and thus autistic needs are even less likely to be well accommodated.

Perhaps one of the worst cases of the intersection of ableism and racism for autistic people of color, especially African Americans, is when dealing with the police. Black people are frequently the victims of police brutality and are treated roughly, with hostility, and with violence by cops. Cops also have tendencies to put their hands on people, to demand submission to orders quickly, and to demand people answer their questions swiftly. These are all practices that are unaccommodating and discriminatory against autistic people who may be uncomfortable with physical contact, may struggle to process vague orders quickly, and may not have the social scripts to answer the cop's questions. Add in the factor of anxiety, and encounters with the police become a horror scene for black autistics. Cops misinterpret disability as noncompliance and get violent. I know of one black autistic man who keeps his wallet on his dashboard while driving so as to avoid having to reach into his pockets if the police pull him over. This safety measure being taken is a response to a widespread trend. Approximately 15% of all calls to the police involve a disabled and/or mentally ill person. These calls often result in violence, and per a 2014 article from the Daily Beast, "The rate mistreatment by police against people with disabilities has reached such a high level, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights held a hearing in April to address the issue." It's dangerous to be disabled, especially disabled and a person of color.

[image description: a portion of a police car is visible. Its decal includes the words "to serve and protect." Drawn on as an addition to this are the words, "the ruling class," creating "to serve and protect the ruling class"]



A well-known police shooting in the summer of 2016 featured Charles Kinsey, a black support worker of an autistic man being shot by a police officer. Kinsey had been attempting to inform the police about the autistic man's disability and that what the autistic man was holding was just a toy truck. While Kinsey and the autistic man both laid on the ground, Kinsey was shot, but as the police officer who fired the shot later stated, he was aiming for the autistic man. Neither of them were a danger to anyone. The Autistic Self Advocacy Network put out a statement in response to this event and proposed a policy approach that would help minimize this sort of police brutality:

“One critical component to reducing police violence, as articulated by a multitude of civil rights and disability rights advocates, is the use of trained interdisciplinary crisis teams as an alternative to armed police when responding to disability and mental health-related 911 calls. The current over-reliance on police instead of trained crisis responders when responding to disability-related calls places people with disabilities, especially people of color, and their loved ones, in fear that they will be targeted for police violence as a result of disability-related behavior in public – even conduct as innocuous as sitting in a street with a toy truck. It also places people with disabilities, people of color and others disproportionately subject to police violence in an untenable position when they face a true disability-related crisis: either forgo publicly-funded emergency services or take the risk that a 911 call will place them or their loved ones in even greater danger.” -Autistic Self Advocacy Network

An anarchist society would not have police as we know them today. Crisis responders seem a viable alternative for situations like this. ASAN’s suggestion even seems to mesh well with the guiding principle of “from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs” by accommodating the specific needs of disabled people. Public policy cannot be our savior, though. As Lydia X.Z. Brown explained, “Outreach can lead to better outcomes for some, but those of us who experience multiple layers of marginality cannot rely on police as an institution to protect or serve us.” Only through self-advocacy, self-liberation, direct action, and democratic people’s organizations can we conquer the oppressive mentalities and belief systems underlining the violence haunting some of society’s most vulnerable people.

[image description: anarchists hold matching shields with drawings of skeletons with their arms crossed on them. Written on the shields are the words, “Stop police brutality”]



For those of us who are not targeted by any given intersectional forms of oppression, we cannot truly understand that given intersection. So we listen to those who do and support their efforts with solidarity. As a parent of a black, non-verbal, autistic son wrote:

“It is not an ideal solution to understanding ableism in combination with racism and other bigotry. I cannot be my son. I can’t travel the world for a year as a nonspeaking neurodiverse person. But I am doing the next best thing. I am learning from everyone who can teach me what happens when multiple differences meet at that intersection of minorities that is our son. I am able to improve the quality of his life by that understanding, allowing him to participate in his life as much as he is able.” - Kerima Çevik, Autism Women’s Network

Intersectionality means that no one is going to fully understand all the complex forces at work in the world completely. To ensure that we are acting as agents toward a better, more just world, communication is key. When hierarchies interact, nothing is simple. Lydia X.Z. Brown pointed a way forward, “Intersectionality demands complexity without easy answers or simple slogans, because the real lives of everyone in the movement are infinitely more complicated than single-issue politics can recognize. Intersectionality requires thoughtful organizing and intense labor if we truly seek to build more just and equitable communities.” The struggle against ableism and the struggle for autistic freedom is not something that can be simply and centrally planned. Just as anarchists defend federalism by understanding that only the people on the ground level can know all the details at play in order to make the best decisions possible, so, too do anarchists recognize that only the people at each and every intersection of oppression will be able to express their concerns and direct their liberation. The revolution will be inclusive and it will be accessible or it will not be a revolution.



[image description: several people are pictured, all with a red tint. There is a person in a wheelchair, a boycott Autism Speaks shirt, a neurodiversity shirt, a Karl Marx shirt, a #RedInstead sign, and much ethnic diversity among the people]

Ableism within the Left

tw: ableist slurs, mental illness; cw: ableism (again), brocialists, violence

There exist within the left what are colloquially referred to as brocialists and manarchists, portmanteaus of bro & socialist and man & anarchist. These are anti-identity politics, class reductionist leftists who are usually white men, but always men. I suspect their abundance is a result of liberal identity politics telling them that they are privileged, resulting in them believing that their class struggle has been invalidated. Nevertheless, they are leftists who fail to apply leftist thought to all aspects of politics. While there is probably significant overlap between these groups, there also exist leftists that are highly ableist. These people also fail to apply leftist thought to all aspects of politics.

Some leftists use ableist language, choosing to criticize people and things with words such as st*pid, d*mb, cr*zy, narcissistic, cr*ppled, the r-word, autistic, etc. Some make jokes about disabilities, it not being terribly uncommon for allistic leftists to share “autistic screeching” memes. Some hold deeply ableist beliefs. For example, I once debated a leftist who believed a largely inaccurate belief of what all autistics are like, saying, “You are talking and thinking as a normal person, how can you consider yourself autistic?” They believed that autistics are incapable of having reasonable discourse on Facebook and that one must be neurotypical in order to engage in such discourse. And other leftists, consciously or not, put down the actions that their disabled comrades are capable of and fail to make their political organization accessible for disabled comrades.

In the leftist dismissal of liberal politics and political actions that seek to work with elected representatives in favor of direct action, the understanding of what direct action is seems to have been lost to many. The left has developed a fetishization of physical, outdoors activism. Likely tied to the machismo and fetishization of violence characteristic of many male leftists, the idea of marching, protesting, and black blocs are hailed as some of our greatest tactics. In support of these tactics, some leftists have taken to putting down other forms of activism, namely what they call “slacktivism”: sharing articles online, writing letters, teaching people, meeting town hall reps, etc. Those whose activism is not out in the streets are considered ineffective, weak, liberal, or not even valid.

The effect of this is that disabled comrades, people unable to engage in physical activism like black blocs, are told that their activism cannot do anything. If you have anxiety, have sensory processing disorder, use a wheelchair, etc. then something like a block bloc or marching may not be healthy, safe, or even a real option for you. Such disabled comrades are told that they cannot contribute to the left. I would like to remind ableist leftists of the words of Karl Marx, “from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs.” That guiding principle applies right now to our revolutionary tactics. Explained by my comrade Garrett Winters:

“...the revolution needs all kinds of minds... We need people of all different skills and abilities, and if those abilities are different than the norm or we don't have the ability to do the norm, that's not a bad thing. What would be wrong is shutting us down if we end up acting in a way that's different from you. We're extremely diverse in our capabilities and we're doing the best

we can...our lives are on the line, after all. Just because you're capable of other things doesn't make what we can do less valid."

Leftists need to better accept the abilities of their disabled comrades. As we unite in solidarity with them and support their activism, they should stand in solidarity and support ours. We're all doing what we can to change the world and every effort counts.



[image description:
there are several black
bloc anarchists
holding black and red
flags. There is white
text that reads, "I
support our troops"]

Leftists also need to work on making their activism more accessible. For example, any meetings should be wheelchair accessible. Meetings should aspire to avoid being potentially overwhelming for disabled comrades. Organizations should seek to reasonably accommodate disabled and/or mentally ill comrades in their activism, and if unable to do so, alternative forms of direct action should be encouraged and honored. We need to make leftist organization and action accessible for leftists of all abilities.

In leftist circles such as the community of leftist Facebook groups referred to as Leftbook, the lack of consideration is apparent. There are unwritten rules, people are vague, confused autistics are called out for demanding 'emotional labor' from those who confuse them, asking people to be gentle can result in being called out for 'tone policing,' and people are sometimes quickly told to 'self-crit' (self-criticize, a practice adopted from Maoist China) without explanation as to why. Generally, as an autistic anarchist, I am often expected to process information the way a neurotypical would, and my inability to do so may result in me being punished and/or labeled an oppressor. As one autistic comrade of mine put it,

"It's so funny seeing allistics... yell angrily about privilege in society as they don't see how they produce a tangled net of 'dos and don'ts' inherently tied to the hierarchies of social capital within specific cliques that allow them to get away with bad, counterproductive, ahistorical and reductionist discourse while making spaces that, for all of their talk about 'safety,' foster resentment, virtue-signaling, ostracism as a method of punishment, authoritarianism and just plain abuse."

Leftist circles frequently reflect neurotypical norms of communication and interaction. We are held to neurotypical standards of behavior even in leftist spaces. And this can be hurtful and challenging for an autistic person. And as another autistic comrade expanded in the same discussion as my previous quote came from,

“Leftism/activism has an NT default to it that they are completely oblivious to. They build their entire paradigm of sacred expectations and assumptions on what morality is and what people should and should not do based on a neurotypical lens. A lot of the things we're told by the NT world are just being repeated here only with different framing pretexts (i.e. reasons we're supposed to hate ourselves for not performing NT roles).

In a lot of ways disability is treated like oppression lite. In many "intersectional" discussions (where they misuse the term, see the footnote for details), we're basically told 'yeah yeah, wait over there and let the real oppressed people talk, we'll get to you when we're done.' Ableism vertically intersects all other forms of oppression (in that all other forms of bigotry use elements of ableism to further their oppressive ways) but many are treating it like it's not a thing unless it's politically convenient for them.”*

The left needs to be accessible both in the physical sense of its organization and in the mental sense of its communication and interaction. And it's currently failing on both accounts. Neurotypicals need to understand that neurodivergents are different and that their struggles are just as valid as any other.

The next logical question for a neurotypical leftist is how to be a good ally. Amythest Schaber offers a nice list on how to generally be a good ally to the autistic community:

1. Remember that autistic people should be leading the conversation about autism and our lives
2. Read the writings and listen to the voices of autistic people
3. Presume competence
4. Be prepared to change

More politically speaking, listen to us and regulate those within your oppressor class. Stand with us, not over us. Further than that, learn about our needs and preferences and learn to accommodate your disabled friends and comrades. Call ableism out and call in when someone you know engages in ableism. Be wary of your own ableism and support autistic self-advocacy. Don't be an ally: be a good person, a person who wants autistics to be okay.

An Autistic Anarchist

tw: suicide mention, water spray bottle; cw: ableism, A\$, q-word

Growing up as an un-diagnosed autistic, it felt like it was me against the world. Independence, autonomy, non-conformity, and rebellion have become dear aspects of my personality. My junior year of high school, I was introduced to my first political thinker: Friedrich Nietzsche. His message of resistance, of opposition to the norm, of a war against the powers that be felt very natural to me. And so when I first discovered socialist anarchism, I was immediately hooked. While I may draw more of my ideas regarding political structure from anarchist communist Peter Kropotkin, it is my Nietzschean streak that drives my passion. I prefer to temper my Kropotkin with a bit of Nietzsche. Anarchism, the liberator from the tools of domination and the phantoms of the herd, is something I feel at my core, and much of this I attribute to being autistic. As an autistic, anarchism is what offers the freedom to be me.



[image description: an oil painting titled Wanderer above the Sea of Fog by artist Caspar David Friedrich in which a man stands on a rock before a sea of fog. The image has notably been used as a cover for Nietzsche's most popular book, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*]

As an autistic, hierarchy is abhorrent to me. Hierarchy in any form means that I, as a disabled person, will be talked over, will be edged out, and will have to face the wrath of the state's hegemony. Hierarchy means the reproduction of the ideology of my destruction. Nietzsche noted that to be ruled is a murderous tragedy, "State I call it where all drink poison, the good and the wicked; state, where all lose themselves, the good and the wicked; state, where the slow suicide of all is called 'life.'" Hierarchy means neurotypicality is favored, and thus neurodivergence is suppressed. Hierarchy means rulers pretending they are acting in my best interests, as if they are my friends. What Nietzsche wrote of the state is analogous to what one could say of Autism Speaks, "Coldly it tells lies... and this lie crawls out of its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people.'" The state, the allistics, the hierarchy... none of these can affirm the life of autistics.

Looking at me, you may believe that the world is made for the benefit of people like me, but from my perspective, it's largely made for people who look like me, not so much people who are like me. Being autistic is a very different experience from anything else.

I went a long time without knowing that I was autistic or even disabled at all, and much longer before discovering my queer identities. Naturally, I felt unjustly attacked by claims made about me being privileged. My social awkwardness, my social inadequacy made me feel far too lowly for me to view myself as a beneficiary of the current system. I felt oppressed as a man, but in reality, I am oppressed as a disabled man. Ableism manifests itself as gender oppression, and vice versa. And so, for me, the belief that neurotypical is the norm prevented me from understanding how forces of oppression really work. The invisibility of my disabilities kept me in the dark on the world.

When initially learning of civil rights movements, we are usually taught in school of the movement for racial justice, for women's rights, and occasionally even the rights of gay people. In recent years, thankfully, even transgender equality has reached the national spotlight. Forgotten, it seems, is the disability rights movement. Indeed, it is not uncommon for organizations to explicitly take stances against racism, sexism, and homophobia, but not against ableism. It can feel like we have been abandoned and forgotten, even by the left. As discussed in the previous chapter, ableism is sometimes even relegated as a less relevant form of oppression, and the needs of disabled people often go unconsidered.



[image description: a water spray bottle labeled "nt opinion spray." Various expressions are typed in red to the left of the spray bottle, "no, bad neurotypical, keep appropriate distance pls, away, stop speaking"]

Anarchism is not just a political ideology, but a philosophy. Being autistic has enhanced my ability to recognize when one should stay in one's lane. Being autistic has clearly demonstrated to me the significance of the actual experience of oppressed peoples. Being autistic has clarified the importance of self-liberation. And being poor, powerless, autistic, and disabled has made intersectionality all too obvious. It's oppression and subjugation all the way around. Being autistic has made me a great anarchist, anarchism empowers me to feel free being autistic, and the anarchist philosophy has given my mind structure in place of chaos.

Pride in Identity

An article I wrote on 9/23/17

Pride – when one derives self-respect from something. I am proud of my writings. I am proud of my chess. I am proud of the way I treat my friends. These are important things for me, but there are bolder things I dare take pride in. Namely, pride in identity.

In response to the consistent degradation of their like, many of the oppressed proclaim to be proud of who they are. People are proud to be queer, proud to be trans, proud to be black, proud to be a woman, proud to be disabled, proud to be autistic. It is quite easy to see that the pride of the oppressed is nothing like the horrendous pride of the hierarchs. White pride generally means pro-genocide, anti “race mixing,” anti-semitism, etc. The pride of the hierarchs is pride in oppression, domination, and hegemony. The pride of the oppressed is simply not that.

But how can it make any sense to be proud of one’s identity? Philosophically, it simply does not make sense to take pride merely in something arbitrary. It only makes sense to derive self-respect from, to take pride in, one’s own doings. I did not choose to be autistic, I was simply born this way, so how can I be proud to be autistic?

These notions surrounding pride revolve around ethics/morality, particularly valuation. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s contrast of slave morality and master morality is instructive here. Nietzsche discerned in dominant Greek ethics a master morality which valued such things as strength, pride, and nobility. Master morality values rulership and that which the rulers have. In response to this, slave morality is created. Slave morality, a foundation for Christianity, spites masterhood by devaluing that which the master has and valuing the life of a slave. Slave morality values humility, servitude, pity, turning the other cheek, and other such staples of Christian morals.

While pride in arbitrary identity escapes the subservience aspect of slave morality, it clings to the idealization of the position of the oppressed. It is to glorify being oppressed and to resent, or in more Nietzschean terms, to develop resentment, against an illusory enemy. This illusory enemy is not the hierarchs (a material oppressor), but the status of being free from oppression. To cling to slave morality is to restrain yourself from pursuing your ego, your will to power, your self-creation of an artful you that you can be proud of.

Central to Nietzsche’s philosophy is the transvaluation of values, a change in cultural values. Nietzsche differentiates between ethics and sacred ethics, morality. For Nietzsche, all morality, especially slave morality, is antithetical to living authentically, “Definition of morality: Morality – the idiosyncrasy of decadents, with the ulterior motive of revenging oneself against life – successfully. I attach value to this definition.” In place, Nietzsche espouses amoral ethics. Freed from the values endowed by divine beings and texts, what are we to be proud of?

There is pride to be taken in identity. But not as slave morality pride, but as pride in iconoclasm. One should take pride in defying the ideological pillars of the empire. Thus I conceptualized anarcho-autism. I am not proud to have been born autistic; I am proud to be politically autistic. I am proud to defy the rule of allistics and their cultural hegemony. Similarly,

there is pride to be taken in being politically black, politically queer, politically trans, etc. These prides each have their own properties, but are united in that they are pride in action. They are prides in active being. Again expanding on my canon, one is born autistic, but autism isn't a disability, it's a lifestyle.



[image description: the sabokitty, an Industrial Workers of the World symbol often used for anarcho-syndicalism, is pictured with the neurodiversity rainbow infinity over it.]

Mutual Aid among Autistics

cw: internalized ableism, animals, battle language

Growing up in our extremely ableist society, I developed many ableist ideas and beliefs. It seems as impossible to avoid ableist thoughts in America as it is to avoid racist thoughts. To grow up ableist appears inevitable today.

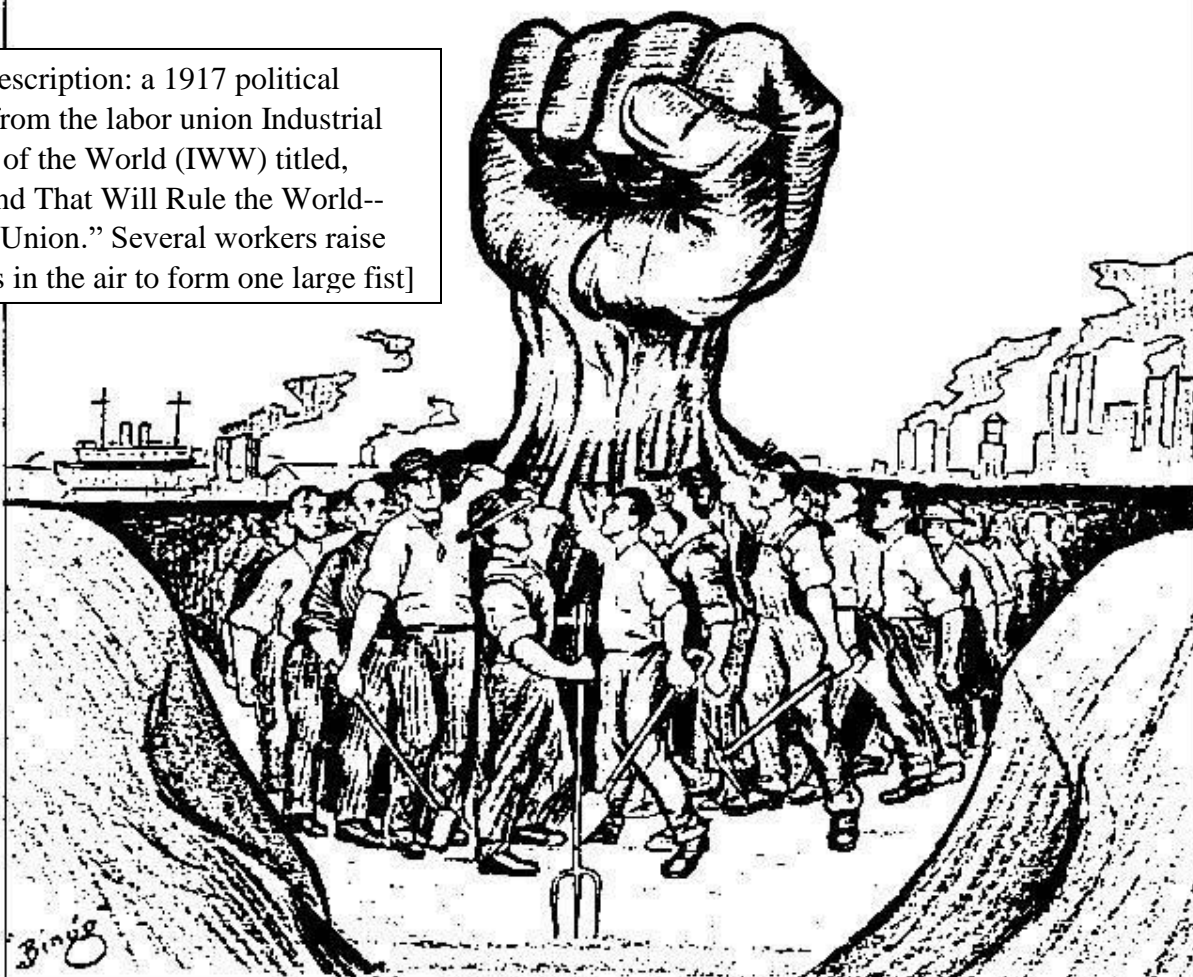
When I first began to learn that I am autistic in my freshman year of high school, I had very little knowledge of autism. First off, I developed a lot of self-hatred. I believed myself to have aspergers syndrome, and I mentally separated myself from other autistics. Senior year, when my psychology teacher briefly stated that aspergers is no longer used as a diagnosis, but that they just “call it all autism,” I rebelled on the inside. I didn’t want to associate with *them*. I didn’t want people to see me as unintelligent, as incapable of doing things, of people projecting their stereotypes of autistics upon me. At the root of it, as is the case with many instances of ableism within the disability community, this sentiment came from self-hatred and horrible internalized ableism. I started to abandon this way of thinking when I began to understand autism as Autism Spectrum Disorder. With an understanding of autism as a multidimensional spectrum, I was ready to identify as autistic.

I believed some pretty terrible things, but I’ve learned to renounce them. While, like the struggle against racism, I will never fully conquer my internalized ableism, I think that I’m doing a pretty okay job. I believe that all disabled people are equally valuable. It doesn’t faze me if a neurotypical believes that I have an intellectual disability because I am autistic. I stand in solidarity with all of my fellow autistics. The autistic community is there for each other. In a world wrought with ableism and cure culture, autistics have banded together with support and mutual aid. Allistics’ attempted division through functioning labels has only strengthened our comradery. We are all in this together.

Peter Kropotkin was not only an anarchist, but a biologist. In his *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*, he analyzes his own scientific research in the field of anthropology. As a result, Kropotkin claimed that mutual aid, not competitive struggle, was the dominant factor of evolution. Species throughout the animal kingdom and humans throughout history have demonstrated that “in the long run the practice of solidarity proves much more advantageous to the species than the development of individuals endowed with predatory inclinations.” This is in spite of all of the forces in the history of humankind, in spite of the thousands of years of exploitation, authority, and dehumanization. Kropotkin says this speaks to the depth of the human instinct, “The mutual-aid tendency in man has so remote an origin, and is so deeply interwoven with all the past evolution of the human race, that it has been maintained by mankind up to the present time, notwithstanding all vicissitudes of history.” And a world that harnesses mutual aid can be beautiful. Investigating human organizations based upon such principles, Kropotkin observed, “[people], as soon as their interests do not absolutely clash, act in concert, harmoniously, and perform collective work of a very complex nature.” With communism, the tendency of mutual aid affirms life in the individual.

Under capitalism, we see that mutual aid is repressed. Rudolf Rocker explained, “A system which in every act of its life sacrifices the welfare of large sections of the people, yes of whole nations, to the selfish lust for power and the economic interests of small minorities must of necessity dissolve all social ties and lead to a constant war of each against all.” Capitalism pits worker against worker, black person against black person, woman against woman, trans against trans, exploited people against exploited people, in the struggle for survival. Capitalism wages war on the human spirit for the benefit of the ruling class.

[image description: a 1917 political cartoon from the labor union Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) titled, “The Hand That Will Rule the World-- One Big Union.” Several workers raise their fists in the air to form one large fist]



In the era of late capitalism, oppressed peoples must band together to revolt. In order to achieve our dream of communism, to win the class war, we must organize together and salvage our humanity. Autistics already know the value of mutual aid. We do not claim functioning labels or a “better” position on the spectrum. We label ourselves in unity as autistics and build each other up while a neurotypical world tries to destroy us. I like being autistic.

Solidarity forever, comrades.

The End

tw: death mention, gun, dinosaur

There is a lot of information that I didn't touch on in this book. These issues are a lot more complex than I have conveyed. But I've done my best to write an accessible, quality primer into the integration of anarchist communism and autism acceptance.

Anarchism is my philosophy. All else is an extrapolation, a natural expression of its principles. Anarchism is not just opposed to hierarchy, but vehemently against it. Hierarchy reduces those at the bottom to mere objects, to people without control over their own lives, to people unable to live. This framing of society, as affirming or denying life in the individual, is something Paulo Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* inspired in me. Freire argued that due to hierarchy, through capitalism, even the rich capitalists are denying their own life through their denial of the life of others. Hierarchy is a denial of life. I'd like to use an expanded version and alternative translation of a Mikhail Bakunin quote I mentioned in the chapter "Anarcha-Feminism,"

"The liberty of every individual is only the reflection of his own humanity, or his human right through the conscience of all free men, his brothers and his equals.

I can feel free only in the presence of and in relationship with other men. In the presence of an inferior species of animal I am neither free nor a man, because this animal is incapable of conceiving and consequently recognizing my humanity. I am not myself free or human until or unless I recognize the freedom and humanity of all my fellowmen.

Only in respecting their human character do I respect my own. ... I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free. The freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation."

Dismantling hierarchy, dismantling material, social, and cultural oppression and hegemony, are the means to affirming life in the individual. Only when autistic and allistic people are socially equal and free can they interact in ways that adhere to instincts of human nature and their creative passions. The freedom of all neurotypes is necessary to the freedom of the individual.

Following the social model of disability, it is society's failure to meet the needs of people with a certain set of abilities that renders them disabled. With a political understand, this means that disabled people are disabled materially by capitalism and disabled in the realm of ideals by phantasms. The tools to address these sources of disability are communism and anarchism.

Anarchism is by definition intersectional. An opposition to hierarchy means opposition to all hierarchies. To recall the distinction Camus made between rebellion and revolution, this plants anarchism as firmly revolutionary. A movement that dismisses one hierarchy and deals only with others is not a revolution, but a rebellion. It is not anarchism. Any hierarchy is, to put it in Proudhon's framing, a sort of shadow government. The maintenance of any hierarchy in a

movement, even one that is nominally anarchist, is thus antithetical to revolution, for the very simple reason that it is government, it is the oppressive hierarchy. The revolution will be intersectional or it will not be a revolution. This leaves anarchists the greatest of tasks: to be wholly revolutionary. It's easy to be a rebel and hard to be a revolutionary.

In the struggle for anarchism, it's important to remember that for many people of various marginalized identities, revolution is not optional. The revolution is for everyone, but revolution is imperative for some. For many of the oppressed, and I am highlighting autistic folks in particular, the decay of capitalism without a true revolution is equivalent to a death sentence. A friend of a friend of mine wrote the post quoted below:

“A reminder in Autism Awareness month that Antifascism is not and cannot even be conceived as an elective struggle for those of us who need to be ‘cleansed from the stock’ to create a ‘genetically strong ethnostate.’ Fascists historically take the capitalist economy's relegation of disabled workers as a surplus population to its logical conclusion- they exterminate us. In Germany, this was done early- justification of offing the disabled is often a radicalizing young fascist's first gateway into considering the power of purifying violence against unwanted populations. Support autistic people. Confront fascism.”

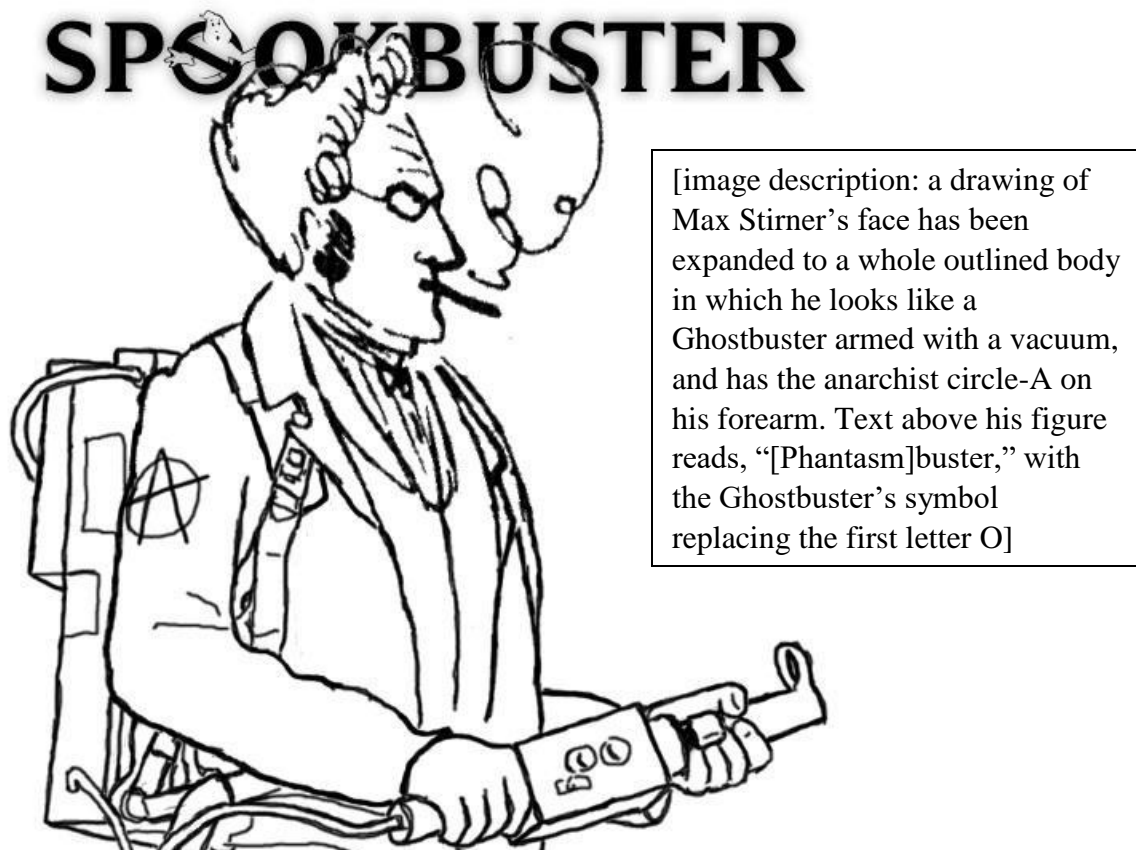


[image description: a T-Rex fires a machine gun. In an array of creative WordArt fonts is written, “People with autism re cool & great, and fascists deserve embarrassing deaths.”]

Autistic people are at the frontline of anti-fascism in that our very survival is a defiance of their agenda. In the famous words of Camus, “The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion.” Autistic freedom, a dismantlement of the neurosupremacist hierarchy, allows us to begin to conceive of this rebellion transforming into revolution.

Autistics face cultural hegemony in many forms. As the human rights experts presenting to the United Nations remarked, discrimination against autistics is the rule rather than the exception. This cultural hegemony stems from phantasms. Phantasmic social norms, phantasmic unwritten rules of social interaction that place value on neurotypical standards of behavior are a prerequisite for neurotypical cultural hegemony. These phantasms say to the autistic: “suppress who you are, become someone else!” Friedrich Nietzsche countered such phantasms with the Latin phrase *amor fati*. This translates to ‘love of fate.’ To autistics, *amor fati* entails that you

accept that you are autistic rather than deny that and attempt to function as a neurotypical. Nietzsche, a phantasmbuster, wrote, “Become who you are!” This is the core of the anarchist philosophy: to be free from the phantoms that prevent us from being who we are. When we reveal the harmful phantasms for what they are, we open the path to become who are, and in so doing, we become better in tune with the infinite. In order to become who I am, to affirm life in the autistic individual, I oppose the state, the epitome of hierarchy. I am opposed to any state in part because, as a neurominority, it is always going to be a bastion of cultural hegemony against me.



In sociology, the study of social behavior, anarchism is idealist. I do not shy away from this label, as it has been used to call one detached from reality (the term's use in philosophy), but embrace the label. It is through an idealist approach that we address the phantasms, through which we address the autistic spectrum that is haunting today's phantasms. Giving a means of change to idealists in addressing phantasms is Nietzsche's transvaluation of values. The philosopher Albert Camus explained, “Nietzsche's message is summed up in the word *creation*, with the ambiguous meaning it has assumed. Nietzsche's sole admiration was for the egotism and severity proper to all creators. The trans[valuation] of values consists only in replacing critical values by creative values.” Nietzsche's goal is the same as Freire's. In place of social morals and ideas, phantasms, that are antithetical life, idealists act with agency to change the minds of the individuals and thus change society, the phantasm of which, according to Max Stirner, individuals are the reality. Through a transvaluation of values, the idealists can defeat the phantasm of the gender binary, the phantasm of neurosupremacy, the phantasm of white supremacy, and the phantasm of hierarchy. Through a transvaluation of values, we can affirm the

phantasms that affirm life in the individual, such as the phantasm of gender. The goal of anarchism, the goal of the idealists, and explicitly the goal of Nietzsche, is superhumanity. As Camus connected Nietzsche's philosophy with anarchist politics, "he failed to perceive that the doctrines of socialist emancipation must, by an inevitable logic of nihilism, lead to what he himself had dreamed of: superhumanity." The übermensch, the individual of superhumanity, is the achievement of an anarchist communist world.



[image description: a comic book style image of Nietzsche opening his button-up shirt to reveal a logo similar to the superhero Superman's, with the S replaced by a U. The character Superman comes from Nietzsche's concept]

Anarchism aims to liberate people from the materials and phantoms that oppress them. And as a last-ditch effort to argue against anarchism, its opponents invoke the claim that human nature is incompatible with communism. They say that we are not good enough for communism, that hierarchy is natural, that centuries of domination have rendered people too submissive and self-centered. We are, after all, the idealists. Peter Kropotkin flipped this concern on its head and asked,

"Men are not good enough for Communism, but are they good enough for Capitalism? If all men were good-hearted, kind, and just, they would never exploit one another, although possessing the means of doing so. With such men the private ownership of capital would be no danger. The capitalist would hasten to share his profits with the workers, and the best remunerated workers with those suffering from occasional causes. If men were provident they would not produce velvet and articles of luxury while food is wanted in cottages: they would not build palaces as long as there are slums..."

...If men had a deeply developed feeling of equity they would not oppress other men. Politicians would not cheat their electors; Parliament would not be a chattering and cheating box, and Charles Warren's policemen would refuse to bludgeon the Trafalgar Square talkers and listeners. And if men were gallant, self-respecting, and less egotistic, even a bad capitalist would not be a danger; the workers would have soon reduced him to the role of a simple comrade-manager. Even a king would not be dangerous, because the people would merely consider him as a fellow unable to do better work, and therefore entrusted with signing some [silly] papers sent out to the other cranks calling themselves kings."

Human nature is an argument against capitalism. People, especially men, today are too evil for capitalism. I believe Bakunin was correct when he said, “Real humanity presents a mixture of all that is most sublime and beautiful with all that is vilest and most monstrous in the world.” Humans are capable of both greatness and atrocity.

Human instinct is driven by both mutual aid and the will to power. To me, these are the balancing forces of human nature, forming the ego. These are the innate inspirations to assist and encourage the flourishing of our fellow humans and to strive for personal accomplishment and strength. With anarchist communism, these elements of the human spirit are not opposing forces, but instead are complementary. Our mutual aid shares the wealth of humanity with all, as safety and prosperity are guaranteed for all. With the freedom secured through communism, the will to power is unleashed to thrive in new, more beautiful ways. Rather than striving to rule others, we can all aspire to reach new heights in finer and kinder, creative values rather than wealth and class, to pursue achievement in fields that exist beyond good and evil. We are to be untitled, unmastered, but at the same time the owners of new titles, and masters of crafts. We are to become authorities over the phantasms of the future, a future in which autistics will live life to its fullest.

The punk band Against Me! has a song “Baby, I’m an Anarchist” in which the lead singer, transgender woman Jane Grace, expresses, “And to you solidarity's a four-letter word.” That four-letter word is love. While love is important, and we need love, reducing our care for others to love instead of solidarity is like reducing our autistic equality to awareness rather than acceptance. Support us in the ways we need to be supported, by being a good comrade, not just a sympathizer.

To be openly, unabashedly, and unapologetically autistic is an act of political defiance. Solidarity forever, comrades.

au·tism: a word

An article I wrote on 6/7/17

The word ‘autism’ is generally pronounced, au-tism, as indicated by the pronunciation guide Google offers when one searches “define autism.” But what if it we instead pronounced it as aut-ism?

Autistic people are said to “have autism.” This language at first appears to take a middle ground between identity-first language (autistic person) and person-first language (person with autism), but indeed contains all of the inherent flaws of person-first language. Person-first language implies that you can separate the autism from the person, which is false. Being an autistic is an integral piece of who I am. I think autistically, act autistically, feel autistically, sense autistically, and experience the world autistically. To say that I “have autism” continues to draw a line between me and my neurotype, between me and who I am.

In this person-first use of the word autism, autism becomes pathologized. It is looked at as a sort of disease, an unfortunate condition. And the way the word is usually pronounced reinforces this conception. Autism as standardly pronounced can be conceived of as just another error in the brain wiring. As a member of the autistic community, I very rarely actually use the word autism in my writings. When referring to autistic people, the word autistic or autist is always preferred. The word autism has felt obsolete in light of a greater scientific understanding of how being autistic actually works, but I am now beginning to believe that there is hope yet for this word, a new chance at life.

I recently wrote a book titled “Anarcho-Autism” in which I integrate anarcho-communism with autism acceptance. One person on reddit criticized the name on the grounds that autism is not an ideology, but with this post I suggest, what if it were? What if autism, instead of being au-tism, was aut-ism, an ism, the practice of aut? What if we conceived of autism as an ism, defined as “a distinctive practice, system, or philosophy, typically a political ideology or an artistic movement.”

Online Etymology Dictionary offers the following entry for the word autism:

1912, from German Autismus, coined 1912 by Swiss psychiatrist Paul Bleuler (1857-1939) from Greek autos “self” (see auto-) + -ismos suffix of action or of state. The notion is of “morbid self-absorption.”

From the beginning, the word autism was used to describe being anti-social. That is, autistic people did not conform to neurotypical standards of behavior, and this was considered a social offense. Autistic people were considered off in their own little worlds, and we were considered selfish. That is the origin of the term, a condemnation of divergence from the norm. And so the word quite literally means self-ism.

Perhaps it is time to resurrect the original condemnation of autistic people, to embrace our egoism as a means of wellbeing. In the concluding chapter of my book Anarcho-Autism, I

quote the philosopher Albert Camus, “The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion.” Autism, aut-ism, can be embracing that one is autistic. It can be a way of being. Autism can be the aspiration to be the most autistic possible, to be so autistic in such a revolutionary manner so as to be a rebellion in one’s self. And anarcho-autism can express being anarchistically autistic. To be autistic today in a world built for neurotypicals is to be an iconoclast by nature. Autism, particularly anarcho-autism, can be the expression for harnessing that innate rebellion. As I conclude in my book, “To be openly, unabashedly, and unapologetically autistic is an act of political defiance.”

I have known myself to be an autistic anarchist. Now I dare say that I am an anarcho-autist as well.

Glossary of Terms

- Neurology
 - allistic: non-autistic
 - aspergers syndrome: an outdated, inaccurate psychological classification for autistic people, associated with high intelligence and low social skills
 - autism spectrum disorder: the psychological diagnosis of autistic people
 - echolalia: repeating words, sounds, and phrases one has heard
 - neurodivergent: having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of “normal.”
 - neurodiversity: the diversity of human brains and minds – the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species.
 - neurodiversity movement: a social justice movement that seeks civil rights, equality, respect, and full societal inclusion for the neurodivergent.
 - neurodiversity paradigm: a specific perspective on neurodiversity
 - neurominority: a population of neurodivergents whose shared similar form of neurodivergence is largely innate
 - neurosupremacy: the dominance and favoritism of the neurotypical neurotype
 - neurotype: a brain type, often used for neurotypicality and for more innate forms of neurodivergence
 - neurotypical: often abbreviated as NT, having a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls within the dominant societal standards of “normal.”
 - scripting: the use of developed sounds, words, or phrases as a catalog for conversation
- People
 - anarchopac: Disabled, agender, pansexual anarchist, platformist, and Marxist YouTuber and blogger known for intra-left material
 - Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1872): Russian anarcho-collectivist, known for passionate feud with Karl Marx and arguments against the red bureaucracy
 - Murray Bookchin (1921-2006): American anarchist who wrote extensively about ecology, his idea of communalism inspired the democratic confederalism of Rojava
 - Janine Booth: Autistic activist, Marxist, author
 - Lydia X.Z. Brown: Non-binary Asian-American LGBTQIA+ Autistic disability rights activist, runs the blog Autistic Hoya
 - Albert Camus (1913-1960): French philosopher, founder of absurdism, anarcho-syndicalist
 - Noam Chomsky: Professor Emeritus of MIT, American foreign policy expert
 - Paulo Freire (1921-1997): Brazilian socialist educator, author of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, which challenges the traditional 'banking model' of education
 - Emma Goldman (1869-1940): Jewish Lithuanian-American immigrant anarcho-communist, major contributor to anarcha-feminism

- Cynthia Kim: Autistic activist, writer at Autism Women's Network
- Lorenzo Kombo'Ervin: black anarchist, former Black Panther Party member
- Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921): Born a Russian prince, became a scientist and the father of anarcho-communism
- The Left-Libertarian: Renowned libertarian socialist YouTuber
- Nestor Makhno (1888-1934): Russian anarcho-communist, military commander of the Black Army in the Free Territory of Ukraine during the Russian Civil War
- Errico Malatesta (1853-1932): Italian anarcho-communist, author of *Anarchy*
- Karl Marx (1818-1883): German communist, economist, sociologist, and political scientist
- Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900): German philosopher, known for superman, will to power, eternal recurrence, death of god, transvaluation of values, herd instinct, etc.
- Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865): Creator of anarcho-mutualism, first to identify as an anarchist
- Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958): German anarcho-syndicalist, author of *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice*
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): Classical liberal Enlightenment thinker, author of *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and the Social Contract*
- Amythest Schaber: Autistic activist, blogger, YouTuber, and public speaker
- Amy Sequenzia: Autistic activist, writer at Autism Women's Network
- Max Stirner (1806-1856): German philosopher and anarchist, egoist
- Nick Walker: Autistic, LGBTQIA+ and disability rights activist and author
- Isms
 - ableism: discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities
 - anarchism: a political philosophy that advocates self-governed societies based on voluntary institutions
 - capitalism: economic system characterized by private ownership of the means of production, a market economy, and wage labor
 - collectivism: a stateless economy in which workers would collectively own private property and money would be replaced with labor notes
 - communism: a socioeconomic order structured upon the common ownership of the means of production and the absence of social classes, money, and the state
 - democracy: a system of government in which the people exercise power directly
 - feminism: the equality of genders
 - idealism: In a sociological sense, idealism emphasizes how human ideas—especially beliefs and values—shape society
 - imperialism: the process by which one country dominates another directly, by political means, or indirectly, by economic means, in order to steal its wealth
 - Marxism: a method of socioeconomic analysis that analyzes class relations and societal conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and a dialectical view of social transformation.

- mutualism: a society where each person might possess a means of production, either individually or collectively, with trade representing equivalent amounts of labor in the market
- platformism: a tendency within anarchism that stresses the need for tightly organized anarchist organizations that are able to influence people's movements
- populism: A tactic to address civil unrest using populist leaders as an intermediary between the people and the rulers
- racism: systematic discrimination and prejudice towards people on the basis of race or ethnicity
- sexism: gender oppression, discrimination on the basis of gender
- social ecologism: a moral economy that moves beyond scarcity and hierarchy, toward a world that reharmonizes human communities with the natural world, while celebrating diversity, creativity and freedom
- socialism: collective ownership and management of the means of production
- syndicalism: revolutionary unionism aiming to create workers' control of the economy
- Theoretical concepts
 - autonomy: the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed, un-coerced decision
 - base: In Marxist theory, the forces and relations of production—employer—employee work conditions, the technical division of labour, and property relations—into which people enter to produce the necessities and amenities of life
 - black bloc: a group of protestors who wear black clothing and usually engage in violent measures such as street fighting, vandalism of private property, rioting, and demonstrating without a permit
 - dual power: forms of direct action that try to build organizations that will replace capitalism
 - hegemony: preponderant influence or authority over others
 - herd instinct: a concept in Nietzsche's philosophy, referring to how individuals in a group can act collectively without explicit centralized direction
 - intersectionality: a political theory that holds that the oppression of groups combine to create a full system of oppression in which one's oppressed identities cannot be separated
 - mutual aid: a term in organization theory used to signify a voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit
 - prefiguration: the idea that the institutions we seek to change the world with should reflect the world we want to see
 - solidarity: unity (as of a group or class) which produces or is based on unities of interests, objectives, standards, and sympathies
 - phantasm: a concept from the philosophy of Max Stirner, things which exist only in our minds
 - superstructure: In Marxist theory, society's culture, institutions, political power structures, roles, rituals, and state

- transvaluation of values: a concept in Nietzsche's philosophy, a change in moral values towards the exaltation of life rather than the exaltation of suffering
- will to power: a foundational concept of Nietzsche's philosophy, the driving force in humans for achievement, ambition, and the striving to reach the highest possible position in life
- Übermensch: a concept in Nietzsche's philosophy established as a goal for humanity to set for itself
- Gender terminology
 - cisnormativity: the assumption that all, or almost all, individuals are cisgender
 - gender binary: the classification of sex and gender into two distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine.
 - gender roles: a set of societal norms which dictate the types of behaviors which are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived sex or sexuality.
 - gendervague: Someone who is gendervague cannot separate their gender identity from their neurodivergence
 - non-binary: someone who doesn't identify with the common binary genders (male and female)

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