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Ontological Anarchy In A Nutshell

By Hakim Bey.

Since absolutely nothing can be predicated with any real certainty as to the “true nature of things”, all projects (as Nietzsche says) can only be “founded on nothing.” And yet *there must be a project* — if only because we ourselves resist being categorized as “nothing.” Out of nothing we will make something: the Uprising, the revolt against everything which proclaims: “The Nature of Things is such-&-such.” We disagree, we are unnatural, we are less than nothing in the eyes of the Law — Divine Law, Natural Law, or Social Law — take your pick. Out of nothing we will imagine our values, and by this act of invention we shall live.

As we meditate on the *nothing* we notice that although it cannot be defined, nevertheless paradoxically we *can* say something about it (even if only metaphorically): — it appears to be a “chaos.” Both as ancient myth and as “new science”, chaos lies at the heart of our project. The great serpent (Tiamat, Python, Leviathan), Hesiod’s primal Chaos, presides over the vast long dreaming of the Paleolithic — before all kings, priests, agents of Order, History, Hierarchy, Law. “Nothing” begins to take on a face — the smooth, featureless egg-or gourd-visage of Mr. Hun-Tun, chaos-as-becoming, chaos-as-excess, the generous outpouring of nothing into something.

In effect, chaos is life. All mess, all riot of color, all protoplasmic urgency, all *movement* — is chaos. From this point of view, Order appears as death, cessation, crystallization, alien silence.

Anarchists have been claiming for years that “anarchy is not chaos.” Even anarchism seems to want a *natural law*, an inner and innate morality in matter, an entelechy or purpose-of-being. (No better than Christians in this respect, or so Nietzsche believed — radical only in the depth of their resentment.) Anarchism says that “the state should be abolished” only to institute a new more radical form of order in its place. Ontological Anarchy however replies that no “state” can “exist” in chaos, that all ontological claims are spurious except the claim of chaos (which however is undetermined), and therefore that governance of any sort is impossible. “Chaos never died.” Any form of “order” which we have not imagined and produced directly and spontaneously in sheer “existential freedom” for our own celebratory purposes — is an illusion.

Of course, illusions can kill. Images of punishment haunt the sleep of Order. Ontological Anarchy proposes that we wake up, and create our own day — even in the shadow of the State, that pustulant giant who sleeps, and whose dreams of Order metastasize as spasms of spectacular violence.

The only force significant enough to facilitate our act of creation seems to be desire, or as Charles Fourier called it, “Passion.” Just as Chaos and Eros (along with Earth and Old Night) are Hesiod’s first deities, so too no human endeavor occurs outside their cosmogeneous circle of attraction.

The logic of Passion leads to the conclusion that all “states” are impossible, all “orders” illusory, except those of desire. No being, only becoming — hence the only viable government is that of love, or “attraction.” Civilization merely hides from itself — behind a thin static scrim of rationality — the truth that only desire creates values. And so the values of Civilization are based on the denial of desire.

Capitalism, which claims to produce Order by means of the reproduction of desire, in fact originates in the production of *scarcity*, and can only reproduce itself in unfulfillment, negation, and alienation. As the Spectacle disintegrates (like a malfunctioning VR program) it reveals the fleshless bones of the Commodity. Like those tranced travelers in Irish fairy tales who visit the Otherworld and seem to dine on supernatural delicacies, we wake in a bleary dawn with ashes in our mouths.

Individual vs. Group — Self vs. Other — a false dichotomy propagated through the Media of Control, and above all through language. Hermes — the Angel — the medium is the Messenger. All forms of communicativeness should be angelic — language itself should be angelic — a kind of divine chaos. Instead it is infected with a self-replicating virus, an infinite crystal of separation, the *grammar* which prevents us from killing Nobodaddy once and for all.

Self and Other complement and complete one another. There is no Absolute Category, no Ego, no Society — but only a chaotically complex web of relation — and the “Strange Attractor”, *attraction itself*, which evokes resonances and patterns in the flow of becoming.

Values arise from this turbulence, values which are based on abundance rather than scarcity, the gift rather than the commodity, and on the synergistic and mutual enhancement of individual and group; — values which are in every way the opposite of the morality and ethics of Civilization, because they have to do with life rather than death.

“Freedom is a psycho-kinetic skill” — not an abstract noun. A process, not a “state” — a movement, not a form of governance. The Land of the Dead knows that perfect Order from which the organic and animate shrink in horror — which explains why the Civilization of Slippage is more than half in love with easeful death. From Babylon and Egypt to

the 20th Century, the architecture of Power can never quite be distinguished from the tumuli of the necropolis.

Nomadism, and the Uprising, provide us with possible models for an “everyday life” of Ontological Anarchy. The crystalline perfections of Civilization and Revolution cease to interest us when we have experienced them both as forms of War, variations on that tired old Babylonian Con, the myth of Scarcity. Like the Bedouin we choose an architecture of skins — and an earth full of places of disappearance. Like the Commune, we choose a liquid space of celebration and risk rather than the icy waste of the Prism (or Prison) of Work, the economy of Lost Time, the rictus of nostalgia for a synthetic future.

A utopian poetics helps us to know our desires. The mirror of Utopia provides us with a kind of critical theory which no mere practical politics nor systematic philosophy can hope to evolve. But we have no time for theory which merely limits itself to the contemplation of utopia as “no-place place” while bewailing the “impossibility of desire.” The penetration of everyday life by the marvelous — the creation of “situations” — belongs to the “material bodily principle”, and to the imagination, and to the living fabric of the present.

The individual who realizes this immediacy can widen the circle of pleasure to some extent, simply by waking from the hypnosis of the “Spooks” (as Stirner called all abstractions); and yet more can be accomplished by “crime”; and still more by the doubling of the Self in sexuality. From Stirner’s “Union of Self-Owners” we proceed to Nietzsche’s circle of “Free Spirits” and thence to Fourier’s “Passional Series”, doubling and re-doubling ourselves even as the Other multiplies itself in the *eros* of the group.

The activity of such a group will come to replace Art as we poor PoMo bastards know it. Gratuitous creativity, or “play”, and the exchange of gifts, will cause the withering-away of Art as the reproduction of commodities. “Dada epistemology” will meltingly erase all separation, and give rebirth to a psychic paleolithism in which life and beauty can no longer be distinguished. Art in this sense has been camouflaged and repressed throughout the whole of High History, but has never entirely vanished from our lives. One favorite example: — the *quilting bee* — a spontaneous patterning carried out by a non-hierarchic creative collective to produce a unique and useful and beautiful object, typically as a gift for someone connected to the circle.

The task of Immediatist organization can be summed up as the widening of this circle. The greater the portion of my life that can be wrenched

from the Work/Consume/Die cycle, and (re)turned over to the economy of the “bee”, the greater my chance for pleasure. One runs a certain risk in thus thwarting the vampiric energies of institutions. But risk itself makes up part of the direct experience of pleasure, a fact noted in all insurrectionary moments — all moments of waking-up — of intense adventurous enjoyments: — the festal aspect of the Uprising, the insurrectionary nature of the Festival.

But between the lonely awakening of the individual, and the synergetic anamnesis of the insurrectionary collectivity, there stretches out a whole spectrum of social forms with some potential for our “project”. Some last no longer than a chance meeting between two kindred spirits who might enlarge each other by their brief and mysterious encounter; others are like holidays, still other like pirate utopias. None seems to last very long — but so what? Religions and States boasts of their permanence — which, we know, is just jive... ; what they mean is death.

We do not require “Revolutionary” institutions. “After the Revolution” we would still continue to drift, to evade the instant sclerosis of a politics of revenge, and instead seek out the excessive, the *strange* — which for us has become the sole possible norm. If we join or support certain “revolutionary” movements now, we’d certainly be the first to “betray” them if they “came to power”. Power, after all, is for us — not some fucking vanguard party. In *The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (Autonomedia, NY, 1991) there was a discussion of “the will to power as disappearance”, emphasizing the evasive nature and ambiguity of the moment of “freedom”. In the present series of texts [Immediatism, 1994, AK Press, originally presented as Radio Sermonettes on an FM station in New York, and published under that title by the anarchist Libertarian Book Club], the focus shifts to the idea of a praxis of *re-appearance*, and thus to the problem of organization. An attempt at a theory of the aesthetics of the group — rather than a sociology or politique — has been expressed here as a game for free spirits, rather than as a blueprint for an institution. The group as medium, or as mechanism of alienation, has been replaced here by the Immediatist group, devoted to the overcoming of separation. This book might be called a thought-experiment on *festal sodality* — it has no higher ambitions. Above all, it does not pretend to know “what must be done” — the delusion of would-be commissars and gurus. It wants no disciples — it would prefer to be burned — immolation not emulation! In fact it has almost no interest in “dialogue” at all, and would prefer rather to attract co-conspirators than readers. It loves to talk, but only because talk is a kind of celebration rather than a kind of work.

And only intoxication stands between this book — and silence.

Pirated from the anti-copyrighted book *Immediatism* (1994) by Hakim Bey. AK Press, Edinburgh and San Francisco.