

Dreams, Transcendence ... Communism?

Motivation: Neuroses

Red Hughs on Libcom:

...The enjoyment of life, from the cooking of excellent meals to swimming at the beach to hanging with friends to sing-alongs, tends to involve participation rather than consumption... The point is that human activity would focus on mutual enjoyment rather than attempting to create a "better version" of the present world... (<http://libcom.org/forums/theory/capitalist-dad-vs-libcom-son-round-2-23022010#comment-367287>)

CantdoCartwheels:

So you want more and better karaoke machines, lots of readily available recipe e-books and cookery programmes on tv and better transport links so people can get to the beach quickly. (<http://libcom.org/forums/theory/capitalist-dad-vs-libcom-son-round-2-23022010#comment-367625>)

Red Hughs later:

Would your idea of paradise be more more iphones or sex on the beach? (not the drink). Or ... would you rather work 40 hour/week in a karaoke machine factory and do karaoke on the weekends or would you like to spend some time and learn how to sing? (and no, I don't know how to *sing* but I ought to...)

Imagine, you have a shift in a big collective kitchen. Everyone's there because they *like* to cook. If you're just starting out or even if you have some experience, someone else is happy to show you new techniques. Or if

everything's working, there is time to chat as you go. There's plenty of time since there are lots of cooks - since a lot of people like to cook, since it's pleasant. This "unproductive" in the sense that you could have a big factory spitting out hi-tech microwave gruel and save people time so they could make more karaoke machines. But as a total social relation, this is preferable.

Not all experience has to be pure unmediated joy or conveniently pleasant to do. But a large portion of activity could be a combination of those two. Factory and automation methods certainly would be preserved and they could be mobilized on the "minimize unpleasant toil" principle. (<http://libcom.org/forums/theory/capitalist-dad-vs-libcom-son-round-2-23022010?page=1#comment-367684>)

This exchange is a small but hopefully revealing part of the debate concerning whether a post-capitalist society would still require control mechanisms such as labor-time-vouchers to impel people to maintain or increase production. It has raged around the libcom.org discussion forums for some time. Red Hughs is myself. Continuing;

Mikus:

The fact of the matter is that while productivity has greatly increased since the 19th century, so have human needs, and so what we consider an acceptable standard of living has gone up dramatically. It's not at all clear that productivity is at such a level that we could just give everyone as much as they wanted and not tie consumption to production."

(<http://libcom.org/forums/theory/dread-ed-labour-notes-02042009?page=1#comment-325109>).

It is part of received wisdom of nearly every traditional culture that the road to happiness is finding inherent joy in some constructive activity, rather than becoming fixated on future goals and rewards: The fixation on gaining and losing things outside ourselves is one thing that keeps us stuck where we are.

Of course, through the course of the last 10,000 years of civilization, the purveyor of such insights have often used them to maintain their position in the social hierarchy rather than to create a human community expressing these possibilities.

Still, if a communist is not to be merely a democratic reorganization of the present misery, communism must find ways to transform both production and needs in a way that escape the endless ladder of today's commodity relations. What is interesting here in the discussion is not simply what kind of production a communist society would have but what seems like a kind of willful blindness to this idea, the idea that people could go from meeting their needs with external commodities to meeting their needs within their collective processes. In translating the *Tibetan Book Of The Book*, Chögyam Trungpa used the psychological term neurosis to describe the overall condition of being caught in the self-reinforcing world of one's own representations. Neurotic behavior is thus tied to representation.

THE HEYDAY of music publishing in Minnesota, the period from 1900 to 1929, saw almost 500 known individual pieces come out for the piano-playing and singing public. More or less in line with what was happening in the rest of the country, the real peak occurred from 1910 to

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1919. By the mid-1930s the decline in sheet music sales was becoming swift and inevitable, hastened by the increased popularity of the radio and the phonograph. As early as 1915 the Emporium Mercantile Company of St. Paul had added a "new phonograph department," and it was not long before the "crank box" and canned music replaced the piano as a household necessity and Americans

became listeners. In their turn the phonograph and radio became status symbols of the parlor. (<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/44/v44i04p122-141.pdf>)

The phonograph transformed and reduced the previous collective musical culture.

But the process was not a straightward progression from the unmediated to the mediated. The same increasing means of production that produced the phonograph also produced instruments and sheet music, gave all classes more time to focus on music and allowed more musicians to make a living at music.

What is uniquely human in many ways is what brings a profound disquiet to our existence. Our ability to manipulate symbols and form language is what has expanded the human ability to lose balance between a symbolic relationship with the world and a direct experience of the world. It allows us to become unbalanced in the process of substituting the sign for the reality.

Writing about the collapse of the worker's movement in Germany,

Wilhelm Reich asked what the force which allowed humans to defend the society which repressed them and acted their interests. Reich's answer was the socially dominant forces of sexual repression. Towards the end of the upsurge of the 1960, the pamphlet "Reich, How To Use" by Jean J. Voyer appeared. Among other formulations, it said:

In all societies in which modern conditions of production prevail the impossibility of living takes individually the form of death, madness or character. With the intrepid Dr. Reich, and against his horrified recuperators and vilifiers, we postulate the pathological nature of all

character traits, i.e. of all chronicity in human behavior.

(<http://www.bopsecrets.org/PS/reich.htm>)

Here, I believe "Chronicity" means concern with the future and the past. Like the Buddhists, Voyer thus advocated a purified immediacy. This position itself seems fixated and narrow. It is not "Chronicity" as such that is the enemy. Rather, neurosis appears when a particular rule system appears takes a fixated form beyond the immediate environment which gave rise to it.

In questioning the Reichian position, we need to look at the historical process which has summoned both neuroses and our ideas about them into existence. The danger of swallowing Reich or any particular psychological approach *whole*

comes from the problematic quality of anything that might describe itself as a science of psychology, especially one coming out of the 19th century. The history of 19th century science beyond physics is the history of science as often primarily a source of authority with only slightest hint of self-questioning:

First, the fact that from the fifteenth century on, it was the rare doctor who acknowledged ignorance about the cause and treatment of the disease. The sickness could be fitted to so many theories of disease - imbalance in vital humors, bad air, acidification of the blood, bacterial infection - that despite the existence of an unambiguous cure, there was always a raft of alternative, ineffective treatments. At no point did physicians express doubt about their theories, however ineffective. (http://idlewords.com/2010/03/scott_and_scurvy.htm)

The concept of enlightenment is slippery enough that the Feudal system of Tibetan was quite able to use it as a justification for the brutal domination of monasteries and lay lords over the mass of peasants. Indeed, whether it is religious leader, scientist or revolutionary, the wielder of opaque specialized knowledge should be avoided.

The entirety of the article on scurvy is worth a read as an example of the limitations of the initial understanding that science had of scurvy. Without an understanding of the nature of scurvy as a deficiency of a substance, the initial discovery that lemon juice could prevent scurvy was eventually lost and was only rediscovered along with the actual cause.

Hopefully, the survey gives the reader an idea why an understanding of neuroses and the various means of escaping them are both important for radicals and a difficult and deceptive riddle.

My aim, then, is to survey the various methods, aiming to explore the particular



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worthwhile *structural elements*. This is an exploration rather than a pronouncement. It provides a variety of structures we revolutionaries can use if we keep in mind the tenuousness of our knowledge. The method of numbered theses is often used to connect otherwise disconnected thoughts. In this case, I am using it because the lines of thought go in a variety of different directions, so that, like the Seven Bridges of Königsberg, in order to visit all the crucial questions, some of questions must be revisited ...

I. Dreams... Our Dark Continent

A Star Trek: the Next Generation episode describes a dream world where those who have been assimilated by the totalitarian Borg can again experience their individuality. This fantasy describes something we all feel; the relief from relentless routine that comes from dreams and fantasies of a different life. In the episode, those in the dream world have no memory of the dream world once they awoke and began their routine, just as we often struggle to remember our dreams of a different life when we are enmeshed in routine.

Today, we live in a world that is utterly insane but which continuously thwarts our ability to articulate this insanity. It suppresses our memory of any alternatives; it suppresses any language to express an alternative; it speeds life to the point where we don't have time to understand the situation; it separates people to the point where they don't trust anyone to believe, or be sympathetic to, their plight.

Our repression comes as a result of the degradation of the totality. Any foundation that would be used to express an alternative is undermined by the commodification of dissent, by the constantly increasing pace of life, by the atomization of human relations and the destruction of rational thought. But by the same mechanism, formless resistance appears in places and will expand at the rate this society goes to crisis. The "Borg" today is not some external

invasion but rather a symmetry of spurious choices which permeates life. Dreams and the remembering of dreams today together feel like a crucial part of possible resistance. The remembrance of dreams is itself a practice of Tibetan Buddhism as well as a variety of Shamanic traditions throughout the world. And this awareness has come as modified versions of these practices have been spread throughout the developed world by New Age Entrepreneurs. The New Age Movement involved the



revival of a whole spectrum of alternative spiritual, psychological, body work and energy work disciplines – everything from hypnosis to Buddhism to yoga to qigong and beyond. Coming out of the explosions of social possibilities in the 1960s and salvaging a wide variety of methods from the past, this "movement" was crystallized by a wide variety of New Age entrepreneurs who have inevitably narrowed these experiences into a specialization on the edge of life. The rising period of capitalist society was characterized by ideologies of science. The present declining period of capitalist society is characterized by ideologies of religion. The rise of religion as an apparent replacement for politics or science can be traced to a capitalist society whose inhabitants no longer

expect progress. Seeking a higher purpose – in religious terms, "Spirituality" – remains a constant need within human society. And, as capitalist society tends towards a more hopeless and incomprehensible form and the mystique of science and progress are debunked, the mystique of a religious, personal vision gains authenticity. The same critique applies just as much to idealist philosophy. Religion contains a tone of despair and submission to the mystical, where philosophy contains an optimism for Reason's power. But with the universal degradation of thought, "reason" itself becomes just a reflexive faith in a kind of neurotic fixation. Science was not always "just another religion" but it now seems like that to a good portion of humanity. The advance of the overall means of production increases the *potential* exactness with which we can describe previous history. The degeneration of social relations under later capitalism decreases the actual or average level of this same understanding. This one instance of the contradictions between real and potential human possibilities under capitalism has profound implications for revolutionary strategy. Despite being presented as a historical moment, the recent failed climate summit in Copenhagen bears mention only at the level of being exactly what one would expect. The apparently opposing forces only squared off on the level of one scientific/bureaucratic/economic proclamation versus another. Every option offered not only promised to continue capitalist society but also to maintain 90% of the various forms of pollution that it produces. But just as much, each side offered a competing simplification of the present totality. I don't claim expertise to evaluate them, yet the faith the ideologically charged have in these predictions seem dubious. Moreover, whatever the validity of this particular effect of pollution, we know, overall, that human chemical pollution is creating massive catastrophes. The fight

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of the liberals is merely to create a variety of controls of certain ineffectiveness against only one kind of pollution while fighting ideological opponents around obscure points that we can't even be certain if this will matter. Here we have the challenge for present day radicals: The rise of capitalism has created many areas which science can predict and control very exactly. At the same time, it also has created complex configurations of objects whose behavior is more complex and unpredictable than ever before. how can one escape this wall of manipulative fog?

Historical insights come through placing existing processes within larger frameworks. Classical mechanics is now seen as a special case of quantum mechanics. Material production can be seen as a kind of information processing. And, a given viewpoint sometimes strains to escape from the dominant framework. Isaac Newton used classical geometry rather than calculus to formulate his theory of gravity in his *Principia*. This showed the correspondence of this formulation to classical concepts but hid from the world a new tool for directly understanding instantaneous motion.

To escape the dominant pseudo-issues of today, the communist perspective situates activity in collective processes. The spectacle, the present totalitarian monologue of the system concerning its fate, disembodied the perspective of the erstwhile spectator, filling his head with a perspective which is unable to return him to the position of seeing his physical and social existence.

The avant guard of the Situationists was

at least in the realm of the artistic. Today, we might wildly speculate that the avant guard of discontent is as much in the realm of the cybernetic world. In any case, we are communist anti-engineers here. We can trace a strange path, from psychology to revolutionary theory and sales training which has the virtue of stripping off morality and leaving you with analysis. We can roughly describe the modern neurotic conscious in terms of language structure. We'd suggest that this progression has involved both an expansion and degeneration. The advantage of all these cybernetic approaches over earlier approaches to the unconscious is that they offer a clean, model-based system for letting go of judgments. Their weakness is that they appear after the purpose for describing the relation between the conscious and unconscious has vanished from science's considerations. We say, of course, that this purpose cannot be what Freud imagined, the maintenance of civilization. Rather, this purpose needs to be the creation of a coherent human community; communism.

How does speculation on this level even help us move towards a communist world? In some ways, it just ends up talking about what isn't possible, but at other levels it provides ways to step aside and catalyze the possibilities offered by internal processes.

II. Unconscious

Freud described the similarity of the neurotic individual's rituals to the rituals of civilized religion. A neurotic harnesses ritual to calm the clash of violently conflicting internal rules in the same fashion as religion placates the contradictory demands of the deities. Ritual may serve to an extent to mitigate an

imbalance in rules previously laid down in a violent fashion, rules which the ritualist cannot bring directly into harmony. In many ways, today's society

of non-communication is formed out of the neurotic rituals of those who are unable to form direct bonds with each other.

Freud was not the first psychologist to speak of the unconscious. Indeed, in many ways, he was the last broadly recognized psychologist to aim for a psychology of the whole person. What he accomplished was to spread the awareness that the conscious mind occupies a paradoxical position in human existence.

The Oedipal Myth and related narratives provided the awareness that civilization suppressed passions because those passions presented dangers needing management and suppression. The moment of Freud's "discovery" shaded into the extensions of Reich, of the Surrealists and the Situationists – as well as of Mussolini and the fascists. Freud's theories themselves are both debatable and the tip of the unconscious iceberg. Buddhism was created as a system to not just placate the conflicting demands of a rule-based system, but to dissolve them entirely. Thus the wider-range of known mind-body techniques, from meditation to hypnosis to self-analysis and bodywork, offer radicals (and non-radicals) the possibility of going beyond neurotic compensation. Still, what's interesting is how, regardless of their degree of understanding, these many methods relate to the unconscious.

III. Language And Feedback

1) Feedback loops are the key components of post-World War II systems theory. Norbert Wiener described the generic feedback loop in his book *Cybernetics*. The feedback loop model unifies a wide variety of phenomena in natural and human activity. The smallest animals or bacteria use feedback loops and much of the behavior of even the most complex animals can be defined through such loops. A female leopard chasing a gazelle is in the moment of the chase because



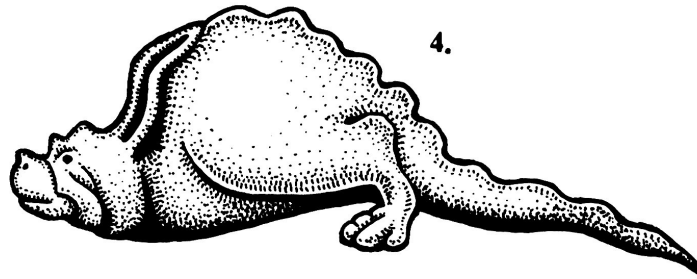
she alters her movements exactly as the Gazelle alters his. Indeed, much animal behavior which human beings are unable to duplicate still is rather clearly the result of highly complex feedback systems.

2) When feedback loops combine, they form integrated systems. The feedback based quality of many human and animal behaviors can be seen in the way in which they fail. A person with Parkinson's disease moves in a way that is characteristic of a feedback system overcompensating for movement. An old "ball dog", who has been conditioned to retrieve a ball, will often "short circuit" their loop by grabbing and "retrieving" the ball it offers you before you can even pick it up.

3) Coming before the digital computer, the cybernetic formulation provided a picture of intentional activity not specific to the processing of symbolic information. The feedback loop has a simple formulation: TOTE: Test Operate, Test Exit. Move toward the goal, testing if one is close enough. If you get close enough, stop.

4) Capitalism is an abstract system and a historical system. The relationship of wage labor allows a particular system of surplus extraction to be reproduced in the San Francisco, São Paulo and Tokyo. With this abstraction of everything, human self-consciousness along with all science has moved towards an abstract "structural" formulation that strips off the historical basis of understanding while allowing these abstract formulations to be applied over a wider area (this general tendency towards structural theory should not to be confused with the specific intellectual current of structuralism). This process of abstraction has built a world-wide machine that both manipulates human action and anticipates it. The

communist counter-strategy here is not to deny this direction toward structural analysis but rather to see the structural within the historical context and to place previous historical theories within a structural context. With this conception, we would trace the thread of a radical psychology and radical cybernetics



from Joseph Gabel to the Situationists and from Alfred Korzybsky, Noam Chomsky and Norbert Winer to Richard Bandler and Neuro-linguistic programming. 5) The biological *Signaling Theory* of John Maynard Smith gives a systems-based explanation for the origins of language. In this explanation, while an utterance may be honest as a signal, it need not have any logical truth or coherence. Rather, the honest signal is a precursor to language. Long after the death of those larger positions that benefit from these insights, the evolution of modern social signaling theory and evolutionary game theory have provided a basis for understanding unconscious processes in a manner that does not assume a fixed meaning to particular representations. Revolutionary theory requires an attitude. It can articulate the categories and ontologies of capitalism and communism and refuse to consider how one becomes the other. Or it can assume a process

which underlies both capitalist society and which will underlie communist society. I would argue that the latter approach is similar to both modern system theory as well as the original dialectics of Marx. The concept of the replicator encompasses any conserved information interacting strategically.

The simple process is that in given interactions, there is incentive for honest signaling and similarly other situations engender dishonest

efforts – though they are not so much dishonest as detached from their logical sense. And indeed, the simple model of modern expression shows that all those representations that detach from their particular logical sense go on to attach to a single central power – the spectacle. The flexibility of language involves at the least the ability to create new behaviors and, specifically, new feedback loops. The first verified examples of human language are from ten thousand years ago; we have no definite record of human language production before civilization. It is possible that, as Julian Jaynes hypothesized, language began with civilization. It is possible that pre-civilized human communication had the ungrammatical form of the modern Piraha. It is possible the language existed for quite a while before human civilization but simply was never recorded and somehow had its disruptive tendencies mitigated by the primitive community. Regardless, language, as it has evolved in human civilization, is as

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much part of an accumulated surplus as architecture or mathematics.

IV. Language In General

Language allows human beings to quickly change the feedback loops which govern their behavior. When individual changes in behavior can be transmitted more quickly than through genes or imitation, human society becomes self-modifying and capable of social thought and memory. Human beings distinguish themselves from animals at the point when they create their means of production. But they distinguished themselves as humans through language, the means of production par excellence. Symbolic expression with temporal and recursive binding – modern language – is a prerequisite and product of “civilization”.

It reflects human beings’ creation of their means of production and is one part of these means of production.

Language did not appear suddenly with all its modern capacities for self-reflection and “individual choice”.

Archaic language appeared in what we now describe as religious expression.

Julian Jaynes postulates the archaic brain as divided into an order-giving right and an order-taking left. Much ancient literature seems to involve unexamined forces making unarguable demands on unreflective humans. The increasing flexibility of human means of production have characterized the evolving human relation to language.

We could say that the first stage of civilization involved the creation of a simple agricultural economy controlled by a simple command system. Language allowed for large-scale organization and slow modification of behavior. But

during this time, human language use was generally not self-reflective. This corresponds to both the schizophrenic state and the “bicameral mind” described by Julian Jaynes.

1) The development of agricultural civilization allowed the social accumulation of language ability.

This may have involved “The breakdown of the bicameral mind” or may have involved other processes which allow language to become more self-reflective.

a. Yet it was only in the twentieth century that Noam Chomsky characterized human language as a grammatical system which allows the ordered parsing and manipulation of an infinity of signs. Human beings are unique among animals in their ability to use language to control, direct and change their behavior, even if they not unique in

using symbolic expression.

b. All civilizations have involved efforts to control and codify language. This discipline implies a strict grammar which requires that, among its complex rules, fixed nouns perform fixed verb actions which are described by a set series of adjectives. Such grammatical discipline fights a constant struggle against the use of language as a spontaneous and immediate extension of feedback loop activity. The alleged properties of the language of the Piraha represents the far counter-pole to such linguistic discipline – though we are currently ignorant of whether such functional sound poetry represents original language or a reaction to the language of civilization.

c. To say “rational human being” is to express in language that a

person uses “reason” – language – correctly. This requires language to describe itself. Such self-description requires grammatical constructs for self-description.

Thus such a concept and such constructs came at the time of the ancient Greeks - the dawn of the era of language describing itself.

We can see the last two thousand years of extreme upheaval as the process of language becoming self-reflective as production relations become more self-modifying. This answers numerous riddles posed by linguists and philosophers. I am combining language and logic in my discussion. If we define logic as a set of rules for what makes a statement convincing, we can assume that any language has a logic and that “logic” is a part of language.

Among other properties, the era of capitalist society is the era of production becoming self-altering. The means of production must be constantly revolutionized rather than being fixed by the conditions of social relations. In describing that rationality had no other purpose than to understand the whole of its processes, Marx also described how reason rested on the entire production system.

2) “The discovery of the unconscious” in 1920 has become its undiscovery in 2009. We can trace the declining lines of science in a movement towards more compartmentalized approaches with the simultaneous rising lines of the power of science's analytic tools. Together, they first appeared as a distinct phenomenon and then eventually became only a curiosity. If we boil down Noam Chomsky's linguistics to a recursive, rule-based manipulation of symbols, the conscious mind might be seen as the



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part of the brain which maintains a plausible narrative of rule-based behavior. Thus neurotics have lost the balance between their internal narrative and the direct, sensuous experience of the world.

The contradictions of modern ideology are also well reflected in the simplistic tactics suited for Internet forums. The law of the excluded middle – either X is true or X is false – is patently inapplicable for the complex swirl of multiple causation around “issues” like “Climate Change”, “Health Care Reform” and “Financial Crisis”. This produces many statements which contain germs of both truth and falsehood.



V. Religion

We see various revolutionary writers, – notably Giles Dauve and Ken Knabb, put forward critiques of religion of one form or another. But these critiques seem ungrounded in the larger world of the conscious and the unconscious, the mystical and the neurotic, within which “the religious” lives.

Revolutionary materialists naturally see human beings as economic, social, psychological and biological beings. The present economic crisis is also an ecological, a biological and psychological crisis.

The present crisis situation brings to a head these various contradictions. Some have existed for hundreds of years and others for thousands of years. This crisis invites us to consider our fundamental conditions of existence as never before. At the same time, the present world produces a situation where many people simply do not consider their collective situation in any meaningful way.

In many ways, these critiques have not caught up to the critique of religion

which Tantra launched more than a thousand years ago, from within religion itself. Bagwan Shree Rajneesh, Osho, describes religion as preaching. For him, religion is the rule-giving side of “spirituality”.

In all specifically religious development, we can see tension between authoritarian control (often in a father figure) and nurturing community combined with a fluid organization of spirit (sometimes in the form of a mother figure). Different religions, of course, differ in the degree to which the authoritarian father has predominated over the nurturing mother.

Some forms, especially the patriarchal Abrahamic religions, have been a direct negation of an earlier holistic vision. The need to vanquish “demons” is the need to directly crush earlier forms of existence.

Hinduism involved a truce between these differing tendencies. Islam and Christianity demanded absolute domination by the father, but, in the form of Catholicism and Sufism at

least, there was some fall-back into a more peaceful coexistence of the two principles. Other forms, such as Tibetan Buddhism or Taoism, have involved an evolution of earlier holistic visions but still with ultimate justification of class society.

The question of God and the gods itself is virtually irrelevant to the deeper questions of religion. One God may be closer to no God in the sense of simply seeing all life being sacred. Many gods may be closer to no-God in the sense of avoiding a moralism that kills God to maintain His moral edicts with greater neurotic fervor.

It is plausible that, in a Nietzschean fashion, civilized societies cultivate on some level the neurotic compulsion towards rules that permitted those on the bottom to be manipulated while keeping some magical and Shamanic techniques preserved for those on the top. It is notable that numerous Eastern civilizations, having a compact between

pre-civilized and civilized religions, also further cultivated techniques of enlightenment. As an achievement, enlightenment is as useful to a civilized ruler as it is to a pre-civilized hunter.

Everywhere, indeed, large vistas beyond what Capital integrates are visible if not tangible. Aside from Jaynes, Alfred Korzybsky, Wilhelm Reich, FM Alexander, Fredrick Nietzsche, Benoit Mandelbrot, and others bear looking into. Alan Cohen's *The Decadence Of The Shaman* is a serious study but like the present investigation, it may best serve to demonstrate some small piece of what's possible. However, such demonstrations can be extremely useful – the power of the imagination is a crucial factor.

Today, evolutionary game theory and signaling theory offer a plausible argument that animal signaling was the precursor to fully evolved human language. The thing to remember is that a simple signal is both a fetish and an honest expression. The lion's bellow of strength and Thomson's Gazelle's leap of vitality express their condition by being in their condition. We can deduce how the evolution of this direct expression into the ability to logically represent another thing has been a good portion of what Nietzsche intuited as the tortuous process of creating a human being.

Even more, while this rationality did not for a moment fail to serve capitalist interests, the progressive aspect of capitalist society has been specifically to generate a rational view of the conditions of human society. Oppositely, the Spectacle is the return of communication to the signal. It is words and images which attach to the roar of power, which in turn represents only itself.

While we can, in subjective terms, point to the idiotic and soul-destroying quality of the present era, we cannot objectively say that the present era has ceased to advance learning. Now, in the complex terrible progress made by our present society, there are multiple processes of rising and falling levels of understanding. In 1948, Wilhelm Reich was arguably the last psychologist to confront the total problem of human existence in capitalist society, despite psychology crafting a vast series of particular tools afterwards.

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The new age movement really does bring all the spiritual discoveries of past ages to the loving arms of all those professionals willing to charge modestly high fees – they lack only the ability to advance beyond any of the defeats whose moments they purchase. While economics as a specialized field originated as a defense against the subversive implications of political economy, it can still achieve particular interesting analyses (such as those of Hyman Minsky).

With all this, our travels through the present panorama of alienation need to become an adventure rather than a chore. As a tool, revolutionary theory must aim for a lucid awareness of the elemental struggle beneath capitalist society.

If I'm mixing wild-ass, exciting theories along with fairly definite positions, one reason is to simply avoid being swallowed by the relentlessly dull surface of daily life which we face.

VI. New Age

1. The New Age Industry is a remnant of those cultural innovations, concentrated in the 1960s, which sought freedom from Western Culture's specific strictures. The need to maintain a sustainable position within capitalist society by leading these tendencies to be more purely recuperative – it is a more fluid side of religion.

Like any capitalist project, the New Age Movement has made many improvements on the level of methodology (often neglecting the social essence that originally gave rise to these approaches).

Communists will wish to use this point rather than merely take it as a moral condemnation. The challenge for any cultural vanguard is to remain on the other side of the frontier of the tolerable as capitalism advances this frontier. We must play, imagine, dream and surrender in a more full fashion than capital is able to integrate. Thus, after discarding the

more mystified and authority-oriented aspects, the techniques unearthed by the New Age practitioners might offer would-be communists an interesting toolbox for dealing with the insanity of current culture.

Neurotic compulsions are the universal glue of capital today. Capitalist social relations came at the point of fusion of the previous civilized strands in Europe and the Mideast. The framework of wage labor allowed all previous neuroses and counter-techniques to compete in the framework of commodity relations.

2. Karma, the accumulation of cause and effect, can be reasonably compared to the accumulation of surplus labor. Just as the desires of the ego are always disappointed, the results of human activities always escape the intentions of the actors. Modern capitalism is both obsessed with death and obsessed with ignoring it. The capitalist system of value is nothing more than the projection of intentions beyond the present moment – it is the effort to take your life with you into death.

3. Techniques of enlightenment could crudely be described as the project of escaping habits, compulsions, routines and received ideas — essentially attachment to past and future. The rise of spectacular capitalism marked the point where the project of communism and the project of enlightenment become intertwined — each requires a bit of the other and it is thus that the supercession of this era is the means where by they can each be authentically realized. The attack by Reich (and some Situationists) on character armor can be seen as one natural aspect of this process. Like other techniques, it is not unambiguously rebellious unless it achieves

autonomy from capitalist processes and the rebellion is not revolutionary unless it acts systematically against capital.

The spectacle is routine, daily resignation, in an era where it has become capitalized. The struggle against fixed ideas can no longer accept the division between daily life and the social totality. Karma and value form a unified phalanx. The evolution of capitalism itself has demanded more and more flexibility in certain domains and from a certain subset of the technical and working classes.

From this, the techniques of enlightenment are clearly useful and capitalist society has imported yoga, Buddhism, qigong and other Eastern belief systems.

4. There are periods within capital's evolution where it forces the working class, kicking and screaming, into a greater level of flexibility than it was previously comfortable with. Here, resisting flexibility can be part of rebellion. There are other periods where the working class achieves more flexibility than capital can digest. Here, becoming more flexible can be a rebellious strategy.

VII. Techniques

There are a plethora of techniques of enlightenment. They roughly involve: going beyond the conscious mind's ability to encompass a phenomena; extreme concentration or extreme diffusion of consciousness; using the conscious mind's ability to self-describe to overwhelm it; stalking the dividing point between conscious (rule-based) and unconscious (feedback based) processes.

We might say that a certain proportion of these techniques most fully suit the need of civilized exploitation – guru meditation, self-abnegation, etc. Other techniques specifically resist exploitation. Osho provides a catalogue of many techniques in *The Book Of Secrets*.

1. Revolutionary theory works to connect

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the objective aspect of modern alienation and the subjective aspect of modern alienation. The objective aspects of modern alienation can be seen in wage labor and in the entire domination of capital and commodity relations over our lives. The subjective aspects can be seen in the domination of ideology and neurosis. In structure, this approach is identical to every position that demands that the user experience immediacy. The only uniqueness of revolutionary communist materialism is that it sees this shift happening out of the material conditions of society as a whole – the transition of means of production. Any materialist analysis of language (a la primitivism), of the use of the mind-body (a la FM Alexander) or of the human use of the environment has to come to the same conclusion – that we are approaching a final crisis. The unique point of communist theory is that this is happening on the scale of human society and so humans can create the solution (whereas other analyses are left merely with the understanding that a shift is crucial, but without the slightest idea how this will be accomplished).

2. But in many ways, the challenge is how to deal with an external imbalance between those who have moved further toward internal balance and those who have not moved as far in this direction.

The trickster anti-guru is a paradigm for both this bridge as well as a way this bridge can fail. The trickster anti-guru essentially serves as a catalyst, creating an unpredictable environment that allows the practitioner to become lucid in their habits. Zen Buddhism, Osho, and Carlos Castaneda exemplify this model. The actions of the anti-guru are calculated to force the practitioner to fall back on their resources and attain enlightenment without dependency on a guru.

The Situationist International also operated as a trickster anti-guru, forcing would-be followers to engage in their own searches rather than swallowing the ideas of the Situationists.

The trickster anti-guru always walks a knife's edge. Even when they successfully inspire a practitioner to act for themselves, they can allow the person to attach some residual belief in the anti-guru's ability to inspire further such

revelations, ultimately impelling the anti-guru to become a guru. The best anti-guru warns against this danger, despite the fact that most also fall at least partly into this trap. The Situationist International originally described the framework that it is necessary to take up here: being in a race with the forces of conditions, and attempting to use conditioning methods beyond what a conditioned society could tolerate. Yet towards the end of the SI's history, Debord admitted that many members failed to do more than passively admire the organization.

The ambiguous communist potential within New Age schemes can still be seen in their emphasis on being fluid. Capitalism requires that the working class become more fluid in their adapting to its conditions but the capitalist enterprise itself is never a fluid or flexible entity. Essentially, it involves rigid controls combined with clever inveigling.

3. The New Age paradigm of a person being in the flow, taking responsibility for their own health, their own life and existing ecstatically in the now, can be at best manifested in a few incidental persons. The relationship of teacher and student, shyster and consumer, is based not on the uniqueness of the person but the spectacular distance that permeates all capitalist relations.

The revolutionary group which cultivates methods of being in the flow risks the same problem of followership as the New Age guru. The only advantage a revolutionary group might have is the lack of any need for followership. Those groups which maintain a self-limiting quality may have the opportunity to make their existence a provocation.