The Algorithmic Anarchist A Reflective Sourcebook

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As a computer industry veteran and (at least) a philosophical anarchist, I am one of the many observers of the difficult relationship be high-tech and the left-tinged (to be fair, individualist anarchism is 'itself', it is, potentially, nothing-tinged) radicalism. So, without sitting in the British Library and growing a bushy beard, I've decided to write something about it. As you can already see, I'd prefer it to be playful rather than ponderous.

I've organised the work alphabetically by subject with a little cross-referencing. If you see 'qv' in brackets, there's something to look up in a book or on the intertubes. Start with Wikipedia or better, for philosophy, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. We live in a wonderful time for open learning. No, I am not writing this for academics and Latiny people, hence this explanation. I am gradually providing text web links to give better access to expanded material, so there is a mixture of both at the moment. Wikipedia is pretty good for scientific, mathematical and 'factual' information, if sketchy, but can be bad for disputed topics, because of aggressive editing, see the the Philip Cross mystery and controversy.

Some people may (rightly) feel that these texts are a little choppy. However, they relieve me from the burden of producing some over-arching ideological theme to unify the whole work. I'm a utopian but the details of any utopia need to be worked out amongst the actors and builders, as they go along. In my outlook, there are prescriptive utopias (the original, for example), descriptive and narrative utopias (News from Nowhere and a great deal of science fiction) and negotiated utopias, via utopian thinking and discussion. We want different things. However, we all need, at least shelter, warmth, and food in adequate amounts. Above that, there is curious but comforting commonality in our taste for the sky, green space and (undefinable but agreed on) natural beauty. I'm not going to start into culture, because I believe Bourdieu who seems to show that taste is a function of social class.

Also, future statements such as 'there will be a sea battle tomorrow' do not have any truth in them, in general, things do not turn out as you expect them. So this is a toolkit with connecting subjects rather than any grand unifying theory. I'm bound to be wrong about some things, it's the human condition. Finally, on this subject, the only 'business' book that I like, Up the Organisation, is organised thus, so I am happy to borrow the organisation and give attribution to the idea.

In terms of influence, here are some in no particular order, The Whole Earth Catalog, Alternative London, Undercurrents, the Global Ideas Bank, the Situationists and their antecedents, the Merry Pranksters and Yippies, Tom Wolfe and the humour of Bill Hicks. There are probably many others that will appear in the detail, I do not believe that there are very many truly original bits of thought, and they are probably not in here. I am an integration engineer not an originator.

OK, so let's begin. See the FAQ, which is under F (as it would be) for some partial explanations of this and that. I will add to it, when people have commented and queried the first edition, too.

Absolutes

Radicals of all colours tend to get hung up on absolutes. For example 'if we can't boycott X at 100%, forget it'. But actually the world is much more ill-defined and partial, so absolute thinking can be an enemy and, more importantly, a source of perceived powerlessness.

Everyone knows the (incorrect, the frog will jump out) story about frog boiling now, raising the temperature little by little, so that the frog does not notice. Consider the current arrangement of society as the frog and radical change as the water that is heating up as a metaphor for progressive change. Also confrontational change or change involving large discontinuities will almost certainly provoke a) awareness of the process by the status quo b) violent reaction.

This is why I believe, for example, that each home grown carrot, raspberry and salad leaf that is therefore not bought from Tesco, is a small victory. Incidentally, [Bristol tried to ban blackberry picking](#) and a council near me cut down several big stands of blackberries for 'security reasons', so the status quo does see alternative sources of food as either disruptive or frankly, a threat. Go, [Winstanley](#).

Lastly, on this subject, I agree that things can be too slow, also. However, this is the power of networking too, one carrot at a time for 100K people is 100K carrots out of their system and into 'our' system (however that evolves).

Alternative Currency

This requires a whole book, actually. We can divide the subject into alternative and complementary, which are as their names suggest. Mostly, at the moment, we see complementary currencies, currencies that exist alongside a national currency, the [Bristol Pound](#) for example. Most of these are, at least, partially convertible into the national currency and therefore are not totally distinct from it. Some of them are grant supported too, so they are designed for partial dependence on the current system, not independent from it.

They tend to appear or reappear when the conventional economy is in trouble, there were hundreds of scrip issuances during the US 1930s depression, for example. More recently the [truque clubs](#) (in Spanish) in Argentine appeared during the financial crisis in the early 2000s. There's a conspiracy theory that these clubs were undermined by the 'reappearing' central government when they became too widespread and too successful. I wasn't there, so I don't know the truth of that, but it is a clear danger.

There's a lot of scope for experiment and innovation here now, too. For example, [cryptocurrencies](#) that have some human governance built into them. In general, I'm not a huge fan of crypto, there's a separate entry for this. It feels like an energy squandering distraction and a clunky technology, but I'm keeping an open mind.

Android

I'll just re-quote something I wrote on one of the tech boards here, to wit: "As far as I'm concerned Android is a sticky layer of ugliness, spyiness, syrupiness and general insecurity attached with sticky tape onto the top of a Linux kernel. Most of this shit is written in Java, the COBOL of the 1990s with it's murky license and endless lines of code, to do one little thing."

At least, if you must use it, read one of the articles on securing the phone, this is discussed in a little more detail in the technical section.

I currently feel that the best kind of mobile phone is a feature phone, no GPS just phone calls and SMS. I'm not going give any commentary about Apple and iOS (which is also based on another related open source operating system) because it's all deeply wrong, closed and suitable only for misguided hipsters.

API

Short for Application Program Interface. A systematic way of using a piece of software from another piece without touching the internals of the target software. This is a way, for example, of integrating maps or bits of real-time data (train times, let's say) into a web site.

The main take-away from this, repeat fifty times, **open APIs are not Open Source or Free Software**. Open APIs do not necessarily mean Open Data either. Like 'volunteering', 'hackathon' there is a great deal of bad-faith misrepresentation about this. Very often, one will see some corporation trumpeting that they are 'open' because they have 'open APIs'. Not true, not true.

Apps

No, no. Most commarcial and (national/local) government apps will take data from you by either stealth or as a result of bad design and/or security measures. I have already said that I'm not a believer in 'smart' phones either. If you must and want to spend every single moment of your day on Twitter or Facebook, then you'll have a lot less time for the revolution too.

Here are a few random permission strings, from the Android developers website:
READ_CONTACTS WRITE_CONTACTS GET_ACCOUNTS , LOCATION,ACCESS_FINE_LOCATION ACCESS_COARSE_LOCATION, MICROPHONE,RECORD_AUDIO

See what I mean? Incidentally this is often not done with intent, but the results of stupidity without malice can often be the same. One of the results of LOCATION for example, is that the APP and therefore the originators understand where you are.

Artificial Intelligence

Most Artificial intelligence "isn't". There are two branches, symbolic AI more popular in the 1980s in the form of expert systems and non-symbolic, statistical and neural networks. It's fair to say that they can be combined to make hybrids too.

The main current problem and immediate danger is statistical machine intelligence now used for evaluating credit scores, insurance premiums and other figures that will affect quality of life. Most of these approaches optimise and do simple statistics, rather than do anything particularly intelligent, in the case of corporations, optimise profit, possibly at the expense of exclusion and bias (the lower paid and particular ethnic groups, for example). The output is numeric and they are not (unless some kind of hybrid) explanatory. Also, there may often be non-transparent implicit bias in the input data. These are the proponents of the 'computer says no' activities. There's an additional concern in that human operators are willingly surrendering decisions to these systems, since, for example 'computer says no' is less of a bitter pill and potentially less confrontational than 'I say no'.

Quite a lot of the simpler AI is well understood now and there are many, many open source tools for producing our own systems, I have written about this in the entry People's AI.

Artwashing

This is a good introductory article but, basically, putting lipstick on a pig in order to gentrify and 'attract investment'. Nice motivational murals where there are many, diverse happy faces (modern) or nostalgia for a past that never existed in the form portrayed by the mural. Artists, who often have to scrape by, are caught in the middle of this, because these represent decent commissions, however they should either a) resist the temptation b) introduce symbolic (say) elements of subversion into the finished mural. Most councils are culturally poor anyway, they probably won't notice.

I'm not against 'street art' but it needs a mandate from the bottom, rather than being pushed down from the top. Currently, as I write, this is going on where I live, a great deal of cash spent, and we are 'voting' for the ones we like best, in my case, none.

There's a hugh difference between artwashing and people's art, artifacts of local production and ownership, this might include graffiti, for example. From a middle class perspective it may look like scribbling and scrawling but it is saying something, even if merely 'I exist and was here' and (unhappily) 'this is the territory of our gang'.

Bail In

Another reason for physical cash and community backed cash. A bail in is when a failing bank decides to help itself to some (or all, but that hasn't happened so far) of its depositors cash. This happened in Cyprus in 2013, look it up.

The usual 'canary' for this kind of activity, a form of institutional theft, is legislation that would allow it. As far as I know (I'm not a lawyer or a statue law expert) this kind of legislation exists as least in Canada, Cyprus, New Zealand, the US, the UK, and Germany, as of 2013. There may be

more now, so it's an area that would repay further research.

This is also an additional (and strong) argument for more radical (as opposed to state supported, grant funded, half measures) alternative currency states and people-controlled trading mechanisms.

Big Data

Well, you hear about that, nearly every day now. In the case of personal data, the accumulation of enormous quantities of data from loyalty cards, credit cards, debit cards, on-line activity, mobile phone use, credit scores, sports watches, electoral registers and anything else that defines an individual or family.

Previously, computers and computer storage couldn't handle these quantities, now they can, to the detriment of our privacy.

There are two additional points here. First, the data can be linked together, for example record A has the same telephone number as record B, then 'we' can produce record C with the accumulated data. Second, this unpleasant accumulation can then be used for Microtargeting (see the entry), because someone, often Facebook, knows your age, your voting preferences, your income, your car model and (pace Vonnegut) on and on.

There are many other kinds, from pollution sensors, weather stations and other automated sources. Incidentally there's overlap between this and personal data in, for example, the data provided by smart meters and domestic security systems. Simple example, smart meter data can potentially provide or confirm information about whether a dwelling is occupied and whether someone is using unusual quantities of electricity, which might suggest a pot farm.

Blinding

Not as violent as it might sound. The purpose of this is to deny, deprive and remove all (or more realistically, as much as possible) your personal data from The System (qv), whether you believe this is the Capitalism System, Neo-Liberalism, Big Data or 'whatever'. This is the reason to cut down or abandon credit cards, loyalty cards, promotional emails, turn off GPS, use simple feature phones and not smartphones (they aren't they just provide a method to follow you around, sell you stuff and divide your attention) and any other measure you may think of. Use cash, whenever possible too, debit cards are as bad as credit cards, for tracking you.

Incidentally, since the first draft, it has now been revealed that Google tracked Android users even when the location services were switched off, so *trust* is not the most realistic default setting for this part of your life.

I found the local police wandering around in the library at time of writing. They wanted people's email addresses, so that they could have 'conversations', do not give email addresses to anyone except your actual correspondents.

I'm still using gmail at the moment but I'm shifting to one of the Swiss based paid providers little by

little. That's the downside, you may have to pay for extra privacy (qv).

I'm doing this now, it's a pain:

1. Paid the provider and set up the new email
2. Imported all the contacts into my new email
3. Switched on forwarding from the old email to the newspaper
4. Wrote to all my frequent correspondents noting the change
5. Changed at the bank, the council etc.
6. Put a note at the bottom of my old email and new noting the change
7. Clear up exceptions, newletters etc. piece by piece

I'm expecting that the total switch over will last several months, but that's fine. I'm thinking of keeping the old gmail open and filled with junk, just to be annoying. This is on the same principle of putting surrealist and stilted Marxist requests in Siri, Alex and other assorted cybernetic home-invasion abominations.

Bollards

You didn't expect this entry did you? I had a discussion, more a full and frank exchange of view with a local councillor about bollards. As I see it there are two choices here. First we can continuously prevent people doing 'bad' things by filling the whole of the public realm with bollards, razor wire, cutting down bushes (so people can't hide knives), and removing benches (so kids can't congregate and the homeless can't sleep on them).

Or, second, we can address some of these thing at their roots, persuade people of the virtues of behaving in a somewhat different way, in which case we don't need all these physical barriers and rearrangements.

There's also an entry on Clutter, as in public realm clutter. Needless to say, I am not an enthusiast.

Bots

Another subject close to modern AI, but with old, old roots, stretching back to Eliza, a program that can try to converse with you and perhaps make you believe, for a while, that it is a person. Lots of uses ranging from the commercial and customer help to sowing some kind of political dissension. Lots of discussion recently about whether bots have contributed to election results, no clear answer.

As the radicals do not seem to have many (or any) bots at the moment and that is a shame, because there is certainly some liberatory mischief to be had, see, for example the Brandalism entry. I have been thinking also of some of the ideas in Robert Sheckley's (qv) stories and novels, especially the idea of hyper-specialised predator. These do not limit themselves to one species but sometimes down to one individual. Imagine, for example, a little mocking bot that stalks sowing ridicule on the ridiculous.

Boycott

One of the best tools, left in the toolbox. The modern world is run by 'just-in-time' (computer driven ordering) too, so *surgical boycotts* will have immediate and amusing effects. I'm thinking, for example, of one particular size of one particular thing, for a week.

The boycott of the Sun newspaper isn't working too badly either. Even partial electronic boycott, such as *diminishing* orders to Amazon and *substituting* Hive as much as possible, is good. Do not be lured into the trap of believing that if it's not done at 100%, it's not worth it, as preached by the sanctimonious (often) socialists. That way lies paralysis and powerlessness.

One theoretical example, LinkedIn, bought by Microsoft for $26 billion. If everyone left, it's worth zero, no riots, no sit-downs, no police. Because there is network maths involved, even a 10 -15% haemorrhage would hammer it too. Where 'you are the product', you are, in fact, also the 'decider' if you mass together in sufficient numbers. Incidentally, I left LinkedIn the very day Microsoft bought it, actually it's been near useless professionally anyway or, perhaps, I just don't care enough about 'work'. See the entry for Facebook also.

Brands

Oh, they are so sneaky. That Cadbury's fruit and nut, that I used to like is owned by Kraft's which is now absorbed into a global conglomerate called Mondelez. The chocolate making itself has been yanked out of the UK into somewhere in Eastern Europe. It was cheaper. Kraft also broke a takeover promise when that happened. Not that one can ever expect any large corporate to keep a promise though. So, Cadbury is a prime boycott candidate, until they wither away or change their ways.

However, one can argue, rightly, chocolate is de minimis, one does not live by chocolate alone. So, consider this. The original name for the Sellafield was Windscale (qv) and, as such, suffered a fire and release of radioactivity in the late 1950s. But now the installation has become 'Sellafield' and the original problem has been buried in history somewhat. There are problems associated with Sellafield too, perhaps it's time for another name change?

Another example, Accenture were previously Arthur Anderson. As such they were the auditors of the Enron and surrendered their licence as a result of this. The consulting part was split off and became 'Accenture'. Much better. Not.

Finally, Rachel's Organic yoghurt with its cutsie-pie message is part of Lactalis, an enormous (61K employees) conglomerate. This is becoming more and more frequent now and is part of what Debord called 'récuperation' which has its own entry here.

So there are several points to take away here, changes of name, changes of ownership (especially concentrations of ownership) and récuperation. There are no databases or tools, as far as I know (and someone please correct me for the next edition) that track all the brands presented by any given conglomerate and stay up to date. For example, the repulsive Nestlé (and yes, I am looking at the actual behaviour, the wells etc. rather than the confusing videos, same for Coca-Cola, purveyor of sugary shit) owns a huge number that are currently listed on a Wikipedia page. In order to effectively boycott Nestlé all these brands need to be damaged. On the other hand, in my opinion, if

sales sink by 10% behaviour begin to change.

Brandalism

There's a [website for this](). Simply, it's the subversion of street advertising by alternative messages. To some extent, because the posters are well-designed and 'arty' people tune these efforts out (we actually interpolate (fill in the gaps) a lot of what we believe we 'see'), a shame. However with some simple home grown gestures, see the Bullshit Gesture entry, for example, you can help this very worthy enterprise.

From a point of view of changing dominant narratives, it's important work, see this quote

Paul Mazur, a Wall Street banker working for Lehman Brothers during the great economic slump of the 1930s, is cited as declaring "We must shift America from a needs to a desires-culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things, even before the old have been entirely consumed. [...] Man's desires must overshadow his needs."

Bullshit Gesture, The

This is part of my personal Brandalism (see the entry) game and communication. Take any common advertising slogan and substitute 'bullshit' at an appropriate point. Here's a couple of examples to get you starteds. Sky, 'Believe in Better' becomes 'Believe in Bullshit' and Curry's PC World (incidentally, a dreadful place for computers and associated) 'At Curry's PC World We Start with You' becomes 'At Curry's PC World We Start with Bullshit'. See what I mean? It's fun too. Make your own, put them on stickers and t-shirts.

Cash

Use cash whenever you can. You may have seen articles (or trial balloons) saying a pure electronic cash free state would be so much better. It wouldn't, because you could be subject to immediate theft for any transaction, otherwise known as bail-ins (qv) and confiscations.

The thieves would not be the 'criminals', they would be the banks and your government. Understand also, the Zero Lower Bound, near zero interest rates that many 'economists' believe is caused partly by issuance of cash. If interest rates are very low or [negative]() (which is only sustainable in a no-cash scenario) then you are trapped, if there is no cash to draw from the bank and spend.

Also, in France (and soon, I believe in the UK, though currently [watered down]()) there is a procedure call [ATD]() which just removes a sum from your bank account (usually to the tax authorities) with minimal justification. It is easy for this to go out, but nearly impossible, in the case of miscalculation or error for it to go back in. You will also be charged extortionate charges by your bank for the 'privilege' of having this inflicted upon you. That would mean, for example, that the tax authorities would have to admit that they were 'wrong', a near impossibility for any national tax authority.

Some of the status-quo justifications are that cash is 'expensive' to produce and manage, that it is anonymous and therefore used for tax evasion, drug trafficking and support for terrorism. However, it is also bearer of autonomy and freedom, that is probably one of main real reasons for disliking it. See also the entry on Bail In and Cashless Society.

Cashless Society

This goes with the entry for cash but broadens it. A cashless society is a society of near complete control by (neo-liberal states) private for-profit banks or (traditional 'communist' and totalitarian states) the state itself, directly. Difficult to say which is worse.

However, try one or two little thought experiments for example, the state has implemented (as in China) social credit and decides your social credit has become negative, so you no longer have access to payment, perhaps for a limited time. Or, more likely in Western society, the bank has some kind of computer problem (looking at you TSB) and you can't pay anyone anything, until the problem is solved.

Effectively, all your day to day economic activity is in the hands of a third party without interests aligned to your well-being.

This is also when alternative and community currencies become an important tool for resisting this.

Citizen Science

We should leave science to scientists and the government, shouldn't we? Science usually ends up concerning the well being of everyone, nuclear power, drugs, pesticides and pollution to give simple examples. We need to know everything we can about it, to create pressure for informed decisions, to boycott or stop using noxious substances (glyphosate on gardens is an immediate example) and to create data that 'we' own.

These are intellectual spaces of autonomy and power.

To go further, we need to participate and build (see the Making and Hacking entry) our own technology where possible and *where it may be fun*. Fun is a good motive too. Again, why do that? Simple example, Amazon Alexa and Google Mini, superficially nice but there companies are, in my opinion, abusively dominant and they take data from your private domain. If you want something like this, build it and open source it or use the design that someone else has open sourced.

Second example, pollution sensing. In London, sensors were actually shut down for 'reasons of cost' but actually to mask the extent of the problem, only recently revealed. There is no reason to trust government in this area.

Last example, the super sewer, enormous costs for the consumer and profits to the water companies was commissioned and build using mathematical models and not using experimental data. Of course, the search for profit was entirely 'another matter', of course.

Cloward–Piven

I'm quoting this straight from Wikipedia but take a look at the original article, '*The two stated that many Americans who were eligible for welfare were not receiving benefits, and that a welfare enrollment drive would strain local budgets, precipitating a crisis at the state and local levels that would be a wake-up call for the federal government*'. Incidentally. The ultimate aim of this strategy was, to quote 't*o wipe out poverty by establishing a guaranteed annual income*' which is an exceptionally modern concern as of 2016.

My own intuition about this is that this 'overloading' is probably a more general strategy for a more profitable and (sometimes) fun engagement with the status quo. The ubiquity and price of computers gives us the tools too. This is an area where we can profitably build bots (automated computer programs that dialogue or send messages, see the entry here) to do some of the work for us.

When [Asterix goes to Rome](), he manages to confuse the bureacracy there, with a huge set of conflicting demands that eventually the various departments start to echo to one another. It's something like an auto-immune disease for paperwork and procedure. Just sayin'.

To give an example, one of my current projects measures overhead aircraft noise and timing (because the early morning is unpleasant for everyone, for example). However this is easily extended to send complaint emails too. It may be for this reason that many organisations and institutions make their on-line complaint processes very convoluted.

Clutter

This entry is about public realm, but could and can become much, much wider. Our streets are full of signs, do this, don't do that, directions and road markings. As a cyclist my favourites are the little white bicycles that usually indicate obvious but dangerous places where one might feel tempted to cycle.

Add to this, ubiquitous advertising, some illuminated on bus stops and every other every available space, for our delight. In the UK, add to this the nefarious 'free calls' and wifi proposed by BT's (and actually Google and others as partners) [Inlink]() which will collect data from you, track you and generally cyber-agress you in exchange for a pathetic amount of 'free stuff'. These things were also used by drug dealer, when introduced. Use the library instead, they'll take some data too, though.

So, our streets are unpleasantly cluttered, apart from from being polluted and noisy, they are not places where we would be happy to walk, talk and greet our friends. [Grenoble actually removed all street advertising]() and replace it with trees.

Colonise

This is part of another 'essay' that I have not (yet) written and may not write. I am using the word in the sense that Henri Lebfevre used it, the colonisation of everyday life, to quote from Wikipedia: *capitalism changed such that everyday life was to be colonized—turned into a zone of sheer consumption.*

My mantra here is 'divide', 'infantilise' and 'colonise', the three step programme of the new Spectacle, post Debord, an active, toxic and aggressive illusion. However the threat contains also, to a large extent, the seeds of solution, stop consuming, slow consumption and find pastimes that do not involve consumption. For example, find an instrument and play it, rather than consuming music on 'devices'. More radical, indeed, talk to someone rather than phoning them on your smart phone, turn it off (although it probably won't really be 'off', see **Blinding**).

Incidentally, the current government has been closing a lot of libraries, obviously, libraries are free at the point of use and they compete with all the overpriced coffee shops. In the same way that garden fruit and blackberries compete with the supermarkets, got to stop all that, clearly. Lefebvre is good on public space and invented the idea of the 'right to the city' too.

Competition

Have you noticed that the dominant societal narrative is one of competition? When watching TV, I always think of Highlander, *there can only be one* and of narratives of *austerity* that are designed to make us fight like starving rats. Strictly Come Dancing, The Apprentice, The Great British Bake Off, Storage Hunters and nearly every quiz show have 'winners' and 'losers' and no elements of cooperation. Indeed, it is interesting, that there were apparently one or two attempts to make Rollerball, a 'real' game just after the release of the original film. Now, at time of writing, some Russian 'enterpreneurs' are planning to make a real-life version of the Hunger Games to take place in Siberia. Go figure.

Consciousness-Raising

Someone mentioned this to me recently with the wry 'remember that?' tacked on the end. Yes I do, making people aware of stuff. Also, pushing things up an agenda. In terms of anarchist theory, there is often no general agenda though, and quite right too.

So Brandalism, Pranksterism and associated form a web of consciousness raising, the principal agenda being 'there is something else' (but we are not currently sure what it is) or, as Morrison sang 'break on through to the other side'. Actually, I'm afraid of definitive agendas and Value Monism, it's better, in my opinion, to have some rough goals and be iterative.

Consultations

My outlook can be summarised as ignore, create and network the creations. So, on this basis, I've given up replying to consultations, since they are immediately ignored, by whoever. Sometime there's some extra fun and an opportunity for the 'they' to patronise the 'us' in focus groups and workshops. If they have sandwiches, I go, it's a free (but small) meal, if there are only biscuits, I avoid.

However, if one is feeling ranty and has a little spare time, they do offer the opportunity for some fun though. As elsewhere, I prefer humour to opposition as a clearer way of showing my feelings. Strong negative emotions are continued engagement with the status quo, the objective is to ignore it, let it die and create something else.

Credit Cards

If you can live without credit cards, do so. I have kept one because of the extra protection offered for travel, but I rarely use it. Issuers will re-use and sell your data. So, if you can't afford it, don't buy it or save until you can afford it. Debt is social control and slavery. This is also part of what I call 'Blinding the system', see that entry.

Cryptocurrency

No, no. I'm in favour of alternative currencies and, pace Lietaer, an eco-system of currencies for different purposes, but not in favour of large scale crypto, of which Bitcoin is the oldest and most obvious example. First, we may not want 'algorithmic trust' in our lives and may want human trust instead. Second, the question of scale, large leads to the absent owner problem and the current set of destructive distortions in our current economy.

I don't actually believe that the technology is particularly innovative and also, proof of work (not all cryptocurrencies do this continuously) wastes a great deal of energy.

There's also, currently (2019) a lot of over-promotion and outright fraud attached to the area, see for example OneCoin.

Delete Me

You may not have noticed how difficult it is to be removed from a website, once you have 'registered' on a website. In two recent cases, and both (to their shame) are UK non-profits, I have had to threaten them with the Information Commissioner and I am still not sure whether my details have actually been removed. People lie and patronise once they have put on their 'work clothes' and set their alienation to a maximum value of 11.

So, insist on being deleted from things that you have finished with.

Demonstrations

Younger, I used to go on demonstrations, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) mainly. Now, I do not. I believe that peaceful demonstrations are ignored or (like petitions, see the entry) are, indeed, useful because they allow the proles to blow off a little steam and believe that they have achieved something.

Then, in the case of more lively demonstrations, the demonstrators are kettled, photographed, infiltrated and, if the demonstration is successful, the images are suppressed as much as possible by the BBC and all other bits of mainstream media. If anything happens to get broken, the headlines read 'Anarchy Rules'. Of course, in a very real way, we wish that it did.

Finally, of course, we show our hand, to be Machiavellian, it's probably much more disturbing for the status quo to have a very limited understanding of any radical aims. Keep them guessing, that's fun as well.

Depave

This is part of the general gardening and food thread. In London, an enormous area of soil is paved, usually in gardens and used for parking or, simply, to avoid maintaining the green space. This is one of the 'alienating' effects of a system that is designed to make us more and more, time-poor. All this space is useful for fruit tree, bushes and easy-to-grow vegetables.

There are (at least) two other problems associated with this paving, flash flooding and heat island effect. Since a great deal of the paving will not let the water through or out, the water will flow over it, when there's enough there'll be an extra flood of some kind because there's no escape route. All cities and large towns are like storage heaters (which usually contain bricks, in fact), so extra concrete, tarmac or paving stones add to this effect.

Finally which would you prefer, some greenery or some concrete? These are small areas that are under your control, use them well.

Echo Chamber

Even though we try, we live in sets of echo chambers. I include myself in this. Why, social media (qv) encourages and builds them, via recommenders (qv). When Twitter suggests 'who to follow' they will often be somebody who shares your interests or political leanings, certainly not serendipitous, random or diamettrical opposed to your thinking. These are small world networks (qv) in graph theory (qv) putting you into a comfortable clique.

Outside social media, much academia doesn't reach outside into the world. For science and technology, there is long convoluted process of discovery, journal articles, (often) patents and commercialisation. However, the knowledge and dialogue remains embedded and hidden, in for profit journals and denied (especially to the developing world) via patenting and other commercial restrictions.

 In the third sector, same thing, especially now that the bigger charities have decided they have overpaid CEOs.

To be aphoristic, 'the only person listening to you is you'. This theme is continued somewhat in 'reaching out' and 'reaching down'.

Encryption

As I write the the UK Investigatory Powers Act 2016 has just become law, as the Guardian said 'without a whimper'. This gives a lot of extra authority for bulk data collection, for example, logs of your internet surfing and logs of mobile phone calls. It's worth saying that a great many specialist feel that this blanket approach is near useless (because there's too much, even for statistical methods) and somewhat dangerous, needles and haystacks.

So, the main objective may be just to oppress and dampen dissent. Also, as I write, someone if France has just been imprisoned for 'repeatedly surfing Islamic State material', in fact for Orwell's 'thoughcrime'. As an aside, I have had the intuition, from time to time, in the last 20 years that the Civil Service and government have begun to use 1984 as a manual rather than a novel, witness the names of departments, Ofwat, Ofgem etc. I'm waiting for MiniLove to replace the Ministry of Justice now. Enough already.

There are two other entries in this document that relate to this, Friction and Public Key Encryption. Encryption via the padlocky thing is becoming standard but will only give partial protection from mass surveillance logs and there are limits and holes. So the 'best' way to surf is currently via Tor which will anonymise to some extent and 'create friction'.

Unhappily, the best way to use email is to pay for a privacy oriented provider rather than the major 'free' providers, Google, Hotmail and Yahoo. I wouldn't use Yahoo, anyway.

All this is very partial, but currently I'm concentrating my own efforts on the two major cyber activities in my life, email and the web as a project of steady and progressive improvement. I'm not currently a 'smart' phone user and have a few words to say about Android, see the entry. Also, a

certain amount of privacy work is proportionate. If you are seeking personal modesty, the requirement is lower than if you are a whistleblower, for example.

Energy

A great of the thinking in this text concerns 'liberating' or 'unanchoring' the bottom two tiers of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (qv). That is, roughly, an abundance of food, shelter, warmth and safety.

A small (true) story about this. In an un-named small South East Asian nation, the powers-that-be decided that a small corner of native population needed 'progress'. So they moved them out of their villages in tower blocks with bathrooms and running water. So far, so good. But, also, in doing so they could no longer keep chickens, maybe some goats or grow a few vegetables on their garden patches. Also any surrounding tropical fruit trees that could be foraged were cut down, to protect the foundations of the tower blocks. Of course, now they had moved from partial self-sufficiency to dependency, for food, power bills, water bills. They were integrated into modern society and their lives were more hygienic and 'better'. Actually, what happened is that they were plugged fully into the modern economic system and thus 'under control'. I do not believe that this was done consciously, certainly the population did not represent a physical threat, except perhaps in the sense that their manner of living presented an alternative narrative, divorced from the central one.

So, back to the subject, energy and power. There is now a great deal of possibility for change in the use of solar energy with increasingly efficient battery storage. We need the batteries as well, before we can abandon the National Grid and the power companies. Also, and this is discussed somewhat in the Personal Sourcebook part, we need to develop micro-grids to provide a little resiliency and mutual support within neighbourhoods.

Wind is somewhat problematic in an urban setting and useful as part of turbine co-operative and mutuals where there's some open space.

It's worth considering simple solutions (back to the future, I started thinking about this in about 1971) too. For example, Trombe walls seem to have been neglected and are fairly easy to retrofit.

Facebook

I removed myself from Facebook about five years ago. I'd suggest that anyone do the same. Also see my commentary about LinkedIn, if everyone removed themselves from some of these mega-platforms, they are not worth anything to their shareholders and have less influence in all our affairs. This is part of the second part of this text too, the challenge of building social owned alternatives.

At time of writing (and we'll see what the future holds) there is a discussion about buying Twitter via crowdfunding. Depending on organisation and governance, this may very well be a healthier model.

FAQ

Stands for Frequently Asked Questions. This has been around probably since the 1980s at the start of a more general use of the internet and mailing lists (qv). This is the FAQ for this document.

1. Why is some of this, jokey? "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution" - Emma Goldman (probably).
2. Why haven't you put web links everywhere instead of (qv)? Two reasons, a) they fall out of date b) I'd like the reader to do some work, rather than be a passive consumer of what I have chosen to 'curate' (hipster word, sorry)
3. Why is technical stuff treated rather non-technically? I want this to be as accessible as possible, even though a lot of the content is 'technical'.
4. I have a question, comment, correction and/or criticism? That isn't really a question, but write to me and I'll try (if I agree) to incorporate it into the next iteration.
5. Why are there some non-technical entries? These are mainly to do with my own view of attitudes and actions that support my approach to anarchy. They may be idiosyncratic, live with it.

Federation

The only way that 'small things' may become 'loosely joined' is to federate them. There are lots of interesting technical, governance and organisational problems to solve when doing this too. However 'big things', especially big organisations become distant, monolithic and unaccountable, this is Nicholas Albeury's 'law of scale' but there's probably some detailed science about this somewhere or other. Meanwhile, look at government, IBM, Google, Facebook and Microsoft and take my word for it, for the moment.

Connected with the idea or ideal of the small is Subsidiarity (qv), the principle of deciding and acting at the lowest possible level. Actually this is baked into the EU, but they tend to conviently forget it, it's simpler to act from the centre, pushing down.

Friction

This is an an enlargement of the Cloward-Piven and Encryption entry. Every little bit of friction with regard to the status-quo is useful. Some examples are, refusal to use on-line resources, paying with a cheque-book (if you still have one), writing snail-mail letters, refusing to give your mobile-number (I don't have a smart phone now and rarely use my mobile anyway), and, in general, choosing the most inconvenient method for the authorities and banks etc.

This also applies to encryption, for which there's a separate section. Encryption will not necessarily prevent a person or organisation from breaking into your affairs, since it can be broken (at a certain strength) or keys can be revealed or stolen. However, everything is encrypted, just makes the work harder. Incidentally, a number of intelligence analysts have already stated that mass surveillance is often an obstacle to preventing terrorism, since there's too much data presented.

Complain, often and remorselessly through official channels too, it's fun.

Gardening

Yes, gardening! Especially fruit, vegetables and all kinds of edibles. There are three 'theory' strands to this.

The first one is (if you will) a Marxist one about the sale of labour and why we are obliged to do this. Now, it is for warmth, shelter and food. We can survive, somewhat unhappily, without a great deal of the rest. I am not a huge fan of Zerzan (qv) for example, but see the next section on Guerilla Gardening. However, when the working classes left the countryside for the cities (either via enclosure, poverty or whatever reason) they also left behind the possibility of feeding themselves, either partially or wholly without capitalist style, sale of labour (for the essentials). Gardening, guerilla gardening and foraging can partially restore that. In a more ideal world, micro-economies of local exchange (my carrots for your potatoes) can augment the effect too.

I have covered the second one in Import Substitution, that is anything grown or foraged is not being bought from the supermarkets, so their power diminishes. Always a good thing.

Last, trees, bushes, and greenery in general make the city a more pleasant place, over and above the tree-in-a-box tokens that our putative lords and masters plant confusing these with some radical improvement.

Generosity

This is a central part of an (left-leaning or I prefer human-leaning, if you will) anarchist economy. Of course, the diametric opposite, selfishness as rationality, appears centrally in Ayn Rand and more recently in some forms of techno-libertarianism. I am positing Kropotkin (qv), for example.

In neo-liberal world, a transaction is a closed loop, I give you money and you give me something and there the matter (probably) ends. Slightly better is that we continue to do that, over the months and years, as my (or your) relationship with a small shop or market stall. That means that there is a significant human component in the transaction too. Last week I had an extra croissant, because they were a bit squashed, for example. The 'systems' in any large shop or supermarket do not allow for this kind of behaviour.

Up, another notch, from this, are pay-it-forward (qv) systems. Simply, you ask the person to whom you gave something to do (or give) something for someone else, so that there is an open (rather than closed, like the transaction above) ripple in a localised part of society. As good anarchists they can choose a) to do so, or not b) choose what to do or give. It is up to you and then up to them.

Finally, as an ultimate aim, there is pure altruism, you give/do without any speech act or expectation. I'm not bothering with Kantian reflections on the purity of the act, with luck, the main effects are existential and beneficial. Also, even this isn't really pure, it may make you feel good or optimistic. My advice concerning that is 'enjoy', enough already.

GPS

Global Positioning System. Switch it off, if it's in your mobile phone (it is, if it is a 'smart phone'), this is part of 'Blinding the system' too. If something asks you to 'share your location' be like Nancy Reagan and 'just say no'.

Grant Funding

In general, I am 'against' grant funding, from whatever source. Here are some of the reasons

1. In general, funds are allocated via 'competition' judged by 'experts' on a basis of created and often artificial scarcity. It would be preferable to allocate these funds via a more general discussion of the possible benefits of the project and some form of participatory budgeting. I'm not against 'expertise', especially in technical subjects, medecine, aeronautical engineering, and mathematics, for example. However, expertise in local matters, for example, belongs to people who live in, and around, the locality.

2. Box ticking, inflexibility and narrowness of focus. I have been on the receiving end of money that 'would have been' useful, if only it had been used for an allied subject or activity. One example, from about ten years ago, was teaching word processing to people who had very little use for it. However, they would have, and did have a use for email, since they were mainly older people with families who lived abroad. Of course, the solution was to teach them about email surreptitiously, see point 3.

3. There's a certain kind of systematic dishonesty that goes with reporting for grant funding. It reminds me of a joke (that I heard in about 1982) from the (then) communist bloc, 'We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us'. So the system gets more and more skewed, via inaccurate feedback, towards the wrong goals. For those who are good at this game, attendance, outputs, and outcomes are always overstated too, a 'good' session will be found on physical inspection to contain about three demoralised attendees.

4. It favours the slick and well resourced, those will the grinning, diverse brochures that tell a great many lies about their activities. Normally these same people pay and treat their staff rather badly as well. There's a great deal of (sometimes amusing) cognitive dissonance between the brochure and the actuality of the organisation.

5. It distorts and damages any sustainability and autonomy within the organisation's activities and economy. For example, a great deal of grant money flows in, people are hired and equipment purchased, money flows out and there are layoffs and the equipment lies idle. It creates peaks and troughs where there should be a more natural flow of activity.

6. It provides a false ownership, virtue signalling and spurious photo-opportunities for local councillors and (worse) corporates. The corporates are usually trying to mask 'bad' activities by giving a few crumbs to something 'good'. It doesn't really work that way does it? From a text in one of the major 12 Step programmes, 'We are self-supporting, refusing all outside contributions'. Enough said

Guerilla Gardening

We could make the claim that Winstanley was the first guerilla gardener, in the way that I see it. Reclaiming neglected plots and planting pretty flowers is part of it, but not the whole, see the Artwashing entry. Better to plant or 'encourage' some extra food production too, for reasons I've outlined elsewhere.

There are two much more powerful reasons for taking an interest in food-oriented guerilla gardening too.

1. Free or nearly free (a Marxist would argue that labour has gone into it) food is an affront to a system where everything has a monetary value and nothing is 'free'. This is a reason to forage, also.

2. This is the basis for a 'generosity' component in a very flawed economy. I continue this argument in the entry for Economy. Basically, 'generosity' is (potentially) a pay-forward component whereas transactions are closed-loop. Generosity is political act, too.

Hackathon

Beware the humble hackathon, my friends. As the cartoon once said, 'We give them beer and pizza, lock them away for 12 hours, and they give us $1m ideas'. So, a great many of these, especially when run by corporate (using slogans such as 'open', 'help save the planet' etc. etc.) are anything but. Like a great deal of 'volunteering' (I still do some, but only for small, near-autonomous organisations, where at all possible) this is slavery or co-optation.

Before deciding whether to participate, examine the organisation and examine the software licence (if that is what the given hackathon does) of the product that is to be hacked. Also see the entry on APIs and the illusion of 'openness'.

Hierarchy of Evil

This is a mental tool and thought experiment that I use for 'partial activism'. The easiest example is my ranking of supermarkets, see table below

Name	Rating	Notes
Cooperative	8	If possible
Waitrose	7	Expensive though
Marks & Spencer	6	
Morrison	5	
Tesco	3	
ASDA	0	Never use it's Walmart

Incidentally, I try to buy as much as I can from street traders and markets now, prices are often good too. But it requires contact with other human beings, very healthy but difficult, perhaps, for the 24-hour-screen generation.

Let's note that this approach can be applied to all other 'sources of supply' too, I now buy books, as much as I can, from Hive. Amazon are often cheaper but the result is (I have a friend who is a published novelist) that the author receives much less, they avoid taxes and the working environment leaves a great deal to be desired. Also, to note, I haven't used just one value for choosing and ranking, there's usually a cluster, I am usually unhappy with (what philosophers call) Value Monism (qv).

It is up to individuals (especially if they regards themselves as individualist anarchists, essentially I am not) to make their own hierarchies and, perhaps, explain them or suggest them to others. If there is broad agreement, everything moves in one direction and the results are significant. See the entry on consciousness-raising too, an old idea that needs to come around again.

Hieroglyphics

I was originally thinking about learning some Linear B or other hieroglyphic text, as a way of expressing political ideas in a more amusing form of graffiti. I have not completely abandoned this idea. However,

Hipsters

Some of my friends worry and/or chide me for my hatred of hipsters. Why, they are just to be ignored, pitied or mocked, no?

My feeling is this, they are one of the first youth trends to be pure spectacular (in the Debordian

sense), recuperated rebellion. With regard to core ethics or philosophy, this is, in fact vacuous or purely consumption-driven. As long as they can get organic oils for their little beards, lumberjack shirts, iPhones, iMacs, and skinny jeans, they will be perfectly content in their illusory edginess.

They represent the (temporary, I hope) defeat of youth as an agency or focus for radical change. This, of course, I accept is also a cruel generalisation, there must be some, however I do not have the patience to go down into E1 and conduct interviews.

I was hoping to slip into my dotage, but I feel it is somewhat up to we, grumpy, vaguely and naively 1960s radicalised, to start making some changes now. This is somewhat Marcusian, but that's OK.

Import Substitution

This word is taken from classical economics. Look up the definition. My view is that in the 'path' (actually there isn't just one path) towards anarchy, it is a valid concept for smaller groups, not just for nation states.

For example, when you start to grow or to forage some of diet, this is 'import substitution' with regard to supermarkets and (perhaps more sadly) towards market stalls. Let's take another, if you start a local, cash only (at point of exchange) 'ebay', you have substituted or partially substituted for ebay, itself. If you would like to do this, take a look at *fairmondo* in My Personal Sourcebook.

Do not worry about partial substitution, this is a step in the right direction. Even a single carrot *not bought from Tesco is a nano-revolution*. This is also related to Scott's idea of infrapolitics. I re-discuss this under the entry Absolutes.

Interstitial

If Nicholas Negroponte called a (good) book, a while ago now, Being Digital, I would call some of this 'Being Interstitial'. In this, my view is somewhat similar to some autonomists, for example John Holloway of Crack Capitalism, but I am probably less romantic, more networked and more modest in ambition.

However, 'weeds grow in the cracks' and so do fruit and vegetables. The 'other' problem for which Holloway has been heavily criticised is the difference between individual acts of autonomy and the more collective acts that rock the whole system. Almost certainly, some of the answer is networking in the cyber sense, this being why any government takes such an interest in our mobile telephone logs, browsing logs, and any other citizen metadata that they can lay their hands on. They do not want to see things that are (my words) 'clumping up' as a precursor to becoming something antagonistic and perhaps even (heaven forbid) dangerous for them.

Terrorism is a glib explanation, but we are certainly a target. In a sense, this is hopeful, they are realistic enough to be afraid of (some of) us.

Kulaks

Kulaks were were small holders, therefore autonomous and often producing a saleable surplus in

Russia. They were criticised by Lenin and decimated by Stalin. This part of history is often used by the right to show the dangers of 'communism', as defined by the right.

In fact, it shows the dangers of dictatorship, collectivisation as a project and the false belief that scale and uniformity lead to 'efficiency'. You may be asking, at this stage, why have I chosen to talk about this?

I'm talking about it, because the various illusions, coercions and delusions are on the left and on the right, at the moment. From the right, we have the mega-corporations who will, via abuse of dominant positions, squash or suborn (Amazon 'marketplace' etc.) most small businesses. Also from the UK government, presumably irritated by feeble agitations of *actual* freely negotiated contracts for labout, we have [IR35](#). We have, instead, the gig economy, a modern form of slavery.

From the conventional left (and I'm writing this at the end of 2019, during an election period) we have large scale nationalisation, collective state-owned uniformity as panacea. There's a case to be made for some natural monopolies, but the governance and ownership may have much better models than the conventional 'we own it' one.

So free, small scale enterprise and genuine skills-for-hire (as opposed to employee contracts for 'roles' that one is, somehow, obliged to be 'passionate' about) is being squeezed from either side of the conventional political spectrum. Personal and small scale autonomy must not stand, it must not, too dangerous for all the vested interests of the status quo.

Linux

This is a piece of zero-cost software that will run your computer as well as Windows. Better still it will perform well on 'older' computers so they need not be thrown away and can be re-purposed, donated and generally have their lifetimes prolonged.

The energy and ecological cost of building a 'new' computer (or indeed smart phone) is enormous and one of the only (invalid) reasons for having a new one is new versions of Windows, increased bloat. This is a game that IBM allegedly used to play with mainframes in the 1980s, bigger software equals more memory to be sold or rented.

Linux is free, but you will have to learn some new ways of thinking, never a bad thing. See the entry on Open Source too.

Loyalty Cards

Throw away all your loyalty cards too, the exchange you are making in return for your privacy and data is a bad bargain. When enough people give up their loyalty cards, a few (minor) things may change, but also, it's a modest rehearsal for the more radical. And, yes, I do not have a single loyalty card, I do have a Co-op card.

Machine Intelligence

Quick read, so, in the main, it isn't. Have a look at the entry for Artificial Intelligence, I've grouped machine intelligence with this, following the schema used by Wikipedia.

Mercenaries

It's not noticeable on the surface but more and more conflicts are being partially fought by mercenaries. Weapons of war have always been a huge part of 'trade' (or, for most of us, negative externality) but now the manpower to go with it is being financialised too.

How does this change things? Well, smaller actors, if they are financially powerful can start or intervene in a war, the doctrine of 'small wars', ever present but increasing in the conflict mix. Lack of ideology as a component of conflict, increasing focus on profit. Resistance to any supra-national intervention or moderation, they are not participants in Geneva Convention (although, this is true of some national combattants now too) and therefore will attack UN, police forces, medical third parties and other non-combattants. So war becomes more unrestrained and more deadly for anyone whatsover in the war zone. It's evident that all war is bad, this is a new horizon of death, cruelty and danger.

Mischief

I am old enough to remember Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters and their bus (qv). One of the things the status-quo hates is being laughed at. They can deal more easily with being hated, that's a kind of validation for anyone or anything. However, laughing is a different kind of freedom.

A quote from Steppenwolf "In eternity there is no time, only an instant long enough for a joke." and (probably) from Emma Goldman, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution".

So, personally, I'm not interested in the miserable, normative (silly prole, do this, 'we' know what's best for you) social justice warrior method for evolution. It's authoritarian, apart from being unattractive.

On a more serious note, jokes are memorable memes and part of a radical narrative too, this is a (Banksy?) quote on a wall, just by the entrance to the Blackwall Tunnel: "The lifestyle you have ordered is currently out of stock".

Models

Models appear frequently in modern discourse, notably about Climate Change. The believers say "look at the models, it's really bad" and the denier "it's only a model". I'm a deep green, so I'm a believer, however both camps are correct. Models are not reality (whatever that is), they are thinner cruder versions of it.

However, this cuts both ways, if the climate models are correct, then ignoring them is catastrophic,

if we are 'not sure' (correct to some extent, for example) then we need to apply the precautionary principle to our policies.

Also, overlooked, many of the policies that support climate mitigation and adaptation also lead to a more pleasant, greener, less polluted, healthier world. There are potent arguments that we should adopt some of these policies and directions 'anyway'. This is why, for me, the older Utopias of vast automated factories producing unlimited consumer goods (we're nearly there anyway, as regards plastic toys, for example) are a step in the wrong direction.

To some extent, climate, pollution are now going to limit our choices, but the subset on offer is a pleasant set of choices, just not what is sold to us, that's all.

Money

This will probably grow into a big entry, since it's one of my main areas of concern. The current financial system gives us an unequal, unsustainable and eventually (that's in a while, not eventuellement, for French readers). The second and associated problem is (some of) the rights of profit-making corporations and their fictional role as 'personne morale', a sort-of pretend person.

That bit is treated in the entry on Corporations too. Unlike many, I do not believe that corporations and profit are necessarily and logically bad, that depends.

At present, there are many proposals and technologies (the so-called Fintech industry) for new ways of 'doing money'. Some of these can probably be adapted for use in parallel structures.

For one thing, money is technology, from the scratching of symbols on bits of pot to count amounts of grain up to computing, that hasn't changed. The classical definition is here in Wikipedia, medium of exchange, store of value, measure of value. Without starting a book-length side-issue on value and value theory, this is one bit that is certainly 'wrong', one gun does not equal a large quantity of butter, for example. We can come back to this, especially as no-one much has figured it out. Meanwhile, look at Theory of Value and more broadly/philosophically Axiology.

On a more practical level, issuance. Currently either government or (worse) private banks can bring money into existence, magically. When money is issued by private institutions, that is via interest-bearing debt, one of the profound bits of wrongness. Essentially, when you buy a house, the bank creates (previously) non-existent money (without doing any useful 'work' in the old Marxist sense) and lends it to you. However, if you fail to pay back this fiction, it can then steal something 'real' from you. Nice work, if you can get it.

Now for the hopeful bit. We can invent and issue our own money. Either a a complementary (additional) system to the national currency or as a complete alternative, alternative currency. This or these currencies can take many forms, physical notes and coins, physical ledgers, electronic or scratches on pieces of pottery. The problem is not there, it's more finding the goods and services that will be exchanged and some minimum standards of governance to go with the new creation.

Music

Apart from 'having the power to soothe savage breasts' (one presumes that there are people attached to them), it's good in so many other ways too.

But don't just listen, make some. My generation learnt the guitar, easy to start and lots of songs take a week or so to learn. Traditionally, protest songs too, make your own up and publish them, there's a long tradition in folk music.

Also, making music isn't consumption, it's an activity that is nearly free, once you have an instrument. I think that my first guitar in about 1965 was about £2, from the much regretted shop, near my mother's hardware shop in Hornchurch. I've had one ever since.

And a last idea in this subject, it's good for mental health as well, like running (qv).

Narrative

Narrative (as John Lanchester said) has moved out of literature into politics, where, in the mainstream and on social media, it has mutated malignantly into post-truth story telling and spin. This, for example, is one more reason to leave Facebook, or, if you really, really must stay, ignore all 'News' except maybe the most stupid stuff.

However, I believe that there are three abstract nouns that are worth fighting against and providing counter narratives where ever possible. They are commercialisation (especially financialisation), competition and scarcity.

Commercialisation and financialisation is the modern form of clearance and enclosure, it eats into ideas of general accessibility (the most obvious example being housing and healthcare) and the commons, for example, public libraries and green space. Somehow, everything will be so much 'better', if the 'true' monetary value is explicit for every service and facility. The best book about this, mainly about justice, is 'What Money Cannot Buy'. Read it.

Competition is discussed elsewhere, but appears in every prize, grant application, job application and piece of entertainment (X Factor, cooking competitions etc.). Always judged and commented by experts who are somehow better. Of course, if one did not compete in the vain hope of attention from our (self elected) superiors, we could cooperate. Our cake might not be as pretty, but it would be ours.

Scarcity is a societal means of control linked to financialisation. If 'money' is scarce (remember 'money's too tight to mention'?) then control is maximal. Debt and inflation helps this story along too. We need to learn to distinguish between money being scarce and 'stuff' being scarce too. I'd actually argue that the foodbanks, whilst being a scandal, are also a step in the right direction. Better still that we help neighbours in difficulty directly and acknowledge that (usually) our government and administrations are either corrupt (in that they serve vested interests first, not necessarily that they take bribes) or incompetent or both. It is up to us.

Open Everything

This sounds like 'old hippie' stuff doesn't it? Let's hear the stoned, whiny "Everything should be free, man", the more modern "Everything should be free, person" does not have the same ring either. Joke over, if it was.

However, knowledge and computer code, for example, are non-rivalrous, if you know A, that doesn't mean it's been used up and I cannot know A. If I use a program B, that will not prevent you from using a copy. Same, as Hollywood knows, for digital versions of films and series. Obviously here, there are some things to be worked out. Production of modern knowledge (I'm thinking of drugs research followed by the production of useful drugs) is far from zero-cost but the price point and ownership are sub-optimal for society, the world and especially the developing world.

Second different example, academic journals, same thing non-zero production price but price at consumption point that we can confidently call 'gouging'. This means that a large section of knowledge consumers who are capable of doing something constructive with the particular knowledge are excluded from it. The constructive act could just be 'learning' too, in the sense of life enrichment. It's often fun to know new stuff.

The journals and software are a common goods riddle (CPR, taking the language of the entirely admirable Elinor Ostrom qv) with suppliers, consumers and infrastructure but they are not 'used up' with increasing numbers of users.

I believe that coops and mutualist structures are part of the answer to both of these, they do not make everything 'free', but they do align prices with costs, rather than profit maximisation.

Parallel Structures

Of course, the Maoists in Nepal are a good example of 'how far' parallel structures can go. My own views are towards the lower parts of of the Maslow triangle with a view to partial autonomy and partial self-sufficiency. More of a 'turning away' and 'turning back on' than an overthrowing.

It's worth noting that if no-one whatsoever shopped at ASDA, it would close (but see the entry for Brands). In the same way, if the parallel structures increase in strength, then one can expect some of the existing to wither away. For a number of reasons (we need it, I'm a great admirer of Winstanley etc.) I tend to concentrate on food and energy. Housing is a harder problem to solve immediately, too.

So on this basis, see the entries on Computing, Energy, Public Food and Money.

People's AI

 There are now a great many open source tools for machine learning and other forms of sub-symbolic AI. It's up to us to use these for our general benefit and, in turn, open source the investigations and results. This approach, of course, meshes with citizen science, open knowledge

(qv) and open access publishing (qv).

Port-80

As any fule know (qv), this was the original port for serving web content. Since non-encrypted passwords and transited via port-80, encrypted web traffic has now moved to port-443, the home of https (the padlocky thing, see public key cryptography). However, stepping back, the web, originally disorganised, fun and hyperlinked has now become 'sites', Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr etc., a series of walled gardens owned by vectorialists (qv). Spied on by 'everyone', full of advertising, malware, subtle misinformation campaigns and astroturfing (qv), incitements to gamble and buy stuff, it is not a space or welcoming structure for anything radical now.

My 'modest proposal' (qv) is to move to some other non 80, non 443 port or work out some spectrum-hopping (qv) scheme and establish a new people's cyberspace there. Of course, some junk would filter in, but then we could move it again, causing a great deal of corporate pain and anguish in the process. Or we could just 'threaten' to move again.

Port-443

The padlocky port. In principle all web communication via this port is encrypted. However, this is by convention only, there can be encrypted or non-encrypted web communication on any port that is not used for anything else. Hence, my modest proposal to leave all commercial junk in one place and move 'elsewhere', see the entry for Port-80.

Printed Supplements

You may have noticed that newspapers and magazines have additional printed material, ususally publicity folded into them. However, you can add your own material to these, especially if they are on some kind of stand. The same applies to folded promotional brochures of the kind that are often found in shopping centres. This is especially useful, if you have some specific commentary to make that is related to the original printed material.

Public Key Cryptography
Best way to explain this, *it is very probably your friend*. Until recently the USA banned the export of this kind of cryptography, having decided that it was a weapon.

There are two bits, a public key that you publish and a private bit that you keep to yourself. You can have the public bit printed on a card as a QR code, for example. People will then be able to encode messages that only the holder of the private bit can decode.

There's a lot more than that, but specifically see 'web of trust' and 'signing parties' decentralised methods of putting a little extra confidence into the keys that are being exchanged.

Récuperation

This is another useful concept from the Situationist. Simply, if something, a subversive idea, a subversive concept appears to be surfacing and gaining traction, it is sugar coated and absorbed into the mainstream, where it can be blunted.

Actually, hipsters and 'hipsterism' (if there is such a word) are a major example of this effect, the reason I (and others of my generation) find them so irritating. They have adopted eccentricity as a fashion statement but are not eccentric in any useful or interesting way, that is, in their thoughts or actions. In fact, given their clear obsession with Apple products (what is a person with an iPhone, an iPad and an iPod, answer an iDiot, not funny, but it's made me slightly calmer) they are consumers.

On the subject of art too, if it is too challenging, it can be bought and hidden away or used in another context. A current example, Hendrix's version of All Along the Watchtower has apparently been licensed to Chanel. Previously (and worsely, to coin a word) Ezy Rider was licensed to Barclays Bank, one of the most hateful banks on the planet Earth.

Scarcity

One of the fundamental, together with money (and therefore 'austerity'), levers of control for modern society. I'm really, really, really sorry but we'd like to (because we are decent people) but there's not enough for everybody. Please compete and disagree with each other, it will make you healthier.

To take the easiest scarcity subject first, money, the current arrangements (majority private issuance as interest bearing) will inevitably lead to scarcity and inequality. I do not believe that this was originally a conspiracy, because money was an iterative creation, but the status quo will be maintained by those who benefit from it. In this case, especially those who create and handle the current form of money, the banks and associated. There are also some huge problems of governance and democracy associated with this, since private institutions are a major influence on the wellbeing of all who happen to use that currency.

There are at least three alternatives, a) elected government controls issuance, not the case at the moment, since, for example, the Bank of England is (somewhat) independent b) multiple smaller currencies with non-bank issuance c) mixture of a) and b) for example. Finally, keep status quo except that the banks have much tighter issuance parameters. The multiple smaller currencies movement is growing somewhat with the Bristol, Brixton and Lewes pound, for example. However, most of these currencies are backed by the national currency and are therefore not independent in any meaningful way.

Search-engine

Well, you know, Google. As in, let me Google that for you etc. etc. But however, quick convenient and efficient it may be, it is a vector for consumerism (for example, stuff to buy will come out at the top) and the status quo (radical results may be 'hidden', although recent research has Google currently as left-centre leaning for results) and, of course, paid advertising is a dominant feature. Also, it will track you.

This is something of a problem, since technically it is the 'best' one. However, for example DuckDuckGo (qv) is coming up and you can help it be 'better'. It doesn't track you either. So each search that you switch from Google to DuckDuckGo is a finger in the eye for Googlezon/Facebook. Better still, build your own for your local area or for a specific specialised subdomain, ask for donations for the bandwidth or allow only local/ethical business advertising. All the major search engines have a malware (qv) problem, so there's space for something more specialised and focused.

I've given a couple of talks on building search engines, together with some of the more obvious technical and ethical challenges. The slides are on my personal website.

Security Tools

These include Tor, Tails and, in fact Linux. But if you're that worried, it's better simply to stay off-line and off-mobile-phone with what-it-is, that you're worrying about. Tor, in principle will provide anonymous browsing, but, there are usually rumours that one of the US security services has broken into it.

Tails is a secure operating system based on Linux, usually delivered on a CD or USB, so that you can use a machine without leaving a trace of your usage.

As of, 2106, in the UK you will probably also want a VPN (Virtual Private Network) connection. This is discussed further in the technical section. It will deny your browsing history, for example from the 48 organisations that now have potential access to it. Since, anyway, we are dealing with the Civil Service and the UK police, this information will leaked and misused routinely, apart from the so-called 'legitimate' uses. There is no guarantee, of course, that the VPN supplier itself is secure (many of them say that they do not keep any logs, a good start, but how to check) and many of them are USA corporations and therefore subject to US not UK law.

Linux itself is almost certainly 'better' than Windows in this respect. Because it's open source, in principle you can build it from scratch after inspecting every line of code in the build (but as Ken Thompson pointed out in 1984, one would need to trust the compiler, as well). Also, Windows viruses will be ineffective, though there are other attacks directed at Linux.

Spectacle

For those of you who are not familiar with Guy Debord (and the Situationists) who wrote the Society of the Spectacle, try a little light reading. Indeed, it's pretty heavy going. There's a pretty good entry in Wikipedia under Spectacle (critical theory).

Two main take-aways (these are mine, incidentally) a) commodities now rule us b) we have become more and more passive in the face of this. My 'extended' take-away, developed in the more textual part of this work is that 'nothing', except maybe some spreadsheets and computer programs, is in charge now, just numbers and indexes. We are alienated in the Marxist sense and ache to live, but numbers will not let us. We need to start to throw away these numbers.

This insight now needs some re-working and extension to deal more thoroughly with the digital, social media and 'device' (especially the hateful version of the smartphone) world. For example, a great deal of our interpersonal relations are now mediated (or we allow to be mediated) by what McKenzie Wark calls the Vectorialists (see the entry for Vectorialists too).

Finally, and I thank someone in the Anarchist Book Fair for this information, J. B. Priesley invented the word 'Admass' in about 1955, that conveys something of the same, a world dominated by manufactured and manipulated desire.

Also, it's fair to say, that this is one of the main motors of this text, the idea that we can break away from corporate and for-profit owned platforms towards platform cooperatives and non-profit local digital islands. These might reflect our world in a different, co-operative, non-competitive way too.

Speed

Here, as usual, I hark back to [Energy and Equity](), just riffling through, to write this, I find 'people move quite well on their feet'. Yes, indeed. So why don't we do more of that? My belief is that late-stage capitalism has captured the rhythm of our lives and demands that we be 'fast', 'efficient' and 'productive'. This last, 'productive' is a word that we hear from governments as to why we cannot be paid more.

Consider, under some new order, we slow down and only make five plastic dolls per day, disaster, sales and profits are down, the shareholders become angry. Profits must increase every year, since dividends, the share price and directors remuneration must increase, so, everything must go faster. Of course, in this simple activity, industrial robots could do everything and the 'product' is a pure pollutant, so no need to rush.

But speed is a certainly a form of power relationship, our bosses tell us to hurry up, we have (arbitrary, often) 'deadlines' to create unnecessary and unhealthy pressure in our lives. We rush from home to work, we get into our cars to rush to distant shopping centres, to buy things that we don't need. Life in the West is culturally fast, but this speed is contingent and can be unravelled in many cases.

Price and access to speed has distorted urban geography too, since we are car bound, we can put

everthing into malls and out of town boxes, shuttling backwards and forwards, ignoring the potential sociability of our decaying town centres. OK, that's not the only factor, but it's a major one.

I agree that when lives are in danger or suffering, we need to move fast, for the rest we can take our time.

Sponsorship

To head a little in the direction of Ambrose Bierce (The Devil's Dictionary), 'sponsorship is a way for corporate world to shoehorn its way into places that it does not belong by simply spending money'. I've currently given up running my favourite half-marathon (yes, I'm getting old, as well) because it is sponsored by Virgin Health an organisation that has sued the NHS because it didn't like the result of a contract attribution.

Vitality Health a private health company currently sponsors the London Marathon. I'm looking forward to the day when some of the supposedly socialist fiefdoms, London mayor, Hackney, Newham actually roll with their principles and kick these people out. It's also notable that, at time of writing (2019), Active Newham cooperates with ParkLives behind which is the Coca-Cola company, a particularly perverse decision.

Street Art

I meant, this year, to write an essay for a (now defunct) website called 'Art and Anger'. However a smaller meditation here will have to do.

At the start and sporadically through the 20th century some art was also associated with political activism and/or political activists. The ranges from Dadaism (which could be argued as being absurdist or maybe nihilist, but fun, my opinion) to Guernica and through to Banksy now. Banksy is good example of Debordian 'recuperation', something that is subversive is re-absorbed, given a price, made the subject of consumer fetishism etc. etc. Any edge is immediately blunted.STRENGTHENING THE WORLDWIDE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

However I want to aim elsewhere at 'unofficial' (our local council is trying for some 'official' street art at the time of writing) street art. One notices quickly that there is a) tagging b) scribbling c) pieces of fairly narcissicistic and samey mural, no doubt, often, here in London, with the same originators. Indeed, I met some, on one of the canals, about a week ago.

However, the walls, the streets, important elsewhere (I'm writing this in the UK) are a greatly undervalued resource for the expression anger, change, mocking and mischief. For example, as part of my people-networked project, supposing that the same thing (a philosopher would say many tokens of the same thing, but who cares) appeared in many, many places at once. That's quite an important and striking counter narrative, immediately.

How to communicate the message faithfully, given revisionists and class traitors (I'm joking, I think

it is probably about time to discard certain Marxist tropes) within the communicators. This is part of an interesting class of problems called the Byzantine Generals (qv) problem.

For myself, I have been thinking about a project using only Linear B. Trouble is, there don't seem to be many swear words. Maybe some portmanteau words can be constructed, as one does in German? See the entry on Mischief, too.

Subsidiarity

The principle of deciding and acting at the lowest level possible. If it can be done street by street, better that it be done so. Village by village, same thing. This does not necessarily imply flattened hierarchies, in fact, it may imply Bookchin like multiple level assemblies that feed into each other. This is the method used by the Kurds, and described by Cairne Ross in the Accidental Anarchist (qv).

OK, this makes for a more complex system, but also for a much more representative one. People own the decisions, even the bad ones, of which there will surely be a few. Actually, it's baked into the EU but they ignore it for something more centralised whenever possible.

System, The

I refer to the system a great deal in this document. What exactly do I mean by that. First a little tour, I'm an admirer of the Situationists and therefore the system (for me) is whatever underlies the Spectacle. I'm not a big believer in the rule of the Lizards or Bilderbergers, however, I agree with Susan George that, if a group of people have an agenda that converges, there needn't be 'explicit' conspiracy.

Also, neo-classical economics, the current way of 'doing' money and the anthropormisation of abstracts, for example 'the market hopes', 'the market fears' have done a great deal of damage. The wound-up springs (fiduciary duty to maximise) inside corporations and the idea that they are a 'personne morale' and can speak, all of this does a great deal of damage.

It's a tangle or as system theorists say, a wicked problem (qv). Ultimately, my own belief is that no-one is in charge, or maybe there's a single spreadsheet somewhere with a list of indicators that must somehow be maximised. We've lost our way.

My route to restoration is essentially non-violent, neo-liberalism has plenty of open interfaces, if we move our bank account, that's an act, if we boycott (even partially, I buy from Amazon but mostly from elsewhere, it's my 'last choice) if we grow vegetables and/or forage, that's an act. At a richer level if we divest with our retirement funds or don't buy things that we don't need, that's an act. Everything is a choice and an act, co-ordinated and larger campaigns are clearly more effective, one more reason for the technical content in this document.

Think Tanks

Not always a bad thing, if we understand who is funding them. However there is a cluster, mainly at

55 Tufton Street and Lord North Street that are mysteriously funded and connection to the Atlas Network slogan 'strengthening the worldwide freedom network'. In this case, this means freedom from any government regulation, safety, competition, ecology and all the other things that keep up safe.

These particular 'think tanks', a better word is lobbyists have connections to right wing think tanks in the USA, via the Atlas network. They are also, probably, funded by right wing, climate change deniers who make money from fossil fuels, one of the activities they with to be 'free' to continue with. Finally, there are direct connections into the current UK Conservative party, including some documented donations.

Trolling

 I see some forms of trolling as a public service. For example, I spend (waste, some would say) a certain amount of my week trolling right wing 'think tanks' (lobbyists from the so-called Atlas Network) and commentators. I don't insult or name call, but I do draw attention to some of their other activities (cash for access, guns) and affiliations. On these think tanks, there is really just one, but it is a hydra with many heads in 'conversation' thus creating the impression of something more substantial.

I do most of my trolling on Twitter where I am @hughbarnard since I am a transparency maximalist, I have deleted myself from LinkedIn and Facebook and advise others to do the same.

Vectorialist

This is McKenzie Wark's word, not my own. The modern version of those that 'own the means of production' in the sense of those that own and control the digital exchanges. That would therefore be the owners (shareholders) of Facebook, EE (biggest mobile subscriber base in the UK), Amazon, LinkedIn, Microsoft and Google, for example.

Instead of talking to people and even visiting their houses to have a cup of tea, our lives are passing through the hands of these 'owners' who are profiting from each conversation, each (useless) 'like', each 'poke' and all the emojiis laid end to end in a useless row. All the distractions of games with candy (incidentally there is protein folding, SETI etc. at least this is useful), little things that jump and twitch, all theirs. We are steadily encasing ourselves in ever new forms of societal alienation and (what the existentialists would probably call) inauthenticity.

Don't.

There are two remedies to this ill. The first, is to start giving up these habits, downgrade your smart phone to a feature phone or give it up altogether (I have a mobile phone, but it spends a great deal of its time in my kitchen drawer) and look at the web etc. only in certain moments of the day. Do not be an addict, a slave wandering around, gazing down.

The second is the platform cooperative, open source remedy, we retain some of this infrastructure,

but maintain and own it 'ourselves' within cooperative or mutual structures. After all, Ivan Illich (read Energy and Equity, if you can find a copy) praised the telephone as an 'instrument of conviviality' and I, personally, do not believe that Utopia is something very Calvinist, horsehair shirts and imposed 'simplicity'.

Volunteering

Also known as slavery. For example, top of the Olympics shit-pile was paid about £450K per year, yet the 'gamesmakers' were conned into volunteering for something that was a complete waste of public money. I hesitate to think how many homes or hospitals wards could have benefited from £12 billion or so.

Also large NGO and large 'charities', same thing. To be brutal, we are propping up the current system by letting the government/banks starve people and then using major charities to feed them. Some proponents of accelerationism (qv) would probably agree. Local foodbanks and, in general, local solidarity, yes, though, preferably without transiting via the national charities.

It is also now true that heads of the larger charities style themselves 'CEO' and pay themselves large salaries. It's becoming a business. I notice that, as I write this, trust in UK charities has reached its lowest point. Also, currently the RSPCA and the British Heart Foundation are being examined by the ICO for various data offences including financial profiling, to see, presumably, whether there was more to be milked from their donors.

Walled Gardens

This entry should also read 'connecting the walled gardens' or 'closing the gaps'. In the 1980s and 1990s, internet email was not generally available, but we did have Compuserve and AOL (American Online). One of the 'great' things for these providers is that one could only communicate with a member of the same service. In modern terms a Gmail user could not communicate with a Hotmail user, for example.

Now, with Facebook especially, we're heading in the same direction, Facebook communicates (mainly) with Facebook. Also, like the Hotel California, one cannot conveniently leave, since a) the mass of people are on it b) at the moment there are no convenient alternatives, certainly at that scale. See also the entry on Federation for ideas about human scale, responsive, community owned alternatives to these monoliths.

Secondly, closing the gaps. When you search for something on Google (that neo-liberal display window) you will be directed towards Google's preferred 'shops' or Amazon. So the experience is seamless, all your 'needs' will be met by Google, Amazon, Facebook, eBay or Microsoft, no need to look elsewhere. I used to buy secondhand books from Abe Books, but Amazon (of course) bought it, so now I am reluctant to do so.

Governments could, of course, start to apply anti-trust statutes and instruments but seem reluctant to do so. In the case of the UK, they don't mind if these organisations don't really pay taxes either. Partly this is a problem created by UK tax code though, at time of writing about ten thousand pages.

So much for Thoreau's 'simpify, simplify'!

What is to be Done?

Что делать? This is a provocation, since it's the title of Lenin's pamphlet and previously the title of Chernyshevsky's (interesting) novel. However, most modern intellectual life is (conveniently) about analysis and searching for facts, not any kind of 'doing', what political theorists tend to call, pompously, praxis. So I've placed this here as a reminder, as Sartre did not say *to do is to be* but it's a useful thought anyway.

WMD

No, not those. I'm thinking about weapons of mass distraction, the TV, the Web, social media and mainstream press. All of these have a single agenda with slight addition of different flavours, government flavour, consumption flavour, and big business flavour for example.

However the underlying agenda is the preservation of the status quo, things must not change or, if they do, not in any radical or perceptible way. The deckchairs may get moved around a little though. There's always spectator sport in all its forms as an overlay of distraction too.

Utopia

Actually that should probably be in the plural, Utopias, or maybe (if you're a modal person) possible Utopias.

Marx wrote off the Utopians (my personal favourite is Fourier, who believed that the seas would be turned into lemonade) at the stage of the communist manifesto. He didn't believe in raising living conditions for all, just for the proletariat. However, I believe that Utopias, even if unachievable, are a worthwhile thought experiment and tool for debate. They receive very little attention also in speculative literature because dramatically, they can be dull. Imagine a book with 'they lived happily ever after' on the very first page.

However, they answer the question 'If you had a clean slate and magical powers, what kind of world would you like to live in?' Secondly to recycle a cliché, the good is the enemy of the best, current governments and administrations usually concentrate on the 'least worst' or 'what we can get away with until we are out of office and become highly paid consultants/speechmakers'.

So, we need to sit, a few times a year thinking and discussing our own Utopias as a method to give direction to any smaller personal projects. For example, I grow fruit and vegetables because I believe 'freedom' is something to do with (and it's a complicated subject) not being beholden to large profit-oriented corporate systems. I do not mind being beholden and gifting to my neighbours, for example. Also, I buy very little or nothing using commercial credit from banks, if I haven't got the cash, I do without, most or all of it I don't 'need' anyway. So that's me, but others may have valid ideas that are 'not that'. The important thing is to have some argument and direction about the future, for both oneself and one's family.

Incidentally, I love Winstanley's slogan 'Paradise Now, Diggers All'. Go him.