# 2AC

## Case

#### Solving material suffering is good – turns psychic violence

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Craig, “A Life Not Worth Living?”, Studies in Christian Ethics, SAGE

Contrary to those accounts, I would argue that it is death per se that is really the objective evil for us, not because it deprives us of a prospective future of overall good judged better than the alternative of non-being. It cannot be about harm to a former person who has ceased to exist, for no person actually suffers from the sub-sequent non-participation. Rather, death in itself is an evil to us because it ontologically destroys the current existent subject — it is the ultimate in metaphysical lightening strikes. 80 The evil of death is truly an ontological evil borne by the person who already exists, independently of calculations about better or worse possible lives. Such an evil need not be consciously experienced in order to be an evil for the kind of being a human person is. Death is an evil because of the change in kind it brings about, a change that is destructive of the type of entity that we essentially are. Anything, whether caused naturally or caused by human intervention (intentional or unintentional) that drastically interferes in the process of maintaining the person in existence is an objective evil for the person. What is crucially at stake here, and is dialectically supportive of the self-evidency of the basic good of human life, is that death is a radical interference with the current life process of the kind of being that we are. In consequence, death itself can be credibly thought of as a ‘primitive evil’ for all persons, regardless of the extent to which they are currently or prospectively capable of participating in a full array of the goods of life. 81 In conclusion, concerning willed human actions, it is justifiable to state that any intentional rejection of human life itself cannot therefore be warranted since it is an expression of an ultimate disvalue for the subject, namely, the destruction of the present person; a radical ontological good that we cannot begin to weigh objectively against the travails of life in a rational manner. To deal with the sources of disvalue (pain, suffering, etc.) we should not seek to irrationally destroy the person, the very source and condition of all human possibility.

## K

#### Liberatory strategies – responding to domination requires that we commit ourselves to producing a liberatory vision of the social fabric – accepting in advance the futility of our actions shuts down revolutionary potential

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Aziz Rana, “Freedom Struggles and the Limits of Constitutional Continuity,” *Maryland Law Review*, vol. 71, no. 4, 2012, pp. 1046-1051, https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2493&context=facpub.

More relevantly for the American case, the story of Thaddeus Stevens and David Davis indicates that progressive orientations to constitutional faith should be assessed pragmatically. Not only has the constitution-in-practice been riddled with injustice, as Balkin eloquently illuminates, the Constitution’s discursive structures have not been an unalloyed blessing for the freedom struggles of the past. Indeed, there is no reason to believe that although the radical potential of previous movements may have been hindered – at the most crucial moments – by the focus on constitutional narrative, similar fates will not befall future efforts. If the goal of progressives is a transformative and ultimately political one, faith should reside in the ideal of effective and equal freedom alone; this preeminent commitment may require both a politics of constitutional construction as well as one of constitutional rupture (the latter through democratic discretion). In a sense, progressive political faith should view its relationship to traditions, including constitutional ones, strategically – to be asserted when it serves emancipatory purposes and questioned or even rejected when it does not.

Such a call for progressives to be less tradition-bound and more willing to embrace constituent power (not to mention its very real political dangers) comes with a final note of caution. Twentieth century projects of redemption, both revolutionary anti-colonial ones and those grounded in constitutional faith, have all participated in a particular type of emancipatory history. As theorist David Scott writes, these redemptive accounts embrace a narrative structure of “romance.”77 They have presented “narratives of overcoming, often narratives of vindication; they have tended to enact a distinctive rhythm and pacing, a distinctive direction, and to tell stories of salvation.”78 Above all they have posited a future in which individuals can transcend oppression and unshackle freedom from existing modes of subordination – once and for all. Yet, the contemporary moment, both in the U.S. and in the postcolonial world writ large, has been marked by far greater historical complication. Post-apartheid South Africa offers just one telling illustration. The South African struggle embodied a classic story of anti-colonial redemption, complete with a revolutionary re-founding and a fundamental constitutional rupture. Yet, the postcolonial present in South Africa is much more equivocal than straightforwardly redemptive. Although constitutionally premised on racial equality, the country remains riddled with extreme economic hierarchies that are the persistent legacy of apartheid. In a sense, even total revolution and explicit constitutional rejection has not assured a future of salvation. Similarly, here in the U.S., the twentieth century’s great redemptive social movements – on behalf of organized labor, civil rights, and women’s equality – have transformed the political terrain but have also either receded in social power or left us with complex presents, marked by the overlap between formal equalities and substantive injustices. As Scott suggests, the twentieth century romance of redemption and untainted emancipation is now in many ways “a superseded future, one of our futures past.”79

The response among progressive should not be to give up generally on a utopian imagination. But it does suggest the value of binding this imagination to historical narratives of tragedy rather than to those of redemption or romance. By tragedy, I do not mean the notion that “due to some flaw or defect” our political and constitutional frameworks will necessarily commit us to “a disastrous course of action,” one that produces “great suffering and severe punishment.”80 Instead, I mean the idea, certainly embedded in the concept of a tragic flaw, that historical moments are marked by linked and mutually constitutive relationships of freedom and subordination. In describing the tragic in the postcolonial predicament, Scott writes:

[T]ragedy sets before us the image of a man or woman obliged to act in a world in which values are unstable and ambiguous. . . . [F]or tragedy the relation between past, present, and future is . . . a broken series of paradoxes and reversals in which human action is ever open to unaccountable contingencies – and luck.81

Thus, every political period, be it the Civil War, Reconstruction, or the current-day, presents its own hierarchies and dependencies. The goal of progressive action is to uncover those forms of dependence and to strive for liberation from them. But even successful projects of emancipation will produce their own “unaccountable contingencies” and generate new legal and political orders that knit together secured freedoms with emerging hierarchies, as post-apartheid South Africa and contemporary America suggest. This is the paradox of tragedy. It offers a narrative in which the struggle for emancipation is a ceaseless one, requiring an aspiration to utopia but never capable of being completely redeemed in history – as total emancipation is always and permanently beyond reach.

Besides speaking to the complexity of our postcolonial and post-civil rights times, such a narrative of tragedy better addresses the current moment in two ways. First, unlike stories of redemption, it provides a greater bulwark against the inclination to rationalize the injustices of the present, especially by acceding to a Whiggish faith in progress. Redemption stories, as Balkin himself recognizes and critiques,82 have the tendency to read history as a long-term trend toward justice, albeit halting and uneven. At a time when old forms of subordination persist in the U.S. and yet we see sustained backsliding from the very achievements of previous eras, a tragic narrative frontally challenges the complacent willingness to believe that conditions are ‘good enough.’ It does so by reminding us to be on continuous guard against the hidden and unwitting forms of domination embedded in our social practices, even in those practices – like constitutional construction and veneration – that we collectively esteem.

Second, and finally, an adequately tragic sensibility helps progressives to reclaim a space in their political imagination for democratic discretion. The grave problem of past revolutionary agendas (anti-colonial or otherwise) was a failure to appreciate fully the destructive violence generated by radical change. But if constitutional rupture must still be part of the progressive toolkit, an awareness of the tragic has the potential to cabin the worst consequences of discretion. Tragic discourse, by emphasizing the ambiguous nature of any transformative project, suggests its own ethic of political responsibility. Such a narrative makes ever-present the potential costs wrought by legal rupture and compels progressive actors to appreciate the political stakes when breaking from constitutional fidelity. A tragic sensibility demands of progressives both that they aggressively assert emancipatory commitments and that they embrace a judicious political ethics. Ultimately, it imagines an orientation to collective life animated by justice but tempered by the recognition of indissoluble paradox.

#### Individualism alone fails – politics is broader than the self – anti-politics makes structural violence inevitable

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(Gregory, “Illusory Alternatives: Neo-Anarchism’s Disengaged and Reactionary Leftism,” in *Radical Intellectuals and the Subversion of Progressive Politics*, ed. Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker and Michael J. Thompson, Chapter 5)

Neo-anarchists anticipate the charge that they are antipolitical:

The idea behind the charge of being **‘anti-political,**’ of political apathy, is deeply ideological, and goes hand in hand with neoliberalism. It is based on the unbreakable link between ‘modern democracy’ and party-like, structured representation. But the huge mobilizations have proved the media and researchers wrong. They are neither apolitical nor anti-political: they are against what been called ‘political’ in representative democracy, but has been experienced as anti-democratic. The mobilizations we have seen are laboratories of democracy.53

In this vein, they assert that their politics stems from a rejection of politics as it has been practiced and promise to usher in a new kind of politics. But the politics that they promise **is premised entirely on a conception of subjectivity** **as fully realized free self-expression**. In the preceding section, I tried to demonstrate the direction neo-anarchism takes by beginning with this premise. Once the neo-anarchist emphasizes subjectivity, they try to show that such a politics provides a **real alternative** by recourse to anthropological examples and anecdotal **evidence**. But, in order to fulfill its promise of the **emancipation** of subjectivity, such alternatives must avoid concrete claims. This breeds neo-anarchism’s anti-intellectualism. The intellectual suffers from the myopia of not being able to imagine alternatives without demanding their justification. Justification demands explanations that purportedly impose an order. The intellectual must distinguish the “is” from the “ought.” Such judgments are symptomatic of the intellectual’s arrogance. The intellectual, therefore, **practices the** same kind of domination through order and structure as the state. None of the neo-anarchists I have discussed suggest that their politics display such logic. Indeed, if they did, they would be betraying the very principle of structurelessness that informs their vision of politics.54 But, in order to make the claim that their politics is emancipatory, the neoanarchists have to state what is being emancipated. For the neo-anarchist, the only answer can be subjectivity. To the extent that **organization exists** or democracy is realizable, it is for the purpose of endowing a place for subjectivity within politics. Holloway states, “Revolutionary politics (or better, anti-politics) is the explicit affirmation in all its infinite richness of that which is denied.”55 For Holloway, Graeber, Sitrin, and Scott, it is the capacity for subjective expression as a true form of democracy that has been denied. If democracy is taken as the ability to freely express yourself—whether in drum circles or within loving spaces or through a “scream”—then what has been denied is true democracy.

Any form of politics that admits the reality of existing political relations is a betrayal of the promise of alternatives. The neo-anarchist does not have to confront or cope with such realities because to do so is to buy into the ideology of neoliberalism. The whole purpose of imagining political alternatives is to show that existing social relations do not matter. The state, the law, and the economy only matter insofar as they are that which the neo-anarchist opposes. But where the neo-anarchist parts ways with a Left that confronts these realities is that **they do not believe that such institutions can be transformed to serve the public good**. **They simply** reject **these institutions.** Whereas earlier generations of anarchists— rightly or wrongly—believed in political mobilization oriented toward redressing the exploitative tendencies of institutions, the neo-anarchist counters that freedom exists here and now. Like the old anarchists, the new anarchists “wish to ‘build a new society in the shell of the old.’” This is the extent to which they embrace the radicalism of their forebearers. They take their claims a step beyond by introducing the subjective politics of direct action “because in its essence direct action is the insistence, when faced with structures of unjust authority, on acting as if one is already free. One does not solicit the state. One does not even necessarily make a grand gesture of defiance. Insofar as one is capable, one proceeds as if the state does not exist.”56 Freedom exists so long as people decide to act as though it does.

It is in the notion of the **immanence of freedom** through the expression of subjectivity that neo-anarchism is fundamentally antipolitical. If one engages the neo-anarchist in debate over the necessity of political institutions, the viability of the alternatives they propose, or the content of their politics, they have ready answers by drawing the debate into either the extreme of highly specific evidence **of unique cases** or entirely unsubstantiated abstract categories. The interlocutor’s questions are manifestations of the thought processes that have already bought into the categories produced by ideologies of domination. **The mystical and evasive language** of neo-anarchism itself becomes a defense of its bona fide revolutionary radicalism. However, the question that must be posed against the neo-anarchist is whether or not people are already free and what the substance of that freedom is. Neo-anarchism relies entirely on a conception of political means, but not political ends. **Establishing ends requires** implementing a program**,** setting goals, evaluating the desirability and efficacy of these goals. But neo-anarchism is entirely based on a **subjective attitude** toward the world. It is concerned with the means by which one leads a free life, **but not the ends that such means seek to achieve.**

Political **institutions serve the function of** realizing political ends. These ends can either be conservative or progressive, **repressive or emancipatory**. Neo-anarchists deny this. They assert a politics of radical rejection. Such a politics, however, **is** not a solution **to the problems of economic inequality or political domination.** It does not reinvigorate a Left that has become increasingly politically powerless. **Rather, it is symptomatic of the very** malaise of neoliberalism **that it pretends to fight against**. There is nothing emancipatory about the retreat inward **into the self** **or an insulated community**. The neo-anarchists try to valorize a politics of helplessness. In a society that has become increasingly unequal because the economic imperatives of unconstrained capital have co-opted politics, neo-anarchists urge people to ignore these realities. Neo-anarchism is no less pernicious than the rampant irrationalism and mysticism that pervades our culture. It is the political equivalent of the abundance of self-help manuals. The works of the neo-anarchists endlessly invoke the bogeyman of neoliberalism, but they offer no analysis of what neoliberalism actually is or how it operates to lead to oppression. Political structures and economic systems do not need to be understood so long as one can reject them and live outside their influence.

**Consequentialism is good – focus on political purity at the expense of action reproduces violence – fails to answer the question of what we should do instead**

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(Jeffrey, Ends, Means and Politics, Dissent, Vol 49, Iss. 2, Spring)

As writers such as Niccolo Machiavelli, Max Weber, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Hannah Arendt have taught, an unyielding concern with moral goodness undercuts political responsibility. The concern may be morally laudable, reflecting a kind of personal integrity, but it suffers from three fatal flaws: (1) It fails to see that the purity of one’s intention does not ensure the achievement of what one intends. Abjuring violence or refusing to make common cause with morally compromised parties may seem like the right thing; but if such tactics entail impotence, then it is hard to view them as serving any moral good beyond the clean conscience of their supporters; (2) it fails to see that in a world of real violence and injustice, moral purity is not simply a form of powerlessness; it is often a form of complicity in injustice. This is why, from the standpoint of politics--as opposed to religion--pacifism is always a potentially immoral stand. In categorically repudiating violence, it refuses in principle to oppose certain violent injustices with any effect; and (3) it fails to see that politics is as much about unintended consequences as it is about intentions; it is the effects of action, rather than the motives of action, that is most significant. Just as the alignment with “good” may engender impotence, it is often the pursuit of “good” that generates evil. This is the lesson of communism in the twentieth century: it is not enough that one’s goals be sincere or idealistic; it is equally important, always, to ask about the effects of pursuing these goals and to judge these effects in pragmatic and historically contextualized ways. Moral absolutism inhibits this judgment. It alienates those who are not true believers. It promotes arrogance. And it undermines political effectiveness.

#### Our strategies must focus on the state as a locus for changing the political economy – individual-level resistance is a tool of Reaganomics and displaces structural change needed to solve capitalism

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Kriistina Brunila and Päivi Siivonen, “Preoccupied with the self: towards self-responsible, enterprising, flexible and self-centred subjectivity in education,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 66-67, https://sci-hub.tw/https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01596306.2014.927721

Adult education as a survival game?

I have had emotional problems and all kinds of problems, but this project has taught me how to survive. (Pasi)

Some time ago I did not know if I would survive but I have learned to get rid of old survival models and to use new ones, better ones. (Teppo)

During their interviews, Pasi and Teppo positioned themselves as students who had become in touch with their real selves, free from previous emotional and psychological chains by becoming survivors. Davies (2005) has argued that the neoliberal discourse has shifted in a significant way towards survival being seen as an individual responsibility. This is a crucial element of the neoliberal order – the removal of dependence on the social combined with the dream of wealth and possessions for each individual who gets it ‘right’. According to Davies, vulnerability is closely tied to individual responsibility. Workers are disposable and there is no obligation on the part of the ‘social fabric’ to take care of the disposed. As well as success, the individual remains responsible for any failure and its negative effects.

Kenneth McLaughlin (2011) has written how political claims today are being increasingly made on the basis of experienced trauma and inherent vulnerability while the previous political demand for recognition has resulted in therapeutic solutions. In his view, the survival discourse is a consequence of the therapeutic ethos (McLaughlin, 2011). Moreover, in several educational programmes the discourse of survival is already central (Brunila, 2014) in the way that the therapeutic discourse of vulnerabilities and emotional problems is able to find a powerful expression in the position of the victim, and the solution is to become a survivor.

In the therapeutic and enterprising discourses above, students such as Pasi and Teppo comply with such demands in order to be recognised as ‘properly’ flexible, active, self-disciplined and responsible. The ideal subjectivity is built on ideas of what is desirable, what is possible, and how to be heard. These extracts describe how young adults’ existence is shaped, and how as a consequence they begin to position themselves as survivors (see, also, Brunila, 2014; McLaughlin, 2011). The position of a survivor appears to be seductive. The survivor concept allows for a flattering representation of the emotional self, for it suggests that despite intense pain and suffering, these individuals have survived. This makes survivor status all the more authoritative and remarkable, as Furedi (2004) has written. The problem here is that in order to be heard, the young person must play the role of a victim. The position from which people are heard is established through recognising their vulnerabilities, injuries and emotional problems including low self-esteem, anxiety and stress. The assumed identity is one of victimhood or traumatisation; it is the therapeutic identity required for recognition (see, also, McLaughlin, 2011). This risks depoliticising the problems people face in society such as unemployment, lack of education and poverty.

Conclusion

We have argued that therapisation including both the therapeutic and enterprising discourses is effective in linking political rhetoric and regulatory programmes to the ‘selfsteering’ capacities of the subjects themselves (cf. Rose, 1998). The removal of dependence on the social is combined with the dream of empowerment, wealth and possessions for anyone who gets it ‘right’. However, instead of autonomous and rational individuals, what therapisation actually produces is vulnerable and fragile as well as imperfect and incapable subjectivities. When vulnerability is tied to individual responsibility, there is no obligation on the part of the ‘social fabric’ to take care of the disposed. Failure as well as success is up to each individual to bear.

In an era of individualisation and the decline of wider collective identities (Furedi, 2004), people are forced to rely on their own resources. Understanding one’s self becomes crucial. The vocabulary of both enterprising and therapeutic discourses offers a means to self-discovery. The ideal therapeutic discourses offer to free each of us from our psychic and emotional chains so that we can become enterprising and take control of ourselves and our lives. In practice, the result seems to be a ‘vicious circle’ where the individual is constantly obliged to improve his/her ever fragile and vulnerable self in perpetual competition with others. The risk of not achieving what is expected is therefore ever present. This shows how choice stems from the condition of possibility.

#### The state is a productive locus for politics even if it can’t “change” – state policy change is essential to transform our political economy, reform is never an end in itself

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Amna A. Akbar, “Demands for a Democratic Political Economy,” *Harvard Law Review Forum*, vol. 134, 2020, pp. 98-106, https://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/134-Harv.-L.-Rev.-F.-90.pdf.

I. NON-REFORMIST REFORMS

As a matter of rhetoric, the left often fashions itself as against reform and outside of formal politics -- characterizations that liberals and scholars echo. 51But today's left social movements are turning to demands, reforms, and policy platforms. 52This is not a rejection of electoral and legislative politics: it is a cautious embrace, marking a shift for the emergent left. The demands are amplified by an increasingly organized strategy to elect left and socialist candidates to office, to challenge the Democratic Party's ties to corporate money and the billionaire class, and to redefine the realm of the possible. 53Congressional Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, and the growing Squad are supported by a developing constellation of organizations focused on electoral strategy -- and these elected officials have become important amplifiers for radical demands. 54The turn to reform undoubtedly reflects the defeat of the revolutionary politics of the New Left and Black Power era -- itself an index of frustration with what the civil rights movement achieved 55-- as well as a recognition of the immensity of U.S. military and police power that rose up to crush movements here and around the world. 56But it also reflects a sober assessment of the limited scale of left, working-class, and poor people power amid decades of state repression and the rise of the neoliberal agenda Klarman documents. 57It is a bid for power that recognizes that mass disenfranchisement is central to the elite's hold on the state and the economy. A growing number of organizers now understand the need to organize poor, working-class, Black, brown, and immigrant people to effectuate transformational change. 58

Reform has long been a central question in debates about left and socialist strategy, 59with a range of terms to capture the aspiration for a reform program aimed at a larger project of transformation. 60Organizers are increasingly invoking non-reformist reforms, the term coined in the 1960s by French economist-philosopher and socialist André Gorz. 61In Strategy for Labor, Gorz defined a non-reformist reform as one that does not comport with "capitalist needs, criteria, and rationales." 62Instead it advances a logic of "what should be" and requires "implementation of fundamental political and economic changes." 63Whether the change is "sudden" or "gradual" is immaterial: non-reformist reforms require a "modification of the relations of power," in particular "the creation of new centers of democratic power." 64

The non-reformist reform framework is prevalent in abolitionist organizing against the prison industrial complex 65and deployed by those who embrace racial justice, anticapitalism, and socialism more broadly. 66In Golden Gulag, Professor Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls for non-reformist reforms, which she defines as "changes that, at the end of the day, unravel rather than widen the net of social control through criminalization." 67Through decades of campaigns against carceral infrastructure, abolitionist campaigns have produced rubrics demarcating an approach to reform focused on reducing the scale, power, tools, and legitimacy of the carceral state. 68The focus on the ideological scaffolding of carceral control -- the equation of policing with safety, for example -- signals a keen understanding of the interlocking ideological and material infrastructure of our lives. 69In turn, it suggests, like Gorz did, that a revolutionary program of reform must continually deepen consciousness around the violence and exploitation of the status quo as it advances the possibility of alternatives.

While Gorz is remembered as a champion for non-reformist reforms, his work is decidedly ambivalent: a "very clear dividing line" will not always exist between "reformist" and "non-reformist reforms." 70Assessing a demand for "the construction of 500,000 new housing units a year," for example, would require an assessment of whether the proposal involved "the expropriation of those who own the required land, and whether the construction would be a socialized public service, thus destroying an important center of the accumulation of private capital; or if, on the contrary, this would mean subsidizing private enterprise with taxpayers' money to guarantee its profits." 71The non-reformist reform does not aim to create policy solutions to discrete problems; rather it aims to unleash people power against the prevailing political, economic, and social arrangements and toward new possibilities.

But whether something is non-reformist or reformist is about more than the nature of the demand and its particulars: it is also a question of how the campaign is waged. Consider another example: abolition of the death penalty. The conventional liberal approach emphasizes that death is too great a power for the state, and reassures the public that life sentences will continue to ensure safety of local communities. In this guise, the campaign aims to shrink the state's carceral power in one particular way but does not question mass human caging. As the campaign attempts to undermine the death penalty, its logic shores up the legitimacy, righteousness, and necessity of life sentences. 72A non-reformist approach would frame the problem of the death penalty as stemming from the larger violence of prisons and policing and its historical continuities with lynching and enslavement. Life without parole then is not the solution, it is illegitimate carceral violence: what abolitionist organizers in Pennsylvania have dubbed "death by incarceration." 73

If the same demand can be framed or implemented in reformist or non-reformist ways, the line is undoubtedly murky in practice. But this does not make the attempt to distinguish futile. Instead it clarifies that reform projects are contradictory gambits if the aim is transformation: they always have the possibility of reifying the status quo. Nonetheless, there are essential distinctions for developing transformative programs of reform that aim to undermine the prevailing order in service of building a new one.

The hallmarks of non-reformist reforms are three. First, non-reformist reforms advance a radical critique and radical imagination. 74Reform is not the end goal; transformation is. 75Non-reformist reforms are "conceived not in terms of what is possible within the framework of a given system and administration, but in view of what should be made possible in terms of human needs and demands." 76In advancing an agenda to meet human need, non-reformist reforms advance a critique about how capitalism and the carceral state structure society for the benefit of the few, rather than the many. They also posit a radical imagination for a state or society oriented toward meeting those needs.

By contrast, reformist reforms draw on and advance critiques of our system -- whether that be capitalism or the carceral state -- that do not question underlying premises or advance alternative futures. In fact, reformist reforms "reject[] those objectives and demands -- however deep the need for them -- which are incompatible with the preservation of the system." 77Here, one can think of the quick rejections by so many of defund the police or the Green New Deal -- despite the mounting evidence that liberal reforms have done little to limit police violence or to slow the speed at which we are hurtling toward increasingly frequent environmental disasters. 78Liberal reformism effectively shields the status quo from deep critique. 79The end goal of liberal reformism is just that: reform.

The non-reformist reform then provides a framework for demands that will undermine the prevailing political, economic, social system from reproducing itself and make more possible a radically different political, economic, social system. For abolitionists, the underlying system to undermine is the prison industrial complex and the horizon to build toward is abolition democracy. For socialists, the underlying system is capitalism and the horizon socialism. In theory and practice, these are intertwined, variegated, and debated political projects. 80

I am suggesting neither a false neatness within nor artificial distinctions between rich left traditions. But I mention it to make a point so obscured in legal discourse: that approaches to reform reflect ideological commitments, critiques of or acquiescence to underlying systems, aspirations for the future, and theories of change. Reforms communicate analyses of our conditions, tell stories about possibilities, and contribute to dynamic relations of power. So the target and object of the non-reformist framework will depend on one's political project and analysis, as will whether one accepts a reformist or non-reformist orientation.

Whereas reformist reforms aim to improve, ameliorate, legitimate, and even advance the underlying system, 81non-reformist reforms aim for political, economic, social transformation: for example, socialism or abolition democracy. They seek to delegitimate the underlying system in service of building new forms of social organization. Rather than relegitimate, they seek to sustain ideological crisis as a way to provoke action and develop public consciousness about the possibilities of alternatives and our collective capacity to build them together.

Second, non-reformist reforms must draw from and create pathways for building ever-growing organized popular power. 82They aim to shift power away from elites and toward the masses of people. This is a matter of substance and process, from where the demand comes, the vision it advances, and the space it creates. Whether through demands on the state or the workplace, non-reformist reform " always requires the creation of new centers of democratic power[,] . . . a restriction on the powers of State or Capital, an extension of popular power, that is to say, a victory of democracy over the dictatorship of profit." 83In their focus on power, non-reformist reforms challenge liberal legal frameworks that tend to obscure power relations. 84Non-reformist reforms are about building the power of people to wage a long-term struggle of transformation.

In contrast to reforms formulated by expert elites, non-reformist reforms come from social movements, labor, and organized collectives of poor, working-class, and directly impacted people making demands for power over the conditions of their lives and the shape of their institutions. 85People living under perilous conditions must generate analysis of those conditions, and advance solutions, in collective formations. 86 Collective processes -- whether in organizations, unions, or assemblies -- become schools of democratic governance in action: processes of enfranchisement and exercises in self-determination that build power and motivate further action. 87

Third, non-reformist reforms are about the dialectic between radical ideation and power building. Non-reformist reforms come from contestatory exercises of popular power. 88They attempt to expand organized collective power to build pathways for transformation. As such, they are not in themselves about finding an answer to a policy problem: They are centrally about an exercise of power by people over the conditions of their own lives. They aim to create "a vast extension of democratic participation in all areas of civic life -- amounting to a very considerable transformation of the character of the state and of existing bourgeois democratic forms." 89

Because the end goal is building power rather than identifying a policy fix, non-reformist reforms can only be effective when pursued in relation to a broader array of strategies and tactics for political, economic, social transformation. That includes protests and strikes as well as political education, mutual aid, organizing, and the building of alternative institutions.

Along with other strategies and tactics, reforms are in dialectical relationship with transformation: deepening consciousness, building independent power and membership, and expanding demands. 90As Gorz put it, reforms have to be imagined as part of a longer-term "strategy of progressive conquest of power by the workers." 91

#### And, their reading of heterohistory is false – political commitment affords no advanced notice – we cannot know in advance whether we will produce a rupture from the past, but refusing to act at all is disastrous

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Lewis Gordon, “2: Re-Imagining Liberations,” *Freedom, Justice, and Decolonization*, Routledge 2021, pp. 29.

Concluding Considerations

A crucial feature of political commitment is that it is an existential paradox. Unlike moral commitment, which involves doing the “right thing,” political commitment affords no advanced notice or assured principle of verification. Her actions could have produced an arrogant child who is shortly thereafter killed, or a fighting, committed spirit who suffers the same fate. Political commitment requires acting without knowing the outcome and acting for those whom one ultimately will never know. A six-months’ glimpse into the life of the child is not the same as knowing the man he was to become. This insight is similar with regard to political action. No political act offers guarantees save one: it will affect others whom one would ultimately never know. What, then, could one hope for with such action?

The first thing to consider hits the heart of critical diversity. Those who benefit from our actions may be so radically different from us that we may even recoil at the discovery of whom they turn out to be.

Second, those who suffer from our actions may be those beyond our expectations.

Third, the first and second considerations lead to the realization that the epistemic act of trying to imagine the recipients of our actions collapses into the first desire of love, which would be an affirmation of the self. Put differently, it would involve simply positing versions of ourselves into a future whose condition of possibility requires the emergence of people who are both not us and also, possibly, not like us.

Fourth, this means acknowledging, through political commitment, the production of freedom that transcends us. This act of political commitment is simultaneously a manifestation of the second form of love. It offers the paradox of loving, by virtue of action, anonymous generations to come.29

The fourth kind raises the question of building a future, even in the face of circumstances that do not guarantee our having one. In effect, the message, politically understood, is this: learn we hope, but try we must.

#### That makes the alt a political choice to read history in a particular way – that choice reproduces the violent status quo and dooms alt solvency

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Richard Ned Lebow, “2: Pessimism in International Relations,” *Pessimism in International Relations: Provocations, Possibilities, Politics*, eds. Tim Stevens and Nicholas Michelsen, Palgrave MacMillan 2020, pp. 29-30.

The optimism–pessimism binary, I contend, does injustice to both orientations. I have tried to demonstrate this in the case of pessimism. The binary ignores, or at least largely downplays, the considerable, often profound, variation in the everyday meanings of pessimism and theoretical constructions of it. The binary all but disallows the possibility that pessimism and optimism can be bridged or combined, or that people and theories can seek a middle ground between them. It narrows, rather than broadens, our understanding of both orientations towards life. By denying what they have in common, how they might be bridged, combined, or superseded if treated as thesis and anthesis in a dialectic, it creates a false or exaggerated juxtaposition of them as competing and opposed views of life. Finally, the binary encourages us to associate certain psychological characteristics and behaviour with each view, fostering stereotypy and stigma.

It is no accident that the categories of pessimism and optimism were formulated in the late eighteenth century, or that Voltaire and the Jesuits were associated with their development. Enlightenment thinkers believed in the ability of reason to understand and master the world. In their drive to order the physical and social worlds they created or elaborated a number of stark, rigid, either-or distinctions, among them existence-essence, mind-body, subject-object, and liberal-conservative. The pessimism–optimism binary is a conceptual artefact intended to reduce fuzziness and complexity to order and simplicity.

This binary is very much a product of the historical moment. Enlightenment thinkers and their descendants rejected religion as a superstition and one that stood in the way of progress. However, the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment projects of liberalism and socialism are Christianity in a secular form. They promise to restore the Garden of Eden through the rational ordering of society. Pessimists regard these projects as the ultimate expression of hubris. Being an optimist or pessimist today is placing a bet on history and human nature and buying into or rejecting a teleology. This is particularly evident in IR theory.

Nietzsche warned that the greatest form of tyranny is becoming prisoner of a single way of thinking. This is likely to happen whenever philosophy believes in itself and attempts to create a world in its own image.80 Theories of all kind attempt this, including those that address IR. They restrict our horizons and blind us to complexity, nuance, impermanence, and to the creativity of humans in finding new ways of addressing their needs and expressing themselves. One way to free ourselves from such tyranny is to interrogate our analytical frameworks and their starting points. This volume’s inquiry into pessimism is a useful step in this direction.

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#### State is the only way to solve our impacts – the alt can’t stop businesses from emitting carbon, stop price gouging of essential medicines, or respond to escalating right-wing violence

Monbiot 8 – Political & environmental activist, recipient of the UN Global 500 Award for outstanding environmental achievement, author of several award-winning books on environmental crises and corporate capture in politics, reporter for The Guardian Neoliberalism.

George Monbiot, August 22 2008, “Climate change is not anarchy's football,” The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/22/climatechange.kingsnorthclimatecamp

If you want a glimpse of how the movement against climate change could crumble faster than a summer snowflake, read Ewa Jasiewicz's article, published yesterday on Comment is free. It is a fine example of the identity politics that plagued direct action movements during the 1990s, and from which the new generation of activists has so far been mercifully free.

Jasiewicz rightly celebrates the leaderless, autonomous model of organising that has made this movement so effective. The two climate camps I have attended – this year and last – were among the most inspiring events I've ever witnessed. I am awed by the people who organised them, who managed to create, under extraordinary pressure, safe, functioning, delightful spaces in which we could debate the issues and plan the actions which thrust Heathrow and Kingsnorth into the public eye. Climate camp is a tribute to the anarchist politics that Jasiewicz supports.

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But in seeking to extrapolate from this experience to a wider social plan, she makes two grave errors. The first is to confuse ends and means. She claims to want to stop global warming, but she makes that task 100 times harder by rejecting all state and corporate solutions. It seems to me that what she really wants to do is to create an anarchist utopia, and to use climate change as an excuse to engineer it.

Stopping runaway climate change must take precedence over every other aim. Everyone in this movement knows that there is very little time: the window of opportunity in which we can prevent two degrees of warming is closing fast. We have to use all the resources we can lay hands on, and these must include both governments and corporations. Or perhaps she intends to build the installations required to turn the energy economy around – wind farms, wave machines, solar thermal plants in the Sahara, new grid connections and public transport systems – herself?

Her article is a terrifying example of the ability some people have to put politics first and facts second when confronting the greatest challenge humanity now faces. The facts are as follows. Runaway climate change is bearing down on us fast. We require a massive political and economic response to prevent it. Governments and corporations, whether we like it or not, currently control both money and power. Unless we manage to mobilise them, we stand a snowball's chance in climate hell of stopping the collapse of the biosphere. Jasiewicz would ignore all these inconvenient truths because they conflict with her politics.

"Changing our sources of energy without changing our sources of economic and political power", she asserts, "will not make a difference. Neither coal nor nuclear are the 'solution', we need a revolution." So before we are allowed to begin cutting greenhouse gas emissions, we must first overthrow all governments and corporations and replace them with autonomous communities of happy campers. All this must take place within a couple of months, as there is so little time in which we could prevent two degrees of warming. This is magical thinking of the most desperate kind. If I were an executive of E.ON or Exxon, I would be delighted by this political posturing, as it provides a marvellous distraction from our real aims.

To support her argument, Jasiewicz misrepresents what I said at climate camp. She claims that I "confessed not knowing where to turn next to solve the issues of how to generate the changes necessary to shift our sources of energy, production and consumption". I confessed nothing of the kind. In my book Heat, I spell out what is required to bring about a 90% cut in emissions by 2030. Instead I confessed that I don't know how to solve the problem of capitalism without resorting to totalitarianism.

The issue is that capitalism involves lending money at interest. If you lend at 5%, then one of two things must happen. Either the money supply must increase by 5%, or the velocity of circulation must increase by 5%. In either case, if this growth is not met by a concomitant increase in the supply of goods and services, it becomes inflationary and the system collapses. But a perpetual increase in the supply of goods and services will eventually destroy the biosphere. So how do we stall this process? Even when usurers were put to death and condemned to perpetual damnation, the practice couldn't be stamped out. Only the communist states managed it, through the extreme use of the state control Jasiewicz professes to hate. I don't yet have an answer to this conundrum. Does she?

Yes, let us fight both corporate power and the undemocratic tendencies of the state. Yes, let us try to crack the problem of capitalism and then fight for a different system. But let us not confuse this task with the immediate need to stop two degrees of warming, or allow it to interfere with the carbon cuts that have to begin now.

Jasiewicz's second grave error is to imagine that society could be turned into a giant climate camp. Anarchism is a great means of organising a self-elected community of like-minded people. It is a disastrous means of organising a planet. Most anarchists envisage their system as the means by which the oppressed can free themselves from persecution. But if everyone is to be free from the coercive power of the state, this must apply to the oppressors as well as the oppressed. The richest and most powerful communities on earth – be they geographical communities or communities of interest – will be as unrestrained by external forces as the poorest and weakest. As a friend of mine put it, "when the anarchist utopia arrives, the first thing that will happen is that every Daily Mail reader in the country will pick up a gun and go and kill the nearest hippy".

This is why, though both sides furiously deny it, the outcome of both market fundamentalism and anarchism, if applied universally, is identical. The anarchists' associate with the oppressed, the market fundamentalists with the oppressors. But by eliminating the state, both remove such restraints as prevent the strong from crushing the weak. Ours is not a choice between government and no government. It is a choice between government and the mafia.

Over the past year I have been working with groups of climate protesters who have changed my view of what could be achieved. Most of them are under 30, and they bring to this issue a clear-headedness and pragmatism that I have never encountered in direct action movements before. They are prepared to take extraordinary risks to try to defend the biosphere from the corporations, governments and social trends which threaten to make it uninhabitable. They do so for one reason only: that they love the world and fear for its future. It would be a tragedy if, through the efforts of people like Jasiewicz, they were to be diverted from this urgent task into the identity politics that have wrecked so many movements.