Exiting Modernity

by

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The Practice of Exit

This will be the series that garners some attention. That might sound like an arrogant statement, but the truth is, I know that people love the repetitions that I will be expounding upon within this series. Exit, escape, anti-consumption, dropping-out, freedom, perspective-change etc. The average Joe[1] loves that stuff. The problem with these actions are that they are exactly that, *actions.* Now, I'm not actually implying some form of political revolutionary praxis here...far from it. What I'm going to be talking about here is the why and how of personal, individual *practice.* Because much like learning a language, a trade, magick, a skill, meditation or anything else worth its salt, it is always something that has to be practiced, in that manner one has to be constantly (or as much as possible) *practicing* the worldview I will be expanding upon. If you think, for just a second (I know it's hard) on any of those ideas I just put forth: Exit, escape, dropping-out, perspective-change etc. you'll notice that each one of these in its stagnant form as language is actually a semantic trick. In their existence as written/digital words they seem so complete, finished, done, something you can just clip-on, wear, accessorize or acquire, even, dare I say it...purchase.

It's been there since you were little, this idea in the back of your mind that basically anything you need/want can simply be acquired via some form of purchase. Whether that's knowing the right people, having the right amount of money or doing the correct amount of work. Well here's a sombre lesson for you my friends, meaning doesn't exist on any form of binary barter system. You consume TV, you subconsciously consume adverts, consume education (commented on in length in a later post), consume ideals and consume notions, traits and habits. Up until now all unquestioned, I make these assumptions about you because I wish someone had made them about me, caused me to well up in a rage and explode in a bout of cathartic frustration at the situation bottled up - I want to leave, and I don't know how!

There are some things that of course cannot be purchased, this we are told time and time again by those attempting to sell us those things. *Can't put a price on love* says the dating app, *can't buy happiness* says the holiday company, *can't put a price on peace* says the cover of that new Mindfulness book. *The best things in life are free!* Is belting out of the radio, right before the adverts start. Of course, this notion of 'free' is in relation to cost and not constriction. If we turn that phrase a on its head just a little and take the implication that the best things in life *are free* (as in freedom, not free beer), then we're getting closer to the idea that I am beginning with here.

When I state that 'exit' needs to be practiced I mean it, for exit*ing,* dropp*ing* out and chang*ing* your perspective are all processes and anything process based generally needs to be practiced, no man ever got the performance, ritual or action correct on his first try, exiting - which is the word I'll use throughout this series to denote what has been historically entitled 'Dropping out of society' - is not an event in itself, it can't be, otherwise it is simply a movement. One is either consistently exiting, stuck or - in very rare cases - individually enlightened/content/at peace with the cosmos. You harboring the ideals of anarchists and egoists in itself is not exit is it? You cannot stop there, otherwise all you have done is grown a little narcissism. You can now go around and look at how dumb everyone is, even though you're still within the same spaces of them, what have you applied?

An early digression here on revolution, communal action and mass praxis. I am not for them. Shock horror, this isn't another one of *those* blogs, the ones which extrapolate on the same

bullshit leftism *deus ex machina*, or in this case *deus ex civitas.* Just because there's a lot of you doesn't mean that it will change anything. Communal action is *fantastic* in relation to the local. Other than that it's merely the act of selling out your own *need* for discipline to the herd. Yes, that's right, even your perfect social justice group *is a herd,* even you anti-group-think punks are a herd, any group aligned behind a *clear* political motive should be suspicious to you, to your *self.* What do they want with me? What are they doing that I couldn't have done myself? Let us turn to a short analysis of one of my favorite poems to show you the perils of group-think:

Archaic Torso of Apollo - Rainer Maria Rilke

We cannot know his legendary head

with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso
is still suffused with brilliance from inside,
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,

gleams in all its power. Otherwise
the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could
a smile run through the placid hips and thighs
to that dark center where procreation flared.

Otherwise this stone would seem defaced
beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders
and would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:

would not, from all the borders of itself,
burst like a star: for here there is no place
that does not see you. You must change your life.

Rilke here writing of a decaying marble statue that has lost its head, but in every other way it is perfect, beautiful. You can never know the head of the movement you're 'within', because much like the way in which contemporary politics has been taken (on a ride not entirely of its own creation) all herds are either without a shepherd, or cannot spot the man who is herding him, as such, *"We [you] cannot know his legendary head".* You are however a *part* of the brilliance of the torso, that entire which supports the head (the vision, the direction) itself, and so, *you must change your life.*

Why do you not simply cast yourself off from the directionless torso of the masses and birth yourself a new as an individual head? The reason is quite simple. Being part of a group takes no action, discipline or responsibility on your part, or any part of the others, hence why herds are like Apollo's torso, perfectly sculpted, but nothing without a head to sculpt it. The head can exist unto itself.

In this manner consumerism is a torso without the possibility of head, for the multitude of (falsely created) desires can never find a coherent direction, it is a multiplicity of bullshit symbols and expectations. Be wary that you don't fall for its trap of expecting something to *just happen.* These are the images they sell you, these are the symbols with base meaning. Purchasing clothes, a new car, a big house, fancy books, fancy food, the latest phone or any other detritus of modernity is not only the act of purchasing a distraction, but the act of purchasing a distraction which allows you to feel as if you have taken responsibility.

Instead of taking the time to learn about your local surroundings and history you buy a car to drive from new place to new place, instead of learning how to cook you buy take out or junk food, instead of learning about your *own* body and what it can do you buy fancy clothes to cover up your own failings, instead of learning to think for yourself you buy a big TV to think for you. These objects of modernity are conclusions which allow you the illusion of taking responsibility for your life, when in reality you have done the exact opposite, you have sold yourself, your time, to the laziness of your whim, to whichever random subconscious falsely created desire took hold that day. You hope, you scroll, you search for that *thing* which will be the *final* thing to complete everything, the final car, house, TV, book etc. 'This will be the one' you think subconsciously, but it never is.

Why do you do this? Because the last sentence of Rilke's final stanza *You must change your life* is most likely your worst nightmare. And it is easier to change literally *anything* else, than change your *self.* You know how painful that's going to be, you know how difficult it's going to be, and in those moments of terror you retreat into your comforts. This is why, as I stated earlier, one must *practice* exit. There can be no object of exit. Exit is only a conclusion in the sense that it opens your mind to new avenues of thought. If your taken exit has lead you into a dead-end, or locked room, you've been duped. Nothing which leaves you stuck or stagnated can be considered exit. If you feel you are existing on the sidelines of life, the answer is not to be found within objects or material, but in personal, individual experience.

Practice: In the same way that you have control over whether or not *you* buy that Marvel figure, you also have control over whether or not you don't, or even care about such a thing - you *even* have such control over your actions that you stop and ask, 'Do I actually *enjoy/like/ want* to do this or am simply being pulled by something?' Of course the primary reason you've done/acquired any of *these* things is because you believe in some form of status, or, you believe you are being watched. For if you are being watched, you matter, you're worth watching, you *exist.* Ask yourself if this actually matters? Do you sincerely care what other people *think* of you? How much time do you spend thinking of yourself as opposed to thinking about other people? Probably around 90-95% of the time, right. As such, other people are usually doing the same, ergo, they're not thinking of you. No one fucking cares about your shit. Do things with yourself, your body, experience life, even in the most minor, inconsequential ways - not because you wish to be watched, recorded or envied, but because experience is at the heart of existence, and personal experience can neither be sold, bought or commodified.

You *must* practice exit as much as you possibly can, and at its cantankerous heart exit is simply a matter of questioning, critiquing, deconstructing and destroying presumptions, whether they're social, cultural, political, personal or familial - You *can* leave, the only reason you don't is because your current comfort supposedly outweighs the risk of exit, this is sunk cost. Ask yourself a couple of questions, firstly: What's worse, existing in an almost comatose state of being for the sake of comfort for the rest of your life, or taking a risk and attending to the dangerous heart of true experience? And secondly: Were you *really* put on this Earth to be fucking *comfy?* Or, in short: Is it worth prolonging a life you detest?

But much like anything that has to be practiced mastery takes time, and mastery of exit isn't something that can ever truly be attained, at least in an abstract sense. Of course, if your ideal exit is a homestead, van-dwelling, country-living etc. then sure, go for it. But don't forget to question *those* assumptions too. In this manner Exit is critique. By practice I mean question, and by question I mean everything. Modernity is a culmination of rackets that

provide you with presumptions, presumptions which make you anxious, depressed, lonely and alienated, unless of course you buy *into* the presumption, the comfortable, herd-accepted assumption that you need X, Y and Z to be normal. Modernity created your inner anxiety and also created its purchasable cure, Exit allows one to bypass the cure and destroy the idea of infection; Modernity is Oz behind the curtain, and currently you're admiring his tricks.

[1] A note on the concept of 'The Average Joe'. I don't seriously think such an average person exists, everyone is unique in some way, and I don't mean that in a 'everyone is special' soppy way. Only that, everyone's journey through life has been unique and as such that makes the conception of average as a unified truth, impossible. With that said, such an idea in relation to what Nietzsche called 'The Herd' most definitely *does* exist. The average Joe, as I see it, is someone who simply has never - even in the most minor way - questioned their presumptions about life, and as such they're entire existence is a manner of being pulled by whichever force has the greatest pull at that moment, be it a Marvel film, a margherita pizza or a lifelong career, in needn't matter, the average Joe is *unquestioning.*

Willing Slaves to Restriction

The overarching idea which is being written of here is meaning. It has been one of the buzzwords of the alternative scene since the very beginning of Modernity. A phase of history I would argue begins roughly at the end of the 19th century, that is when the clear technological lineages to the distractions which are ruining are daily lives were born: Transport, mass-media, mass-produced food, state education, standardization etc. In part, Modernity is the era in which all of our spontaneous attitudes, creative passions and imaginative weirdness is constricted - usually covertly - due to the fact its very nature is unpredictable. The reason Modernity is against anything (usually) is because that thing is unpredictable, and that which is unpredictable is far more difficult to control, because ultimately if you have no idea what something or more importantly some*one* is going to do, how can you possibly make preparations to control it/them.

Meaning has now turned into this mythical entity, held up in reverence by the disillusioned, lost and young as that which is to be sought after for its own sake. But meaning has a two-fold existence which is often overlooked, and its between these two meanings *of* meaning where we can begin to understand that it is actually ourselves who hold the key to our own cage. The first meaning (of meaning) is the one employed by your mind quite literally every second of existence. The screen you're reading this on has a meaning to you in a nostalgic, technological and knowledgeable sense, a meaning which works in relation to a whole host of other meanings *you* have placed onto other things within your world. To a certain extent these forms of meaning are useful, *very* useful in fact, we wouldn't be able to traverse the world in any coherent sense without a complex circuitry of meaning. However, within modernity meaning is haunted, haunted be the toxic wills of headless ideas, ideologies and groups.

The property that you're within is just that (now), a property. Which means something entirely different to a home, a house, a building or simply a place to sleep. Whether or not you believe these meanings have infiltrated your subconscious understanding of your surroundings

needn't matter, because the ideas/meanings themselves have already infiltrated the communally accepted language so well that such stresses, anxieties and depressions that come with such linguistic baggage as 'property' are already affecting you. Think of a space, any space, or space at all. I imagine you are either thinking of some empty white room, or a space which has a name: School, park, house, shop, road, path etc. The horrid fact is that not only do we abide be these constrictions constantly, but we in fact adore them, they bring us comfort. What is more comforting than knowing your place, constantly. However loud you shout that you're free, however many 'meetings' you *attend* to discuss freedom, or whatever steps you take to actualize further freedom are always thwarted if you have yet to understand your own internalized patterns of restriction.

If you *are* to take the time to think of contemporary 'free' spaces, the conclusion is usually areas/spaces such as parks, fields or routes - it is not coincidental that all of these revolve around nature. Except these spaces are not in themselves free, for the park has its gates, the routes have their edges and the fields have their presumed purpose. *This* is where we walk, *this* is where we play and *this* is where food is grown, that is how it is, that is how it is, that is how your mind speaks to you subconsciously.

This leads me to the second meaning *of* meaning, the one we're sold everyday in some form or other. The meaning of life, what does your life mean, what does it all *mean!?* We ponder, ponder, ponder and get no closer to any real answer, but we push forward anyway. The unfortunate reality here is that the first and second meaning are very slowly being combined, and for a large majority of the population (speaking primarily of the West here) have already been combined. That is, one's meaning in life is built upon notions of restriction. If only I could just get *that* job, then I would be someone/somewhere. If only I could purchase *that* car, then I'd be seen as X. If I only could go to *that* country, then I'd be X. You have allowed the meaning in your life to be constricted by meanings imposed by others. Those others include: peer groups, corporations, ideologies, politicians, events, followings, the media and more. You have allowed the socially presumed meanings of the herd to construct the faux-meaning of your *own* life. Ask yourself why you never questioned any of this? Why did you never take the time to sit down and think on whether or not you agree with these things? You thought you were free, but you were only free within the confines of other's meanings.

Many state, often which quite loud certainty, that they are indeed free, and lead innovative, playful and joyous lives. Yet these people never take more than a second to question the most basic assumptions of their supposedly *free* activities. It is a cliche that begs repetition, but what accounts for the large amount of play today - both for adult and child - is simply their parents giving them the technology they believe to be fun, a belief which possessed them via advertisements, media, magazines, music etc. People don't seem to enjoy, play or create that which they are naturally predisposed to, but they wait, in a state of boredom for something to fill the void of their lives. Usually this means sitting watching TV until work begins again, scrolling through an App or social media feed until work begins again, or finding another method of escape (Drugs, alcohol, porn etc.) until work begins again. Man's idea of play and enjoyment has been replaced with escapist hedonism, of course this is nothing new, but it *begs* repetition. Fear not, there *is* more to life, and it's found in...going backwards.

"The words 'we can't go back' are just another religious invocation of the great god Progress." – John Michael Greer

Very few people within modernity will admit it, but deep down they're virulently against the idea of going backwards, in *any* way. Whether it's politically, culturally or materially. Our assumptions surrounding technology are as follows: New technology is better than old technology, more technology is better than less technology, those that promote older ways of doing things are doing so out of nostalgia or some archaic form of conservatism. We *believe* that Progress is good in *all* cases. Rarely do we look at the results of progress and assess them based on their own merit, and even more rare is a comparison between the new and old ways in relation to meaning or happiness.

It seems almost *impossible* to many that they could now exist without a smart-phone, games console or a TV[1]. It is *assumed* that we can never go back, why is this? Well, it is because everyone else does it, and - quite depressingly - normalcy is extremely comfortable. It's nice to know you're 'in on it', in on the thing that *everyone else* is doing/taking part in. No one wants to feel left out, and yet we still do? Smart phones have allowed us to connect to every piece of information ever recorded at an instant, but we retain none of it. They have allowed us to 'connect' to all of our 'friends' in an instant, and yet when we meet up with our friends they all stare at their phones...texting *other* friends. We were warned about TVs rotting our brains back in the 70s, *"I'm the slime coming out of your TV set!"* (Zappa). We didn't listen, we were too busy focusing on the gimmicks, explosions and crack-like programming of the TV set. There was a time when most of you reading this *didn't* have a smart-phone, a fact that has been all but erased from our memories.

The complex bind that we've got ourselves in is as follows. We *were fine.* Perhaps a little bored, but then there's nothing wrong with boredom, it is in fact *helpful* in the journey towards finding yourself, if you're never bored, you're constantly entertaining yourself with distractions. Anyways, as we grew up and hit the age of 3-7, when we could begin to construct and verbalize what is was we supposedly needed/wanted we began to do so. However, as previously stated, the large majority of these wants were really micro-possessions taking control of our thoughts via the airways of modernity (adverts, media etc.) and so we began to be programmed to want things we never really wanted, or even *thought of* in the first place! Our desires were constructed. If you never saw or heard of an advert for a waterpark would you want to go on a waterslide? Not only were our desires - such as to-be-entertained, to-be-happy, to-be-fulfilled - but the same channels and circuitry that constructed our desires simultaneously gave us the answer to that desire...what a strange coincidence.

Such constructions *of course* always fit into the standardized system of time that we've been funneled into, and lead to believe *is* time itself. We go on about the ol' 9-5, which allows us the 'free' time afterwards to watch the same TV show as everyone else, the one we've always wanted to see...apparently. The very idea of travel and holidays fits into the allocated holiday time our workplace allows us. Standardized time, the destroyer of spontaneity. Many talk of 'getting away', but rarely ever do. Their idea of a break is merely to do the same thing they usually do on the weekends in a different climate. At the bottom of the of 'getting away' is the idea of escaping 'all this', meaning the meaningless, unfulfilling trap of modernity. Unfortunately it's restriction all the way down. This next paragraph is going to be long and *extremely* repetitive, but it's meant as an exercise in all the assumptions of modernity you take part it on a daily basis, usually without knowing it.

You wake up in *your* home, it's *yours* and you feel secure there. You never really thought about whether you needed security, of course a secure place to sleep is needed, but why did you need all those rooms, were you ever *intent* on acquiring all the possessions you now

own, or did you simply feel obliged to do so? Your neighborhood is called that, but you've never really seen or experienced any event which correlates with the notion of neighborly you were sold. A 'nice neighborhood' is one where everyone stays inside, and causes no trouble. You get out of your bed which is full to the brim with blankets and pillows, the mattress is so soft you never want to leave. Some people sleep on the floor, did you know that? That's something you *can* do if you want. I did for a while and it made it easier for me to get up in the morning. Stop assuming comfort and niceness is your endgame, you were sold that lie and you can dismiss it if you like. You take a nice warm shower and cover yourself in 2-3 products to impress other people, people you rarely get the chance to properly speak to anyway. Many people take cold showers. You go downstairs, prepare your breakfast and sit on the sofa, switching on the TV, because why *wouldn't* you? What else are you going to do? Just sit there and enjoy food you have no clue as to how it's made? How preposterous! You get ready for work, putting on clothes which you'd never want to wear nor purchase for the sake of making a good impression. You get in your car and take the 10-40 minute commute to work. 'This is normal' you think to yourself 'everyone has a commute', you never think on the amount of your wage that is going towards commuting or car maintenance. You can get a lower paying job closer to home and save money if you like, that is a choice *you* are free to make. You arrive at work and say the basics to those who you frequently work with. No conversation, you realize, has much merit to it.

"How are you?"

"Pretty good, you?"

"Yeah good thanks."

"Have you seen [insert new superhero film here]?"

"Yeah man, it's wicked!"

"Yeah I know right."

No one ever really talks to each other properly except in rare bouts of unavoidable emotional duress. You eat your lunch and everyone looks at their phones. You go back to work and do some random stuff on a computer. Your job is obedience and little more. Unless you're in a job which directly effects people's lives in some manner, your job is probably complete bullshit, and you know it. Clicking random things on a screen to create the outcome desired by your superiors isn't a job, it's willing slavery. 'That's life' you say to yourself, followed with an internal sigh. Well here's the news, it's only life if *you* want/will it to be. You finish up your day and begin the commute home. You can't wait to get home and watch TV, zone-out, you deserve it you tell yourself, knowing deep down that you really don't. You don't feel anywhere near as alive, exhausted or worked as you could, but it doesn't matter, the monotony has drained your mental abilities to the point where you need a TV to think for you...apparently. You get home, order takeout and eat that in front of the TV, you don't even focus on the show itself because you're too busy scrolling on your phone, too busy getting jealous at other's lives for no reason, too busy distracting yourself from the miserable reality you have willingly walked into. Time for bed, you don't sleep well. You know why, but wont admit it to yourself. You doze off. You wake up and start it all again.

Practice: There's a way out, but you need to dwell on this for a while, or at least until your frustrations reach maximum level and you literally cannot take it anymore. Dwell on each and every assumption you make. Channel that energy, when it comes, into the practice of exiting. Which is what exactly, well, for now something quite simple. List 100 things you do *everyday* - I would just mentally go through your day and write each thing down - and then list next to each one an the primary assumption relation to that activity from the list below (or devise your own list):

Health

Money

Status

Normalcy

Habit

Once you've completed the list of *100,* yes, all 100, note which assumptions you abide to the most. If a clear assumption comes up outside of those 5, which you're partaking in routinely, feel free to add in your own category. Once you've completed all that, meditate for just 5-8 minutes of why you feel obliged to bow down to that category, why do you assume so much around money, health, status etc. Enjoy.

[1] Even though these are all electronic and screen-based this isn't the specific area I'm targeting, they're just the clearest examples of our pressured attachments.

Deus Ex Civitas, The Coma of Modernity

Humans, plural, shall never learn. The destiny of forced homogeneity is death and/or nothingness. We are often told that we *should* learn from the lessons of the past. Usually we are told this by someone in such a position that it is made clear to the discerning listener, that they most definitely have not learnt from the lessons of the past, whatever they may be. By that I mean, when you hear someone state that we should learn from the lessons of the past it's usually spouted by someone in power, and as such someone who can ultimately tailor or eschew those 'lessons' for whatever gain they wish, in fact, they can make the lessons up if they so wish. The fact *we* still continue to state that *we need* to learn from the past means we haven't, I find the whole thing silly. If you're waiting for some *deus ex civitas* - God from the community - then you've already missed the point.

Most of us spend our entire lives like Vladimir and Estragon, the protagonists of Beckett's novel *Waiting for Godot.* Two helpless chaps who are waiting for a person/entity/thing called Godot, and until he shows up they muse on existential dilemmas and ponder life in general. My synopsis is terrible, but it's the aimless waiting here that is the point. You're waiting for something, even if you don't know it, chances are that 'thing' is death. Those of you who've read a little and are a little more woke than others might be waiting for a revolution, others might be waiting for capitalism to unshackle itself from the states' last grasp, some waiting for love, or whatever, you get the idea, you're sitting about with this awful idea in the back of your mind that things just...happen. And perhaps the only lesson of history we've taken onboard is a bastardized form of the ol' *"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good*

men do nothing." (JFK). Well, it's bastardized in such a way that now the lesson we have taken onboard is as follows, *The only thing necessary for the triumph of boredom, unfulfillment and discontentment is that you do nothing.*

I can't blame people for attending to this form of *waiting,* from day one (once again) it's instilled within our very nervous system, the idea that change is this *other/outside* force that acts on its own accord and will enter your life if it so decides. Now, I am not averse to other agencies, forces and pulls throughout the cosmos, however, to sit idly and hope such a force pokes you out of comfort is a silly thing to do. We were taught by TV shows, video games, fantasy novels, the education system and society that things just *happen.* The hero happens to turn up, the villain is always planning *something,* politics is a series of (always) *big* events, books promoting the chosen one, history taught as linear progression of happenings and friends and family discussing gossip, rumours and events of their lives. This entire dynamic pushes the idea that things just *happen,* all the time, everywhere, everyone is having things happen to them. It pushes the idea that change isn't a very slow - often quite dull - process, but is a series of bangs.

As much as I cannot blame people for this constructed ennui in-itself, I can blame them for their willingness to roll around it, even revel in it. People who wish for X, whether it be money, a slim-body, a nicer job, a calmer life, never really go for it in any direct way. Usually they rely on third-party apparatus to mollycoddle them along even the most banal changes in their life, as if without a support-system-for-change, nothing can happen. Those losing weight attend weight loss groups, those trying to make more money search through others ideas and mutate them, those looking for a nicer job look at the stereotypical nice jobs they've been taught to think are nice, those looking for a calmer life search forum posts on how to de-stress, meditate or minimize. We assume that if others don't *know* what we're doing then there's little point in doing it.

Other groups shall tell you that the real enemy is the forces of separation between you and everyone else, except, in reality that's just a covert way of forming their very own 'They' or group, isn't it? The constant push and pull between communal/herd ideas is a tough one to escape. The quickest route out of this form of thinking is to stop believing in change as an abstraction distant from your-self. Others will tell you to expend you energy on attempting to destroy the systems which you believe are altering your life in unfavorable ways. Now, I'm not saying there aren't elements of the 'system' which are out to get the common man, there most definitely are, and they make up the bulk of the system. However, I don't believe that shoveling the large majority of one's problems on an abstraction called 'the system' is helpful either. It's an easy-out.

I harp on about the problem with groups a lot, and it was a *big* thing a many years back, the whole 'anti-conformist' angle. I guess it always has been, the irony is of course that those who proclaim that they are 'anti-conformist' are just creating a new form of thinking to conform to, see: Punks, Communists, Traditionals, Conservatives, Carnivores, Vegans etc. It's extremely easy to believe something that has molded itself to seem correct from every direction. "I do X, and X is correct!" The tough thing to admit is this. You have a very limited amount of energy, and the way in which you use it is solely up to yourself, do you truly believe that channeling you energy into *another* pithy group of idealists is going to alter your own life in any *real* way? Or are you once again failing to take responsibility. I don't wish to sound like Peterson here, but 5 early morning rises, trump a thousand imagined revolutions. take your energy away from blaming the other, and channel it into your own feats.

I imagine that you are now thinking, well yes, that's all well and good saying this, but what are we supposed to *do* then, what are you alluding to? If you thought that then you're already very close to a helpful mode of thinking. 'What are we supposed to *do*.' should be changed to 'What *can I* do.'. You know very well there's plenty of things you most definitely *can,* or could - with a little preparation - do to increase you fulfillment in life. Quite honestly there's no excuse to not. It's the realization that expending your energy on group-think, is really expending your energy in much the same way you do for your employer, allowing it to become the product of someone *else's* end-goal. Stop looking for validation or vindication. No one cares you started taking cold showers, or sleep on the floor, or eat a certain diet, or live in a van, just do it. Assimilating these ideas into 'the system' is giving them the leeway to become assimilated further and become banal identity's like everything else has. Remember when people used to just 'have beards'? I do. But now everyone with a beard is quickly dragged into this mind-numbing identity surrounding beards. The same goes for any TV show, any popular book, anything really, it's all becoming identity.

Identity has become quite an easy target of late, but it begs a few words. Identity, as it is commonly understood these days is merely a culmination of one's consumption habits. 'Well I'm really into Netflix, dogs, pizza, gin and romcoms.' or 'Bearded, love football, clubbing and watching Arnie films.' Humans are at a loss of what to do, say or even think about if it is bereft of a connection to something someone *else* has created. Rarely do we discuss something the person we are talking to has created or written, to do so would seem strange. Rarely do we discuss how we're feeling or thinking, what meaning we are finding and our own paths to contentment. Thought has become caught between possessions and standardization.

Practice: If you so wish you can cause ruptures in the cosmos. The way in which you do this is quite simple. Disagree with a notion so commonplace that it is never even thought about. You are indeed allowed to think cars and roads are stupid, that dishwashers and lottery tickets are bought by morons, that bottled water is at best absurd, that themeparks are at heart a form of hell. And you are of course allowed to interject, and throw passion, love and beauty into other's lives. The way in which you do this too is quite simply. Mention something minor or inconsequential you saw that you found sublime. Say that you saw a squirrel on your route here and he looked jolly, you saw a few cows chewing the grass and they seemed content, tell your friend that it is always great to see them. This is usually enough to knock people out of the coma of modernity.

All group-think is living in the future. What are we *going* to do, *when* are we going to do it, *when* will the community finally be *ready* and on and on they drone. Your lives must be the space and time unto which you take control, for it is the *only* area of which you have any direct effect, however, you have *all* the effect here. You can, quite literally, do whatever you so wish. You can begin by altering the way in which you think. Away from a form of expectation, hoping and desiring towards objects and groups which you half-believe might alter things, towards a way of thinking which admits that changing one's own life will be tough, there will be sacrifice and there will be many moments of discomfort, but that form of danger shall allow you to grow quicker than anyone sat of the sofa. There's a saying in the fitness community that walking even 100 meters is *still* lapping someone sat on the sofa many times. As such, altering just one facet of your life is still a step closer to purer freedom of the self than anyone engrossed in the latest soap opera.

In my recent discussion with Dmitry Orlov he noted that (to paraphrase), *If you are to remove all the vices from most people's lives what do you have left? A shallow...entity.* It might be

very difficult to swallow, but ask yourself this extremely difficult question: *Without my vices, who am I?* Without your phone, your clothing taste, your quirky possessions, your taste in media, your book taste or your general object obsession, what are you? Is a large part of what you do, say and revolve around primarily in relation to acquiring, disavowing or generally interacting with objects of entertainment/vices? If the answer is yes, fear not. There are most definitely aspects of yourself which are *not* to do with escape, vices, entertainment or consumption, you've just forgot them, it's a little sad, but they can be retrieved, but that in itself can be quite a lot of work, I shall extrapolate on how one can begin this process in another post; but for now I shall tell you this, there is no more worthwhile task than the re-enchantment of one's life and the shedding of modernity's toxic baggage.

Neo-Asceticism

If when you walk into a supermarket you don't have a deep feeling of revulsion, terror and absurdity, I have news for you, you're very much still *within* the system. In the same way there's nothing smart about *smart*phones, there's nothing super about *super*markets. The word itself implies that it's a market which is super, in reality of course this is a complete lie. Many of you may have been to an actual market, you get multiple options of the same product usually from people who make the product, you can learn about what it is you're going to consume. Whereas in a supermarket you're basically entering a racket. If you don't buy their products, from *their* chosen selection you're shit out of luck. Eat this, or die. That might seem a tad reactionary to those who've yet to think about the way the world works for more than a second, but ask yourself, if tomorrow the supermarkets didn't have food, where would you get it from? There's two issues here, one on relating to one's reliance on industry and the other relating to one's attachment to brands and desires. I wont be extrapolating on the first issue here, the second has been expanded upon in post one, but here I shall add a little more theory and a lot more practice.

The practice I'm about to speak of will seem somewhat extreme, but once you begin it becomes cathartic and you shed the baggage of modernity quite quickly. It's an idea I've roughly hashed out in my mind, written of in one post here, and shall finally write of in some length now. The idea is called Neo-Asceticism. I more often than not detest the 'neo' label on almost everything it has attached itself to: Neo-Dada, Neo-Luddite etc. Usually it's a way of stating that you are something (Dadaist, Luddite) but wish to make it a new, usually because you wish to make some money or become popular. The prefix neo- should, as such, always be of suspicion. However, I must expand upon Neo-Asceticism to justify my claim here.

"Asceticism is a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from sensual pleasures, often for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals. Ascetics may withdraw from the world for their practices or continue to be part of their society, but typically adopt a frugal lifestyle, characterised by the renunciation of material possessions and physical pleasures, and time spent fasting while concentrating on the practice of religion or reflection upon spiritual matters." (*Wikipedia*)

We've heard of these ascetics, monks living in the mountains surviving off donations of food and meditating for days on end. That isn't what I'm getting here. See, if one is to read that Wikipedia article you notice that the large majority of Asceticism took place prior to the 18th century, in a world where sensual and material pleasures had not reached anywhere near the normalcy they have within our current society. Ascetics it seems were commonplace in

ancient times, it was understood that there were those who took it upon themselves to exit as thoroughly as possible. What is of importance here is what they were exiting *from.* Historically ascetics were not leaving anything close to the absolute hellscape we inhabit now (there are exceptions of course, Gandhi, for instance). They were reacting to a life that most people nowadays would consider pretty bare-bones, so the Ascetic's task was of course spiritual.

So where the Neo- of Neo-Asceticism takes its stand is in the combination of Asceticism and contemporary modes of normalcy. Neo-Ascetics understand that to want less within current times is to covertly state that one wishes to exit the system. For the religion of the system's entire is Progress, all believe that Progress is good and more Progress is good, and so to state, as the Neo-Ascetic does, that one should question their desires, want for less, consume less and perform a daily critique of production and consumption is to question the great God Progress. In this manner Neo-Ascetics understand the arrow of techno-cultural progression is forever aimed towards more and more progress, and so the Neo-Ascetics task is not an active one in the traditional sense, but an action brought about by contrarian passivity. We cannot physically exit the system - individually - by following the arrow of Progress, nor can we exit by performing some archaic notion of revolution, nostalgically looking back towards some primitive time. What the Neo-Ascetic does is become mindful, especially in relation to habits of desire.

The Neo-Ascetic understands the predicament they are in and does not allow themselves to become frustrated at their situation, but merely stares into the heart of need and sweats of its false desires like a short lived fever. When the Neo-Ascetic walks into a supermarket they do not treat it as the average Joe does, as a form of therapy, a communal ground of interest and intrigue, a place that one *wants* to be in, no. The Neo-Ascetic perceives the supermarket (and all mass shopping) for what it is, one's inability to be bored and alone converted into purchase. Needs are not bought out of boredom, desires are. The Neo-Ascetic prepares for the casino-esque mental barrage emanated by the supermarket and stares internally, not allowing themselves to succumb to the pull of - seemingly - random urges.

You may believe that the pursuit of the Neo-Ascetic is overblown, that I am silly for making a simply shopping trip seem like a spiritual hurdle. Well more fool you for disallowing enchantment into your life. Everything is related to one's path in life, and how you deal with the most simply dilemmas is how you shall deal with the big ones; how you do one thing is how you do *all* things. As such it is the task of the Neo-Ascetic to both be aware of his habits with regard to consumption, but to also be mindful of the ways in which he is pulled to and fro by the dynamics of consumption itself. To ask oneself *why* they thought for a second they needed that X, Y or Z.

The Neo-Ascetic doesn't have to go to *great* lengths to become sturdy in their frame. They needn't walk off into the woods or mountains and eat bugs for the rest of their life, however, there are thoughts, patterns and habits they need to become aware of. Quite frankly, *all* purchases are up for scrutiny. From buying vegetables, to buying petrol. Buying vegetables one might think of where they came from, why *do* they buy those particular ones, how much they cost and *why* they want them...*who* told them they needed them? Buying petrol one might think of *why* you need to constantly buy it and whether or not that purchase has become a matter of assumption as opposed to what one actually wants. Once the Neo-Ascetic begins to perform this mindfulness a few times it will become quite easy, even fun. You'll find quite quickly that much of what you own and buy is *additional.*

The distinction between the Ascetic and the Neo-Ascetic begs further emphasis. The Ascetic adopts an extremely frugal lifestyle as to avoid the distractions of material as a means for spiritual enlightenment. Whereas the Neo-Ascetic adopts an extremely critical attitude towards material as a means to shed the distractions of modernity itself, the Neo-Ascetic doesn't wish for spiritual enlightenment - in their role as a Neo-Ascetic - but wishes only to use frugality and critique as a means to return to a self which modernity hasn't tampered with.

It used to be that to deny TV, junk food, mass-medication, drugs, alcohol and the libertine-lifestyle was merely to state that one was not interested in that which the modern had to offer, the quick, the easy, the thoughtless pursuits marketed to empty minds. And maybe this is now simply a matter of repetition, but to deny these comforts is not seen as denying the extra, but it as seen as denying the norm, the standard, the default. If one is to not have a TV, if one sleeps on the floor, wears the same clothes, eats simple meals, does not drink or do drugs, then that person is seen as an outsider. Such a fate is inevitable, and if you don't wish to become somewhat fringe, then this path isn't for you - but you wouldn't be *here* if you weren't already doubting all this. Who is your master, comfort and normalcy, or your own will?

Defeatist: If You Have to Eat Shit, Best Not to Nibble

I noted previously - though not *as* clearly - that such phrases as 'the system' or 'the man' are unhelpful. As fun as it is to "Stick it to the man!", we know that in reality it's an act of transparent narcissism. This will of course offend those who have made it their life's work to 'stick it to the man', but the very fact there are a multitude of *groups* (not just individuals) who have spent quite literally every waking hour protesting, acting-up and generally causing a nuisance for the system, shows that their brand/type of activity is nothing for the system, it doesn't even cause the system to shrug as it blows them away like pesky midges.

There are those who will say that I am being defeatist, more than likely those who have let themselves become swept up in a shriek of the herd, stood there wearing leather jackets and Doc Martins, calling me a sell-out. Let me explain. It is quite evident that protesting does nothing. The only thing it does is make others annoyed at your cause. You're in their way, they certainly dislike their job, but they dislike being annoyed on the way to it even more - their job isn't optional, your incessant virtue-signalling is. What does work is not preaching, but teaching. (Unfortunately we lack many good teachers).

Anyway, regarding the label of 'defeatist':

"If you have to eat shit, best not to nibble. Bite, chew, swallow, repeat. It goes quicker."

I am not telling you to eat the system's shit *willingly,* only that the quicker you eat its shit now, the less you'll have to eat later, potentially you'll get into a situation where you no longer have to eat any shit at all. Enough of these coprophilic metaphors. The point is, unless you truly wish to become a homeless vagabond (absolutely nothing wrong with that, seriously.) you *are* going to have compromise, and no amount of idealist pamphleteering is going to change the situation at *present.*

One of the primary traits of the system is that it is a positive feedback loop where almost anything is concerned. In fact, I'd even argue that it is a multiplicity of separate positive-feedback loops. What I mean by this is that if X is working *for* the system, the system tends

(almost always does) to amplify X until it no longer can, the feedback is wherein the system almost amplifies the compounded X - think, cumulative interest. How does this apply to reality, or your everyday life, let's have a look-

Remember that band you liked as a kid? Let's say for the sake of this piece the band was called *Hellthread Deluxe,* or HD for short. HD were sort of folk-metal, singing about high school nostalgia, rebellion against the system by way of destruction and cooking recipes involving peaches. All of a sudden HD got really big, this annoyed you because you based your entire identity around HD and now your interests seem vacant to you, anyway. The system - or parts *of* the system - notice how popular HD are becoming and unconsciously attach the feedback process to the commodity-entity that is HD. It begins to get infected.

All of a sudden there are HD cookbooks everywhere. All of a sudden there's folk-metal bands everywhere, but of course, these were 2 of the physical things HD promoted, surely they can't capture the feeling of HD and sell it? All of a sudden there are TV stars, radio hosts and popular names who are becoming more and more rebellious and destructive; the world flips and that authentic feeling you once got from HD records fades into a miserable, obnoxious static. *"They don't get it though, not like I do!"* you say to yourself. You'd be correct in this judgement, but you can't complain without seeming like a gate-keeper.

A few years pass and HD shirts are so commonplace that you've all but erased them from memory. You begin to latch onto obscurer interests in a hope that a certain amount of artistic and creative ambiguity will keep those interests safe from the grasp of the system, but it never works. If the system can, it will.

We're seeing this most recently with the rebirth of the 'Simple Living' movement, which in the late 80's and 90's was called 'Voluntary Simplicity'. It's a movement I'm fairly fond of, but much like our folky friends HD, it's going through the system as we speak. But succinctly, Simple Living is...living simply. Not minimalism or asceticism, a medium between the two both emotionally and physically, an understanding that we can have comfort *and* also avoid many of the pitfalls of consumption. Of course the system sees that Simple Living has the potential to cause disruption to its way of being - economic/profit disruption - and sets to work subsuming Simple Living into its framework. "GET YA SIMPLE LIVING BOOKS! You think you're living simply *now,* wait until you purchase our simple living kit, just £399 today!" The system finds *some* way to tell you and make you believe that you're not 'doing' simple living correctly, or as the other simple live-rs are. It preys on your anxiety in relation to status and popularity, not only does it think you're missing out on something, but it makes you believe you're missing out on something it just told you the existence of!

"Have you heard of X?"

"No I have n-"

"OMG! Everyone has X, how come you don't have X!"

Ted Kaczynski's *The System's Neatest Trick* explains this process more succinctly than I ever could:

1. *For the sake of its own efficiency and security, the System needs to bring about deep and radical social changes to match the changed conditions resulting from technological progress.*

2. *The frustration of life under the circumstances imposed by the System leads to rebellious impulses.*

3. *Rebellious impulses are co-opted by the System in the service of the social changes it requires; activists "rebel" against the old and outmoded values that are no longer of use to the System and in favor of the new values that the System needs us to accept.*

4. *In this way rebellious impulses, which otherwise might have been dangerous to the System, are given an outlet that is not only harmless to the System, but useful to it.*

5. *Much of the public resentment resulting from the imposition of social changes is drawn away from the System and its institutions and is directed instead at the radicals who spearhead the social changes.*

Back to the beginning of this piece, for those who would call me defeatist in my acceptance of eating the system's shit, do you see now that no amount of hand-waving and alternative living can meet with the great cybernetic God that is 'the system'. So for those of you who call others sell-outs, or who belittle others who have utilized the system to promote their work, I say you are blind and just as guilty. And yet there is little to be guilty about. Unless one is gratuitously reliant on the system for their identity and survival, then one cannot be blamed for dipping their toes in the system's murky water. Utilizing the system is simply a material act, and the point of this series is to cultivate a *mindset* away from material, towards thought about the acts themselves. What's outside of the system is your thoughts, and ones own ingenuity can emancipate them emotionally from a lot of unnecessary toil. To paraphrase John Michael Greer, why would I waste my finite energy on worrying about that which I cannot change (the system), when I *could* be using it on that which I 100% *can* change...my*self!*

Exiting the system in an instant is *extremely* dangerous. And guess what, the system doesn't care if you do or don't. It doesn't think about *you,* it only notices your productive and consumptive inputs and outputs, so why not *use* the system to as much of your own advantage as possible? As long as it doesn't cause another's life to become miserable, I say drain the system of its energy, it would do - and does - the same to you in a machinic-heartbeat. And so, do not drop-out in any romantic fashion, often ruining your life in the process, but plan, wait and find ways to work within the system until you find a chance of exit. In the meantime, cultivate a mindset which the system loathes, one which this system cannot fathom, a mindset which enchants the world!

The system takes you - often quite literally - as a number. This is something you will have to put up with, but as such, you are also some*one* the system will have to put up with. I am most definitely not stating *any* form of activism here, that word is cursed. Nor am I for rebellion, protesting, marches, vandalism or manifesto-making - if you're doing these after 15 you need to grow up and actually *do* something, not just act as if you are. So what can you do then? Well, back to being a number. Everything in the system is ordered, numerical or quantifiable. A loaf of bread = X, there's 3 Y in Z, a car does X amount of miles, this straight road is X miles long etc. The system thrives on that which it can control in some quantifiable way. This is exactly why it hates humans so much, they're - as children at least - free and spontaneous, and it's very difficult to control something which is unpredictable. I call this form of spontaneity or freedom, 'enchantment'. What the system wishes to do is to dis-enchant your world, to make you dis-believe all the quirky things you used to, make you believe it's *way* of doing things is in fact *the only way.* Of course it isn't.

Practice: You are allowed to do as you please. Even the most subtle act of rebellion can cause ruptures. There are acts which seem as if they wouldn't change a thing, but in their subtly they teach people that they can in fact...just *do that* if they want to. What am I talking of here? Well, as a semi-eccentric theorist (Read-by-normies: Nutjob, oddball, weirdo) I'm fairly used to trying our peculiar things - usually body experiments relating to diet and breathing. Ever have someone walk in on you meditating in your undies, it certainly shows them that there are indeed people who do these things, ever had someone question why you drink honey and boiling water at night (I like it), same goes for any kind of strange tea or beverage, food or pastime. Your practice to sincerely admit to someone something you do that you consider peculiar. Enjoy reading Norse Mythology, let 'em know. Enjoy watching those 14 hour train journey videos, explain to your colleagues why. You believe in fairies...for real, let 'em know. The point of this exercise is to instill in yourself the idea that:

1. *You're in control.*

2. You can just *do* stuff, if you want to.

3. To teach others that the world isn't as stagnant as it seems.

4. To help others break out from the think layer of repressive gunk covering their brains and lives.

There's *always* something to be said for holding your corner. Even if no one listening agreed, even if they all thought you were odd, it was worth it. You found that they're either not the people for you or aren't confident enough to come out of their shell. You also might have found a quiet supporter who didn't want to speak up, but felt happier that you did. There is a lot to be said for admitting your supposedly weird outlooks publicly, if not only because it might have made it clear to someone listening that they are not alone, even though, with all their heart, they believed they were.

No Personal Gods, No Personal Masters

The education system played the cruelest trick on you and you never even noticed it. The trick was in the way in which the education system treated authority. If you're to think back to your schooldays - I am once again speaking primarily of the West - you can probably remember a lot of adults on power trips, bureaucratic systems which seemed nonsensical to you and rules which, clear as day, were there only to assert that there are those who will tell you what to do...just because they *can.* At the time school's authoritarian system seemed so cruel, demeaning and frustrating, not only because it was, but because they wanted it to seem this way. Only a Beano-esque caricature of authority such as that found within the Western education system could possibly make life after school *seem* free...

Which is the exact reason they needed to test you, to push you to the absolute limits of capture. If you're to think back now, notice how utterly absurd it is that one had to *ask* to go to the toilet, to ask if it was OK to perform a natural human function! If you're school was anything like mine the majority of pupils went along with this, they understood it was *how things are* and so thought nothing of it. Now, to the point. If we're to take this absolute culmination of minute control techniques and place them in relation to the reality of life after education, it suddenly makes that life seem very free. No longer do you have to ask to do,

well, anything really. You can buy what you want, own what you want and - within limits - do what you want. The problem of course is that this newfound 'freedom' understood in relation to your previous prison-esque existence makes even the most mundane tasks seem like a dream (to some).

It always amazed me that post-education I found that a large majority of my acquaintances genuinely enjoyed tasks such as insurance, traffic, post-office trips, taxes etc. Nothing makes modern Western man feel freer than chatting about the chains he shares with others. It makes them feel very adult if they mention these things, and to feel like an adult makes them feel free. Except, this entire notion of 'adult' was created in relation to both the education system's desires for you and its means of authority. Or in short; I bet you can't wait to leave here and be an adult. And that's how they get you. Usually the education has left enough frustration in one's system that this illusion of freedom doesn't wear off for an entire lifetime, and so people find themselves assimilated into more complex constrictions and believe them to be freeing. Often the more complex they are, the freer they feel. I mean, think of the lengths of time, patience and mental-fatigue people go to with regard to sorting out even the most minor of status or monetary benefits. "I spent just 3 hours today and managed to get £100 off my car insurance!" Humanity, a cosmic emetic!

"When you invent the ship, you also invent the shipwreck; when you invent the plane you also invent the plane crash; and when you invent electricity, you invent electrocution... Every technology carries its own negativity, which is invented at the same time as technical progress. " (Paul Virilio, Politics of the Very Worst)

Virilio should have extended his metaphor - as beautiful as it is - to freedom, as Dmitry Orlov has:

"*The freedom to be car-free is not generally regarded as important, while the freedoms bestowed by car ownership are rather questionable. It is the freedom to make car payments, pay for repairs, insurance, parking, towing and gasoline. It is the freedom to pay tolls, traffic tickets, title fees and excise taxes. It is the freedom to spend countless hours stuck in traffic jams and to suffer injuries in car accidents. It is the freedom to bring up neurologically damaged children by subjecting them to unsafe carbon monoxide levels (you are encouraged to have a CO detector in your house, but not in your car—because it would be going off all the time). It is the freedom to suffer indignities when pulled over by police, especially if you've been drinking. In terms of a harm/benefit analysis, private car ownership makes no sense at all." ([You are not in control](#))*

I don't want to focus this solely on technology as both Virilio and Orlov have, though understandably they both hold freedom in high regard. I wish to extend this idea back into what I was previously talking about, that is, other's ideas of freedom as imposed upon your psyche. Both Virilio and Orlov's quotes make it clear that one's idea of freedom is eschewed, largely by our fixation on the material. The same idea of freedom applies of course to all further materials, take just a moment to think of the freedoms that come with the material you hold so dear to your heart: Property, communication devices, PCs etc. But this also applies to habits-of-freedom. Once again I return to the juxtaposition between the archetypal authority of the school vs our cathartic release from that hellhole. If we take just one single habit we all currently abide by out its regular context, we can begin to see the damage that has been done to us by adjusting to these ideas. Let's take a shopping trip.

One might argue that we *have to eat.* And I would agree, we *have* to eat, it's a biological fact. I'm not arguing that the system doesn't make it difficult for one to *not* shop at supermarkets, nor am I saying that it doesn't occlude that there are actually other options. Much in the same way that the System's Neatest Trick assimilates all rebellious behaviour into its own loop, so too does the system assimilate all alternative modes of existence into its breath of control. Think of the butchers, bakers and...candlestick makers in relation to a contemporary supermarket, they all seem nostalgically quaint don't they? Almost like a non-serious way of doing things. They're still accepted somewhat of course, largely because there's been a huge push in recent years for artisanal, organic and free-range stuff etc. Let's take it one step further, let's say you go to a friend's house for dinner and they state you just need to go hunt the rabbit and pick the mushrooms before you can get started. What would you think? You most likely would think this absurd, but it was not long ago that such a reality was commonplace, only since the 60-70's has the idea of non-corporation reliance seemed crazy.

Back to freedom. When you engage in the freedom of shopping, the ur-freedom of Western society, what is it that you're exactly engaging in? You're free to walk down countless aisles of useless products and be pulled to and fro by subconscious advertising that wishes to harm you (junk food), you're free to walk under mass fluorescent lighting as opposed to walking outside, you're free to engage in mind-numbing conversation with those who only speak to you out of monetary obligation, you're free to engage in the desires of others being imposed upon your will. Quite frankly, you're free to engage in a battle which you walked into of your own accord.

This piece isn't about altering an alternative to this, - I would push growing veg, attending local markets and foraging, by the way - this piece is about freedom, and our idea of freedom. Now, people don't only see that shopping trip as a part of their free life, they often see it as an expression of freedom in itself. "Well I actually buy Brand X detergent...". The earliest years of life were - if you're like the average person in Western society - spent within familial and state authority structures, your brain was sculpted to understand that outside such structures was freedom; if only I could leave school, if I could leave home, if only I could get a car...*then* I'd be free. The trifecta of stereotypical Western freedom: A job, a house and a car. 3 basic forms of temporal and monetary debt.

To the title, *No Personal Gods, No Personal Masters.* Once again, this is a way of saying *you're* in control. The one thing that you are 100% in control of is yourself. What then are these habits and ideas of freedom, for as has been quite thoroughly stated up until now, *you* need to take responsibility. So to understand that the 'freedom of shopping' is another's desire forced into your will is one thing, but then to *blame* that 'other' for you taking action on it is another. You can understand who's to blame, just don't blame them, because you're just as silly for willingly walking into the trap.

This form of pseudo-freedom has become a personal Master. You bow to it as you would a schoolmaster who was telling you off. You get angry at the traffic but never *seriously* consider getting rid of your car of finding a closer job. The supermarket frustrates you but you never *seriously* consider learning to grow vegetables, attending farmer's markets or sourcing the products from local suppliers. You hate your job and the cycle it feeds, but you *never seriously consider* there is an alternative because you know full well you'd never do anything about it, you are scared. But what you're scared of is falling outside of a notion of freedom that was never your own to begin with. There's a little fascist inside all of us and we fucking love them, why? Everything is easier when you're told what to do. Why do you think people

work so willingly? They have no clue what else to do, instructions and obedience are illusions of sense and reason, they only make sense within a constricted system.

It is easy to yell from the rooftops "No Gods, No Masters!", because once again, that is an action of externalization, it is removal of responsibility and thought. It is placing the direction of one's own life into the hands of an abstraction. You worship these sculpted abstractions as if they were real, and perform emotional feats with regard to these beliefs; you feel helpless, depressed and anxious about the future, all because you have subconsciously constructed your life around these illusions of grandiosity. It is *very easy* to rebel against a God or Master, for their presence shall strike you down; but to rebel against the personal Gods and Masters of our own tortured psyche is another battle all together, their presence cannot appear for it to be struck down, for *you* always finds a reason for it remain strong and vigilant, you power the illusion that is ruining your life!

What you're doing when you abide by these illusions of freedom is putting the responsibility for your own life in someone else's hands. There is no such thing as a shop with 'good choice' or 'good selection', those 'choices' were already chosen for you, the real choice is to *think* about what choices you actually have, and whether or not you become subservient just because of the convenience. Who taught you that *serving* someone was *what one does,* was it the idea/person you serve by any chance? Who told you that X was good, beneficial and positive, was it X by any chance?

You introspect on the truths of contemporary freedom and fall into despair, where's the alternative, where is the other you cry. Remove the binary, the idea that there is some land of hope waiting for you; the idea that there is state of freedom fit just for you that is *external* to you is false. The *only* freedom is the one you create after burning all mental haunts to the ground and rebuilding. Use not the foundations of an archaic mass or state, use not the building material of a thousand lonely ideologies, use not the habits, customs and traditions of those who conspire against you. State loudly and often, even to those who do not presume they're in such a position 'I do not respect your authority, your status has no merit within my domain.' The supermarket walls begin to melt, roads begin to appear as shackles, houses offer little protection only suffocation, schools become prisons and the work becomes a matter of shifting abstractions. Alter your perception of freedom in such a manner that it does the word justice. *We* are free is a paradox. *I* am free, when proclaimed loudly, sounds like a cry for help. Internally, quietly, knowing that your choices are your own, and that you're working towards a greater state of being which has been wholly devised in moments of solitude and reflection, without tampering from the world, within such a state is found the seed of freedom, let it blossom and do what you absolutely must, before it's too late.

Too late isn't an age or time; too late is when fatigue leads to submission and you forget yourself completely, a potential human dissolved into nothingness.

Are You Not Entertained?

Most, if not all of the 'targets' in this series have been quite easy, the ones which time and time again come across as cliches when written or spoken about, and I'd like to think that I have tackled them in such a way that I've removed some of the detritus added to them by motivational group-think. With this said, I'm going to target one of the most cliche targets of all modernity, TV. Or in its overarching context, entertainment. The fact this begs a whole post to cover should show how it's affecting your life more than you think. In the previous posts I have made it clear I am rather passionately averse to contemporary entertainment, and I'd like to utilize this post to clear up many misconceptions regarding entertainment, and how one can form a healthier relationship with it - if such a relationship is possible.

Let's begin at the micro and move out to the macro. Once again the average Joe spends his day working a job he dislikes, commuting, eating junk etc., basically he spends his day being controlled. But at the same time he bows down to a more covert form of control, one under the guise of 'entertainment' and 'happiness'. Now, the term entertainment is in *direct* correlation with TV, video games and smart phones, it is primarily what they're built for. Even texting and phone calls are entertainment to a certain degree, I mean people are using their phones to natter and gossip *far more* than they're using them to communicate actual data - we'll meet at the cafe at 12 etc. - in this sense smart phones, even at their most basic, are a form of entertainment.

Entertainment: the action of providing or being provided with amusement or enjoyment.

So between ol' average Joe's hours of work, biological needs and commuting, his other primary focus is being entertained. Upon waking he turns on the radio or scrolls through his phone, or eats his breakfast whilst watching TV. On his commute he listens to the radio or music on his phone. At work the radio is on and he routinely checks his phone[1] and on and on. Basically, Joe has the *need/desire* to be entertained as much as he can be, there's never a moment when he is truly alone with his thoughts. As soon as he sits down with nothing to do he whips out his phone and starts scrolling. Now, most people get quickly on the defensive here - "Well, what's wrong with that!?". Largely I think this is just projection of their insecurities, most people know they're wasting their finite time (the *only* thing you can't buy) and get angry at those who point this out. But for sake of argument, let's find some reasons why it actually is a bad thing to do.

I don't often enjoy nor find much use in excessive deconstruction, but the act of contemporary entertainment begs such a process to drag it to court. Because that's what most people forget when they're watching TV or scrolling through their phone, it is an *act,* they are performing an *action,* however banal and mind-numbing it may be. Any action performed consistently eventually becomes a habit, at least in a certain sense, whether you like it or not. And at its root the action you are performing when one is engrossed within contemporary entertainment is *apathy.* That's right, man has found a way to not only *be* actively apathetic, but also has found a way to cultivate this behaviour in such a way that it has become a virtue - "Bro, I spent *all* weekend watching Netflix!" Let's take this apart, let's have a look at how man decides to spend the life he has been given-

There is a man or woman, plonked on a sofa. Their body in a strange unnatural position, all folded up and round, no point taking any more weight than any other, they're a big pile of goo.

They will remain here, just sat, in the same 4ft by 4ft space for hours end - the world is *way* bigger than this by the way - they'll move their arm, maybe reposition, but that's about it for using their body. As for their mind, it is quite literally working at its lowest setting. Unlike reading, learning, meditating, practicing or concentrating, contemporary acts of entertainment require *nothing* from the viewer, apart from one thing, that they stare in a certain direction. They are mediums of apathy. One could, if they so wished, be numbed all over, except for their eyes, and they would still be undertaking the act of being 'entertained', that is how pathetic this act is. I have nothing against what is *on* the TV, nor anything against visual media, what I am against is media which is a means to an end. People no longer like TV shows or specific films, they like Netflix, or watching-TV as a whole. They're favorite pastimes are being apathetic to all that they *can* be. It is once again a question of whether or not you *ever* desired this in the first place, or has someone else decided this is the normal desire to have?

Not only do TV/media/smart-phones emanate as a false-desire, they also project further false-desires into your brain. Aspiration, that is what the large majority of contemporary media is - 'You should be X, you should be doing Y, you should own Z'. Often a critique of TV is that it sells you the life you could be living, that you are watching the life you want instead of working towards it. I am somewhat sympathetic to this view, but at the same time very cautious of it. Why am I allowing the TV to tell me what I desire? Prior to switching the infernal thing on I never knew nor cared about X, Y and Z and now I have been quickly programmed to care, but I do not, not actually. What TV wants you to aspire to is to desire to watch more TV.

Let's move to the macro, the main focus of this piece. We've seen what entertainment does on a micro level - it turns someone into a pathetic waste of potential, if this is what you wish, fine, just stay away from me. But what of entertainment in itself, as an idea? Since when did entertainment become *the* thing we directed ourselves towards after all survival, work and responsibilities were taken care of. "Ah, everything I *need* to do is done, time to no longer take any other aspect of my life seriously!"

And this is where the greatest lies ever sold (by modernity) comes to the fore. Happiness and entertainment. Those are complete and utter lies. I put them here together because of their importance in relation to one another. See, entertainment can also be taken as hedonism or enjoyment, and has become synonymous with happiness. When someone talks of being happy these days more often that not we assume that person enjoyed many material pursuits and pleasures, they were entertained and so they were happy, they went clubbing and so they were happy, they ate pizza and watched Netflix and so they were happy etc. We often hear people state with conviction that what they wish for themselves and their children is happiness, but have spent little time working out what happiness actually *is.* Because if one never thinks on whether or not they're *actually* happy, then they will be quite content to merely be entertained forever. As soon as you question whether or not that 10 hour TV and junk food marathon actually made you happy, you soon come to realize that absolutely *isn't* what happiness is. And of course, this is what you're sold. Because happiness-as-entertainment is easy to sell: Holidays, new cars, big TVs, video games, junk food etc. all make one happy, but *only* if one's definition of happiness is the same as those selling you it. Don't allow others to redefine *your* emotions. You are not entertained just because they *say* that what you're taking part in is entertainment, and as such, you have not found happiness just because they say you are undertaking that which supposedly makes *you* happy.

I know what you're all thinking, "Well, what the hell *is* happiness then if you believe you have all the answers!" Now, I never said I had *any* answers, you should search for those yourself for fear of falling into someone *else's* answer. With that said I do believe, to paraphrase David Foster Wallace, that to interject a question without attending to the answer is a tyranny, and as such I will attempt to extrapolate as to what happiness *is* and how it can be found from within modernity.

When one thinks *back* to the moments in which they were happy, they actually realize quite a bleak truth about happiness without realizing it. That is, happiness only exists in retrospect. I theorize this is why so many people find *comfort* in those long TV binge-watching sessions, it reminds them of a time in their childhood when they escaped for hours into a fantasy world on the TV etc. Anyway, the idea that one can just *be* happy, right now, this instant, is a complete miscommunication of what happiness is. Happiness is always in relation to suffering, discomfort, effort or overcoming. Those 4 terms can take very odd and unlikely manifestations in real life, but if you think about the times you were most happy, in the sense of contentment, fulfillment and a serious happiness of sincerely earned merit, you realize that *prior* to the happiness a certain amount of suffering took place, more than likely an amount in relation to the happiness you felt.

You earn your first belt in karate, months of work pays off and you feel happy that it's all come together. You spend extra time preparing a delicious meal for someone you love. You spend 3 years studying hard for a degree. You take the time to get your thoughts down on paper because you believe they'll help people in the same predicament. You spend years watching your child grow and learn with the help of your efforts. Each and every one of these examples expected the person to take the *rest* of their life, outside of work and eating, seriously. They had *expectations.* They were expected to make a sacrifice and suffer, but not in some torturous sense, but in the sense of testing themselves to see just how far they can go whilst they're here on this planet. All of these examples are in strict opposition to *apathy.* The habit cultivated by desiring to be entertained 24/7, if you're being entertained you're not pushing yourself, not truly looking into your full potential.

Here's something for you dear reader, and as much as I care about you, and am open to emails from those frustrated at modernity's tricks, I present you with this: ***Were you really put on this earth to simply be comfortable?*** You probably never thought about it because we're bombarded with the idea that the opposite notion is true 24/7, we take it as a given that those who are lounging around all day are having the best lives, that those in complete comfort are loving life. I am not saying that we have to all go down the mines to feel truly alive, nor am I saying that one should just work, work, work. I am simply asking you, quite sincerely, is comfort really at the end of your journey? That's it is it, to just be entertained and die?

What else is there you cry! There is the rest of the world, there is suffering, triumph, overcoming, challenge, searching, frustration, breaking-through, stoicism, asceticism, love, affection, concentration, discipline and motivation, to name just a few. All of these are in some sense in battle with apathy, apathy wishes to take you over, it wishes for you to be *easy.* To sit back and let all the desires they have for you take you over.

Practice: Question why you turn to your smart-phone every time you are free to do so. Check the amount of time you use your phone and calculate how many days per year that is, ask yourself, is this how I truly wish to spend my finite time?

[1] If your check your phone 1 hour a day that accounts for 18 *full days* (24 hours) a year. I imagine many of you check your phone for 6 hours a day, that equates to roughly a third of your year, or; if you have a smart-phone for the rest of your life, a third of it will be spent staring at it. Is that how you wish to spend a third of your life, staring at a tiny screen?

The Uncomfortable Truth of the Present

Why do I state over and over in this series that all I am dealing with here is repetitions? It's my rather weak way of making it clear to you that you *already* knew all of this stuff, and the reason there has been no change is because you've neglected action in favor of abstraction. I mention repetition once again because I am going to write of material once more, I know what you're thinking, 'Yes, we get it, we worship material and things, we should move away from consumption...we get it, jeez!' That's certainly *part* of the problem regarding our reverence towards consumption, but there is actually another factor implicit in the worship of material goods, in the idea that the 'end is the only purpose of the means'.

We are told this day-in, day-out, that 'It is a means to an end', we say this about our jobs, our food, our commutes, our networks and ever some of our personal relationships. Everything gets assimilated into a system of trade and barter, in this manner we think of all things in some term of material *worth.* Now, I don't wish to channel Marx here, and I am most definitely not a Marxist, nor am I even left-wing in any sense - if you haven't worked it out yet, *none* of this should/does have anything to do with politics. Of course our possessions are worth something in monetary value, our home and even our *time* is worth something. Once your time is worth something nothing is exempt from this system of trade, because it can of course be measured in the amount of time you put into it - the reason many people state that a multitude of activities are a 'waste of time' is because in relation to other activities their prospective return is worse. Why walk for 2 hours in the woods - you'll get no*thing* in return - when you could study or work for two hours, which has an 'end'.

When we state that something 'Is a means to an end' then, the 'end' in question is money and value. Which means we are correlating, directing and changing our lives in relation to money as opposed to experience, freedom, actual-value, contentment, fulfillment etc. Our lives become a culmination of representational goods showing our worth - a big house, flash car etc. Of course, I've written about all this many times before, so I wont dwell on it. However, as stated, in relation to this 'end' - or teleology - there is another factor of perception which is being destroyed, if not omitted entirely, the present.

Let's return to that statement, 'A means to an end'. Let's have perform another little deconstruction here. What are we really speaking of when we speak of 'a means'? The majority of time we are talking of our work, our employment or our vocation. Our job is *our* means to an end, we sell our time for money which allows us to purchase the means of our (usually another's) desire. If we are to deconstruct this means a little further then, we can conclude that a means is a *length* of time, it is in itself a journey. Whether short, long, frustrating, fulfilling or mind-numbing it is a journey in some form. Yet this journey, as

something we can analyze and play around with, is cut short when we begin to think of the 'end' all the time. There's no more thorough verbal repetition found within the gallows of contemporary employment that a variation on the following: 'Can't wait to get home', 'Can't wait for the end of the day' or 'Can't wait for payday'. Amidst action, amidst work, amidst experience, modern man can only think of some form of end, an end which he has been told is what he truly desires, whether he thought of it himself or not. The destruction of the present is found within the language of those who desire only production and consumption.

Martin Heidegger stated (roughly) that our mode of temporality was one in which we are always pushing our past in front of us, and our future is dragging behind, the present is always wrestling with them both to form a direction of the will. In layman's terms, we are always thinking about what we did in the past as to control and construct the future we want. I think Heidegger overestimated the capacity of people to actually think. When one spends their entire day thinking only of a (material) end, they omit both thoughts of the past in relation to that end, and also, most importantly, thoughts of the present. They think of the items they are going to acquire in the near future without ever truly experience what they have in the present.

Let's focus on the first omission there, thinking of the past. See, most people, week-in, week-out, month-in, month-out, do *exactly* the same routine. This isn't unusual of course, humans are creatures of habit, we can't be doing *new* stuff *all* the time, otherwise we'd never be able to lay down some roots, with that said, without change, we do not grow...we do not overcome. Why do people not think of the past then? Well, it's kind of obvious isn't it, if people thought of the past - especially in relation to where they are now - they would come to a fairly bleak conclusion, *they don't fucking do anything.* There is another reason hidden within this though, if they were to think back to their past in relation to the present, this would mean that they would have to critique and question their consumption habits. If they thought back to the past, they would soon realize that the things they subscribe to and habitually purchase actually *add* nothing to their lives; if you are to think back and assess a few months worth of purchases, you soon come to realize that they have added little to your life and ultimately changed nothing, you are more than likely still the same person, living within the same ideas and feeling the same way about the world, as such, to think backwards, to critique one's life, is to come to the conclusion that the large majority of our consumption is really a subconscious effort to escape the uncomfortable truth of the present. Which is what exactly?

Before I answer that question, which if you really want the answer to *right now*, all you have to do is sit in silence with your eyes closed for 2 minutes - got the answer yet? Anyway, back to the former second form of time we regularly omit from our lives, the present. You maybe thinking to yourselves, 'Hey, that's not true, I always living in the present, I mean you *have to be,* idiot!' Sure, I get it, you have to be somewhat present in your conscious to get by in day-to-day life, but are you *really* present? Think about the way you often think to the future, the details you go into, the scenarios, the possibilities, the conversations you have in this wondrous, far off future. Think about the way, late at night, when you go over and over embarrassing situations or nostalgic memories in your head, often escaping into the most minute details for hours on end. Do you truly apply this level of conscious awareness to your present, or is your mind wandering off into the labyrinth-of-material-ends, lusting over future acquisitions?

Now, back to that uncomfortable truth I was going to expand upon. Those of you who sat in silence for 2 minutes will already have the answer whether you like it not. The answer is as

follows, you are at a complete disconnect from yourself, you are not entirely comfortable simply *being,* you find it actively difficult to just *be.* When you sit down for a meal you put a podcast on instead of focusing on the meal, when you watch TV you are also checking your phone and snacking, when you're driving you're listening to the radio, when you are simply *sat down* you are checking your fucking phone. Stop it you incessant child! Can you not deal with your*self,* not even for a minute! This is what happens when you focus solely on the end and not the means (the journey). You subconsciously believe that *that* podcast will be the one which satiates your desire, that 5 minute scrolling session will be your last for the day, that supplementary escape will be the final one, the one that figures it all out for you. Well the truth - as I see it - is this. No amount of supplementary escapes, at least those which aren't actively testing your assumptions and mental fortitude, are inherently extra layers of bullshit atop your-self which you need to shake off. They are, at best, distractions from your own potential, your own thoughts and feelings. I mean hell, when was the last time you didn't rely on another's thought or feeling before forming some thought or opinion about X. Rarely do we actually create for fear of scorn from the populous, we fear we will be cast out of normalcy. But normalcy in itself is a feeble structure made from and for feeble minds, and as such, can change direction in relation to the whim of a random fad or fashion, care not for normality, care only for authenticity and the potential principled-nature of *your* self.

Many will have found frustrations with the 5th post in this series, which - roughly - states that there are ways to work within the system and still retain your-self. That post is really a post about not being an idiot. It is to say that it would be silly choice to hastily exit the system without any plans, because the system wont care that you're homeless or without help, you would simply be shooting yourself in the foot based off an abstract principle. *Exit is a process,* it takes time, so it's dangerous to use language that makes it seem otherwise. You need to take your time and plan the exit which is correct for you, and make sure you are safe the entire time. This is easy to say in abstract of course, but what about dealing with work, what about dealing with the daily ennui of bureaucratic and modern bullshit? Well this is where living in the present comes into play.

This is not a foolproof method, at least not at first. But the way in which one deals with the daily drudgery of modern life is to actually *deal with it.* By that I mean *be present.* I made it clear earlier on that one is largely not-present in their daily life, they're most likely thinking of the near future and avoiding the present as much as possible. I'm not sure why anyone does this, because the present isn't all that bad, in fact, it can be sublime in its beauty and enchantment. You are thinking of your dinner, you are thinking of watching that next episode of a Netflix series etc. You are thinking of hedonistic escapes, rarely do you spend a moment in reality. Whether your job is within an office or building yard, you can return to the present and find moments of enchantment that make it all worth it; I must admit, this process is tough to bear at first, many will drag up stuff they don't exactly like, but that's how you progress - face the fear and horror head on, snarling.

How does one *be present* then? Well, that's a question which is both difficult and extremely easy to answer. Difficult in the sense that what is quite literally under your nose is often the most demanding thing/idea to perceive - *"There are none so blind and those who will not see."* And yet the answer is also easy. Whatever you are *doing,* right now, or at work, or on the way to work...*in the present,* should become the thing which begs the entirety of your attention and concentration. You may argue that I am only finding a peculiar way for you to avoid the reality of your miserable job, or the reality of your commute. I would argue that for

the time being (until you switch to that better job, which you *will do*, remember) these actions are going to have to happen anyway, so why not practice a way of finding meaning and fulfillment in your life.

Practice: Even if the action is simply shifting papers around, sending emails or commuting to work, try as hard as you can to become mindful of all your actions in the present. Shifting papers around, feel the weight of them, concentrate on how you feel, on the peculiarity of your position here and now. Sending emails, become mindful of the words you write, are they as giving, kind and informative as they could be? You will be surprised at the results of adding just the tiniest amount of extra courtesy to an email. Commuting to work, turn the radio off and open the window a little, become mindful of the sound of the wind, the smell of fresh air, focus on the feeling of driving and how the landscapes pass you by in a seamless wave. If your attention drifts from the present into some digression (It will be about the future, I guarantee it) then simply let the thought be and return to the present.

What's actually happening here is a practical critique of consumption. Once you're living in the present you no longer focus on consumption, because consumption is an act that happens throughout time or in the future, it does not happen all at once. Once you stop focusing on consuming things the only other options are to remain silent and neutral (pleasant in itself) or become giving and courteous, the rarity of genuine affection and generosity within modern times is upsetting at best, but when it becomes your only option for a brief period, you soon come to realize there's far more to life than the future that will never come. Act and plan in the eternal present, it will reward you greatly in time. People say life is short, but it's actually the longest thing you will ever do. If you feel as if your life is passing you by, and the days are going quicker and quicker, it is not because they objectively are, it is because you are dragging them towards you with your willing of the future into the present. Begin to live in the present and even the most seemingly mundane moments can become fulfilling memories.

No One to Turn To

You're feeling lost, historically this feeling isn't rare. What's unique is that you feel lost within a space and system which has so many rules, constrictions and directions, it seems odd that one could get lost within such a space where the next signpost is only a mere step away. Of course this feeling is very different to the one imposed on you by others. The feeling of being lost, *they say,* is not rare for someone of your age, it's completely normal to feel lost when you're young. Except, the feeling hasn't lifted in many years, in fact, it's only got worse...more complex. You could denounce all I say as a form of angst, or bitterness, or even resentment, because this is what *you* do.

I dislike hastily shoving entire generations into groups such as Boomers, Gen Y or Gen Z, but stereotypes exist for a reason and unfortunately certain generations bow to a certain God and have passed the same belief system onto their children. They of course bow to work, consumption and an absurd form of material culture in general. Before I start here, this isn't an anti-boomer piece, that would be dull, it's actually an essay regarding infection and principle.

The consumerist culture I have expanded upon within various previous installments of this series is their God, their belief-system and their cultural center. It is the reason, they believe, that everything works and everything falls into place. And within their own circular logic they're actually entirely correct. *IF* you wish for a large house, flash car etc etc. (you've heard it all before), then what you need to do is work long hours, get into debt, spend the rest of your life paying it off and die. And that, technically, 'works'. That is of course all held under the implication that *that* is what *you* want to *do* with *your* life. You're reading this, so I imagine you don't.

I am reluctant to outline who this 'we' is, because it's actually rather tough to pinpoint who it even is anymore. I don't think any particular group of is pulling anybody else's strings is any direct sense, such forms of blaming lead only to extremist delusions. And if you've taken anything from this series it's that *you* have all the power of your own will, and as such can remove *yourself* from those things and forces which you do not want to be within. This *we* might be your older relatives, but it might also be your friends. You remember both these groups from when you were younger in a completely different light, don't you? I know I do. One can of course state that I'm looking at my past through rose-tinted glasses, I may very well be, I don't know. But what I *do* know is that the character and personality of these people has changed. Those new and vibrant spirits from my youth, many whom were close friends, have, upon repetition of action and conversation, become repetitions in-themselves. They utter little more than extracts from the latest media they've consumed and their opinions exist between an ever-tightening window of acceptability, and as for originality, well, there's little that isn't quite simply numbing. The 'we' in a sense, is merely the force of the culture I have been critiquing and its general expectations for the entire population it comes into contact with, inclusive of yourself.

The problem with this form of cultural infection is that you feel like you have no one to turn to. If we're to return to the feeling of 'being lost' mentioned at the beginning, it's not the usual way one feels lost because when one normally feels lost, they understand what they walked into and that there *is* some way out. One walks into a maze, gets lost, and does not panic, because they understand that is the nature of mazes, you just keep searching and the exit turns up eventually. The feeling of being lost I am referring to is vastly different on all counts. Not only did you not choose to walk into this maze, you don't really even know what it is, and as such, don't know what this feeling of being lost is even in relation to. A quote thrown about a lot these days is *"Homesick for a place I'm not even sure exists."*. That gets fairly close to what we're discussing here, the feeling that one's potential is haunting them from another world where they haven't had all the enchantment drained from them.

As stated, the fact you feel as if you have *no one to turn to* doesn't help at all in this matter. What I mean by this is that for those actively looking for an exit, and are not just complacent in their situation, will find, at every turn, those whose perspective and outlook is so utterly absurd that one can't help but feel entirely alone. Wittgenstein said if a lion could talk we wouldn't be able to understand him, the frame of reference would be so different that it just wouldn't make sense to us. I don't think we even need to look outside of our own species now to see tenable results in this theory. You can understand these people, the words and sentences coming from them make sense, but *only* when an entire form of cultural logic is taken for granted. Prior to understanding the average Joe and all his desires, worries and opinions one must take for granted that *this is how life is,* all alternatives are not alternatives, but mistakes in relation to the great perfection that is contemporary Western consumer

culture, for the average Joe, *this* is where we were meant to end up, wasting our precious energy and time on acquiring trinkets and status.

They want X, that doesn't really make any sense to you, but sure, they're not hurting anyone so you go along with it. You grow older and *everyone* wants X. If you *don't* have X then you are seen as weird, odd and an outcast. But not only this, if you do not accept, enjoy and actively participate in the culture and system that makes X possible, then you too are weird and an outcast. You have to hide in the shadows, learning quickly to feign enthusiasm over the most mundane things. All of a sudden you feel alone in a room full of people and have nowhere to turn to. See, all the public spaces are full to the brim of their culture, all the quiet places are slowly being destroyed and infected and the only remaining places are deemed weird. Your choices are repressive and totalitarian normality or, ostracism.

Much along the same lines of a statement earlier in the series, *'Why prolong a life you're not enjoying?'*, I ask you, '*Why involve yourself with that which does not interest you?'*. You might think you don't, but how many things do you do, week-in, week-out, which you do purely out of a sense of normality and habit, things you do not to fit in, but to *feel like* you fit in? I imagine there's many. The reason then that you feel lost and alone is not because you are, but because you are trying to be and find yourself in a place/logic which cannot willingly incorporate you into it. You are not lost, you have simply yet to find or understand the correct maze. It is as if you are being tested on how to be better at X, when you're entire will is directed towards understanding Y. Not only does this culture make you unhappy, it quite literally makes no sense to you.

There are many who simply do not *understand* ascetics, stoics, minimalists, simple-living, nomads, wanderers etc., the problem however is that these very same people act as if their lack of understanding is not due to an ignorance on their part, but due to a malfunction regarding that which they don't understand. That which does not conform to Western culture is not different, but wrong, this is what they have lead you to believe, this is why you feel lost and alone.

Practice: This practice is pithy and a little unrestrained, in fact, it's a little careless. The practice is this, who cares? I have said this many times, *you are free to do as you please.* The problem is most people don't understand this in all its grandiosity. Think of the average lottery winner, when asked what they will do with the money, the state that they shall live their current life but more extravagantly. The same applies to freedom. You can become freer, but how you then utilize that freedom is still up to you...that's what it *is* to be free. So how are you going to use your newfound freedom? By simply becoming a freer prisoner within the maze of modernity, stating that you're free because you drink, smoke and eat more, or are you going to use your freedom to head towards the exit and create as much of your own perfect life as possible?

Anti-Requiem

It has taken me a while to figure out how to finish this series, because I believe conscious thought and meditation on the structures I have already expanded on will lead to further avenues of freedom. With that said, I felt the spirit of the situation had been left alone, and so in this finale I will simply expand on loose thoughts relating to freedom and exit in general, there can be no general conclusion to exit, only a personal one, found mentally.

I *lived* in a quaint little town in the middle of rural England. I say *lived* even though I still live here, because the town is expanding. There was a vote and all that jazz, but anyone who has lived through these happenings will know and, in retrospect, understand that expansion in-itself is a force from the Outside, and there is no single committee or person which can take responsibility, industrial and commercial expansion are the material symptoms of progress, that is, when progress is seen as *a priori* good. Anyway, back to my little town. It was a general small rural town. A few pubs, a few shops, couple of restaurants, lots of green space and a somewhat existent sense of community. Now, this all seems like some nostalgic gushing so far, but there's more to it than that, I promise.

We've all heard of small-town folk getting frustrated when the huge supermarket comes in and ruins all the local businesses, even though those small-town folk make little-to-no effort to support local business. Hey, convenience can destroy even the most pithy of principles! What I'm getting at is, I understand the cliche. In fact, it's almost stupid to critique *that* form of commercialism these days. Anyone who understands the positive-feedback loop of capitalism (Accelerationism), will also understand that material-criticism or anti-capitalist praxis is *really* dumb. I'd like to think that if this series has made anything clear it is that exit and freedom are (mental) perspectives and not physical routes.

So when I write here of my frustration at the expansion of my little town, it is not because I now see more cars on the road, witness the destruction of green spaces or hear more bullshit. No, even though these are frustrating symptoms of expansion in-itself, my frustrations are at the continuation of mental-state which can only be described as dead. More people will move to the town, the town will expand more, there will be less green space, and what made the town nice in the first place will be destroyed and no one will understand why this has happened. And then those with the money will move somewhere else and repeat the process. 'There's nothing new under the sun.' etc. But in this cycle of consumerist life is the problem of freedom and exit. All these people believe they're exiting something, or becoming free from something, when in reality they are still moving along the exact same line as they were before, except this time they're doing so within a 'nicer' house, or in a faster car.

Unlike other texts of this sort I am not here to profess universal love, or unconditional rights or some other (false) objective idiocy. All that I shall profess is the continual analysis of the self. In witnessing the cycle of a town go from idyllic to suburban hellhole, I have actually witnessed very little. I only noticed this in retrospect of course. There were those who years ago attached their identities to the village green and to cricket, there were those in-between who attached it to the idea of careers and there are those who now believe they are moving into a prosperous town. The mistake all of these generations made, or are making, is that they have allowed their selves to become tethered to abstract ideals. But again, I'd like to think that *another* thing I have avoided in this series is the idea that anything I write here is

anything new, it isn't. *All I have written is repetition, and shall be written time and time again by those who took the time to look inward.*

Here's the part where I upset you. This series never had answers, not once. The reason for this is because the only answers worth *anything* are the ones you come to on your own journey, by your own will. I cannot teach you how to 'exit' or 'be free' as much as I can teach another to be calm. My notion of calm is in relation to all that I have I read, experienced and thought on, and as such I cannot help you. You must help yourself. You must change your life.

Why is this part titled 'Anti-Requiem'? Let me indulge you.

Requiem: a Mass for the repose of the souls of the dead.

Modernity is an anti-requiem. It does not wish for a repose for the dead, because it is fueled by the dead. It is fueled by that and *those* who follow their most apathetic whims and desires, those who are purely creatures of habit. The majority shall never be free. Modernity is too strong. But if you've come this far, there is probably hope. Many I knew are simply *gone.* Many reading this will state I am crass, 'edgy' or simply an arsehole for stating that others are dead, sheep or robots. If you're one the people calling me an arsehole, then chances are you are also one of the people who are *gone.* I occasionally see childhood friends I lost contact with. They are *gone.* The conversations are nothingness interspersed with consumption and items, their actions are constrained by devices and their-selves are lost to a void of apathy and habit. I shall waste no time dragging horses to water, they *never* want to drink. Only those horses who are curious about the water in the first place shall be given help. That is you, dear reader, you are here and reading this, modernity hasn't taken you just yet.

The process of exit is mentally exhausting. Freedom is largely sacrifice.

"Freedom is a two-edged sword of which one edge is liberty and the other, responsibility. Both edges are exceedingly sharp and the weapon is not suited to casual, cowardly or treacherous hands." - Jack Parsons