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Definitions and Resources

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This text appeared as a box inside the article “Everything is True and Nothing is Permitted” in *Against Sleep and Nightmare* 6 (2000?), but mirrors almost exactly “Definitions and Resources” from *Against Sleep and Nightmare* 5 (1994?), both of which are available at <http://www.againstsleepandnightmare.net/ASAN/welcome.html>.

Definitions

Activism

militancy; the **ideology** of activity or organization for its own sake. The **activist** would moralistically argue that it's better to go on a march that will change nothing than to stay home and consider social reality. In the manner of the religious fanatic, the **militant** (syn) use constant activity as a way of repressing an awareness of their total social condition. “Sure you may have a theory about us never changing the system but at least we do something.”

Can be a variety of **leftism**. Activist ideologists tend to spread the despairing counter-part ideology of **inactivism** – which equate any active intervention with militancy. “Any sort of political action just inhibits people's autonomy and makes real change harder. Doing nothing is better.”

Atomize

originally, the atom was considered the small unit that matter could be divided up into. Marketplace society **atomizes** people by dividing them into purely separate, comparable units. When people circulated from city to city or country to country merely to earn enough to survive, they are atomized strangers.

Capitalism

the present world system, that started with the European colonialization of the Americas and has expanded its reach to the entire world and every part of life. It is based on wage labor, exchange, and commodity production on a world scale. This system included the so-called Communist Bloc when it still existed.

Commodity

a product, anything bought and sold. A person's labor time can be bought by a capitalist and so their creative power becomes a commodity like sliced bread.

Communism

not the system that once existed in Russia. A social system where human desires will replace exchange and profit as the moving force in society. Communism will be based on people directly controlling their creative activity.

Deficit

the difference between what the American government collects in taxes and what the government spends in various evil programs. Used by politicians to demand

that workers give up wages, jobs and houses to appease their guilt. See also **Myth**.

Democracy

any system where the majority shapes the decisions that the government makes. See **Permanent War**, **Permanent Elections**.

Detourn (de t  rn)

v. [situationists Fr *detour*, change of direction (fig) evasion, trick] to arrange disparate elements of the dominant culture together to form a new work, esp. in a way that reveals the true meaning and function of the original elements. Detournment as revolutionary activity reverses the systematic fragmentation of specialists – n.-ement (-m  ) the act of detourning.

Exchange

giving something of equal value in return for someone giving you an object. The more this sort of apparently simple act dominates the world, the more each person is a purely atomized unit and the more community cannot exist.

Ideology

the thought of power – ideas in service of power. Ideology is frozen thought but not all frozen thoughts are ideology. The **ideologist** develops empty rhetoric whose real appeal is to a person’s unstated (and often unconscious) interest in maintaining their immediate material conditions – their part in capitalism. When a subjectivist ideologist says “all that matters is immediate pleasure,” their rhetoric might be appealing to a student because it would justify their vapid, parasitic existence. “Everyone’s got to work, it’s only fair” might make those forced to work 60 hour weeks feel slightly better.

The left

the left wing of capitalism. Historically, those involved in the political system who wished to move closer to “socialism.” As the political system has become more of a conveyor belt for the capitalist system, leftists have become spokespeople for the most bureaucratic forms of capitalism. Leftists have in mind the interests of welfare workers, teachers, prison reformer and professional “facilitators.” Leftists range from liberal who want a government that takes care of people better to Leninist of various stripes who still imagine the recreation of a soviet-style welfare-state dictatorship.

Morality

see “The Revolutionary Unconscious,” this issue, and “Against Capitalist and Morality,” ASAN #5.

Myth

a magical story is used to give meaning to the lives of people in a culture. The story of Adam and Eve was a Christian myth. “Anyone can work their way to the top,” “America was founded on traditional values,” “We have to work twice as hard to pay off the deficit” are modern American myths. Myths dominate people when they are alienated from their lives by wage labor.

The Nation

a mythical community supposedly consisting of “people living in the same general location, speaking the same language and having the same general culture.” This myth was used to create capitalist governments by the national entrepreneurs of first the US and France and then every region of the developing capitalist world. Since there is no part of the entire world with a homogeneous culture, nationalist ideology is really used to unify people against those who are different. America

was founded on murdering native people and continues to base itself on racism.

Oppression

Being persecuted or subjugated by an unjust force. All specialist of power focus on the unfairness of particular oppressions without admitting the total misery of this society. The manipulators of the most conservative talk of “crime,” high middle-class taxes, and inflation. The left talks of racism, sexism, homophobia and classism. But all the specializing of misery makes it harder to understand the total misery of this society.

Privilege

a special immunity, right, or benefit enjoyed by an individual. This society grants a vast of array of apparent privileges; home-ownership, whiteness, American Express Membership, maleness, or citizenship. But every “carrot” is only a chance to participate more in the economy or to avoid the social terror of today. Virtually no one gets real privilege from being a part of this society.

Right

as capital has carved new social relations, the powers that people had kept by using these informal groups has disappeared into formal rights ostensibly granted by a higher power. As the market economy is perfected, rights become simply an abstract form of private property.

Role

an interchangeable act that is offered for each person to take up at any given circumstance but is expected to be discarded just as easily. When we are at the mall, we must be consumers, at a cafe we be intellectuals. At work, we are expected to be happy.

Recuperate (re cu’pär at)

v. [situationist Fr *recuperer* to retrieve] to put spontaneous or revolutionary elements back into the language of the dominant culture and thereby trivialize them and negate their creative or revolutionary power – Coopt, n. -ation (a-shun) the act of recuperating.

Expert

one who studies, works with, and by extension tries to own any single category of knowledge; **an expert**. A biologist is a specialist on animals. A manager is a specialist at giving people orders. A political consultant is a specialist at manipulating the passive opinions of voters. Ralph Nader is a specialist on consumer rights. Ronald Reagan, the great communicator, was considered an expert at communicating the orders of the government to the population.

As this society reduces life to a machine-like order, its rulers become bureaucrats/specialists who operate interchangeably in the corporate, governmental or university bureaucracies. All specialists become specialists in ideology. The ruling bureaucrats thus generically manipulate people, information, and rhetoric according the economy’s orders. A logging company president becomes the California State Universities president and then could conceivably become a politician. Jerry Brown began as a Jesuit, became governor of California, then was the left-wing cameo presidential candidate and now is a radio talk-show host.

Specialize, specialization

Spectacle (Spek tä kul)

n. [situationist Fr *Spectacle* show, movie, play etc.] A fusion of form and appearance. A form of accumulation under late capitalism. See also “How To Go Beyond The SI In Eight Simple Steps” in *Against Sleep And Nightmare* #5 and “The

Realm Of Quality,” this issue.

Star

any arbitrary focus of spectacular attention.

The System

a vague term that became popular in the sixties and seventies. The know-it-alls of today attack this vagueness because the vague can still be useful. It's true that talking about the system makes it harder to blame any one person or group. But the term system speaks to the instinctive feeling people have that all the apparently unrelated parts of this society form a single whole. Big talkers of one sort or another naturally attack the idea that TV stars, politicians, corporate managers, college professors and the big talkers form a single, invisible class of ruling experts.

Terrorism

the use of bombs, armed attacks, fear and secret cells to wage conventional warfare against an existing state. Terrorist ideology always winds up using the methods of the capitalist state; the specialization of power and a population that is kept passive spectators. And the terrorist group generally aims to recreate a new capitalist state on the basis of “national liberation.” (see nationalism)

Union

an organization that acts as a broker between labor and capital. Thus, any organization organized to explicitly accept the conditions of this society while ostensibly demanding more. It is no surprise that unions act against the working class.

Wage labor

when a person sells their activity for money. This seemingly simple operation is the basis of our society's power, growth and decay. One person paying another to work is an apparently simple relationship that hides how the workers' own power to create becomes something that confronts them as a commodity, something external, outside their control.

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Note: Marx, Mumford, and Nietzsche are important and widely available. The work by Richard Bandler and John Grinder together constitute the basic texts of NLP.