OVER TIME THE LEFT HAS NOT JUST ADDED NUMEROUS MODULES OF OPPRESSIONS TO BE TOPPLED, IT HAS INCREASINGLY MOVED TOWARDS REJECTING POSITIONS OF POWER THEMSELVES. THIS ANARCHIZATION OF THE LEFT, OF ANARCHISM ITSELF, IS A HORRIFYING NIGHTMARE TO MANY.

A BAD PERSON – LONG AGO CALCIFIED BY A HUNGER FOR PERSONAL POWER – MIGHT BE WILLING TO WATCH AS MANY PARTICULAR LADDERS OF STATUS AND CONTROL ARE ERODED, BUT THE IDEA OF BEING LEFT NO LADDERS IS INTOLERABLE IN THE EXTREME.

WILLIAM GILLIS, 2020

BAD PEOPLE

IRREDEEMABLE INDIVIDUALS & STRUCTURAL INCENTIVES

DOMESTIC ABUSER CHARLES GRANER POSES WITH ONE OF THE DETAINEES HE TORTURED IN ABU GHRAIB

ANTICOPYRIGHT

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
HAS KILLED MILLIONS

ITS SUPPORTERS HAVE
NAMES AND ADDRESSES

solved! No one wants to admit that tens of millions of people are just evil. But one of the ways anarchism breaks with liberalism is in the steely recognition that most of those with power are not mistaken altruists, but selfish bastards who will fight us to the end, who will *never* accept a world without hierarchies to climb and will constantly work against it, limited only by their self-interest.

There is an alternative to both mafias and marauders, but it requires the city folk, the "sheep" the self-proclaimed wolves dismiss, to take their security into their own hands. It requires that the altruistic get the apathetic to stop off-handing conflict to a distant few, that we stop shoving our problems into a black box.

Contrary to the assertions of some leftists there are in fact thoroughly monstrous people who are not just victims of their social conditions. Humans vary. We each follow somewhat random paths in the development of our values and instincts, buffeted by a million tiny butterfly wings of context that can never be managed or predicted.

A hundred cloned children with identical genes, given identical love and education, will nevertheless face moments of uncertainty where one must randomly pick a hypothesis or strategy from among those possible and run with it, to *test out* different models and values. Tendencies of course emerge in the aggregate, but they have exceptions. Sometimes these exceptions are themselves an aggregate phenomenon. An approach that is stable when adopted by 99% of a population may nevertheless be hard to keep stable at 100%, with random lone defectors seeing sufficient reward as to re-emerge. Game theory reveals that while compassion and mutual aid are broadly embraced in certain environments, this is often paralleled by the emergence of persistent minor tendencies of parasites and predators around the margins, with varying degrees of complexity. Most populations stabilize with a *mix* of individual strategies. Further, an individual's life path is not only shaped by impossible to control random conditions, it also *necessitates* a degree of randomness in their personal exploration. Unfortunately there are certain perspectives that, once reached, aggressively wall themselves off from further consideration, adaptation, or mutation.

In the most harmonious and enlightened community, in the most advanced culture, in the most egalitarian and fair world, there will still emerge the cruel and callous, the manipulative and brutal. Those for whom other people are not an extension of their own existence as sites of agency, but objects to be crushed or used. These monsters can be drastically diminished in number by various institutional and cultural changes, but their emergence cannot be entirely suppressed. And they will invariably seize whatever means and tools are available to them to harm others and seize power.

Bad people will always exist.

We can problematize the fuzzy edges of "badness" and we can plunge into greater psychological detail on the variety of forms taken, but at the end of the day there is still the brute fact of individuals locked to bad values and habits. People not mistaken or confused, people for whom no therapy, argument, enticement, or punishment will ever work. People for all intents and purposes permanently locked to certain malicious values and perspectives. People whose exploration dead-ended in values and strategies that studiously seal themselves off from further development, from further engagement. People who are not just merely passing through badness, but who have taken it in and bonded to it.

These bad people are the walking dead, husks of former imaginative and inquisitive minds. They vary in how much insight they lapped down before they walled off the world, some become great specialists in certain

have to be willing to, at the drop of a hat, race out of our houses and confront and stop with violence the predatory gangs the ex-cops will try to form.

You'll note that although reformulated so they can be secured through bottom-up social organizing rather than a state, such a prescription replicates many of the incentive structures the state uses. Reactionaries instinctively think in such terms *because such incentive structures work on them.* Obviously they do not work as well on everyone, as selfless martyrs in resistance struggles around the world prove. Reactionaries think you can shock and awe people into compliance, and then are eternally surprised when the subjugated are willing to make personal sacrifices to oppose injustice generally. While conservatives desperately want the rhetorical mantle of victim, a much smaller minority of them truly believe or are willing to sacrifice in any continuous sense.

This is not a defense of carceral justice, borders, etc, but it does require us to think about the incentives we create for the decidedly non-altruistic. Decentralized free association with sharp self-defense is in keeping with anarchist values, but we often hesitate to embrace certain degrees of sharpness. This can be a mistake.

Just as leftists often see individuals as cogs marching in lockstep with institutions, liberals will twist themselves into pretzels trying to imagine ways the other side in a conflict is well-intentioned albeit mistaken. If it's just a math error then you can point it out and everything's

for their privileges and comfort, a set of norms and conditions.

If you want to stop former cops from immediately transitioning to genocidal gangs and insurgent terrorism, like the Ba-athists in Iraq, you have to build an appropriate incentive structure for them. Mobilize such universal and powerful self-defense forces from the bottom up as to make them afraid of being the first stepping across a fixed and clear line, but also — and this is the hardest part — leave them something to be invested in.

A friend of mine has long argued that we should pay the police double what they currently make to sit at home and not kill anyone. Police abolition through giant pensions. A kind of explicit extortion agreement where at least the extorted public can set and oversee the terms. I have my doubts that this could be implemented or overseen without a state, but further I have my doubts that they wouldn't simply finance the creation of their own army were they so generously compensated.

What's left is a kind of preservation compact. We agree to leave you that stupid house you bought in the surburbs, with firm social norms against violating such. You can operate on the market, collect food and basic needs from post-state social services, and we'll retrain anyone to work in professions without power. But the moment someone organizes a hierarchy or fields an ex-cop gang to spread terror again that gang gets exterminated by every surrounding watchful civilian. We

domains of manipulation, some are inane and immediately visible. Often they are both, experts at certain *games* of power, bumbling fools at the world beyond.

But this is adamantly not a conservative argument for the state or any power system that might paternalistically 'save' us from such bad people.

A core anarchist realization is that we cannot guard against bad people by creating institutions of power because the same bad people will inevitably seize and wield those institutions. The only long term answer is to remove all positions of power, to make it, in a million ways, impossible for anyone to seize or maintain control over other people.

The left is repeatedly marred by the mistake of assuming that individual monsters are purely a *product* of social structures. This is anti-reductionist in the most grievously mistaken way. It thinks entirely in terms of the "forest" and ignores the actual trees. The left correctly notes that persistent societal macrostructures are reinforced by certain feedback loops, but then it often simplifies its model of the world purely into such terms. The agents it focuses on become things like nations, "capitalism," "civilization," et al., and these accounts are often quite good at mapping how these structures persist, or at least cutting through delusional liberal narratives about these abstractions, but they're extraordinarily bad at predicting when such abstractions break down.

From above a "forest" might appear to behave like a single entity, but no one ever told the plants and animals beneath the canopy about our concept of a "forest." They are not simply gears in a wider clockwork mechanism.

Because the left tends to think in terms of such grand structures it tends to assume that the arrangements of individuals are simply and directly caused by those grand structures, that they'll just march along to further those narratives like rigid cells in a body. This is the source of the left's persistent statism. It is why Leninists believe in capturing "control" over the state, believing that capitalism can be abolished top-down by a series of edicts.

Anarchists are smarter, we realize that change has to emerge bottom-up, but many unfortunately often inherit the left's macroscopic thinking when it comes to futures *after* capitalism.

There is no better example of this than when it comes to policing.

Leftists are quick to point out that All Cops Are Bastards because of their functional role in the institution. It doesn't matter if an individual *means* well as a cop, they're bound up as components in an overall oppressive system. This is true enough, although it obfuscates opportunities for a committed infiltrator to disrupt policing. We might imagine a genuinely good person that goes undercover as a cop, and sets up the thinly paper over the vicious jockeying for personal power.

The left has its grifters and abusers, but the right is almost nothing but. Reactionaries are not prone to revolutionary breaks with the status quo in no small part because they are the people least capable of organizing such. Even when sociopaths feel under pressure enough to form a defensive union and reactionaries radicalize into self-conscious fascists, they still face serious challenges achieving critical mass. Antifascist groups run rings around neonazi groups because antifascists are altruistically self-sacrificing. Neonazis meme a lot about sacrificing for the white race or whatever, but they all realize — as Anglin and Spencer have made explicit — that race is just an empty and arbitrary construct they cling to because of its utility in pursuit of personal power. They can brainwash a few dipshit kids to die for the cause (more usually personal fame), but not much beyond that.

Cops are, to be fair, generally pretty stupid, but they are also overwhelmingly self-interested. Even the world of divorced old white guys wearing wraparound sunglasses in their cars — while they may delight in opportunities to publicly demonstrate their machismo and reaffirm comfortingly simple narratives — are still deeply selfish creatures. Willing to wear tacticool armor and scream, but only so they can sit and be served at Baskin Robbins or TGI Fridays. Their "America" isn't an ideal of liberty for other people, it's a deeply personal totem standing

Even if we remove institutions of power/terror, how will we stop them from rebuilding them?

As you can tell from my approach so far I think the answer is to really look at and understand the game theoretic dysfunction that stops all the non-cop monsters from organizing today.

Police make up far less than one percent of the population and yet they are able to imprison a larger percentage, able to hold back the rebellion of a much greater percentage. This is because an existing order is defended by collective action problems. Even when you have a huge base it's hard to initially motivate and organize a sufficient mass of folks to act. The first few white supremacists intent on launching a pogrom are put down, if not they become a movement and soon a genocide. The first crew of former cops to try and return to criminality — whether raiding or setting up a protection racket — must be quickly and proactively stopped before their gang can metastasize.

As bad as leftists can fall to squabbling in pursuit of moral purity, and for all the few opportunists that try to momentarily exploit such within the ladders of the left, fascists backstab each other with even more ferocity. The only way the right has learned to solve collective action problems is with blunt tools like nationalism and racism. These are supremely undexterous mobilizing tools, which is why the right's base is, for lack of better terms, astonishingly ignorant and stupid. They also only murders of fellow officers, ruins evidence to let hundreds free, or leaks critical intel.

Of course such extreme exceptions only prove the general rule, but this kind of top-down thinking of police purely in terms of their institutional function misses another way in which cops are monsters.

The police are rotten because policing *attracts* rot.

The role of the police is to preserve simplistic hierarchies and rules with violence. To maintain "order" — that is to say to make the world legible to the simple-minded. And to exercise unrivaled brute violence to make this so.

This is everywhere the same regardless of the flag the police are under, and regardless of the contours of the specific order sought. Forget the horrors of the USSR, even if the order to be maintained was a direct democratic commune of enlightened values, the role of policing this order would attract many of the very worst people. Incentives matter.

If police are "bureaucrats with guns" as David Graeber puts it, they are so both to serve our highest rulers and because a great many more — in hunger for simplicity — allow issues of conflict and security to be offloaded upon a very small number of people who are almost uncheckable.

Leftists are correct to point out that modern policing is a recent invention, and in america tied to slave patrols, but conservatives are right to tie policing with gangs and armies more generally. Just because the exact contours

and trappings of these gangs has changed dramatically over history, doesn't mean their core nature has. Anyone telling you otherwise is just trying to sell you a re-skin, not honest abolition. Police Abolition that doesn't seek to undo a form of relating that dates back to the earliest city states is just tame reformism by another name.

Despite some occasional rhetoric, conservatives are broadly nihilistic realists about power, and they are right to remember that the state poses itself as the alternative to roving bands of marauders, a very real phenomenon. The state is a protection racket often formed by those same roving gangs of monsters setting up permanent shop. The more cooperative civilized folks get extorted for their crops and learn to tolerate these barbarians as "their own," but the occupiers always have more in common with the vicious marauders. The same underlying cognitive strategies. The same personality. They may paint themselves as sheep dogs protecting the sheep against the wolves, but they are at the end of the day both meat-eating canines, and the sheep end up being butchered either way.

Cops today are very much a continuation of this recurring dynamic. Even the right-left dichotomy rapidly polarized to reactionary rural communities and left-leaning cities, while in north america the cops live in a suburban ring around the cities they terrorize. The narratives of simplistic gang warfare simply hold more appeal *outside* cosmopolitan spaces where people are pressed up against one another and forced to find more complex ways to cooperate and conflict. The survivalists to abolish the institutions they congealed in. People don't change overnight.

De-Ba'athification in Iraq removed the torturers and murderers from Saddam's administrative and security forces, but it let those cops continue to fester as the base of new terrorist and paramilitary groups; unemployed professionals in violence have to do *something*. The police we merely fire today will be the core of the marauding gangs they warn will come in their absence. At worst they will provide a crystallizing seed of centralization and legitimacy capable of organizing bad people through to their collective self-interest.

This is adamantly not to advocate an exterminationist policy. There are seven hundred thousand law enforcement officers in the United States. They may be the worst of the worst, but offensive mass murder on anything near that scale should be unthinkable, and is clearly not on a path to anything like a liberated world. Mass imprisonment in some kind of Stalinesque re-education project is likewise beyond unconscionable, and even less likely than therapy to have a deep impact. The US currently incarcerates 2.3 million, they may be mostly far better people than the average cop, but simply putting the cops inside the prisons they currently run would reproduce the current carceral state with only modest reforms. No anarchist who truly believes in a world without domination can embrace endless bloodshed.

How then, do we live with these monsters?

scale necessary to create long-lasting institutional incentive structures that can bend selfish pricks to a collective purpose.

In contrast the police (an occupying military force designed to continually put down a population) don't sacrifice, they have huge salaries and plush accommodations, absurd liability protections and expect everyone to bend over backwards for them, they whine and quit over the slightest inconvenience.

This is why dismantling the apparatuses of the police state is so pressing. But it is also the site of insufficiently examined danger. If existing hierarchical structures can be demolished or dismantled, how quickly and efficiently will police deputize other bad people as paramilitary auxiliaries? They would happily give guns to rapey incels from 8chan and tell them to start killing libs. And even if we do successfully dismantle the police/military command institutions capable of organizing other monsters, how do we clean up a world of such unemployed landmines.

If indeed 800 officers are quitting the NYPD in response to the George Floyd uprising those people aren't magically going to stop being authoritarian thugs. They're not doing it for ethical reasons, they're quitting because popular revolt made the job harder for them. The absence of the badge, the removal of the institution that harbored them, won't transform these rabid creatures into people with consciences. It's not enough fantasizing of marauding as warlords find deep common personality — and from there common culture — with the police that ostensibly protect against precisely that.

The legacy of white supremacy provides framing to this, and certainly the police help maintain white supremacy in complex structural ways, but many a reactionary without conscious racial animus instinctively sees a black cop at the bar as an ally, not because of any conscious evaluation that the black cop is functionally reinforcing white supremacy. No, at the most base level the black cop and the reactionary share a *worldview* and aspects of personality. It is one largely of zero-sum violent competition, fearful of messy complexity, disdainful of empathy, inquiry, and creativity, anything that might undermine hard resolve.

The role of policing attracts, facilitates, and is best performed by pre-existing *bad people*.

And like knows like.

Understanding affinities and predilections in terms of character, not just structural positions, is critical to understanding the world.

The reactionary explosion that was Gamergate and Trump has forged an alliance across all sorts of divides and differences that on paper look impossible. What united them was a general recognition that the world was removing operating space for bad people like them, at an accelerating pace.

This was as horrifying as it was unexpected for many of them. After all, their worldview tells them that brute violence and selfish opportunism are the True Nature of the world. The Way Things Just Are. They were playing The Game and everyone else was caught up in temporary delusions.

So how on earth could they be losing?!

The left often tries to parse the reactionary coalition in terms of axes of systemic oppression. Patriarchy, racism, homophobia, ableism, class, etc.. Those who fear losing their privileges often react with violence, that's broadly true. But why are they losing? And simply looking at a person's systemic privilege chart is not as predictive of their politics as such an account would suggest. What would drive a coalition together so fervently? Is it just the inevitable response to a black president and economic travails? This doesn't explain the steady growth of reaction in numerous circles and it doesn't explain the volcano of reaction online from Gamergate on. There are many complex explanations for the archipelago of grifters, militants, and opportunists working against their ostensible structural affinities, and most of them are right, to a degree.

But at root the reality is that in the last decade bad people and even just the moderately apathetic in almost every subcultural corner started finding a rapidly tightening noose around their necks thanks to the internet. What is derided as "cancel culture" is just old fashioned boycott dynamics supercharged by massive conservative media ecosystem is relatively centralized and in lockstep, leading to individuals with atrophied epistemic muscles and a completely inaccurate shared map of the world and their enemies. They're mostly selfish bastards so there's incentive for randos to make shit up for a semblance of importance. This spirals out into the most absurd dysfunction. Sure these chuckleheads have more guns — as they incessantly remind the world — but that doesn't mean much if whenever Karen reposts a shit meme you deploy your troops to random big boxes in nowheresville.

There is of course a dangerous ratchet of tribal identity and shared delusion, but that's because those things benefit all individual parties in the short term. In the long term if they actually do finally start the civil war they hunger for, reactionaries will be horribly hobbled by this kind of systemic inaccuracy.

Conservatives habitually assume anarchists must be "paid protesters" because they'd never put their lives on the line to fight the cops without a paycheck. And most would certainly never spend hours every day exhaustively tracking the opposition to zero personal acclaim.

Reactionaries endlessly think in military terms because such blunt hierarchical systems are the only thing capable of organizing them.

If they were to autonomously form up into gangs on their own there's a good chance they'd squabble into catastrophic dysfunction, at least before reaching the

please. Won't it be great when we get revenge. When the clean simple understandable game of violence is all that's in play.

One thing to note about such — the hunger to grab guns you've never used and point them at protesters in your rich neighborhood — is that it's in some twisted sense "defensive." Someone in a surburban home will talk a lot of shit about the need for *other people* to genocide away the libs, but this stems from a deep aversion to risk, novelty, and complexity. He may donate a pile of cash to grifter thugs livestreaming fights with antifa, but he hesitates at facing risk himself. While borderline fascists are legion in number, they're mostly chickenhawks. Like the old white man screaming himself into horrified hysterics when the lynch mob finds a black man armed with a gun, he knows that his social order is falling apart because it is brittle to this kind of collective action problem. The reactionary mob may outnumber the black man, but not a one of them is willing to make the first move.

Bad people have a hard time acting in their common interest without a hierarchical system to handle coordinating them. While bad people love to fantasize of a world without n-iterated games — shrunken down to a local patch disconnected from all else — where they can murder and rape without fear of consequences, they flounder in the face of decentralized complexities.

The recent nationwide freakout over "ANTIFA buses" is reactionary dysfunction in perfect miniature. The connectivity and the rapid progression of political/ethical discourse as the collective hive mind grows in size.

As people came online in greater numbers and greater activity the promise of the internet was fulfilled. The oppressed gained a voice and made their case. Radical ideas finally had their day in court. The altruistic were persuaded and mobilized. What were once extremely marginal (although correct) analyses of systemic injustice rapidly won out in the marketplace of ideas. Not in the sense that they persuaded literally everyone — some folks weren't interested in listening, some were less connected, and some were indeed hostile to the loss of privileges these arguments prescribed — but in the sense that they accumulated large enough support to *apply pressure*.

You see, boycotts are an asymmetric tool. They require sacrifice on the part of the boycotters and they don't present very many opportunities for personal benefit. A negligible transient status bump from signaling your participation and a massive energy drain to launch and keep campaigns going.

Let's say that you get raped by Sam. The default self-interested calculus is to shut up about it and pretend like it never happened while avoiding him. The damage is done, the legal system and public opinion is overwhelmingly stocked against you. You could maybe inflict a little revenge, but you'd take massive damage. And as revenge, it wouldn't be a stunning victory that

would demonstrate your superior power to all those watching, no, you would appear weak. You were raped, you lost standing fighting him. You took the path of the damaged, self-destructive, crazy woman. No, better to shut up.

But what of the *other* people he could hurt? If you're a selfish person you don't care, or only care enough for a deniable whisper of warning here or there.

If, however, you're an empathetic person for whom the rape of another person is akin to getting raped again yourself… the answer is obvious, you have to do what you can to stop Sam from raping again.

So you whisper and yell, you warn everyone you can.

And since people are mostly selfish or apathetic bastards most of them don't give a shit. They continue being friends with Sam, they continue to provide him with access to spaces and people to prey on. So long as they can avoid the issue, so long as they can deflect or 'both sides' or whatever it takes to not have to sacrifice anything, they will.

So you demand that people pick a side or you'll burn your bridges with them. The people more invested in Sam than you get outraged you'd damage them over this and drop you for Sam. You're just one person, how much damage could you do to them.

But here's the thing. The people sticking with Sam are purely some degree of Bad People. They're not altruists. They won't sacrifice to stop Sam from raping again. So

widest, but even wider is the counter-attack space. They can bomb dams and poison water supplies, but can they stop every scientist and tinkerer on the planet from autonomously probing and inventing? Civilization, properly understood, is not a brittle megamachine but an emergent hive of collective collaboration. Ecofascist terrorists are a serious danger, but they are so small in number that wiping them out is conceivable.

The harder problem lies with the more popular pathways of reaction. From exterminationist Right Wing Death Squads to balkanization to sweeping institutional fascism. While more ecofascist and collapsist variants seek to permanently demolish the infrastructure that connects people and super-empowers altruistic minorities — letting the rubble of civilization serve as perpetual prison walls — this other path seeks to maintain proactive social control. Rather than transforming everything to something hopefully perpetually stable, this form of reaction seeks to preserve much of the existing order through unmitigated violence against the rest. You get to keep your surburban home and consumption rituals largely intact, in return for rivers of blood just over the horizon as all those unruly city/colored/queer folk are permanently silenced and the rest of the world more brutally enslaved.

These re-colonization fantasies are virtually everywhere in the US today. *The liberals have made noise for too long, they've cluttered up your world with all kinds of complicated things you can't quite grasp and a sense of entitlement to stop you from raping and hurting as you*

It is often said that the internet has turned politics into a mechanism to sort ourselves by personality. This process is far from complete, but it is more real than not.

And if the reactionary alliance and the fascist resurgence we face today are dynamics of personal character, we cannot merely derail or smash something systemic and solve the problem. A fascist person will keep on being fascist, cloaked or not. And reactionaries who have woken up to the noose tightening around their necks will not soon forget the existential risk they face.

Bad people have achieved a certain degree of class consciousness.

The biggest open question is whether they can manage to slaughter enough of us to revert society to a simpler game that's less biased against them.

There are a few pathways available.

The first is the ecofascist collapsism you find among Atomwaffen and their ilk. This is probably the most coherent grand picture thinking among reactionaries. Social connectivity is the root of the problem reactionaries face, the thing that's allowing boycott dynamics to start to eclipse brute force dynamics, and so the grandest possible reset would be to wipe out not just the internet but cities as well. Hard to 'cancel' a marauding warlord for rape in the ruins of civilization. But there are countless significant challenges between a few kids building bombs while whacking it to Evola and Kaczynski and their goal. Their attack space is the

you get a few altruists on your side willing to sacrifice to help you. If you get enough of them together, even when you're a minority, you can collectively leverage a lot more. "If you stay friends with Sam you will lose not just one friend but five friends."

Boycotts, like strikes, are most effective when they're transitive in some manner. You don't just boycott the tomato company, you boycott every company that buys from them as well. You get colleges to divest investments from anything near the tomato company. You threaten to boycott any state that continues giving the tomato company tax write-offs. You sacrifice collectively immense reputation, time, energy, money, etc, until the impact starts dissuading people. Then you target the remaining defectors. The moment another tomato company adopts the same practices you come out swinging hard, no matter the personal cost. You never allow defectors.

Every boycott requires a different critical mass to work, but that mass is *not* a 51% majority. The leverage individuals have varies, but what usually remains the case is that the sacrifice is not directly advantageous in net to the individuals involved, even if the boycott works. The benefit is usually over a large number of people.

Boycotts are not just a collective action problem, they're often not even a benefit to the individuals boycotting. And this is why boycotts are a style of conflict that tends to slightly favor altruistic people.

The internet decreases networking costs and so it made different types of boycotts easier. Everywhere.

This is the noose that the shitbags could feel tightening. One day they woke up and saw their friend getting shit for calling someone the n-word, the next day it was for a minor joke, *a joke*! What were the boundaries of allowable etiquette one day seemed to suddenly ratchet the next day. It was absurd! To keep up you had to constantly pay attention, you had to waste a ton of energy acting like you cared about other people.

The whole thing was madness to anyone with a right mind (ie selfish bastards), because there was very little winning in this new game. At best a bad person might eek out a little prestige wearing sheep's clothing and trying to herd them in their crusade against wolves, but the sheep inevitably came for them too. Sometimes the sheep even came for each other! Even if you could somehow brainwash yourself into being altruistic like them, that was no assurance you'd get power! Quite the opposite. There were no truly stable positions of power to be seized. And what good is a game if there's no throne?

In all corners, in all walks of life, bad people had a collective shudder in horror and realized suddenly that to preserve the various games they'd been playing they'd have to do something weird: they'd have to unite.

Just one little teensy problem. They're not that fucking good at it. Their core values and strategies leave them incapable of autonomously sacrificing for a collective

abusers, etc., that have whined about anarchist critiques of power that ventured too close to their own chosen ladder. And we might expect that at least some of the left's inclination to get lost in structural thinking is the result of intentional misdirection, to leave room for individual bad actors.

But while boycotts can and do fire in directions not aligned with anarchism's aspirations, the overall ratcheting effect of internet-era boycotting has been both a strangling of the selfish by the altruistic, and an undermining of *positions of power*. Every throne is more precarious and short-lived. Every rapist now fears their survivors.

Anarchism, once written off as a fringe and preposterous cult of naive sheep, is now revealing itself to a number of people around the world as their worst enemy. The implicit logic behind a cleansing firestorm that risks demolishing every relationship of control, every position of power, every reassuring but violently-maintained simplicity.

While big self-reinforcing patterns of capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, etc, are certainly real enough, it is individuals who make the future. And while class, race, gender, etc., help statistically prompt the emergence of certain habits of mind and orientations to the world, it is ideology and habituated character that directly propels a given individual to act.

power themselves. This anarchization of the left, of anarchism itself, is a horrifying nightmare to many.

A bad person — long ago calcified by a hunger for personal power — might be willing to watch as many particular ladders of status and control are eroded, but the idea of being left *no* ladders is intolerable in the extreme.

This is the problem we now face. While conscious anarchists are only one part of the overall ratchet, the world is waking up to the threat of anarchism, realizing for the first time that it is not just a specific set of abusers, rulers, or selfish jackasses that is threatened by the changing world, but *all of them*.

The sharpest disadvantage of anarchism is that, by its very nature as a radical rejection of all domination, it leaves no line of retreat. By targeting all evil, it offers nothing of appeal to fundamentally evil people.

There are, of course, even bad people who, for a variety of reasons, find anarchist circles to be stalking grounds more suited to their aptitudes than finance or human trafficking. They are inherently hostile to "cancel culture" or any theoretical approach that might cast judgement on individuals or frame anarchism in radical ethical terms. It should be no surprise that, for example, the white-nationalist Michael Schmidt tried studiously to strip the anarchist tradition of ethical and philosophical content, re-casting it as merely an anti-state and anti-capital movement, silent on everything else. Everyone knows examples of predators, rapists, good. They fight each other, they grab for power, they run grifts, they get bored. Heady moments of possibility invariably collapsed into grueling, whining shambles. Beside a few true believers — so damaged they'd sacrifice for the collective bad, the maintenance of The Game — most everyone turned out to not want to sacrifice.

They were willing to loudly vice-signal for years when that meant trumpeting their cruelty and bullying anyone that smacked of sincere altruism. They were willing to spend a few bucks a month subscribing to personal entertainment catered directly to bad people. But they weren't generally willing to lay down their lives, much less their day-to-day comfort, and sacrifice in grueling unpaid unrewarding organizing and activism.

Bad people excel when there are external regimented hierarchies to weaponize them. But they are toothless without them, incapable of the sacrifice necessary to resolve collective action problems. Some of them are willing to do violence and die for The Cause, but dying is easy. It's the drudge work with no personal reward that's impossible.

And so, as the neoreactionary fascists say, "Cthulhu always swims left." Not because institutions are captured in democratic spirals of majoritarian tyranny, no, democracy would be far *more* reactionary than boycotts. If the only way to change things was a mere vote almost every country would have more conservative

institutions. No, boycotts on the whole super-empower altruistic minorities.

Obviously this includes *mistaken* altruists who sincerely believe that a fetus has a "soul" or that white people shouldn't eat burritos. These particulars matter, but don't derail the broad tendency of information age boycotting against the sort of games many have specialized at. It's also true that centralized epistemic organizations have collapsed, and as a result the internet is a churning place, filled with Qanons and horoscopes, temporarily generating all kinds of batshit foam, but the long arc of discourse is towards greater accuracy.

As social complexity grew in bottom-up ways with urbanization, globalization, and various other increases of connectivity, reactionaries continued to win all the rock solid, easily identifiable hard power stuff, and the altruists in turn melted around their iron fists in a thousand complicated facets of culture and society.

Personal strategies that were tailored to a world of simple violence and simple small communities, have floundered in the face of a more complex world. It's *unfair*. It's *unnatural*. Trying to understand or keep track of the new game hurts many a poor little reactionary mind.

Some have adapted, of course, the left has many a grifter and opportunist, but they find themselves increasingly pressed. The rapist or careerist who thought they had a solid game going suddenly finds themselves cancelled, or gets fed up with the amount of energy they have to put into preference falsifying. And those who've tried to weaponize the new social norms into "give me something or I'll call you out over nothing" plays face diminishing returns (because they're unwilling to truly sacrifice) and rarely last more than a year or two before being themselves identified and marginalized.

This is why the more clearheaded selfish bastards look at the left and see a suicide cult, an astonishingly stupid game that can't be won. "*You'll deserve it when they eat you alive*." They can never imagine being motivated by altruism in a self-sacrificing way, and so they see the boycotters as a storm of insanity and shortsightedness. Everywhere around them is empty virtue signalling. Actual righteous fury and passion — raised by increased direct connection to injustice — is beyond their comprehension or written off as the braying of irrelevant sheep.

The left often talks of establishing a world without class, racism, patriarchy, homophobia, ableism, etc, but these are merely flavors of power — they leave the promise of entirely new power systems emerging from the ashes. The replacement of one set of games with another. A young upper middle class person with floundering options for personal power under the Czar might see great opportunity in getting in on the ground floor of Bolshevism — at least they'd have a shot at establishing themselves higher up. But over time the left has not just added numerous modules of oppressions to be toppled, it has increasingly moved towards rejecting *positions of*