



UNPACKING ‘DEMOCRACY’

Pamela Satterwhite



A HUMMING WORDS • NEW (NASCENCE TO END WORK) PRESS BOOK
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THIS IS A HUMMING WORDS • NEW
(NASCENCE TO END WORK) PRESS BOOK

“My soul is like a singing bowl – it *hums*.”

Cover: Sergei Konionkov, *To Those Who Fell Fighting for the Cause of Peace and the Brotherhood of Nations*, 1918 (portion)
Back: from John Boswell’s *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance*

Francisco Goya art from *Los Caprichos*:

Frontispiece and page 35: Dream of lies and inconstancy

page 36: What a golden beak!

page 63: Bon voyage

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The Purpose of the Series

This is Volume 1 of a five-part series: *We Are Living the Transition That Ends the Class System... and Ushers In... Our Future... Freedom...*

This series continues discussions begun in *Waking Up: Freeing Ourselves From Work* and on the website Nascence to End Work (writings available free online at nas2endwork.org).

I hope with these conversations to help concretize our vision of 'future freedom'... a future based in uncoerced life.

A key argument in this series is that 'power' has a vision on which they are very focused, and that only a broadly worked-on vision on which we... the people... are equally focused... can stop theirs from becoming reality.

I think we can glean from their actions... actions which otherwise seem unaccountable...

(Why so resistant to full participation...
...and instead so committed...
...to authoritarian visions...
...that trash our earth vast...
...and hurt brothers and sisters...
...we, who could so easily...
...make health and happiness...
...the general way of things?)

...a vision founded on an idealization of ancient Greece...
an ancient Greece that never existed.

Martin Bernal, in *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Volume 1: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785 – 1985*, explains how this ‘history’ was fabricated... based at “the university of Gottingen [Germany], founded in 1734 by George II, Elector of Hanover and King of England...” forming thereby “a cultural bridge between Britain and Germany...”

...a profoundly racist – in a Platonic sense – academic project... which was then systematically spread to students at elite educational institutions across the ‘civilized world’ as “the classical heritage”.

Those reared to be ‘rulers’ imbibe Plato with mother’s milk.

Bernal shows that what we have been conditioned to call ‘ancient Greece’ – meaning the birthplace of ‘European Civilization’ – was in fact a ‘Great Mediterranean Bowl’... around which swirled... danced... ran... fled... (desperate to escape slavery...) peoples of many lands and ways... Asiatic, Arab and African... who shared those ways as they came and went... a very fertile fermentation....

‘Western’ elites’ vision of the ideal ‘state’... and therefore their futuristic imaginings... are largely Plato-inspired... express the flights of fancy they found... in the *Republic*. Karl Popper, in *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume One: The Spell Of Plato*, exhaustively explains the propagandistic nature of Plato’s writings... and the totalitarian nature of his thought.

In his *Republic* Plato provided a practical guide to ‘rulers’ for establishing slavery... I hope this series will further practical discussions... for escaping it.

(This writing here and on the website is contributed with the goal of helping to further a mass movement to end wage work. Your financial support will allow us to reprint both this book and *Waking Up* in order to make them available for discussion in low-income communities.)

- Volume 1: Unpacking ‘Democracy’
- Volume 2: Revealing ‘Division’
- Volume 3: Beginning Again
- Volume 4: To Rebuild Our Freedom
- Volume 5: Classifying Will Not Bring ‘Class’ To A Close: The Case For Not Labeling Our Future Freedom

“What Is ‘Democracy?’”

The Founding Fathers had no ‘purpose’ other than to enjoy a good life... and by ‘good life’ they meant “freedom to pursue happiness”... a pursuit possible only with the possession of sufficient leisure to do so. The necessary inter-relationship of these ideals... ‘good life’... ‘freedom’... ‘happiness’... ‘leisure’... was for them self-evident...

...self-evident in earth-terms as well... meaning... it is true.

(And there’s our future in a nutshell... ‘good life’... ‘freedom’... ‘happiness’... ‘leisure’... not for the few, but for all.)

The one who first brings [“the pursuit of happiness”] on the stage of American politics is a classical scholar, George Mason. Ten years before he did this, he had written describing himself as a man who spent most of his time in retirement and seldom meddled in public affairs; content with the blessings of a private station, he enjoyed a modest but independent

income and disregarded the smiles and favors of the great. The Virginia Declaration of Rights is substantially the work of this man. In it the natural rights of men include the enjoyment of life and liberty, as in the Declaration of Independence, and also “the means of acquiring, and preserving, property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.” This clause passed unchanged over to the Virginia constitution of 1776. Mason had prepared the statement for the Constitution of the United States too; it was left out through a complex series of circumstances. In one form or another, the clause has been incorporated by two thirds of the state constitutions framed up until this century. Some of them actually go so far as to say in the language of the Declaration of Independence that it is the people’s right to “alter or abolish” a government that fails to secure happiness for the people. (Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure*, p. 263)

But it’s over-simple to say the Founders merely took for their purpose... ‘the good life’... it was more complicated than that. They were shepherds of men, and gave serious thought to their role... as foretold... by their mentor.

In a... passage in the *Republic*, Plato gives us a mythological yet very pointed description of [a] conquest..., when dealing with the origin of the 'earthborn', the ruling class of the best city....

Their victorious march into the city, previously founded by the tradesmen and workers, is described as follows:

“After having armed and trained the earthborn, let us now make them advance, under the command of the guardians, till they arrive in the city. Then let them look round to find out the best place for their camp – the spot that is most suitable for keeping down the inhabitants, should anyone show unwillingness to obey the law, and for holding back external enemies who may come down like wolves on the fold.”

This short but triumphant tale of the subjugation of a sedentary population by a conquering war horde (who are identified, in the *Statesman*, with the nomad hill shepherds of the period before the settlement [of Sparta]) must be kept in mind when we interpret Plato's reiterated insistence that good rulers, whether gods or demigods or guardians, are patriarchal shepherds of men, and that the true political art, the art of ruling, is a kind of herdsmanship,

i.e. the art of managing and keeping down the human cattle. And it is in this light that we must consider his description of the breeding and training of “the auxiliaries who are subject to the rulers like sheep-dogs to the shepherds of the state.”

The breeding and the education of the auxiliaries and thereby of the ruling class of Plato’s best state is, like their carrying of arms, a class symbol and therefore a class prerogative. And breeding and education are not empty symbols but, like arms, instruments of class rule, and necessary for ensuring the stability of this rule. They are treated by Plato solely from this point of view, i.e. as powerful political weapons, as means which are useful for herding the human cattle, and for unifying the ruling class.

To this end, it is important that the master class should feel as one superior master race. “The race of the guardians must be kept pure,” says Plato (in defence of infanticide), when developing the racialist argument that we breed animals with great care while neglecting our own race, an argument which has been repeated ever since. (Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume One: The Spell Of Plato*, p. 50 – 51)

But *their*... the Founders'... 'good life'... following an ideal of 'Ancient Greece' and the musings of Plato, was not for everyone but only for 'citizens'. And... ponder it a bit... how could it be otherwise if your requirement for leisure depended on *others* doing the work to feed you?

...i.e. a rigid class system.

(I will be arguing that their imposition of 'class' [in this case, a slave system proper] was not 'necessary'... for the ultimate benefit of all... for all to have 'art' and 'beauty' and 'civilization'... but was rather for a far less lofty goal...

...the goal of making the so-called rulers into idols.)

To 'justify' the abandonment of good fellowship and solidarity with one's fellows of the same species requires some pretty strong reasoning...

(... 'justification'...

...making something *seem* 'just'... that isn't.)

For the purposes of this series, be attuned to this: by 'ideology' is meant 'justification for veering from truth'... and by 'truth'... is meant 'correspondence with earth... species health'... what our bodies are *meant* to be... biologically.

It should be clear from the above that another word for 'ideology' would be...

... 'propaganda'...

...because *truth* needs no 'justification.'

And... as controlling the limits of 'thought' for those trained (us) to be an energy source... (for an entire *system*...) is all... when the conditioning slips... as it does across generations... it has to be 'fixed'... re-tooled... tweaked... requiring 'power's' auxiliaries to provide 'new' tools... (i.e. tools that seem 'new' but are actually just the same old poisoned brew.)

"I Do Not Think That Word Means What You Think It Means"

Democracy and totalitarianism are not exclusive terms. Democracy is rule by the people. Totalitarianism is the attempt to impose a single pattern upon the thought, feelings, and actions of a community. The opposite of totalitarianism is not democracy, but the pluralistic society, in which people are free to differ and in which complete conformity is not the test of good citizenship. (Lester G. Crocker, "Introduction" to *The Social Contract and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, p. xxiii)

O 'democracy'!...
...how have you mis-led me?
...count the ways.

We have been misled by the words, “democracy means rule of the people...”

...in actual (earth) terms – i.e. in the way it's been applied practically – it doesn't mean this at all... it means that the state represents the will of 'the people,' *and* the will of 'the people' manifests the will of the state...

...as 'the people' will be *designed*... by 'educational' means... (and continuously reinforced structurally...) by the state.

In order for 'power' to exist... a legitimization had to be invented.

Under 'class'... within 'class' systems... 'power' generates the ideologies (propaganda) that it needs... to maintain its exclusivity.

(Across generations the ideologies are adjusted but all as a block do this: they take the concepts by which we express longing for freedom and set their pundits to the task of redesign... creating the impression [feeling] that we're moving closer to realizing them, when we're actually leaving them further and further behind. Let's call this game of 'bait-and-switch' "side-steppin', mis-directin' and deflectin'.")

"Democracy means rule of the people" is an ideological trap which has effectively contained us since 'Western' 'rulers' or their auxiliaries first invented it. We are trapped literally by words... by 'ideas' only....

Side-steppin' and mis-directin' is trickery that means...
...providing the song and dance... to keep us distracted...
...and prevented from seeing... the true motives and actors...
...and to this end the pundit-middle-classes...
...replace authentic thoughts with...
...propaganda.

'Class' in the guise of 'thought'...
...has, through the minds of pundits...
...been designed to choke...
...all efforts to move beyond it...
...a literal drag...
...a slowing morass...
...a hand pulling us back...
...in our face a cold blast...
...a weight on our knees...
...when we try to kick free...
...up!...
...to the surface...
(...which is there, never doubt...
...where all that's kept in...
...will come out...
...our love our light...
...our links our might...
...all good all right...
...our inheritance is our endowment...
...life.)

Successive ideologies have proven to be...
(...following the very structure of society...)
...the most successful strategies...
...for robbing us of certainty.

“It’s as if someone, or some few, had drawn the feeling of certainty out of us and taken it for themselves.” (Andrey Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*)

Why do we think we’re ‘free’? Only because we’re *told* that we’re ‘free’... because “we live in a ‘democracy’.”

So we’re trapped in lies... circularly: “people who live in a ‘democracy’ are ‘free’”... and... “we live in a ‘democracy’.”

If you listened to your *body* only, would you believe you were free?

In order to figure out how and why we’re being lied to we would have to gather in numbers regularly... daily... to discuss our collective experience... compare notes. This... as we have seen... with the extreme state reaction to our attempt to do this... called ‘the Occupy Movement’... is a thing the state will not ‘allow’.

So... here’s another lie: “people who live in a ‘democracy’ have ‘freedom of speech’”... and... “we live in a ‘democracy’.”

We have been robbed of ‘thought’... in stealing our right to speak... for how do we know what we think... if we don’t hear it spoken? (...and this has been pointed out by Studs Terkel.)

Because we can’t “hear ourselves think”...
...we’ve lost self-visibility...
... and so self- (independent [from
‘power’]) *viability*...
...viability to *ourselves*...
...as...
...our voices make us real to ourselves...
...pronounce us distinct human beings...
...silenced...
...we don’t exist....

When we speak together out loud our truths... we begin to make ourselves real to ourselves.

We’re told we have “freedom of speech”... but without freedom to gather and discuss... continuously and with purpose... our ‘speech’ is but regurgitation of what ‘the state’ tells us to think (via mass media airwaves and its designated ‘speakers’... ‘thinkers’...

...because we have to compare notes...
...to figure out...

...how we are *all* mis-used...
...by seeing from the vantage of the 'whole'.

Our belief-system and our organs of state...
...are totally shaped...
...by a propaganda piece...
...written by an ancient Greek...
...not because he thought so presciently...
...but rather because the rules of
conquering...
...run briskly from 'A' to 'B'...
...little has changed...
...as we human beings...
...are ever the same...
...we hunger 'til we have it...
...to be free.

So...
...the word 'democracy' misleads...
...largely because...
...we've been misled by the punditry...
(...who repeat...
...like a drumbeat...
...its platitudes...
...continuously...)

...and by the institutions of 'learning' ...
...and by the mass media...
...and by the very people we depend on to
guide us...
...our parents...
...all in one voice tell us...
...that if we are unwilling to memorize the
minutiae of 'law' ...
...by which 'power' and its minions...
...its operatives of 'state' ...
...auxiliaries...
...control our lives...
...and then diligently jump through those
hoops...
...scrupulously bend...
...our behavior to them...
...that we are 'stupid' ...
...can be legitimately victimized...
...and relieved of duty...
...of any responsibility...
...for determining things ourselves.

We may choose a 'representative,' we are told... to sit in
a seat and perpetuate illusions... but we may not choose
freedom... the right to think for ourselves and figure out a
better way.

Memorizing The Constitution in order to ‘prove’ it’s not being followed – or that it was never written for the benefit of all, let alone to further freedom – is a fool’s exercise... and the people are not fools.

But we *are* being betrayed... by those with access to the airwaves... the ones who could rally us all... to a global exercise... *not* of “Making ‘Democracy’ Real”... but of “Designing A Society For The People... For All Human Beings... Globally.”

‘Society Re-Design’... the most important ‘work’ of our time.

Instead, far too many of us...
...even many with love and heart
enough...
...to dedicate their lives to greater
“openness”...
...have been duped by false projects...
...to the degree of self-betraying...
...by diverting their efforts of ‘figuring-
out’...
...down paths that cannot lead the way
out...

...such 'work' as this...
...sometimes comes from unconsciousness...
...but sometimes it's from...
...members of the punditry...
...*choosing* to be...
...'power's' 'auxiliaries'...
...which has the unfortunate effect...
...of misleading us...
...into swinging high...
...totems and false guides...
...when instead...
...we could be roused from our beds...
...of lethargy...
(...in which we're sunk...
...flooded...
...in the fear that 'what-is'...
...'must-be'...)
...by proclaiming the only oppositional
strategy...
(...to 'class' society...)
...the only 'real'-mission...
...i.e....
...'making real'...
...*our* 'future-vision'...
...'being free.'

But the *ancestors'* analysis does help us...
...as we'll see below with Sebastian de Grazia....

*“Is There Such A Thing As A ‘State’ That Works For
The Benefit Of All?”*

“Making ‘democracy’ real” is a phrase repeated *ad
nauseam* by progressive pundits...

...but...

...is there such a thing as a ‘state’... (whether you
call that state a ‘democracy’... or ‘socialist’... or an
‘autocracy’...) that works for the benefit of all?

In the nineteenth century the most
influential philosopher of democracy
was John Stuart Mill... Mill was less
interested in working out an economic
theory... [than in examining] liberty
and representative government....
(Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work,
and Leisure*, p. 269 – 270)

(As we should too, as, clearly, it hasn't been
working... for me and you....

And why start fresh... as if... our ancestors never existed?)

One of Mill's chief worries was the ever-growing pressure that government, industry, and public opinion put on the individual to conform to their requirements. This, the third quarter of the nineteenth century, was a great period in English trade and industry. It must have seemed that machines were here to stay. Mill must have thought there was little to do to liven the deadening routine of factory work, but indirectly one could do a lot. When men were not working they could devote their free time to politics. There they would learn about cooperation, they would sharpen their wits in discussion and begin to feel a sense of local and national responsibility....

To keep men toward these worthy objectives the first step was enlarging the suffrage. This would bring men around to voting, give them a stake and, hence, an interest in politics; after interest would come participation, which in itself was a form of educating the citizen. At present, men's work was a routine, a satisfaction of daily wants, not a labor of love.

Neither the product nor the process of their work life lifted their minds above ordinary beings, stimulated them to reach for books, brought them in the circle of persons of culture. Just giving a man something to do for the public would supply almost all his present deficiencies. “The proofs of this,” Mill wrote, “are apparent in every page of our great historian of Greece.” His model is Athens. Men’s leisure should be dedicated to the *polis*. Participating in politics, Mill pointed out, “raised the intellectual standard of an average Athenian citizen far beyond anything of which there is yet an example in any other mass of men, ancient or modern.” ...Once the citizens took a more active role in politics once they had the liberty to vote and speak and be educated, what then? How does this liberty lead to the good life? Liberty for Mill was doing as one pleased, a phrase that seems related to the idea of leisure. And to have as many choices as possible is a good thing because it prevents the routine of work from turning one stale. At the mention of work, though, the resemblance to leisure evaporates. You can only be partially free if you are not free of necessity. The working

classes whose heads Mill wished to lift couldn't lift them while they were tending a loom, driving a quill, or selling goods over a counter....

...How can you be free to do as you wish if you have to work all day? How will your free time be free if you have to be ready to go back to work on the dot, and if your free time is clocked too, and if in it you are reacting to your work – blowing off steam, making a whole article in your basement workshop, wearily watching TV. Work is still working on you....

The Greek idea of leisure encouraged participating in politics, but not so much for the benefit of the participants as for that of the state. (Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure*, p. 270 – 273)

All ideologies of 'class' society resolve into this: "the self is nothing... the 'state' is all..." For why... otherwise... would we sacrifice our lives...? why would we not fight like hell our captivity...? like any other species... if we rated ourselves high?

Not long ago I watched a process in a pet store...

...a passel of parakeets...
...being herded and trapped...
...one by one scooped...
...up...
...caught...
...carried from one cage to another.
Eventually there was but one left...
...and that one...
...seemed to struggle the hardest.
“Doesn’t he see...
...all his fellows fought unsuccessfully?”
...said The Trapper wonderingly...
... “why does he still resist?
...when he sees nothing can come of it?”
“Perhaps there’s some bottom lines,” said I...
“...that must not be sacrificed...
...some basic principles to defend...
...that she will not forfeit...
Perhaps a parakeet...
...has more integrity...
...than we?”
The man caught my drift...
...and didn’t like it one bit.

So ideologies exist...

...to foster a parent-child dynamic...
...by which...
...we surrender power willingly...
...to councilman... king...
...senator... prince...
...all are ways, then...
...to extend...
...childhood...
...*ad infinitum*...

And a pundit class to invent and
proclaim ...
...the ideologies that keep us tamed...
...is an essential middle...
...to keep us all muddled...
...and must, therefore...
...be systematically cultivated...
...trained...
...to accept the collar willingly...
...see it as a badge of honor and
privilege...
...and agree...
...to *earn* their right...
...to be seen.

So “divide-and-conquer” begins...
...with this original sin...
...the betrayal of the privileged...
...intermediaries.

The first function of ideology...
...from beginning to end...
...if your goal's to control...
...humans and their tribes...
...first, last and always...
...is divide, divide, divide.

Participation [in politics] would be beneficial [thought John Stuart Mill] because the citizens had leisure to think about politics, not merely to be busy in politics. Mill gets this idea twisted. His citizen, it seems, spends free time exclusively in community activities....

Neither of Mill's ideas – how to spend off-work time and what liberty is – fits the conception of leisure. Both have been excessively politicized....

Work itself... does it not give a sense of purpose, both local and national,

to those who work, and exclude from it those who do not? Voting, on the contrary, does not give enough of this sense. It is too numerical, each voter's vote makes too small a ratio to count... Now, Mill knew that besides the citizens there was a large body of slaves in Athens. Did he really hope ever to bring workers up to the level of the Athenians, or was he seeking some basis by which he could say in his heart that English workers – if they became voters – could never be called slaves? (Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure*, p. 273 – 275)

...i.e.... substituting an 'idea'... for freedom.

Did Mill think that a word...
... 'citizen' ...
... might make us free ...
... when ...
... in actuality ...
... we had no liberty?

While de Grazia is concerned about indirect governance, and the fact that the imperative to work prevents anything like participation in government... *he* never gets (his allegiance) twisted. 'The state'... if it makes sense for it to be... is not the priority... the priority is '*we*'...

Ultimately, de Grazia concludes that 'democracy' and 'freedom'... (or 'democracy' and 'leisure')... are incompatible. Because the state requires people to work, by definition, 'citizens' cannot have leisure – freedom from necessity – which is the only authentic definition of 'free'.

His clarity, I think, comes from a groundedness greater even than Fromm's... who saw the matter strictly in terms of 'alienation':

Just as work has become alienated,
the expression of the will of the voter
in modern democracy is an alienated
expression. The principle of democracy
is the idea that not a ruler or a small
group, but the people as a whole,
determine their own fate and make their

decisions pertaining to matters of common concern. By electing his own representatives, who, in a parliament, decide on the laws of the land, each citizen is supposed to exercise the function of responsible participation in the affairs of the community. By the principle of the division of powers, an ingenious system was created that served to retain the integrity and independence of the judiciary system, and to balance the respective functions of the legislature and executive. Ideally, every citizen is equally responsible for and influential in making decisions.

In reality, the emerging democratic system was beset by one important contradiction. Operating in states with tremendous inequalities of opportunity and income, the privileged classes naturally did not want to lose the privileges which the status quo gave them, and which they could easily have lost if the will of the majority, who were without [large] property, had found

its full expression. To avoid such a danger, many among the property-less population were excluded from the franchise, and only very slowly was the principle accepted that every citizen, without restrictions and qualifications, had the right to vote.

In the nineteenth century it seemed as if universal franchise would solve all problems of democracy.... [But] the introduction of universal suffrage... disappointed all those who believe that universal suffrage would help to transform the citizenry into responsible, active, independent personalities. It became clear that the problem of democracy today is not any more the restriction of franchise but the manner in which the franchise is exercised.

How can people express “their” will if they do not have any will or conviction of their own, if they are alienated automatons, whose tastes,

opinions and preferences are manipulated by the big conditioning machines. If a government can prove that everybody has a right to vote, and that the votes are counted honestly, or if the voter is afraid of voting against the governing party, the country is undemocratic. It is true indeed that there is a considerable and important difference between free and manipulated elections, but noting this difference must not lead us to forget the fact that even free elections do not necessarily express “the will of the people.”

...In an alienated society the mode in which people express their will is not very different from that of their choice in buying commodities. (Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, p. 184 – 185)

But de Grazia nailed it...

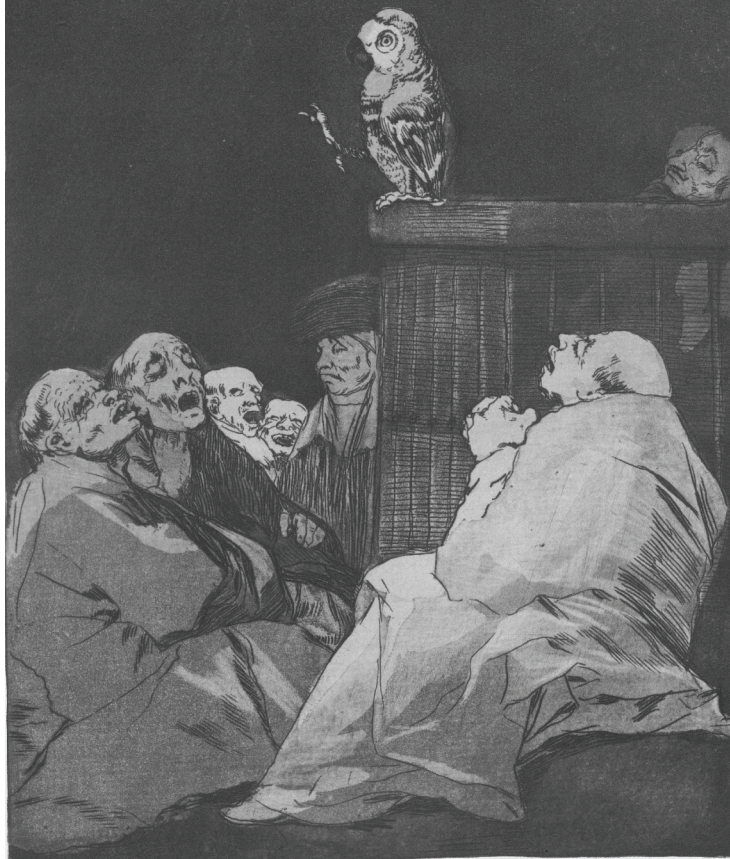
...it is wage-work that impales us...

...bleeding off our will...

...by dangling carrots before tired eyes...

...after annihilating our tribes .





“What’s Einstein’s Definition Of Insanity?”

Four years ago Immanuel Wallerstein, Senior Research Scholar at Yale University, wrote the following words:

The issue is not whether capitalism will continue to exist or not. It’s doomed. The issue is what will replace it. It’s no longer possible to have serious accumulation of capital because the costs are too high in terms of purchasing power... Capitalism as a system depends on lots of people working to produce surplus value that ends up in a few hands. This results in polarization. If thirty percent of Indians or the Chinese are middle class...a lot more money has to go into their hands. So the world level of profits declines with the growth of the middle class globally. And they consume an enormous amount of goods – food and energy – so you see prices go way up because there are more people who can afford to buy those products. Now there could be a

substitution – Americans consume less as the Chinese consume more – but there’s resistance to that... One way is to reduce labor costs... bring in rural populations at lower wages, but we’re running out of them. Within the next twenty-five years they’ll be wiped out. (Immanuel Wallerstein, Interview, Against the Grain, KPFA Radio, April 28 and 29, 2008, quoted in *Waking Up: Freeing Ourselves From Work*, p. 29, and in “*Occupying Our Commons*” from the website: nas2endwork.org)

These words struck me as significant and I expected intense debate. “*Is Capitalism Doomed?*” “*What Will Replace It?*” Fascism?... I assumed discussion on the progressive airwaves.

But until recently I heard nary a peep from the pundits.

So I blogged about it, addressing activists of the ‘Occupy Movement’:

Considering again... as we pitch
our tents... the words of Immanuel

Wallerstein... I can't help but ask:
What is a movement to re-claim our earth if
it does not begin in a process of community
visioning... to develop an alternative path to
'power'? – as it's 'power's' manufactured 'need'
(ultimately the need to be seen) that has
brought us this present catastrophe?
Is 'power' driving us off a cliff?
Is 'capitalism' doomed?
How do you know?
Does 'power' cease to exist when 'capitalism's'
evil ways catch up to it?
Aren't these discussions we should be having?
Aren't the answers to these questions critical
for developing the kind of consensus that
would allow us to move forward collectively
as human beings to a world in which
everyone... not only has access to material
stuff – which in the present system is possible
only if one is selected by 'power' to serve –
but can wake up every morning with the
words, "what do I want to do today?"
So... a query to those of good heart in the
progressive airwaves... Immanuel Wallerstein
spoke these provocative words over three and
a half years ago. Hearing them, I assumed

they would spark furious subsequent discussion... primarily as a community service to encourage us all to take ownership of our collective future. Why has this not come to pass? What could be more important to discuss?... and what other discussion would more readily energize... all of us? (“Re-Considering Immanuel’s Words,” 11.12.11, in *“Occupying Our Commons”* from the website: nas2endwork.org)

I’m hearing discussion now... but I don’t believe it’s the discussion we should be having. On the contrary, I’m finding this official ‘speech’ (speech that serves ‘the system’) diversionary and dishonest... designed to plant doubt... buy time....

As I write these words a global movement that challenges false divisions is underway.

Simultaneously, ‘power’ is marshalling immense resources to shut it down before it can develop certainty about a vision of the future that is truly oppositional to ‘the system’.... It’s impossible to

know how far along we are with this project as the media is pretty much controlled by 'power'... and because agent provocateurs are everywhere fostering division, doubt, and dissension... doing what agents do... trying their best to undermine the only quality that is wholly oppositional to this 'system': a love for your brothers and sisters so strong that you want for them... the 'all'... all of it... all the good stuff humans know how to make and feel and think... for each other.

The moment when the certainty blooms...
...that our bodies tell us true...
...and that what we want for ourselves...
...freedom...
...is what we want for everyone else...
...we'll be well on our way...
...beyond the reach...
...of the agents.

Now that the question ('capitalism') is at last being called, one pundit particularly is being consulted a lot on progressive airwaves... and although he's not addressing Wallerstein's "Heads up!" directly, I sense a reference to Wallerstein in these words:

Question to Richard Wolff: "Capitalism is

resilient. It's been up against the ropes before and bounced back. Can't it do that now?"

Richard Wolff reply: "No one ever knows – despite grandiose claims to the contrary – when an economic system has accumulated so many problems that its survival is no longer possible. Every economic system has made it through crises. It's only reasonable to expect capitalism to do the same." (Richard Wolff, Interview with David Barsamian in *The Sun*, February, 2012)

"Grandiose"? Really? "No one ever knows..." Really?

'Power' exploits generational gaps in experience to the full... while relentlessly – without cessation, generation after generation – pushing forward *its* agenda to privatize the commons... land, government as a whole – and, perhaps most fervently, the educational commons.

It's obvious from its success that it intends education to be, each year, more inaccessible than the year before. They rip books from our hands, 'bury' them

clandestinely, and... if the existence of an ancestor critical to our seeing reality must be acknowledged... one who marched unequivocally toward general freedom... and shined light brightly along the way... such courage will be labeled naïve... and irrelevant.

Add to this their success in keeping us atomized and it's no surprise 'power' still controls our lives.

They build on *their* 'work' unceasingly...
...while we struggle to the truth
haphazardly....
How build on the insights...
... of our ancestors...
...when...
...each generation must start...
...all over again?

Despite this... hideous arrangement... this one-step-forward-two-steps-back gross unfairness... our understanding is – probably thanks to the Internet – now making up for lost time...

...and 'power' is worried...
...otherwise...
...trust...

...they'd trot out someone much more inventive...
...than Richard Wolff...
...who recycles stray thoughts...
...from Bowles, Gordon and Weisskopf.
(But he outshines them in one respect...
...they were being honest...
...while he is duplicitous.)

“The idea of the [wage-and-price-controls] was to zap labor and we did.”
(Arnold Weber, administrator, Nixon administration wage-and-price controls commission, quoted in Samuel Bowles, David M. Gordon, Thomas E. Weisskopf, *After the Waste Land: A Democratic Economics for the Year 2000* (1990), p. 80)

The history of the U.S. economy from the late 1940s to the late 1970s encompasses two fundamentally different periods. The first, beginning shortly after the war and continuing through the mid-1960s, was one of boom conditions for most people in the United States. The

second, stretching from the mid-1960s to the end of the 1970s, was one of deteriorating economic performance and deepening crisis....

Those years of optimism now seem like the distant and receding past. After the mid-1960s economic welfare began to stagnate or decline for large proportions of the U.S. labor force and U.S. households. Economic anxiety spread like the plague, infecting more and more Americans, from Wall Street to Main Street. “It would be necessary to go back to the 1930s and the Great Depression,” pollster Daniel Yankelovich concluded in 1979, “to find a peacetime that has had the country so concerned and so distraught.”

How can we best explain the extent of this reversal of U.S. economic fortunes? (Samuel Bowles, David M. Gordon, Thomas E. Weisskopf, *After the Waste Land: A Democratic Economics for the Year 2000* (1990), p. 35 – 36)

Bowles, Gordon and Weisskopf found a clear pattern: a declining rate of corporate profitability. (An inevitable downward tend... to 'capitalism'?)

After 1966... corporate profitability did not recover from the stresses of economic downturn. Following the recession of 1969 – 70, the after-tax profit rate peak in 1972 was one-third lower than it had been in 1965. After the recession of 1974 – 75, once again, the after-tax profit rate peak in 1977 had fallen below its 1972 peak....

[And] there is... an unmistakable downward trend in the accumulation rate after the mid – 1960s; each cyclical peak and each cyclical trough after 1965 is lower than the previous one, just as in the case of profitability....

The magnitude of the U.S. economic crisis was reflected in the international as well as the domestic arena. American corporations lost much of the competitive

advantage they had enjoyed in the early postwar period. (Samuel Bowles, David M. Gordon, Thomas E. Weisskopf, *After the Waste Land: A Democratic Economics for the Year 2000* (1990), p. 43 – 45)

They argue that this occurred because “four principal buttresses of private power... had begun to erode”... that...

- ...there was a decline of U.S. international domination;
- ...there was a demise of the capital – labor accord;
- ...there were challenges to the logic of profitability;
- ...and there was increasing intercapitalist competition.

The corporate face of ‘power’ did not wring its hands at this news... nor did it look to the stars for a solution to their declining profits... they got busy. They embarked in the seventies on a campaign to “discipline” labor – that’s you and me – we who do the work.

At an important management conference in the middle of the recession, corporate leaders eagerly awaited the effects of rising unemployment. “We need a sharp recession,” one said. “people need to recognize,” a second added, “that a job is the most important thing they can have.” A third was most hopeful: “This recession will bring about the healthy respect for economic values that the Depression did.”... We call this the “cold Bath” treatment. The effects of this pressure show up in the record of both fiscal and monetary policy through 1979 – even before Paul Volcker and the Reagan administration arrived with their replenished supplies of ice. (Bowles, Gordon and Weisskopf, *After the Waste Land*, p. 89)

They got busy. Look around you at the results of all their busyness. They have mostly achieved their goals, and all life on our earth has been devastated by their “success.” (from Blog 8, “Just Say NO! Make Coke the First Corpse to

Go!”), May 12, 2009, from the website:
nas2endwork.org)

The important point here is that ‘power’ responded to falling profits in a logical, coherent and organized fashion. Bowles et al. show this clearly. They conclude that the ‘problem’ with the ‘capitalist system’ is *structural* and can only be remedied by government taking control of the economy. Their argument is similar to that put forward by Erich Fromm in *The Sane Society* – and they all in one voice recommend... that ‘power’ be reined in...

(...though I believe...
...as we’ll see...
...that they went astray...
...by thinking ‘money’ is the game
‘power’ plays...
...when for ‘power’ the game in chief...
...is “the pin-point of the hierarchy” ...
...‘greed’ is but a tool...
...in a monumental dual.)

But we should be synthesizing and *advancing* our ancestors’ gifts, not continuously rediscovering them.

We've known for some time now that 'power' *cannot* be reined in.

It's significant that of the four 'reasons' Wolff cites to 'explain' falling wages beginning in the 1970s he fails to mention the heightened level of organization of the 'ruling class'. On the contrary, he falls all over himself trying to convince us that 'no one's to blame,' 'we all did this,' 'power' may have been greedy, but *we* were stupid.

We should be beyond blaming the poor or the rich. Everybody did his or her part to contribute to this crisis. The bankers' did what bankers do; the working people did what working people do.... When a system has everybody playing more or less by the rules and achieves the level of dysfunction we have now, it's time to stop looking for scapegoats and understand that the problem is the system itself. It's driving everyone in it – corporations, individuals, banks, businesses on Main Street, whomever – to act in ways that

are bad for the economy as a whole.
(Richard Wolff)

Wolff says that there's no way to predict whether or not "capitalism is doomed"...
...but if he didn't want to accept the analysis of Bowles et al. he could have consulted a bit with Rosa Luxemburg, she's been waiting a hundred years for the conversation.

The more violently, ruthlessly and thoroughly imperialism brings about the decline of non-capitalist civilizations, the more rapidly it cuts the very ground from under the feet of capitalist accumulation. Though imperialism is the historical method for prolonging the career of capitalism, it is also a sure means of bringing it to a swift conclusion. This is not to say that capitalist development must be actually driven to this extreme: the mere tendency towards imperialism of itself takes forms which make the final phase of capitalism a period of catastrophe....

‘Sweating blood and filth with every pore from head to toe’ characterizes not only the birth of capital but also its progress in the world at every step, and thus capitalism prepares its own downfall under ever more violent contortions and convulsions. (Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, p. 453)

So what in Wolff suggests prevarication?

In *Waking Up* I wrote that if you don’t ask the tough questions, it’s a con. A propagandist is not concerned about truth and will never ask the tough questions... openly... honestly... as one trying to get to the heart of things. On the contrary, unresolved issues are mowed over with lies presented as givens. These ‘givens’...

“...the ‘economy’ must be protected at all costs...”

“... ‘we’ ‘all’ brought this crisis on...”

“...the ‘solution’ is ‘jobs’...”

“...everyone played by the rules...”

“...we can have a ‘democratic economics’...”

“... ‘enterprise’, ‘worker’, ‘market’ are legitimate categories...”

“...this downturn is probably cyclical...”
“...‘democracy’ and ‘market’ go hand-in-hand...”
“...only now is capitalism starting to be critiqued...”

...seemingly just slipped in... are the true points of the ‘speech’... they will be repeated... reinforced... until a little rut is cut in the listener’s brain... so he or she will be welcoming of the notion ever again.

His proposed ‘solutions’ are only solutions if the earth can be consumed *ad infinitum* (the physical truth of the words ‘economic growth’)... and it cannot... ‘the system’ cannot provide ‘jobs’ to the degree it did... when earth was a virgin... to rape.

Therefore...

...all the ‘jobs’ he dangles to convince us to continue to believe in ‘the system’ is bait to add brakes... to a movement.

The bait of ‘jobs’...
...is a mirage...
...and by the time we see that...
...he’ll be long gone.

“Whoops, my bad!” is what he’ll say as he settles into his more advanced salary. Meanwhile, our hopes will be dashed... our movement set back... or dismantled.

Before we decide to... once again... sacrifice a future that’s free chasing after a halter and leash... we should give serious consideration to these words of Albert Hirschman:

Here the interests [the various routes down which money is pursued] are far from taming or chaining the passions of the rulers; on the contrary, if the citizens become absorbed by the pursuit of their private interests, it will be possible for a “clever and ambitious man to seize power.” And Tocqueville directs some superbly caustic and prophetic words (written years before the rise of Napoleon III) at those who, for the sake of a favorable business climate, ask only for “law and order”:

“A nation that demands from its government nothing but the maintenance of order is already a slave in the bottom of its heart; it is the slave of its well-being, and the man who is to chain it can arrive on the scene.”

...If it is true that the economy must be deferred to, then there is a case not only for constraining the imprudent actions of the prince but for repressing those of the people, for limiting participation, in short, for crushing anything that could be interpreted by some economist-king as a threat to the proper functioning of the “delicate watch.”

Secondly, [Adam] Ferguson and [Alexis de] Tocqueville implicitly criticized the older tradition of thought that had seen in the pursuit of material interest a welcome alternative to the passionate scramble for glory and power.... [Their] point: as long as not everyone is playing the “innocent” game of making money, the total absorption in it of most citizens

leaves the few who play for the higher stakes of power freer than before to pursue their ambition. In this way social arrangements that substitute the interests for the passions as the guiding principle of human action for the many can have the side effect of killing the civic spirit and of thereby opening the door to tyranny. (Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, p.123 – 125)

...and, we should never let go de Grazia's hopes for all humanity... his dream of freedom for all peoples.

As the utility of the mass army diminishes in warfare, so may the utility of mass labor diminish. If automation offers work for only a small class of specialists, the concept of a labor force is on the way out. For the mass of workers, then, work will have little significance. If machines, tended by a few machine-herders, do the work, why should men work? The heat is off. (Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure*, p. 384)

His dream is not fantasy. Moreover, ending 'class'-injury is the only thing that will dissolve the arrogance of autocrats... allow the earth to spin freely... and return the human species to a long-delayed, much deserved, sanity.

Despite the official rhetoric (propaganda), we do not have "freedom of speech". Those 'voices' (opinions) we hear over the airwaves are not our voices... they represent the sanctioned speech of 'the system'... a script... which, in the absence of an ability to develop our own voices, we too often adopt as our own.

'Jobs' do not allow us the time (a.k.a. our lives) to develop our own voices, and, as we have recently seen, when we attempt to come together outside of the job to develop them, the state intervenes and stops it.

And on we strive... unwilling to drive.

And with the lash like fire-lick-on-back...
...how 'inventively' we dance...
...and seek...
...to shimmer and gleam above the rest...

...to prove we too...
...‘deserve’...
...to stand among ‘the best’...

But the more we dance on that long
leash...
...the more we seem to set in stone...
...our slavery.

When we have time to think we see...
...totalitarianism is the destination...
...of a wage-work system...
...because ‘jobs’ keep us busy...
...distracted...
...without means –
...time, encouragement, knowledge –
...to question the tasks we are given.

We’re kept passive, porous and mean...
...*structurally*...
...as...
...we cannot “know what we think”...
...’til there’s time to think it.

Under conditions of chronic, inadequate time we often give up thinking altogether – because we have no ground in which it can grow – and so... switch to ‘superficial’ mode.

So... the difficult reality we have to face is... that...

...it's not that the failure of ‘capitalism’ means ‘democracy’ is at a crossroads and we could find ourselves facing fascism... rather, fascism is already here, embedded in the ‘class’ system...

...a lighter form...

...present in varying degrees...

...globally...

...but with a common fixity...

...on mutually exclusive autocracies...

...all striving to be...

...the pin-point...

...of the hierarchy...

...unless *we* intervene...

...and *choose*... a brighter way.

In Conclusion:

The solution to lives lived in the imagination...
– as well as to the massive misalignment of life...
...which is the gap...
...between those who do the work...
...and those who use us...
...view us...
...and earth alike...
...as but a mule to harness –
...are lives lived in conscious reverence with the earth...
...i.e. reality.

And to those who say...
...that only when we free ‘the best’...
...by harnessing ‘the rest’ can ‘knowledge’ be
expanded...
...I reply...
...“*whose* ‘knowledge’?”
...do we not...
...each one...
...have ‘knowledge’?...
...through direct connection with the earth?...
...a learning to be fully heard but when...
...we’re free...
...from being forced to work...
...and free to give our full gifts uncoerced....

...imagine what our earth will be...
...once it becomes our soul...
...priority.

So... who says 'knowledge' is a club to beat us
passive and quiescent?... treat our earth like trash
and rob us of our land?... while making a private
possession... of our common inheritance?
Until it's stopped all roads lead back to 'power' ...
...they set it up that way...
...and they cannot now evade the eyes that must...
...despite all their efforts to hide...
...come back to them...
...when we see what disarray...
...their so-called 'knowledge' has brought us...
...and how a falsely formed allegiance...
...to destroyers of our earth...
...has led as well to deep misanthropy...
...a denial of mutual responsibility...
...in the name of never-was 'democracy' ...
...based... as it always has been...
...on our slavery....

The very notion of 'social-responsibility' is a cruel joke under
'class.' We're defeated before begun, for how can there be
responsibility for our brothers and sisters when 'society' is based
on 'making-use-of' our brothers and sisters – and the earth?

When we have the courage to acknowledge truth we cannot but admit we none of us exhibit responsibility to anything but ‘power.’

‘Democracy’... why are we so wedded to this word?... a word used to justify slavery... and therefore deep misanthropy...

Popper... Fromm... and de Grazia (to a degree)...
...all drag this carcass ’round like a totem...
...or a disoriented mama bear her dead cub...
(...except it never was alive...)
...or Linus his blanket...
...fingering it with love to find the frays...
...and then fantasizing where to add his bit of tape...
...to the master-work...
“...which fabrics, textures, colors, threads...
...to make the final weave?...”
...a perfect tribute to the labor...
...of ‘our’ ‘forefathers’...
...who began it all...
...the grand vision...
...‘civilization’...
...holding ‘chaos’ at bay.



