



# **BOUNDLESSNESS**

Rydra Wrong

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“This essay was written over a few months. I was inspired by:  
friends, Milan Kundera, Hermann Broch, Angela Carter, Macedonio  
Fernandez, Stirner, Jorge Luis Borges, and so many others.”

You may contact the author at [rydrawrong@riseup.net](mailto:rydrawrong@riseup.net)

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[faggotcrimewave@protonmail.com](mailto:faggotcrimewave@protonmail.com)

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# **O**n Playing Out the Game Without a Reason

*“Nevertheless human life was thus image-graced and image-cursed; it could comprehend itself only through images, the images were not to be banished, they had been with us since the herd-beginning, they were anterior to and mightier than our thinking, they were timeless, containing past and future, they were a twofold dream-memory and they were more powerful than we: an image to himself was he who lay there, and steering toward the most real reality, borne on invisible waves, dipping into them, the image of the ship was his own image emerging from darkness, heading toward darkness sinking into darkness, he himself was the boundless ship that at the same time was boundlessness; and he himself was the flight that was aiming toward this boundlessness...”*

-Hermann Broch

# An Indifferent Universe

What am I to do when I live in a world that is as indifferent towards me as I am towards it? How do I live in this world when I am positioned in it physically, but against the entirety of the social constructions of man(and god!)? How can I be in the world but also be on the margins of it? Does my center hold no matter which edge I exist on? Being anarchistic/nihilistic positions me on a fringe of the fringe, on an intellectual/conceptual and sometimes physical margin. Being a nihilist or egoist or a label-less amoral weirdo among weirdos puts me further on that fringe and deeper into the margins. This is something I have at times begrudged the world for but never truly minded. Sam Delany tells me that “the only important element in any society is the artistic and the criminalistic” and this troubles me because I would prefer not to be in relation to society and any amount of resistance or indifference I show to society would only perpetuate society, yet here I am. Those of us who end up in this weird place, the end of the road or the edge of a cliff as a dear friend calls it, still have options. I can turn around and join the herd, jump off the cliff, stand perpetually on the edge, or I can walk back and try to shepherd the herd to the edge of the cliff with me. I find most of these options both unattractive and unpalatable, but I have never been one to turn down a cliff jump as long as there is water underneath, and the sea is what I find once I leap. The sea is indifferent, chaotic, calm, slowly lapping, unjustifiably and unreasonably violent; just like me. It is upon this cliff edge that I so easily lose perspective, that I do what Zappfe says we all will, which is seek out distraction, isolation, anchoring, and sublimation.

Seeking out these coping methods to fight an indifferent universe can easily make one who has walked to the edge of the cliff appear almost seemingly indifferent from the herd they have supposedly left behind. Examples of this are when people try to build a new philosophy or a new critique. It is seen by propaganda, when these people try to show the way or the good life by

example. It is also seen when people living the supposedly good life attempt to convince or teach others how to do it as well. In *Immortality*, Milan Kundera writes that:

*There are two methods for cultivating the uniqueness of the self: the methods of addition and subtraction. Agnes subtracts from herself everything that is exterior and borrowed, in order to come closer to her sheer essence (even with the risk that zero lurks at the bottom of subtraction). Laura's method is precisely the opposite: in order to make her self ever more visible, perceivable, seizable, sizable, she keeps adding to it more attributes and she attempts to identify herself with them (with the risk that the essence of the self may be buried by the additional attributes).*

We can substitute here any person for Laura or Agnes, they are the X and Y to the equation of self-creation. I have renamed Kundera's chapter, which is originally titled Addition and Subtraction, to Nothing & Infinity. Here Kundera presents us with a paradox. If we empty ourselves we become nothing and if we keep adding to ourselves we become everything. Where do the poles of this false binary take us? I begin with an exploration of addition & infinity.

## **The Infnitizing of Addition**

Addition/Infinity means attaching and fixing ideas and values and systems and ethics onto our selves. As Kundera writes:

*The method of addition is quite charming if it involves adding to the self such things as a cat, a dog, roast pork, love of the sea or of cold showers. But the matter becomes less idyllic if a person decides to add love for communism, for the homeland, for Mussolini, for Catholicism or atheism, for fascism or anti fascist. In both cases the method remains exactly the same: a person stubbornly*

*defending the superiority of cats over other animals is doing basically the same thing as one who maintains that Mussolini was the sole savior of Italy: he is proud of this attribute of the self and he tries to make this attribute(a cat or Mussolini) acknowledged and loved by everyone.*

*Here is that strange paradox to which all people cultivating the self by way of the addition method are subject: they use addition in order to create a unique, inimitable self, yet because they automatically become propagandists for the added attributes, they are actually doing everything in their power to make as many others as possible similar to themselves; as a result, their uniqueness(so painfully gained) quickly begins to disappear.*

People who choose the method of addition are builders. Is building inherently doomed to lead to infinity and stasis? I would answer with uncertainty, but when a builder is convincing others or attempting to force all others to build in the same way the individual has taken their desires and feelings and put them into something that is bigger than themselves. In doing this, they have made themselves, their project, and their life less unique. They have tacitly conveyed that their way is the way, that their life is the good life. Egoism ceases to become egoism when one engages in propaganda, when one still has a cause that is not their own. There are semantic arguments against this. These supposed egoists will say that they are forming a union of egoists, but what do they mean when they say this. Is a desire mutual if it is forced onto another? Is it a mutual desire if I must convince another rationally that they should have it, even if I am clever enough not to use words like should? At this point the train has gone off the rails and this kind of egoist has reverted back to an eschatological position. Any form of convincing is evangelical, even if it is in my own self-interest. I must reconcile myself with this if I wish to engage with others, and even more so if I want to engage with my self in good faith. When I convince a friend to do something, even something as small as to go with me somewhere,

within this question lies a form of evangelizing. As Angela Carter says, “a desire fully communicated is fully satiated.” This means that in stating my implicit desire in the form of a question to a friend, I am fulfilling this desire and preening to my friend about my embracing of this desire. With this done they have no way of expressing their own desire without it being colored by our relationship and their knowledge of my desire, and the entire project of engaging in mutual desires becomes not only problematized but rendered null.

Propagandizing also presents the aesthetic problem of the teacher/student relationship and the ugly(to me!) nature of condescension/expertise/patronizing. When I witness groups of children or teenagers, there are obvious Big Men(regardless of gender). The Big Man problem is created by both sides. For someone to achieve this type of social power others must submit. Much like the master slave relationship, it takes two to tango, so the fault isn't just on the Big Man but on the little men imbuing the big man with power by their submission. This is a problem with only one collective solution, that it needs to be fought by all. Engaging alone with it will often cost one membership in a group, friend circle or collective, so I proceed often at my own chosen risk. Fighting the problem requires a form of strength most people don't have. It requires the strength of being able to say “I don't know” and the strength of not being afraid of being seen as a fool. Dealing with Big Men requires me/anyone to have the ability to play with our thoughts, our ideas, to hold them loosely but passionately, and to fight the desire to conform and subjugate ourselves. Many humans have the desire to fit into a hierarchy, to place themselves in a comfortable position either above or below. If one member of a group doesn't have an active and willed desire to fight against this, then Big Men will not just prop up they will be welcomed. Fighting the problem of the Big Man involves a negation, a shedding, a subtraction of socialization and a will to power. I see will to power as the driving force that creates something/anything, movement from stasis, a taking of space physically and metaphysically. When I say a taking of space I mean it

with the full implication that there is no empty space and that every movement and thought is an act of violence (no I don't have a positive or negative connotation here, but imply aggression/change/difference) upon whatever was occupying the physical or metaphysical space I have now taken. This will to power involves vulnerability, the vulnerability of being wrong or seen as wrong. This is often viewed as weakness by those who don't understand the power in this ability. Being vulnerable in this way allows me the power to change, to take criticism which is a gift often given but rarely received and use it to my advantage.

Directly confronting propaganda means calling all affirmations and positivistic projects into question. It is one thing to like to garden, or talk, or blow up dams. It is quite a different thing to make an argument that others should join me in gardening, talking, or blowing up dams. To be an anarchist is often to make this crucial error. We, as modern humans, have become so used to affirmation by negation that when I speak a negation I am met with the assumption that an affirmation is implicit. When I say I don't like hot showers, the partner in dialogue assumes I like cold showers. When I say I don't believe in revolution or something less obviously a binary, I am still met with an assumption of an implicit affirmation. The ability to negate without affirming is a skill I was never taught, one I must continually teach myself. This is where I must part with the affirmers. The affirmers are many. They are the communists, the social anarchists, the believers in life, or love, those who wish to see their affirmation spread out across humanity. Even worse are the affirmers of the environment who wish to see their affirmation spread not just to humanity but across the entire planet and possibly the universe. I say to these affirmers in the voice of Angela Carter's hereditary count of Lithuania:

*It is not in the least unnatural to assert that he who negates a proposition at the same time secretly affirms it – or, at least, affirms something. But, for myself, I deny to the last shred of my altogether memorable being that my magnificent denial*



*means more than a simple “no.” Sometimes my meager and derisive lips seem to me to have been formed by nature only to spit out the word “no”, as if it were the ultimate blasphemy. I should like to speak an ultimate blasphemy, and then bask in the security of eternal damnation, but, since there is no God, well, there is no damnation, either, unfortunately. And hence, alas, no final negation.*

I too deny that I am pregnant with an affirmation of any sort. As I hold fluidity and doubt as my arbitrary values, I hold truth and affirmation in contempt.

“***if only I could  
force everyone  
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this situation.***”

# Propaganda and Its Dissenters(me)

Propagandists' other great trick is to align themselves with a form/ethics/identity that affirms them as living the way or the good life. We see this in easier targets as identity politics which is often an attempt at demanding/begging for handouts or some form of equality and justice from a group of people with more power who these politicians implicitly believe are in the wrong. These affirmers are easier to contend with because I can simply say that what they desire is not the good life, that I have no mutual desires with them and that while I can acknowledge that some of what they say makes sense I still have no interest in their justice, their future, their sloganeering to utopia. Instead I pick a more difficult target. There are those who write theory and put out books and do podcasts. Again, there is nothing inherently wrong with these projects unless their goal is to convince. I have done this. I have said angrily to groups of people, "if only I could force everyone to read these 50 books, then we wouldn't be in this situation." At this point I have betrayed myself in affirming something not just for my own sake, but for the sake of some nebulous group of others. It is extremely difficult to avoid solidifying a thought or concept into a fixed idea, especially an idea I put work into, but it is the only way to stop myself from making myself less unique. Now, I am running into the danger of becoming what Kundera so harshly describes as a man of conviction:

*A person who thinks is automatically prompted to systematize; it is his eternal temptation(mine too, even in writing this book): a temptation to describe all the implications of his ideas; to preempt any objections and refute them in advance; thus to barricade his ideas. Now a person who thinks should not try to persuade others to his belief; that is what puts him on the road to a system; on the lamentable road of the "man of conviction"; politicians like to call themselves that; but what is a conviction? It is a thought that has come to a stop, that has congealed, and "the man of conviction" is a man restricted.*

Even as I am writing now I am tempted to explain everything to you, dear reader, to make all the connections for you, to trace out a clear path that you can follow me down and say “yes, yes, I agree!” In fighting that temptation I must leave myself open to misunderstanding(which was always inevitable) and follow down the path of Borges who left expression(explaining something completely) behind and instead affirmed nothing but the uncertainty of the very pen he wrote with and the very hand that guided it. Full expression often results in sloganeering and cliché because mutual agreements(if such a thing exists) are sought out. We often hear it said that, “there is no inherent meaning and no objective morality so I am the creator of all my values.” I want to examine this further.

## **Ethical Outrage Shows Ethicists as Moralists by Another Name**

If I am the creator of my own values then I am affirming that there is an I to create from, that I am a unique and separate individual capable of making value judgements on my own. Jason McQuinn writes in “Demoralizing Moralism” that:

*Critical self-understanding involves the simultaneous development of a finite ethics, a set of values consistent with what are considered and felt to be one’s most important interests, that are expressed in everyday life activities. These values are organic expressions of one’s radical subjectivity, of one’s self-possession, self-understanding and self-activity. They don’t originate outside of one’s life, demanding one’s subjection, because they originate from one’s own direct life-experiences and serve one’s own interests.*

When I read this passage I am struck by the prescriptive tone in it and the use of the words ethics, values, and consistency. First, what is this ethics that so many seem to be fond of? Many

will differentiate ethics from morality, but do they pull off this tightrope walk and make it to the other side of the building? Is ethics simply consistency between what we think and what we do? Is this an attempt to answer the mind-body problem? I believe ethics are a reification of morality. It is rare to find one who doesn't make their subjective ethics general. Often those who reject morality in favor of ethics still exhibit ethical outrage (such as self identifying amoralists acting shocked and outraged complaining about a violation of their ethics. This can manifest as perceived justifiable rage at another for cheating on a partner or breaking of any ethical boundary they have created but pretend is separate from morality). But how could one be ethically outraged if they do not hold other beings accountable to their own individual ethics. It is in this outrage, this hate, this annoyance and allergy to differentiation of ethics that the ethicists reveal themselves as moralists by a different name. Is my subjectivity actually radical or subjective if I am holding others to it? Beyond ethics lies the problem of consistency. Even the most radically subjective form of ethical consistency is a fixed idea. This perspective also affirms the idea that we can be consistent, that we have an essence. Who is this essential subject that is making these value judgements? I believe the nature of a self poisons this entire discussion. I am left here wondering why some believe that consistency is worth striving for and am struck deeply by the notion that it is to create a program. What is consistency for if not to create a path for others to follow, an individual human life to be recreated, a program to be put into the great computer of the universe to be run ad infinitum.

Consistency, values, and ethics can often be found as affirmations hidden in critiques/negations. This adding, this infinitizing is present in Bellamy Fitzpatrick's Invitation to Desertion. It is easy to critique ideas and individuals at the weakest points in themselves or their arguments, so here I will try to attack a position of strength. In this essay Bellamy describes the various evils of civilization of which it is hard to disagree, but I am left feeling nonplussed. Here Bellamy outlines the beginnings of an affirma-

tion. I am attempting to break down positivistic projects and get to the heart of addition. Bellamy writes that:

*We are talking here of a whole way of seeing, an understanding of the world and how to act meaningfully within it. It (The whole way of seeing) is presented as an antidote to the reigning ideology of neoliberal republicanism, aiming to delve into the roots of our crisis so as to understand how to live as much as possible outside it and against it.*

I challenge the notion that there is a way to act meaningfully in relation to the world as I challenge the notion that there is a way to act meaningfully in any way as anything other than an arbitrary choice. I disagree that we are in crisis. Here Bellamy asserts that we are connected to humanity, as he will later assert that we are connected to everything on the planet. It is this connection that troubles me. Even if I accept the premise that humanity is in crisis that does not mean that I am in crisis unless I hold some connection to humanity. Also, how can I live outside side of anything I am connected to? How can I live outside society anymore than I can live outside myself? How can I act against anything, civilization included, without binding myself to it. To hate is to tie myself ever so tightly to an enemy, to enter into an intimate relationship. I believe that the ultimate aim here for Bellamy is a form of indifference to civilization, but throughout the piece there are assertions to attack being needed at times which continues to bind Bellamy and anyone adding with him to civilization. As someone who has read *Against Leviathan, Against His-Story*, I agree with Fredy Perlman that just the mere act of putting up a wall to keep society out ties me indelibly to this society and means I will ultimately subjugate it or be subjugated by it. Neither of these forms of subjugation appeal to me.

“Invitation to Desertion” continues to prove a perfect example of addition/infinity by creating a new ethics and forms out of its own critique. By doing this Bellamy follows the pattern of affirmation by way of negation. Bellamy writes that “to truly value

individual freedom and joy, kinship and love among humans, intimacy with the beautiful nonhuman world, and psychic peace and clarity entails anti-civilization anarchy, the abandonment of the civilized way of life.” My issues here are the underlying assumptions and implicit value judgements made. Underlying this statement is the belief that one is more free around other free beings. However, how can we know what a free tree looks like if we don’t know what a free human is? This is further complicated by the problem of using species(an arbitrary concept and not a material reality) at all as a way to differentiate beings. Secondly, the choice of the words “beautiful nonhuman world” implies that the human world is ugly or at the very least that the nonhuman world can be judged as beautiful. Are we the only “species” who is ugly? Bellamy will be the first to tell me about the Jewel Wasp who quite literally turns a cockroach into its slave by injecting it with venom through which it is able to control its mind and body. Is this ugly? Is this beautiful? What about the large amounts of ants slacking off and not doing anything? Do they justify our laziness? Should we be in relationship to these lazy ants and these slave driving wasps?

This is the perfect time for the commonly used analogy as to whether or not we should act as humans did before civilization. The fact of the matter is that we don’t know and a nihilist or egoist simply cannot use the behavior of ants, wasps, or other humans to justify its own life because their life and mine needs no justification. To justify is the ultimate endpoint of adding until reaching infinity. It is appealing to the general public and justifying my added qualities which limits my uniqueness and invites others to join me. Finally, I am left to wonder what is meant by psychic peace and clarity? Are we speaking of embracing no-mind, the way we envision (but do not know) animals to be? Living in utopia can the mind be at peace? I would say no. The literal translation of Utopia is “no place” and I am constantly needing to remind myself of this. I would guess that the very nature of consciousness is to doubt. Consciousness allows us to abstract and to see abstractions, to lie to others, to be lied to, and to lie to ourselves. We can see a tree or

a person as something they are not. Who knows how this came to be or if consciousness actually exists but to speak of psychic peace and clarity is to ignore the reality(my reality at least) that we are constantly at war with ourselves and everything else. It is hard not to find the notion of destituting power implicit in this. I do not believe power can be destroyed for it lies in every interaction I have, even with my self. If I accept myself/my self as a fluid and don't attach myself/my self to identities such as human or animal, then how can I have clarity. I return to the problem of the need for consistency, for the only consistency I find is that I change and as far I know I can't create a program, plan, path, *way*, or *good life* out of this changing.

Finally, further complicating most paths of addition is their desire for some sort of harmony. We see it in this piece by Bellamy and we see this in most "deep ecological" writing. Bellamy is wiser than many of those who fall into the trap of imagining a world totally devoid of violence and chaos but still falls somewhere into this trap of harmony. Michel Serres is kindly brutal enough to tell me that:

*We are fascinated by the unit; only a unity seems rational to us. We scorn the senses, because their information reaches us in bursts. We scorn the groupings of the world, and we scorn those of our bodies. For us they seem to enjoy a bit of the status of Being only when they are subsumed beneath a unity. Disaggregation and aggregation, as such, and without contradiction, are repugnant to us. Multiplicity, according to Leibniz, is only a semi-being. A cartload of bricks isn't a house. Unity dazzles on at least two counts: by its sum and by its division. That herd must be singular in its totality and it must also be made up of a given number of sheep or buffalo. We want a principle, a system, an integration, and we want elements, atoms, numbers. We want them, and make them. A single God, and identifiable individuals. The aggregate as such is not a well-formed object; it seems irrational to us. The arithmetic of whole numbers remains a secret foundation of our understanding; we're all Pythagorians. We think only in monadologies.*

Where does this desire for harmony emanate from? I do not know but I find it particularly limiting. This passage destroys the possibility for consistency by highlighting the desire many have for it. The conceptualizing, mind trickery, and magical thinking required to attain harmony are a bridge too far to cross! Harmony is what we imagine death to be. I find life to be a nearly constant taking of, giving up, and fighting over space. The word harmony comes from Greek and Latin and has roots of joining, of ship planks coming together, of settled government order, and of musical notes combining into a pleasing tone. These two roots of harmony show an ephemeral joy of music and a settled order of law. For me harmony isn't worth striving for and only exists in a way that I enjoy as short moments of overlapping and mutual concord.

## **The Nothingness of Subtraction: Let's get Personal**

Nothingness and infinity lose themselves in each other as poles that destroy the binary of existence and material. For someone like me who generally(though not always) chooses subtraction as my preferred method for cultivating the uniqueness and inimitability of my self, there is no way around committing to a deeper investigation into the nature of this self. A Memory is rising to the surface of my sea, disrupting the calm. A past lover and I walk along an oceanside cliff and watch as the sun sets in the ultimately cliché(rightly so in this case) place in space and time for a moment of vulnerability. I am explaining myself, expressing myself as completely as possible, hoping for understanding and connection. I am wet with tears as I explain that I can't let go of my essence, my essential self. I am explaining an issue(any variable can be inserted here) that I've had for years that affects the way I can be intimate and relate. I am crying because I want to let go of my essential self. I am upset because I paradoxically don't be-



lieve in an essential self, wanting to leave that notion behind, yet at the same time I cling to my essential self so tightly that I fear death solely because this essential self which feels eternal might cease to exist. I feel tired of my self, sick of its stories, wanting new ones, fearing the new ones are just replacements or copies of the old ones, doubly worried about not being able to subtract or add and in that confusion I will be left with neither nothingness nor infinity. Is this thing we are supposedly living everything or is it nothing? Is it something else completely?

Totalbeing is a way of existing that is a sort of negation by addition. By adding everything completely we can negate the entire reality of it. Macedonio Fernandez ends his truly unique novel with the words, “those who imagine experience not a single instant of non-being.” This imagining is a consciousness, a self, a thing we have lied into existence. Where is the barrier to this self? Does it end on my skin? Does it end where my arm hairs meet the air? Do the bacteria and viruses and bugs inside of me count as my self? Once again I am left with a poorly defined boundary, a fuzzy temporality as Timothy Morton would say, one I don’t understand, a border I cross back and forth from without even knowing it. Furthermore, when does this self begin? Was I born with it or did I manifest it as a small child bursting forth into the universe as a unique one!

Let us play for a second and pretend that this consciousness exists, that I am a real person who somehow sprung into existence from non-existence.

*When I just plain think, without a direct object complement, without determination, who am I? Who am I, beyond the joy coming from this shudder of awakening, the growth of this green ivy, this dancing flame, this living fire? I think in general, I am a a capacity to think something, and I am virtual. I think in general, I can think anything. I think therefore I am indeterminate. I think, therefore I am anyone. A tree, a river, an ivy, a fire, a reason*

*or you, whatever...The I is nobody in particular, it is not a singularity, it has no contours, it is the blankness of all colors and nuances, an open and translucent welcome of a multiplicity of thoughts. It is therefore the possible. I am, indeterminately, nobody. If I think I am nothing and nobody...Who am I? A blank domino, a joker, that can take any value. A pure capacity. There is nothing more abstract. I am just the plain whore of the thoughts that accost me, I wait for them, morning and evening, at the crossroads, under the statue of the angel Hermes, all wind and weather. And maybe, I am, maybe, if the verb 'to be' is a joker or a blank domino, as well.*

Michel Serres tells me that when I think I am that thought. Having no limit on thought I am everything, I am all possible things, I am infinite, but am I forever expanding? Is infinity a closed loop? What are the bounds of the infinite. How small is nothing. What is the meaningful difference between infinity and nothing? Subtraction is as flawed as addition for they seek the same end. The endpoint of addition is infinity and the endpoint of subtraction is nothingness. What is the difference between infinity and nothingness, between everything and nothing? Many of us laud the idea of the creative nothing, of evacuating ourselves completely with negation to form a starting point from which action is possible. To discuss the creative nothing is to discuss Stirner, so here we go:

*If thoughts are free I am their slave, since I have no power over them. But I want to have the thought, want to be full of thoughts, but at the same time I want to be thoughtless, and instead of freedom of thought, I keep thoughtlessness for myself...you are not only thoughtless and speechless in sleep, but also in the deepest reflection; indeed, precisely then the most so. And only through this thoughtlessness, this unrecognized "freedom of thought," or freedom from thought, are you your own.*

Stirner a la Kundera presents us here with a paradox. He wants to be full of thoughts, recognizes he is a slave to them, and then also wants to be thoughtlessness which is a freedom from thought. As Stirner himself points out, freedom is always a relationship. We are always free from something, we are never just free. Freedom abides by relational logic, that all things exist in relation...even if Stirner can be accused of sometimes seeing the self as on its own. The concept of freedom is meaningless except as a way to relate to non-freedom. Stirner comes close in this quote(which is in the conclusion of his work *The Unique and Its Property*) of advocating for something like the Taoist idea of Wu Wei. Wu Wei is a concept which calls for action without action, action without intent. In Bruce Lee's words:

*You must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become like water my friend.*

This is the thoughtlessness that Wu Wei speaks of. Others will call this animal instinct or no-mind or a million other things depending on the subculture. Wu Wei is a leaning in towards determinism on some level. It is an embracing of presence in the most radical way, it is paradoxical, it is unethical, amoral, and has no additive qualities. If we are truly looking for a creative nothing then must it come from Wu Wei or thoughtlessness? Can I be so aware that I kill all the phantoms and the decades of self-narrativizing and socializing that fill me up so much? I don't believe a creative nothing is possible, but on the level of practicality I can understand why someone would like to live a life working towards it. The important thing for me is to understand that thoughtlessness is zero. This is the paradox because this zero is also infinity. If I reduce myself to water then I flow into/over/through everything. It is subtracting to the point of zero which is why Taoists can call it action without action, or inaction, or non-doing. This type of stasis is antithetical to the universe which is always moving and changing and shifting and violently colonizing. I don't believe

that my way of life needs to match what I believe the way of life of the universe as an imagined whole to be, and in fact there is something to rejecting biology and material that appeals to me.

A further investigation of freedom as a negative and reaction feels imperative to me as I wrap my mind around these metaphysics. Now I call for help and guidance from *Vampyroteuthis Infernalis*, a quasi satirical scientific review of the vampire squid:

*To speak of politics is to speak of freedom. As part of a superorganism, ants have sacrificed their freedom; as part of an organism, cells have done the same. A consequence of this sacrifice is a new freedom, namely that of the superorganism and the organism. This new freedom is created because the preceding and sacrificed freedom was biologized. Put another way, freedom exists where biological rules(regulations) have not fully encroached upon life. Freedom is a provisional stage in the tendency of evolution toward socialization and death. Those who explain human life as a function of biology-this would include economic explanations, since the economy is a digestive function- are progressive. They are wallowing in the evolutionary tendency toward socialization and death and are thereby contributing the abolishment of freedom. Those who champion freedom, on the other hand, are "reactionary", they are attempting to resist the biological tendency toward socialization and death in order to conserve space for a fleeting, provisional condition.*

Here we are presented with two approaches towards freedom. One is the constrained almost thoughtlessness styled approach which would be fully accepting of people as material and driven by material. This would be somewhere in the minds of many who use ecology as their guide. Humans who attempt to be themselves through a looking at the world around us and by using biological material as guide tend to be additive. The other approach is reactionary, freedom from death and socialization as Stirner might say here. In this space we might find anti-natalists along with transhumanists of a different order than the

technophiles. If the goal of life/material/the universe is more life, then a reactionary and subtractive approach would be death. If the goal of life/material/the universe is death then a reactionary approach would be eternal life. This is the metaphysical side. The applicable side for me is in accepting freedom as a fleeting condition, always ephemeral. This requires subtraction, taking away of things, and letting them go. For someone like me who holds on so deeply, it a nearly impossible task that requires near everyday practice to even manage moments of.

On a larger scale the idea of freedom as reactionary and temporary has big effects on any world creators. At this point a society of free-people is completely impossible. It might be fun to try this, but the efficacy of the goal is laughable at best. This is again where I depart from nearly all people on the planet and I end up mostly alone, with maybe a group of friends at best. I have experienced this freedom... I cannot deny it. I've had moments with lovers where we ridiculously stare into each others eyes and in that moment time, society, and death become null, non-existent, we have done away with them. I have spent time in the ocean where the sun is out and burning into my flesh which is simultaneously soaking in the cool seawater and I feel that fleeting sense of harmony and timelessness which is a freedom from the existent. It is strange to think that what I find to be a freeing from the existent is when I lean hardest into the existent, into my body, into my present moment. This is where the overlap with thoughtlessness and freedom exists. Thoughtlessness is a freedom from thinking, and in my experience it is the state of being that people tend to get the most joy/freedom/ecstasy from. In *Testaments Betrayed* Milan Kundera writes that:

*Ecstasy means being "outside oneself," as indicated by the etymology of the Greek word: the act of leaving one's position (stasis). To be "outside oneself" does not mean outside the present moment, like a dreamer escaping into the past or the future. Just the opposite: ecstasy is the absolute identity with the present instant, total forgetting of past and future. If we obliterate the future and the past, the present moment stands*

*in empty space, outside life and its chronology, outside time and independent of it (this is why it can be likened to eternity, which too is the negation of time).*

So, in a way, when discussing timelessness, thoughtlessness, and ecstasy, we are talking about Macedonio Fernandez' idea of totalbeing. This is the type of freedom in the Vampire Squid book when they discuss a reactionary freedom that exists temporarily *against* life as it normally is lived. So, this is the positive project of subtraction, this negating of time and life and death for an ephemeral infinity. An ephemeral infinity might seem paradoxical, but most of the positive projects of subtractors will be contradictory and paradoxical. The problem I have for this is twofold: one that I am using language to describe a metaphysics, and two which is that I am putting awareness up on a pedestal. I am a nihilist that says there are no objective values and that nothing is truly knowable, but at the same time I value awareness. Truthfully, dear reader, this is just as confusing for me as it might be for you, but it is the best I have. This is where my biggest critique of Stirner coincides with my biggest critique of myself. Derrida attacks Stirner and me by saying that Stirner raises phenomenology and consciousness to the level of a value. It is very difficult for a metaphysician to embrace thoughtlessness and consciousness at the same time, because the value of being aware is nil if the goal is to turn off the little man in our head that we imagine consciousness to be. Being aware is the opposite of thoughtlessness/Wu Wei, because to embrace those concepts is to turn off the processing system, the human computer. Thoughtlessness is a total embracing of the body, ecce homo, only the body remains. The other problem is phenomenology which never seems to fit quite right for me. I lean more towards a post-nihilist positioning where I don't trust my senses. I used to fight with a close friend all the time about this and he would tell me that what I was saying implied that I could walk out of my house tomorrow morning and step into lava. I accept this, and maybe one day I will walk into that lava, but I am still upholding raw possibility as my highest of chosen and arbitrary values.

# The Fly(s) In The Ointment

Feelings! They are something I rarely heard discussed in political or metaphysical conversations, but they are ever present. If I had to describe my phenomenological experience, it would be as passing through and inhabiting different feelings. Sometimes it feels as though I am a jellyfish, powerless to move on my own, being dragged around by my feelings as if they were currents. Unlike the jellyfish though, I am often in a battle against my feelings. I ask myself why I feel them, how I can move on, and how I can have a new feeling so that I don't have to have the old one. A lot of our terminology and lexicon around feelings carries the weight of determinism and a lacking of control. We get lost in feelings, stuck in feelings, we blame others for our feelings...they often seem to be things put on us by others or forces beyond our control. David Foster Wallace describes depression as being stuck in a feeling that will pass but while it is happening it feels as though the feeling will last forever. In a moment I find hilarious, I was once self medicating for that old philosophical bugaboo tooth pain and I ate so many edibles that I ended up on all fours puking and crying and feeling like I was experiencing physical and self death metaphysically. I felt as though my soul(whatever that is) was being ripped out of my chest and I was entering some voidal nothingness. I begged my best friend to kill me, I told her I would never speak to her again if she didn't. Of course the feeling passed and now it is just a funny story but during the feeling I couldn't see a past or future, it completely overcame me. DFW says that people kill themselves because a feeling has set them on fire and the worst part is that nobody else can see the flames. He believes people don't jump out of buildings because they want to die, but because they can't stand being on fire any longer. How much of this is in our control?

We are taught to scorn our feelings because as we now know, they arrive in bursts. Our feelings never come to us directly and simply. For example, most of the anger I feel masks a sadness. This makes me wonder if feelings exist as anything other than a reaction...and

I have no answer. It is only in accepting the bursts of sensory input we receive and playing with them that we can change our relationships to them. I spent years being depressed, thinking that I was born a depressed person, and then eventually I just let the feelings wash over me, accepting that they had arrived, and I began to re-imagine my relationship to them. Now, I still get depressed sometimes, but I no longer identify as depressed because when that particular burst of senses/feelings hits me I know that it will pass and that there are ways I can help move it along. Feelings throw everything I believe into disarray. My notion of a self, my notion of choice, all of it is attached to my feelings. They infect (no connotation here) every part of who I am and what I do. There is power in choosing slowness, in not rushing to figure feelings out, in letting them lap over me as waves and giving myself time to dive under their sea and better understand them in the hope of building a relationship to them that isn't just as their slave.

Feelings live in our bodies...and my body, along with many other people I know, is something I don't have that great of a relationship with. Personally, my body has let me down time and time again. Whether it be cancer, or tens of broken bones and several surgeries, my body is unreliable for the things I want it to do. Beyond that, my body carries the physical and mental scars of all the traumas I have experienced in my life. It is for this reason that I stand with John Gray when he writes that free will is a joke because we all have such long pasts. This means that when we are making a decision, whether it be for lunch, to stay with a partner, to turn left instead of right...anything... the decision has been made long before we imagine ourselves to be making the decision. The things we can't control such as where we were born, the body and family we were born into, and everything else outside of us that was put into/onto us affects our decision more than the little consciousness man we imagine to be in our head. This is the big joke, that we play out the game of life for no reason, that we march along in one giant festival of insignificance. This makes any attempt at addition or subtraction an exercise in futility, both methods of creating a unique self are methods in reaction against, searching for freedom from nothing less than the universe and life itself.



# The Joke: Humor and Diabolum

With addition and subtraction both ending up for me as convoluted and without a path I am left only with my humor. Thomas Disch writes that “laughter is just a slowed down scream of terror.” I’m not sure I totally agree, but maybe there is something to the idea of laughter as a way to deal with the horror of the world, the terror of the ineffable and unknowable. Laughter is an acknowledgment of my insignificance, of the insignificance of every decision, of my history and future. Laughter allows me to alleviate myself of the burden of the weight of things. In *Immortality* Kundera writes himself into the story as himself and throughout the book he is having discussions with a man he calls Professor Avenarius. Avenarius has given up on political activity and instead goes around with several knives in his coat and slashes tires indiscriminately because he finds cars and the roads for cars aesthetically unappealing. Avenarius says that:

*Diabolum is characterized by the total lack of a sense of humor. The comical, even if it still exists, has become invisible. Joking no longer makes sense. This world takes everything seriously. Even me. And that’s the limit!” He continues, “humor can only exist when people are still capable of recognizing some border between the important and the unimportant. And nowadays this border has become unrecognizable.*

What is the border between the important and unimportant? Where does it lie? Why is it so difficult to see? Perhaps it is difficult to see the border because the truest answer to the question is that we do not know, will never know, and have never known what is important. Even in my own life the things I believe to be important change and shift. The way I relate to the past changes as well for there are events that I didn’t even think about for years that rose to a level of significance and moments that felt as heavy and important as possible have over time slipped into insignificance. Perhaps it is because we are born into a world that forces

its desires and plans onto us, that finding our creative nothing to assert our own values is so difficult. It is hard to subtract to zero and adding onto something that was already given to us makes a mess of this border. It is always the serious people without humor who are conducting the greatest atrocities humans are capable of. Often times it is those with the best senses of humor who fall under the weight of history. However, the joke reminds me of freedom. The joke stands out as an ephemeral/eternal(for infinity is in a moment) freedom from the weight of the world. By accepting my insignificance and laughing at it, I am free to change everything about who I am and how I relate to the world. Holding on tightly, not laughing, and missing the joke, makes me the butt of the joke instead of the one laughing along with it.

The only thing left to do in the face of an unknowable and insignificant self and world is to play out the game without a purpose. Eventually, Professor Avenarius is caught slashing tires. A woman sees him holding a knife, but she believes he is attempting to rape her! Avenarius ends up going to jail and being set free, but he never told his lawyer or anyone but Kundera what he was actually doing with that knife(slashing tires). Kundera muses on this as he responds to Avenarius:

*You(Avenarius) were ready to go to jail as a rapist, in order not to betray the game..’ And eventually I understood him at last If we cannot accept the importance of the world, which considers itself important, if in the midst of that world our laughter finds no echo, we have but one choice: to take the world as a whole and make it the object of our game; to turn it into a toy. Avenarius is playing a game, and for him the game is the only thing of importance in a world without importance But he knows that his game will not make anyone laugh.*

This passage cuts deeply into me as I see Kundera’s view of Avenarius, which is as an extremely lonely man. I have no declarations to make about loneliness, whether there is one or zero, whether everything is connected or nothing exists. I have come

to realize that I only have the joke of a life lived out for no reason at all, playing a game that I will never truly understand. My biological draw towards others, towards socialization and death, makes me want to play the game with friends, strangers, sea otters, and rocks. I want to hear my laughter echo, to echo the laughter of others, but this too might end up as a futile project. However, if there is one thing I've ever possibly known to be true about myself, it is that I just want to fucking play.

As Tom Robbins says...

***“It’s never too late to have a happy childhood.”***



*·faggotcrimewave·*