

A collage of various boots, some in solid colors and others as semi-transparent overlays, arranged around a central banner. Each boot's sole has the word "SOCIETY" printed on it. The banner is a thick blue line with the word "SOCIETY" in a large, bold, black serif font.

SOCIETY

Introduction

Society is the hidden violence done to you every day in the name of other people—people you don't know, people you probably don't like, people you are likely never to meet. It is done by happy faces with perfect teeth, wonderfully groomed assassins for whom it is never personal, never emotional.

Society is the set of rules you operate by so that you get along with others. It is the queue and the waiting for the doors to open. The rushing about when the doorbell rings or the guests are about to arrive. It is the folding of napkins and placement of utensils. It is the fact that success is contingent

on manners, “hygeine”, and attractiveness. Society is the science of sociology and urban planning, of quantity and survival, of public policy and statistics. It is about measuring people to fit the coat prepared for them(which means turning a deaf ear to a lack of need for coats, to a lack of a desire to wear coats, or the hatred of the characteristics of society’s coat in particular). If society is a coat the role of us is to learn to live with being a coatwearer, full stop.

Society is a history, generation after generation, of social questions never having faces. Social questions are answered by markets, isolation, and websites. The geological layer-

ing of these answers has looked like a babel forced into a single language, thousands of people converted to one, and variety pared down to pabulum. It looks like genocide, forgetfulness, and happy ignorance in the name of safety, sanctity, and truth.

If the question is society, the answer is fuck you.

Society is not a neutral force. Social relationships only exist by the suppression of the real desires and passions of individuals, by the repression

of all that makes free relating possible. Society is domestication, the transformation of individuals into use value and of free play into work. Free relating among individuals who refuse and resist their domestication undermines all society, and opens all possibilities. And to those who feel that they can achieve freedom through a merely social revolution, I end with these words of Renzo Navatore:

*You are waiting for the re-volution?
Let it be! My own began a long time
ago! When you will be ready... I won't
mind going along with you for a while.
But when you'll stop, I shall continue on
my insane and triumphant way toward*

*the great and sublime conquest of the
nothing!*

—Feral Faun,
Social Transformation
or the abolition of society

The moral code of our society is so demanding that no one can think, feel, and act in a completely moral way. For example, we are not supposed to hate anyone, yet almost everyone hates somebody at some time or other, whether he admits it to himself or not. Some people are so highly socialized that the attempt to think, feel, and

act morally imposes a severe burden on them. In order to avoid feelings of guilt, they continually have to deceive themselves about their own motives and find moral explanations for feelings and actions that in reality have a nonmoral origin.

—FC,
Industrial Society & Its Future

Society, then, can be defined as the totality of obligatory relationships individuals form in order to reproduce themselves materially, physically, and mentally. Thus it can be seen that

the abolition of work, like that of the family, means the abolition of a social activity in the sense that its only goal is to reproduce members of humanity. Even if, hypothetically, humanity were not reproduced in an unequal manner (the wage system), the content of work would still call out for its own abolition, as would the content of the family, because we are not thirty thousand turds or forty thousand snores, as Artaud points out, nor are we twenty thousand legs stretching under a desk or fifteen thousand sets of dishes. We are fifty poems and ten accordion tunes (awaiting more). But work, the family, and society in a more gen-

eral sense necessarily presuppose the “alienation” of their products. It is only from a poem or an accordion tune that we cannot be separated because they are *useless*.

—Demolition Derby

You reformers want to “transform” the State from an instrument of oppression, tyranny, and infringement of rights into a cooperative agency for subserving the common purposes of Men;

anarchists want to abolish the State. As anarchists are not opposed to such cooperative agencies as you mention, obviously the State means something different between us. These divergent meanings have their origin in two fundamentally different ways at looking at the relations between men. One is the collective; the other the anarchistic. One tries to organize society; the other to free it. One looks for a form of organization; the other for a set of principles. If it is the aim of society to discover some form of organization to which it must

adhere, then some means must be established to force conformity to that form. To force adherence to organization implies coercion and invasion; to defend a set of principles is not invasive. In a free society many different forms of organization are possible. Anarchy is not a concept of organized society. And as it implies a society existing by virtue of voluntary agreement, even the associations for defense of its principles must be voluntary. I beg to submit that government and defense are antithetical, that organization implies conformity which may

be either imposed or agreed to, and that without a distinction between invasion and defense no science of society is possible.

—Laurence Labadie,
On “Society”

By committing suicide, individuals make a radical break with social necessity of any kind. In this sense, it is possible for suicide to give the impression of being the freest action an individual could possibly carry out. In response to the question “Is suicide a solution?” in *La revolution surrealiste*

#2, Crevel answers ... yes. Artaud, on the other hand, felt that suicide remains a moment of reality, and loathing any form of reality, thought that suicide could not be anything other than an act imposed on him by social reality. This is the viewpoint he was to develop later in “Van Gogh, suicided by society”. This approach to suicide, and to death in a more general sense, is the most powerful, the most poetic, and at the same time the most deeply thought-out because it conceives of death as a social moment of life and considers both to be equally abominable (this disgust radically distances him from all the modernists—the

antipsychiatrists, Telqueliens, and the rest, who have subsequently attempted to appropriate him).

In fact, the only freedom demonstrated by “my suicide” is not in my choice of death instead of life at one moment as opposed to another, but that I carry it out because I am the only one who can kill myself. Certainly, an act imposed by society that I can carry out immediately (apart from delinquency) is reminiscent of the self-management of a-social acts that we found with respect to anti-psychiatry. Still, one cannot properly speak of self-management, because in order to do so it would be necessary to adopt a

schema which is one of social relationships: my act must be lost in the anonymity of acts belonging to everyone. As things stand, my freedom can only make itself known through an act whose origin is not free. But emphasizing the necessary character of suicide while presenting it on the contrary as a chosen act, let us suppose that I, and all the other likely suicide candidates are told how to carry it out. In this case it is no longer I who kill myself, but thanks to the instructions used, an interchangeable member of a group of people who will potentially kill themselves. When I take the amount of little pills necessary to go over the edge,

for example, I will be aware that other individuals, at the same instant, or a little sooner or a little later, have gone through the same motions, measuring out the same dose in order to achieve the same result! It's enough to nauseate you too much to commit suicide!

These days I can rarely pick up a newspaper, read a book, watch television, or listen to the radio without being confronted with demands that "Society" should do this, that, or the other. Politicians, priests, social workers, reformers, and revolutionar-

ies, not to mention a good number of conservatives, are eager to urge me to support their panaceas as to what “Society” ought to do to correct some wrong somewhere. This is, indeed, the age of sociolatriy, and woe betide those “selfish” individuals who will not join the chorus of supplication to the social idol and plead that its “will” be done.

But although I have looked hard and long for this “Society”, I cannot find it. Just as when I sought for “Man”, I could only find men, so when I seek for “Society”, I can only find individuals. It is clear to me that behind all the clamor, there is nothing more substantial than the mistaken belief that when

you and I and several million others form a “Society”, there is created an organic entity to which appeals can be made and from which a response will come. Such a belief has no basis in fact. “Society” is no ego that can cause, feel, or will anything. It is an abstract noun denoting a specific aggregation of individuals relating to each other for certain purposes. It is not a supra-individual organism having a life of its own apart from the lives of those individuals who compose it. “Society” is a purely mental construct. Those who worship it are worshipping a spook.

—SE Parker,
Sociology

Capitalism, which presupposes itself, constitutes the last possible society because, having replaced nature in every respect, it is society which presupposes itself. Society therefore tends to short-circuit classes and social groups and to directly socialize the individuals that it obliges to coexist within it. As a result, individuals in dominated social groups tend to be raised to a condition of being social individuals just like everyone else. From this state of coexistence flows a necessity for people to tolerate each other,

in other words to put up with each other instead of loving or hating each other. A cool attitude prevails (but one which does not exclude violence of a more or less cunning nature), along with critiques of resentment and violence which fly off in all directions. Also, there is the arrival of youth as a social force, which corresponds to society's need to constantly renew itself because there is nothing left to conquer. This arrival was foreshadowed by Nazism and fascism on the one hand and by the Popular Front on the other, as transitional political forms on the

way to the stage of the real domination of society. Now that the period of political transition has been left behind, today (ie since the beginning of the Sixties) the social force of youth manifests itself primarily through music, which has become more and more mechanical, technical, and lacking in content—ie pure Muzak—in accordance with the tendency towards the abstract universalization of capital.

For me, “Society” is simply a means to achieve certain of my ends. It is an expediency, nothing more. It is not the source of my

being and my doing. Refusing to be ensnared by the net of conceptual imperatives that surrounds its deification, I am content to be regarded as “selfish”—and find no shame in it.

—Wolfi Landstreicher,
What is Society?

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