

G U N C A D



[REDACTED] 3 D 2 A [REDACTED]
HISTORY [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] AND [REDACTED]
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COME AND TAKE IT

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FOREWORD

It was only three years ago that PLA.boi started making and publishing 3D-printable suppressor files from his empty suburban apartment. The PDF guide to his first release instructed builders with photos of printed components on his carpet, and of annealed baffles and endcaps as seen in his crusty oven. The guide mandated hand painting these parts with craft resin and JB Weld (“none of [these steps] are optional”) and then wrapping the assembled mess in a panel cut from a two-liter soft drink bottle.¹ PLA.boi named this first of his projects the Diet Mountain Dew 9, which was “mostly printable” in the same way the Floyd protests were mostly peaceful. In the DMD9’s “Troubleshooting” section is a prediction of the kind of cycling problems likely experienced by Luigi Mangione in the infamous surveillance footage of his shooting of United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson. PLA.boi wrote that he found such issues “to be

1 Pla.boi, *The Diet Mountain Dew (DMD9) Suppressor*. FTN Suppressor Pack. DEFCAD, Feb. 6, 2026.

more common with p80s or 3d printed frames, that hasn't [sic] fully broken in yet." To fix the problem, he recommended drilling a hole.

The DMD9 was met with disinterest, much less fanfare, and would eventually be deleted from Odysee. In the readme to his 2023 "Fuck That Noise (FTN) Suppressor," which requires fiberglass-reinforced packing tape, the designer admits his previous projects had too many steps and were "a pain in the ass to build." Worse, they had no politics. PLA.boi's next step, indeed his breakthrough, was as much social as technological, and is a subject of this work's collected essays on the history of GunCAD.

The first three essays were each given as public speeches at one year intervals, and are framed by topics like January 6th, the *VanDerStok* lawsuit, and the advent of commercial AI.² "GunCAD: History and Value" is taken from an extended interview recorded with Garret Walliman in advance of the movement's first big copyright lawsuit. These remarks were originally made in the hope that GunCAD, or what is now called 3D2A, could find a way through the cycle of censorship, link rot and "just-so-stories" eroding our culture. Upon reflection, however, I believe this interplay of history, sup-

2 *Bondi v. VanDerStok*, 604 U.S. 458 (2025).

pression, and etiological narrative is GunCAD's culture, and that 3D2A has in ten years become not so much a set of technical practices as an existential regime based on questions like the role of death in art. What's most striking to me upon revisiting these texts in 2026 is how rapidly JStark was transfigured in our cultural memory after his death. These texts reveal the strategy of radical revision applied to his life.

Withheld from this collection is *Black Flag White Paper* in order to sustain that work's power (to disappear). The Appendices are devoted to my style of semiotics and a speculative ontology. This collection could just as well have been titled *Mnemohistory and Necessity*. In light of California's landmark civil suit against The Gatalog, it might have been titled *The Autistic Imperative*. Regardless, what follows is the first literature of our movement's history, and the first history of its literature.

CRW

AUSTIN

March 5, 2026.

POST-POLITICAL

Can you see the title of the presentation?³ This is “Post-political.” What is that? This isn’t just going to be a primer on the genealogy of this movement. It’s going to be a how-to guide: How to be post-political. I don’t want you to be political. Forget about that. *They* want you to be political. I want you to be *post-political*, because that’s where your movement comes from.

About me. Who am I? How can I tell you these things? Well, my name is Dominica Yowls. I invented the movement. Let’s see, I gave it its aesthetics, that’s right, its political philosophy. And then of course I developed its current law and legal theory.

3 Originally delivered at Bear Arms N’ Bitcoin in Austin, Texas on April 10, 2021.

LESSON ONE

My lesson number one for you: Politics. *It's fake. It's gay.* What do I mean by that? Defense Distributed and the 3D gun, they evolved from – or you could say as reactions to – the heights of “commanding heights” liberalism, and the failure of the Ron Paul Revolution. This is the anxiety right before the Obama period, and I think (most accurately) 3D guns emerge at that moment where there is a specific anxiety about the political task of the *global democratic consensus*.

Can everyone hear me? What's a global democratic consensus? Well, it's described beautifully in Rancière, if you'll allow me:

“The task of modernity is to secularize politics, to demilitarize and diminish it, to remove everything in it which is not functionally ordained for maximizing the chances of success for the collective being, for the simple management of the social. This political task is quite precisely that of politics' self-diminution.”⁴

In short, in the theory of Rancière, democratic politics is the art of suppressing the political.

4 Rancière, Jacques. *On the Shores of Politics*. Verso, 2007.

Now, this isn't new. I'm saying it's accurate, but I'm saying it's not unique. In fact, in the theory of Rancière, politics has always been the art of suppressing the political. Why do you think Joe Biden won? Well, you can say "it was rigged," but then that's just another way of saying the same thing.

I want to discuss, then, these domains of suppression before we get into the practicum. How are we depoliticized? These domains should be recognizable to you, especially after the year that we've had. They are by (number one) expert knowledge, the progressive fantasy of expert administration of the social. Number two, participatory governance, which is all theater, but everyone has a role to play. "You have a civic duty!" Why don't you go watch the polls and get kicked out? That's fun. Next, of course, is multiculturalism. A huge spectacle, a grief complex and industry, and obviously a way of diluting your voice, your capacity for exit, and your own felt and perceived power. Lastly, I need not really comment on ecology and biopower. It's really all it took, a little coronavirus, to get rid of any illusion *you* had of political freedom.

These domains of de-politicization, we can say that both in the formal structures of government and the informal, they—in their conspir-

acy—contribute to what we can call a *war on noticing*. “Oh, the war on noticing. It’s just like Weimar. Well, what do you mean Dominica?”

Alright, just a thought experiment:

Say the Trump insurrectionary force *actually did* sack The Capitol. And that that dude with the horns, he sets up a new government, installs and empanels a grand jury, and starts issuing subpoenas and making demands. Do you think you would have found out about that on YouTube? No! But you’re 3D gun printers, most of you (some of you), and you know that because, of course, even in those rare moments where the formal structures of power tell you, “Yeah, sure, fine, share your (3D) stuff,” the informal structures let you know that *you cannot*.

Now, I’m not trying to be cynical, but if we’re in a war on noticing, and that’s the essence of the political, then the post-political might be *to notice*. A problem of perception. What can we notice?

This is a picture of the F35 Joint Strike Fighter, the result of a \$400 billion DOD program. Many years belabored, delayed, etc. What did it produce? A plane which could not fly in the rain. Look it up. Among other things, this plane could only meet its mission targets and its required mission periods, let’s say 30% of

the time mission capable. Abysmal. A supply chain which could not be managed. Completely inestimable to the DOD process. Too complex. Cannot even invent systems to track the part redundancies, the part repair requests. Alright? It cannot fly at a 20 degree angle. What else can we notice?

From the office of the Undersecretary of Defense, an industrial capabilities report for fiscal year 2020. Huh? I didn't hear about that in the news. Well, you're not supposed to. Remember, it's a war on noticing. Excerpts from this report. I love it just because I deal with these things a lot. I want a pull quote here. I mean obviously the office of the Undersecretary of Defense admits American defense industrial and manufacturing capability has been lost. Oh, did you not know that? The pull quote:

“While total manufacturing output might have grown” in the last ten years, “the workforce on which a defense industrial renaissance would depend [and that renaissance is of course outlined as a congressional priority] is, in effect, an endangered species.”⁵

5 OSD A&S Industrial Policy. *Fiscal Year 2020 Industrial Capabilities Report to Congress*. January, 2021.

Since I have just a moment, I'll pull one more quote. China has emerged as a major machine tool customer in the world in the last ten years, and the trends in what would make a successful manufacturing economy are mostly the machine tool industry. But the way that the Undersecretary of Defense has defined this, or as this report has said, though the American machine tool industry:

"...laid the groundwork for the [so-called] mobilization miracle of the Second World War, a fact understood by our friends and foes alike... America has allowed its machine tool sector to turn from a national asset into a national security vulnerability."

Here's an irony, right? Where the DOD tells us, "Actually, it's a liability that not enough citizens are out there learning the machine tool industry and how to build with defense industrial techniques and learn that science," the ultimate irony is a future of Oriental Despotism where it's *simultaneously a crime* for you to learn these things and to share that knowledge with other people. This is *what's coming* in America, but somehow, ironically, not what's expressed as a priority by the defense industrial complex.

Now look, I'm not just being bitter. What I want you to know is that in the post-political era, you're going to have to repeat this after me. What are we looking at? What do we want to notice? Class, repeat after me:

Neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics.

LESSON TWO

Lesson number two: No gestures of loyalty. This is a how-to guide. I don't want to bore you with Baudrillard and heavy theory.⁶ That stuff got me nowhere for years, but you're still here. So let's talk about "how-to." Oh, it's nice to have our dream, "freedom technology" and everything, but let's also have habits of mind. Your lesson number one was politics is fake. Right? Don't get involved. Don't think of it. It's fake. It's gay. Okay, listen. Lesson number two: No gestures of loyalty.

Now, this is fatherly instruction. I promise you everything delivered here is in the spirit of love. I'm so happy that you all exist now. It was a very lonely, lonely period before, and now I feel like that fatherly figure. I may not always

⁶ This is a lie.

be around, like your real dad, but I'm here now and I'm here to give advice.

This is a hero of the movement, our friend and yours, JStark. He's in his Garden of Gethsemane moment in what is arguably the classic document of this generation of 3D printed guns, *Plastic Defense* on YouTube.⁷ I'm sure everyone here has seen it. Beautiful document. JStark is having some difficulty in the garden explaining an aspect of his politics. He knows he needs to have a politics, and has surely got one, because he's *doing it*. He wants to explain it, but he's a little limited. And I don't hold this against him because of course he's stuck in the fake and gay politics of his country and his time. But here's his statement:

"We kind of don't like extremists because they usually start a fierce conversation or debate."

I think this is an accidental and omissive statement, and its ironies are that it, one, feels like the suppressive, depoliticizing talk that we just spoke about. Well, what's wrong with a fierce

⁷ These comments, the first to predict JStark's death, were made six months before the infamous report in *Der Spiegel*. Baumgärtner, Epp, Lehberger and Höfner. "The Shadowy, Homemade Weapons Community Just Keeps on Growing." October, 2021.

conversation or debate? The politics of the day tells you that's what's wrong and that we don't need to have that.

I think if we give this, well... of course the second irony is that JStark is saying all this about extremists while wearing a mask in the woods. *Someone needs to tell him.* Again, all delivered with love. But what I want to say about this is let's say we give that statement its most generous or gracious interpretation: JStark is expressing something of the difficulty of the moderation of a community, especially one which has to persist in pseudonymity, anonymity. "Look, we're trying to build guns. We don't want to get sidetracked." I had a bit of this experience when, in my day, I was managing the DEFCAD IRC and forums. My strategy was to not moderate, not just because of the feds, but because I didn't want to control the conversation. Every community has this problem of moderation. In my case, we got something worse than extremists. We got FOSSCAD.⁸

Anyway, JStark is back in the garden and he's continuing to explain his politics. He's saying, "in general, we don't like racists, we don't like xenophobes." And I think I understand what this visa is. This is an offering, which is

⁸ Popular GunCAD subreddit banned in 2025.

not necessary, of an olive branch, let's say, to the eternal journalist, or to the arch-liberal. This is Jake Hanrahan.⁹ Look at that. Look at how he feels in his face that he can inspect and judge the utterances of JStark. It's quite arrogant, but let me proceed.

What JStark is using here is what we could call the newspeak of the new faith. It's uncomfortable to see a post-political figure, or a figure who should be one, using the word "xenophobe." There is no need to say that. And of course, since I'm an adult and have a real view of history, I would point out to you that racists, especially in the case of marginal freedom technologies, resistance movements, and, in short, *terrorism* – racists are instrumental and should never as a rule just be ruled out of your organization.

This is Francois Genot, famous Swiss Nazi, and the original financier of Palestinian Liberation, Algerian Liberation, and the Arab Bank of Geneva. His friend, Wadie Haddad, godfather of modern terrorism, is known to have said to him: "Adolf Hitler was a great man."¹⁰ I hope that that's what Brady quotes me for in this speech.

9 3D2A's Martin Bashir.

10 Preston, David Lee. "Hitler's Swiss Connection." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Jan. 5, 1997.

So when JStark is in the garden, or when you are in the garden next, and you say these things to the journalist, like, “Well, we don’t like racists, and of course we don’t like extremists.” I’m telling you that that is nothing other than a *gesture of loyalty*. And though you are trying to be reasonable, what that journalist – look at him – look at him processing what JStark is saying; all he’s hearing is:

I am still afraid.

Your goal as a post-political figure is not to give these people the hallmarks of a captive mind. Your goal is to *not get captured*.¹¹

LESSON THREE

Lesson number three: You are extremists. “Oh, Dominica. I’m not an extremist. I’m a classical liberal.” Well, I’m sorry. Now yesterday’s classical liberal is tomorrow’s extremist. Joe Biden’s extremist. Because this is not a PowerPoint, this is going to mess up my slides, but I know you’re extremists for a couple of reasons:

First, the ITAR says you are. You’re a felon if you share the wrong files. You’re a felon.

11 Miłosz, Czesław. *The Captive Mind*. Vintage International, 1990.

You know my experience with the ITAR, or you should.¹² And believe me, ignorance of that is no excuse when Joe Biden gets to cracking. And then of course, many of you hide your faces. You know you're extremists, you know what you're doing. You also know you're extremists because DHS is here. DHS is in the parking lot taking license plates. And then, finally, you know you're extremists because *I'm* an extremist, and I'm public about what I do, so you are *more extremist* than me. I'm the least extremist person here, probably.

This is a famous NSA program disclosed by Edward Snowden in 2013 and confirmed by *The Washington Post*.¹³ I just like that it's visual and it fits this presentation's homosexual motif. But what you're seeing are maps of cell phone tower coverage, and this program maps all the little cell phones which travel together through these areas. And the more areas that these cell phones travel through together, the more the NSA can be sure that we are finding and looking at *co-travelers* for network analysis. All of your phones made it here today in this room. I promise you *this* phone's on that list. Your

12 *Defense Distributed v. U.S. Dep't of State, et. al.*, No. 1:2015-cv-00372 (W.D. TX)

13 Gellman & Soltani, "NSA Tracking Cellphone Locations Worldwide, Snowden Documents Show." *The Washington Post*. Dec. 4, 2013.

phones are now too, and so we're all co-travelers. Right? Welcome to extremism.

Now for bonus points, before I go to the next slide, does anyone know the name of this famous NSA program? What's that? Okay, good guess. The name of this program is *FASCIA*. Not subtle.

Here's a heuristic, extremists. It doesn't matter what the apparatus is. Say it's DHS. We're in 2001. We say, "Huh, maybe it's not good, George W. Bush, to create an Orwellian police apparatus to synthesize all of the nation's law enforcement and intelligence data. Maybe that'll be used against us one day." "No, that'll never happen," says George. And now it's happening.

And of course, what's more salient to our purpose is the example of ITAR. Right? ITAR, invented as a legitimate, controlled and constrained way of keeping actual, literal munitions out of the hands of the enemy, the Nazis, the Japanese, etc., evolves in the Cold War into an architecture for the filtering and the control, the suppression of *information itself* about this munitions material. That architecture reinforces what we call the Iron Triangle: the bureaucracies, the government committees, and the research universities. And now it is used by our opportunistic enemy to be a domestic

arms control. Foucault's Boomerang means any government apparatus eventually swings back, defeats its imperial or colonial purpose, and eventually *controls you*. Remember, your goal is to not get captured.

I don't mean to say more about it than is worth saying, but, as in my case, you can sue the State Department about the ITAR or the Foucauldian apparatus. You can tell them, "Hey, this is illegal. This doesn't work for me. This is bad." And then you can spend millions of dollars and many years. Then maybe the State Department will say, "Okay, fair enough. We'll remove our jurisdiction." Just like in *Crypto Wars One*, we'll remove it.¹⁴ We'll move it to the Commerce Department. But then another government comes in, and then another, and then this new government says, "Ah, we're going to put 3D files back onto the ITAR," and then you sue again.

The current government may get you stuck in a quantum position, where they say, "We want to regulate the files with the EAR, but if that's a decontrol, we'll put them back on the ITAR." Probably we'll get both. Probably the Ninth Circuit will say something like, "You can't keep this stuff on the ITAR," and it'll move

¹⁴ See <https://cryptome.org/>

to the EAR.¹⁵ And then Joe Biden, empowered with all of his wisdom and non-dementia, will put it back on the ITAR. And you will say – and you will rightly say – “God, that feels black-pilled to me.”

You might take the approach of the guy in the back there with his mugshot. That’s Jules Bonnot of the Bonnot gang. These guys were inspired by egoist anarchism. They were hardcore individual anarchists. They were like, “Fuck that. We’re living for today.” Anyway, you might take that approach. And I think most of the people in our movement have, because they’ve seen our example, they know it’s absurd, and it feels like, “Look, I don’t have the time and the money. I don’t know if I want to participate in this.”

This cartoon here in the middle: You could say a lot of things about the Bonnot gang, but they invented the getaway car. Like them, you could say, “my approach is illegalism. There needs to be civil disobedience, there needs to be noncompliance.” And you know what? I agree with you. There’s got to be people in this move-

15 *Washington v. United States Department of State*, No. 20-35391 (9th Cir. 2021).

16 Wilson, Cody. *Black Flag White Paper: A Primer On Copyright and 3D Guns*. DEFCAD, 2024.

ment that will hoist that *black flag*.¹⁶ We've got to depend upon that.

But I am here to say with today's lessons on the post-political that this is not necessary. And though JStark's attitude is super noble – though he is determined to be some kind of martyr, if nothing else, in his home state, and I will not dishonor that – it is not the only method. It is not the *necessary method*. I want to teach you a little more.

You might feel like Octave Garnier, a member of the Bonnot gang. This is the prescient suicide note he left before the cops blew his brains out: "I didn't want to live this life of present-day society because I didn't want to wait and maybe die before I lived."¹⁷ It's beautiful. It encapsulates all the vitality and angst and ambition of youth. I want people in this movement to not feel like Mr. Garnier. I want you to build and to learn and to experience, but I also want to teach you another habit of mind.

If you want to be the most black-pilled possible, even before these states get on with *their* 3D gun laws, which are coming, we see them coming every day, 75 million and more in this country cannot already legally own an AR-15.

17 Parry, Richard. *Bonnot Gang: The Story of the French Illegalists*. PM Press, 2016.

I've done the math, I've done it for years. This is just with seven states and D.C., by the way. This isn't even half the states in the Union. And of course, as you know with everything that we try to do, half the states in the Union show up and they say: "Not here." And they will likely win.

But that is not a reason to pursue illegalism or the martyrdom of a JStark. And, finally, I can dispense with these slides; this kind of disturbing iconography of the new faith and proceed to lesson number four.

LESSON FOUR

Ah, our comfortable aesthetic. I would like you to reconsider the political metaphor of the igloo. Now you probably think, "Cody's here and—," and the DHS agents, will you raise your hands? DHS agents? Anyone? Well, you probably think, "He's talking about 'the boog.'" No, not really. I want you to maybe rescue this image of The Boog because who knows how much of that was programmed as a meme or as disinformation.

Consider the words of Sir William Parry, the great Anglo explorer of the Northwest Passage. In his first exploration of the North Pole, upon seeing the Eskimos build an igloo, he says, "It is strange to think that all these measures are

taken against the cold, and all in houses of ice.” In the work of Ernst Junger, we see this written in a different way. He says, “An individual can defy superior forces. It is often that he can defy these forces, the state, society, the very elements themselves, by making use of their rules, but without submitting to them.”¹⁸

I’m going to say that again. The individual can defy superior forces, the state, society, the elements, by making use of those elements, those rules, and without submitting to them. I would submit to you that this is why I have offered DEFCAD as a platform for this movement. This is our igloo. Now, there will be an interactive component to this presentation. Soon we can build an igloo together, but let’s consider this first igloo.

Why have I sponsored this conference? Why have I built DEFCAD? To annoy you? To remind you that we’re still around? No, I’ve built it as a neutral, third-party platform. One of the rules, one of the elements of this legal structure that we have encountered is the Communications Decency Act, whose Section 230 says that “No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker

18 Jünger, Ernst. *Eumeswil*. Translated by Joachim Neugroschel, Telos Press Publishing, 2015.

of any information provided by another information content provider.”¹⁹

In my despair of not being able to legally share 3D files for let’s say ten years or something. God, has it been ten years? I’m at least able to be a neutral content provider. A platform as recognized by the Communications Decency Act. And so when you choose to share that material, I am not treated – DEFCAD is not treated – as the speaker of that material. That is very important because this is a federal law. And these federal laws protect even JStark and the spicy content that people like JStark contribute.

What you see here on DEFCAD in all of its aspects is not technical data controlled by the ITAR, is not any other kind of speech that a state or other authority can get to. It is speech *about* the speech, first and foremost. Here’s some reputational stuff with the stars. Here’s JStark showing you his video. He looks damn good in that thumbnail there. I mean, it’s amazing. And then we tell you, here’s the mirror. Here’s all this other information about it.

Now, I know this might be obvious to you, but this is a very important protection for when the Oriental Despots get inspired. “I know, I’ll

19 47 U.S.C. § 230(c)(1).

do something,” Mr. Grewal says.²⁰ No, actually. And though we have a New Jersey control at DEFCAD, that’s all perfunctory. That’s all presentation, because state AGs can do nothing in the face of CDA 230. If New Jersey and New York, California, the seven states who ban the AR-15 decide, “nope, you can’t have 3D data in our states,” which they’re deciding, it doesn’t matter how illegal the content is when it’s on DEFCAD, because DEFCAD is protected by CDA 230.²¹ That’s not to mention the First Amendment and all the other very good arguments that we have for maintaining such a platform. We have CDA 230. We have the first few building blocks of our igloo.

Now, when this was a PowerPoint, this would’ve been funnier. But you’ll see I trained a machine to learn who was and wasn’t a writer at *The Trace*.²² And it told me it was *this* guy. This guy writes for *The Trace*. You all might have heard of *The Trace*. This is the guy from Perfect Hair Forever. You can see him there defending himself against his symbolic castration. That’s one of the hyperparameters we tune in the ma-

20 Former AG of New Jersey. Subject of *Defense Distributed v. Attorney General New Jersey*, No. 23-3058 (3d Cir. 2026).

21 The first prediction of *The People of the State of California vs. The Gatalog Foundation, Inc. et al.* (CGC-26-633508).

22 Bloomberg-funded press outfit dedicated to gun control. Presided over by Everytown for Gun Safety’s John Feinblatt.

chine, and it said he writes for *The Trace*. And so when a journalist from *The Trace* wants to write about DEFCAD, wait a minute, why hasn't that happened? Well, it hasn't happened because we use another part of the Igloo. We use the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act.

In the terms at DEFCAD – check it out – we say that if you're a writer for *The Trace*, you can't use our computer service. I'm sorry, *you can't even be here*. Alright? And if you are here, you run afoul of the CFAA. And I swear to God, we'll bring criminal and civil penalties. You know we will. And so *The Trace* hasn't said a fucking thing about this platform. Oh, how it feels to be on the other side of that barbarous monarchy of the tech platforms. Welcome. Please take advantage of this shield that I have offered you.

One more benefit of being on a third-party platform like ours, which is aligned to protect your interests and development. Let's call this CtrlPew's "Shoulder Thing that Goes Up." Another company recently said, "Hey, this 'Shoulder Thing that Goes Up' looks a lot like something that we make." And they wrote to us, "We are the stakeholder. We have the IP here, we have a patent, so take it down." We responded to this producer and we said, "Huh, that's a very interesting argument you have. We're DE-

FCAD. We're a neutral content provider. We're not the creator of this material. But you know what? Just for you, we'll talk to the creator of this material and see if he agrees with what you say about your IP."

And so we go to CtrlPew – I don't think I'm saying anything off the record here– and we say, "Hey, CtrlPew. Is this the IP of that other group?" And CtrlPew says, "No, of course not." We say, "Okay, thanks," and we go back to the group and tell them: "No, it doesn't check out. This isn't the IP of your group." And they had nothing else to say. You can take advantage of that.

I'll say a couple more things about DEFCAD because there are always these misunderstandings. I want people to know that it's actually easy to contribute to this site anonymously. We're not asking contributors, in the same way as we are downloaders, to give up any personal information. It's never been more convenient to contribute anonymously or pseudonymously. We facilitate that. And in 2021, I know Garrett would want me to say we have a number of new improvements to our uploader, our versioning, and our pre-release process. We want to facilitate those actions which have evolved in this community, which I think are wondrous and amazing. We want to represent them and make

them legible to those who might think about participating in this community.

PRACTICUM

So I promised there'd be a practicum, an interactive component to this speech. What I want to give you is a nice little building block. And before I reveal it, maybe I'll first describe it to you. The ITAR has a definition of public domain. And this has always been one of the igloo blocks I like to build with the most. Even though we know the gun controllers want to use the ITAR as this domestic control, it's been such a slippery thing for them to do because the Internet was never defined in the ITAR. And when it nearly was, there were still these "exemptions" and "exceptions," which are both legally distinct things, no one knows what they mean, and everyone's just *playing with it*, both in the federal courts and state legislatures. No one knows what's happening.

But one of the great exemptions in ITAR is the public domain exemption, where there's a number of definitions of what is material which

is not controlled by the ITAR.²³ Material in a library, for example. So Defense Distributed built a library.²⁴ I think the most important thing to explain as a building block that you can use in this lesson is number six there. Can everyone read number six? It's going to be very difficult for you to read, so I'll read it out to you.

The definition of public domain, number six in 22 CFR § 120.34: "information made available through unlimited distribution at a conference." That means information which is distributed in an unlimited fashion at a conference, generally accessible to the public, is information considered in the public domain by the ITAR. Huh? It's almost like if we shared technical data for 3D printed guns at this conference it would not be controlled by federal law, and would then be deemed to be in the public domain. Wow. What a thought. What a thought. Something you should consider doing.

I'll finish on this note. "One day, humanity will play with the law just as children play with disused objects."²⁵ I invite you to do that. You

23 Goldstein, Matthew. "Department of State Confirms Prior Approval Requirement for Electronic Exports to Public Domain in Case of 3D-Printable Gun." *Thomson Reuters/WorldTrade Executive*. June 15, 2013.

24 *Defense Distributed v. Bruck*, No. 21-50327 (5th Cir. 2022).

25 Agamben, Giorgio. *The Omnibus Homo Sacer*. Stanford University Press, 2017.

don't have to join the Bonnot gang and invite yourself to a collective suicide. Yeah, that's *fun*, but also you can play with the law. And I think that's the most post-political message I could have for you; that the law is a disused object anyway. It's not something that deserves your loyalty or gestures of loyalty. It's a game for them, too.

Let's start playing.

DEATH ATHLETIC

My name is Dominica Yowls.²⁶ At least for this speech it is. At least for today it is. And if you don't use my preferred pronouns, at least during this speech, whoever this journalist is will call you at your construction job and get you fired. A lot of people don't recognize that 3D printed guns were actually originated by a trans woman, and it's true, so we were diverse from our origins. I think that's worth pointing out.

Today's speech is called Death Athletic. It's something inspired by Sloterdijk's anthropology of the acrobat, but I'm going to try to make it relatable. And I was told that my speech last year was not very practical. So, this is going to be a more practical speech, or at least the most practical speech I'm capable of giving. I hope to talk technique at the very end, and then maybe we can discuss with the Q&A. Our theme, from Ernst Junger:

²⁶ Originally delivered at Bear Arms N' Bitcoin in Miami, Florida on April 9, 2022.

*“Tell me your relation to pain, and I’ll tell
you who you are!”²⁷*

There are some people who believe that, as understood by the hedonic principle, we should only really pursue pleasure. We should only really pursue those things that might actually benefit us in logical trade-offs. But I think, like the ancients (and some of the moderns) noted – including Nietzsche – there’s an *interest* in pain. There’s an interest in, let’s say, *men carrying burdens*. And we recognize that it may even be important that we subject ourselves to certain hardships.

In that spirit, then, that men were meant to carry burdens, I’d like to contemplate Western thought’s deepest contemplation of this. I say “deep” in the Nietzschean sense, where maybe pain doesn’t actually make you better. This speech isn’t about improvement. I don’t think pain makes you a better person, but maybe it *deepens* you. In that spirit, let’s continue.

Just for the receipts, this is my old, defunct Twitter bio before I was completely eradicated from social life. And my final bio there is:

DEATHATHLETIC

²⁷ Jünger, Ernst. *On Pain*. Translated by David C. Durst. Telos Press Publishing, 2008.

It's not my favorite bio; I liked "The Second Segwayman of the Apocalypse." But a Death Athletic was actually the thing I was contemplating, my memento mori, before I was in fact removed a second time from the social.

This was 2018, the last time I updated that Twitter bio, and I include this not just for the receipts, but to say that even I will sometimes disenchant myself. I'd like to teach you about some of the things I was actually thinking about, some of the things that actually inform our artistic passions, our motivation as [Defense Distributed], or why we do what we do.

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia is a Greek word. The Greeks were concerned with the art of the beautiful death. That's my understanding of the word. Beautiful death. Of course we mean it in different ways since the Progressive Revolution, but forget about your installed or received wisdom about that word.

Euthanasia is about *death performance*, you could say. An obsession of the Greeks to die in a beautiful way. Or you can recontextualize it like with the Japanese art of Seppuku. These have been cultural concerns for some time. Of course

there's something forgotten in a modern context, but Sloterdijk would say, as I mentioned earlier, in his anthropology of asceticism and acrobatics; Sloterdijk would say that euthanasia is the *secret center* of what he calls "humanity's acrobatic revolution."²⁸

And so I want to begin with death performance, the art of the beautiful death. The first time I realized I had died, or died socially, lost all my relationships or something, was when I published *Liberator*, the first 3D printed gun. And I didn't anticipate it. I didn't know what would happen.

I had read what I thought was some cool shit when I was in school, like Robespierre's *Virtue and Terror*.²⁹ I was introduced to that by Žižek, and this idea that we can include the *threat of our death*, or at least our indifference to it as an historical accident, as a way of proving that we're committed to our projects or something. "Well, it doesn't matter if I'm dead." Or when the *New York Times* journalist asks, "So, what if someone prints your gun out and shoots you?" This is the most common thing that the libs still ask 3D gun printers. And when you, meaningfully, sniff and you say, "Hey, maybe it'll happen,"

28 Sloterdijk, Peter. *You Must Change Your Life*, Polity, 2013.

29 Robespierre, Maximilien. *Virtue and Terror*. Translated by John Howe, Verso, 2017.

really, that's some crazy shit that they don't like to hear. You're confessing this indifference to your death.

So, I had had this kind of intuition already with Liberator. I had read some of Baudrillard's *Fatal Strategies* too. I knew death was somehow a part of it. That this was a limit experience in culture, and – maybe not to get too deep into this – when Liberator actually happened, I was told by my first attorney, “Your life is over. This is a State Department enforcement action. You'll be lucky if you don't get 10 years in prison.” And I thought, “Oh, wow. I'm really done.”

Assuming some of these things, even in gray areas of the law, is to go beyond the pale and to risk something like a social or a physical death. And I was bitter. If not bitter, I was upset at having not really understood that. But how can you understand these kinds of things? How can you be prepared for that?

So, the reason I've now come to this slide is the *second time* I thought I would die. Somehow I clawed my way back from the whole Liberator experience and mounted an opposition. I built a new company with Defense Distributed to make the Ghost Gunner, and to have enough

money to sue the State Department.³⁰ It's a whole roundabout thing, but we'll get to it and we'll get to *why*. And I learned, just by happenstance – this was March of 2018 – I learned I was going to somehow, impossibly, beat the federal government in this contest about the First Amendment and 3D files. When I learned that, I thought, “Well, I’m certainly not going to survive this victory. I didn’t survive the last one.”

Knowing that my death would – this social death – or this real thing was going to happen, and that I was probably going to ruin my life again for (who knows?) I thought, “Well, what’s a secessionary statement? What’s a way to be known?” What’s a way to bury the name of God and confess:

Nevertheless, yes, I choose this death.

So I chose to resurrect this symbol from Goliad.³¹ This is the severed arm of Philip Dimmitt’s flag that flew at La Bahía in Goliad in the Texas Revolution. Long disused and not

30 Feuer, Alan. “Cody Wilson, Who Posted Gun Instructions Online, Sues State Department.” *The New York Times*. May 6, 2015.

31 Dimmitt Flag.



very familiar, even to Texans, though some know it now. The intuition here was that [Defense Distributed] had already done something similar with the flag of Gonzalez, if you know the “Come and Take It” flag with the cannon.³² And Gonzalez, of course, featured in the Texas Revolution as well.

Once again I was dwelling on this idea of Texan independence and secessionary gesture. What’s another gesture? What’s a way to show that we’re intentional in a way that can be known beyond just the accidents of my stupid company and my own pointless death? What’s a message that can carry forward symbolically from that moment?

So, I chose the severed arm of Goliad. This is the strongest statement of Texan independence. And maybe it’s not worth belaboring, but since I have a little extra time, you can go back and see that Dimmit and the boys at La Bahía were actually the first people to assert Texan independence in the Revolution. Beforehand it was the usual waffling of all early revolutions: “Well, actually we’re committed as Texans to the Constitution of 1824 of Mexico. And so, you see, we’re committed republicans. And actually this

32 See note 43.

isn't a revolution *at all* and we're not looking for independence."

But the boys at La Bahía were like, "You know what? White jihad." And that's where this flag erupts. In itself, Goliad – and I don't want to go too deep into this – but Goliad is a fun word. So I tried to adopt that word, and its significance, as well because Goliad is an *anagram*. And in the work of Baudrillard, he says you should always bury the name of God in these secessionary gestures.³³

Without spoiling a secret, I can tell you that anagram – looking backwards – was an anagram for Hidalgo. The settlement before Texan independence was of course a Mexican one, and Hidalgo was one of the greatest figures of Mexican Independence and secession. And so it seemed to me that Goliad was this specifically Texan-situated way of telescoping secessionary gesture. First it was Mexican independence, then it's Texan independence, and now with 3D printed guns what are we saying? Some kind of weird, cypherpunk 3D printed gun independence? I don't know. You figure it out. *I'll be dead.*

Moving forward, what a joy to be hidden in this way! What a disaster not to be found! But I

33 Baudrillard, Jean. "The Nine Billion Names of God." *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Translated by Iain Hamilton Grant, SAGE Publications Ltd., 2017.

believe someone found me. Here he is. And JStark had his own motives, his own reasons, and I can't fully know them, as I didn't know him well personally. But I think it's worth pointing out that the FGC-9 marks I and II include the severed arm of Goliad. It was like JStark understood the secessionary gesture, and he shared the same impulse to say the same thing. At least there's a relationship here.

A cynic could say that – knowing what happened to JStark – a cynic could say that JStark adopted our praxis, or these symbols, as his own funeral ideology. Or the intelligence agencies, probably one of you represents them here today; you may think this is a representation of the strains of Euro-Kurdistan, or the radicalism invading Europe. But we, I would say We the Living, We Americans, understand something better, because JStark left us *more clues* than just his use of the arm. You see “Live Free or Die,” and then you see his name there. JStark and the numbers 1809.

This is General John Stark's letter to the boys at Bennington.³⁴ JStark chose to adopt the pseudonym of this American Revolutionary War veteran who was writing at the end of his life to

34 Stark, Caleb. *Memoir and official correspondence of Gen. John Stark, with notices of several other officers of the Revolution*. G.P. Lyon, 1860.

those who would have a reunion celebrating the events of Bennington, saying that he couldn't join them. He regretted it, but he instilled in them and left them with this famous postscript, this "Live Free or Die" motto, which became the motto of the state of New Hampshire, and of course has been used in the French Revolution and many other revolutions all over the world ever since. Live Free or Die, bold words.

They seem heartily, healthy American words. They're held to originate with Patrick Henry or the Virginia delegation, the boys who wanted to reconstruct a militia once the royal charter had been removed. But the point of this slide is to allow us to look at JStark and give a more complete reading to his life. This wasn't just a guy who wanted to say some cool shit. This was a guy who understood that he was a part of our revolution, and was a soldier of it with us, but somehow knew that he wouldn't join us in the reunion, or wouldn't be able to. He was in fact predicting his own death. I think that's a beautiful death performance. And somehow, even if unconsciously, he knew it and was practicing my ostensible point here, a type of *euthanasia*.

This slide is meant to illustrate the tightrope walker from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In the tightrope walker scene, a jester comes out dur-

ing his performance and knocks him off his game. He loses his head, he loses the wire, and he falls to his death. He doesn't immediately die, and Zarathustra the prophet is there by his mangled body. The performer says: "Oh, shit I'm going to hell. I'm just going to die. How pointless my life is." And Zarathustra says, "No, not at all. You made danger your profession. And that's not nothing. Allow me to bury you," or "choose to die by your vocation," essentially. This is the essence of that speech. And I would say, then, that I don't know how JStark lived, but I believe he died an American. That's something I want to say about him here. He made danger his profession.

Perhaps JStark's final symbolic presentation for us is this stark choice from the motto: Live Free or Die. "Live Free or Fucking Die," I believe was JStark's turn on it. That's amazing and, in fact, quite an injunction with that addition.

We can recognize, though, that death is almost a certainty for us, even not a choice. Freedom, as this other peak, seems quite less certain than death. Is it even possible? Do you feel free? The question, then, is how to venture this crossing? Because, of course, we know if we stay on the shore and *don't* engage in any kind of practice, we're surely headed for one of these results: this depressing result of death.

How do we make this crossing to freedom? Freedom technology conference. What are the metaphysics of this desire?

MEDIATION

This is professor René Girard. He's our Virgil through this second section: Mediation. Girard teaches us a number of things about desire, about our will and our metaphysical ambitions. The standard model, let's say, of wanting to do something or of reaching an objective is this direct, this linear one. Okay, I'm a creator and I want to make something cool like the FGC-9 because I've heard about it, and I think that's really badass.

So, we imagine this kind of direct relationship where we pursue that object. I'm a subject pursuing an object, but Girard tells us "not so fast." In fact, we're not quite so free to desire anything, or even imagine anything. We have to learn it like anything else. Desire is imitative. It's taught too. We copy.

All desires, even the simplest ones, but especially those great ones (the passions), we learn from a *mediator*. There he is, that's the holy Pepe mediator. He lives in an inaccessible paradise to us. He looks down on us almost with

contempt, you could say, but it's a benevolent contempt. We have a relationship to the mediator in the way that we pursue our stated or intended object. And of course this should not be a surprise. Spengler reminds us – I just had to throw some right-wingers in there, but it's not a right-wing conference! – Spengler reminds us that it's always this way in history. Napoleon thought of himself as akin to Charlemagne, or Petrarch thought of himself as Cicero, and Cecil Rhodes had a custom volume of the caesars made, and he thought of himself as Emperor Hadrian or something. The organizer of British South Africa, check it out.

So, in the example of JStark and the FGC-9, his desire, his stated purpose and his accomplishment was perfecting the promise of 3D printed guns, or the first fulfillment of the promise of 3D printed guns. As you may remember in the documentation of the FGC-9, it is said, "Liberator was proof of concept. FGC is proof of carbine."³⁵ A beautiful restatement of his purpose.

Of course he goes on to some other lengths, but his ability to fulfill that promise is by recognizing the promise that was already outlined for him by the work of Defense Distributed. You

35 JStark 1809, *FGC-9 Build Guide*. DEFCAD, Mar. 27, 2020.

could say his work was *mediated* by Defense Distributed, and so it was in imitation of the intended concept of Liberator, and making that real in his mind, that he accomplished FGC-9 in the terms that he did.

Girard says there are heroes of external mediation. It doesn't really matter what external mediation is, and I should probably speed it up, but it's about your distance to the mediator. External mediation is, "Hey, I'm Don Quixote. I recognize I want to be like Amadis. I know who I'm copying. I'm telling you who I'm copying." JStark says, "Defense Distributed tried to do this thing with Liberator, and I'm trying to do the same thing." So he knew what he was doing, and he told you why. This is external mediation.

But Girard also tells us that as there are heroes of external mediation, there are victims of *internal* mediation. For this example, I'd like to illustrate a victim of internal mediation. Fatherly instruction, remember.

The example is Atlas Arms. And maybe not many people have heard of Atlas Arms, but that's okay, you probably will. But my point is Atlas Arms is also a company, an organization, and a group of people mediated by the experience and the example of Defense Distributed, and ostensibly trying to accomplish a similar

goal, which is something like GunCAD online. In their case this means technical data for ammunition and other related projects, which is all in the same spirit: open source, defeat and upset the institutions, you name it.

And how do they do this? Well, look, there are obvious and immediate similarities. And of course, Girard tells us that in literary examples of mediation, the external imitations can be startling. I'm not saying this is that startling, but Atlas Arms chooses to be an alliterative company, right? AA to our DD, and they're also a non-profit. They use the research from their work to commercially fund additional research, and they hope to fight the ATF. There are a lot of similarities to the work and style of Defense Distributed. Not a surprise. Directly mediated, no big deal. But Girard says that victims of internal mediation actually lose focus on the object that they're pursuing, and they have a tendency to get lost.

An example of this getting lost is that if after a while, let's say four or five years go by and you're not accomplishing the purpose of your project, then you begin to interpret your mediator as a *rival* who's actually trying to thwart you, or some kind of evil God who is actually now preventing you from accomplishing your goal.

And so, this is an example tweet from just last month. Austin Jones to ZeroHedge. There's a couple of things we can unpack here: "I swear to God, ZeroHedge, if you ever do a story about us here at Atlas Arms, that shit Cody Wilson didn't have a goddamn thing to do with it. And you know what? Stop giving credit to politicians and actors."

Austin's overstatement means, "Cody Wilson, Defense Distributed, they don't even do anything." Girard has taught us a couple of things which can be exemplified in this tweet, which are, well, number one, Austin is kind of living on his inheritance already. He's talking to ZeroHedge about an article regarding his work, which, by the way, *doesn't exist yet*. So, he's already taking out lines of credit on things he hasn't done because he lives in this diverted, deviated transcendancy where he's obviously more pure and more earnest in his attempts to accomplish the purposes of something like Defense Distributed. And Defense Distributed itself is now this perverted, fallen thing, which actually isn't even doing that anymore.

This proceeds to the point where Defense Distributed is actually wholly just pretending and an actor. DD is, in fact, not just an encumbrance to him, Austin Jones, to Atlas Arms, but to everyone in the 3D2A space, you see? So,

there's this kind of negative divinity given to the mediator in Girard, where actually we become *the devil*.

And so, Girard points out that as the years go on, and you can look at the history of Atlas Arms, it's kind of like this four or five year project of self-display where nothing really gets published or nothing actually gets commercially developed, but Atlas Arms becomes better at being a better version of Defense Distributed, at least in terms of presentation and purpose (and purity). What a joy it is to read a live blog about how pure a company is in an industry of fakes and everything. Amazing.

Girard's saying with that golden arrow there what a victim of internal mediation is doing is often just trying to *copy the desires* of the mediator, and not really trying to accomplish the intended or stated object of that desire.

Why do I bring all this up? Well, it's because I think this is the source of *ressentiment*, Scheler's "modern feelings," in our community.³⁶ It's easy to inhabit a certain persona of the 3D gun printer or the freedom technology rebel or advocate, the Bitcoin privacy extremist, these kinds of things. It's easy to inhabit that persona and

36 Scheler, Max. "Ressentiment." *On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing: Selected Writings*. Edited by Harold J. Bershady, University of Chicago Press: Lightning Source UK Ltd, 2013.

then somehow purity spiral and pretend that actually you have a real metaphysical autonomy which isn't mediated by anyone or influenced by anyone. And actually you are the literal pope of some kind of particular cypher-punk ideology.

I'm saying a lot of things here. But basically this idea of metaphysical autonomy and Nietzschean confusion, I think it's worth confronting. Maybe a way out of it can still be found by using the example of Atlas Arms, and that's what I'm trying to do here. Let's use that example.

This deviated transcendency, this spoliation, this encountering of impotent hatred and rage at your inability to accomplish your stated purpose while you're being mediated by something like Defense Distributed leads to these strange episodes of stolen valor. I mean this very dearly because – remember– the purpose of our speech is the Death Athletic and some type of euthanasia; hazarding your life for something deeper and symbolic.

These episodes become really meaningful. So, in an example of a newsletter update that Atlas Arms sends to donors; the most recent one, in fact, Austin says, "Look, I've got an open source manual I'm writing and it's got

everything in it, okay? It's going to have all the technical data and instructions and all this stuff. It's really great, but I'm sorry I can't share it with you because we are a *unique* target in this space. In fact, even more so than our 3D printed brothers."

If you know anything about 3D printed guns, the files are actually still claimed to be regulated by the feds. I mean, it's true that it is a crime to actually share 3D printed gun files on the Internet in certain ways. So Austin is saying, "We are even more of a target than our brothers in 3D printing are. I know you probably see there are files out there and I get it, *but listen*, this is some toxic stuff here. This is very dangerous what we're doing. We're up on the wire, we're tightrope walking. And we're going to share the manual with you, I promise, but look: Federal and state laws."

The problem here is that this is a lie. This is not true. 734.7(c), EAR, says the only files that can't be shared on the Internet, or disclosed to the public domain, are software and technical data for firearms, firearm frames and receivers. Okay? So, I've got good news, Atlas Arms. We fought your battle for you, buddy, and we won! And you could share your stuff today. You could share your stuff tomorrow.

But we get the sense that there's a certain fear then from Atlas Arms about, I don't know, objective mediocrity or whatever. We know that it's better to have this excuse that someone is preventing you from publishing. *I'm* preventing you from publishing. But just remember, I'm the actor, I'm the politician.

I won't mention another episode of stolen valor. It doesn't matter. At least Austin can point us out of the way, the way of this sand trap. We're stuck in some quicksand here when we're a victim of internal mediation. Girard says, "We can make men our gods, or we can make God our god," essentially. This is one of the easiest ways out of the mediation trap. We can actually choose a divine mediator, or we can kind of pretend that men are our gods and suffer the consequences.

I think this is the perfect dilemma represented by the self-display of Atlas Arms, where it's both this Randian project about heroes and intense individualism and nostalgia for the desert, which (by the way) usually conceals a *morbid* concern for the other. As well, Austin is a professed Christian. I think, then, let's choose the Christianity on this one and kind of forget the Randian thing. In this case the Christian thing, God the Architect, helps you more.

ACROBATICS

Finally then, let's get to technique. Why did I go through the prior two sections with you? It's because I think that *if* we have a divine mediator, and if we're contemplating the deepest questions of pain, like death and death performance, we have a combination required now to really perform. And it's okay that the 3D printed gun space has become so manifold, just like in Bitcoin. There are many lifestyle brands now, and there are many people that trade on just the aesthetics or whatever. That's great.

But I think there's still a higher practice, and I think there's still something that can really be done and really wow people. And I think it begins with involving your own death and the concepts that I'm talking about here today. JStark is of course an ultimate example. But let's not forget Yoshitomo Imura, who paid the price too.³⁷

Anyway, using the example of Christianity and divine mediation, we can begin with the most Christian of Christians himself: Christ crucified. What is The Passion about? Well, a lot of things, depending upon your point of view. But

37 Oga, Yukiko. "Man Who Made Handguns with 3-D Printer Gets 2 Years Behind Bars." *The Asahi Shimbun*. Oct. 20, 2014.

what's most interesting to me for the purpose of Death Athletics and explaining this agonist ethos, which I swear to God I'm going to do, is the account in John 19:30.

In Luke and Mark, Christ is on the cross. He cries out. He dies. In Matthew, I think Christ says, "Father, I give up my spirit to you." This is *almost* the statement that we're looking for. But in John, the addition is very interesting. In John, he says, "Tetelestai," or in Latin, *Consummatum Est*. As we know it in English, Christ says, "It is finished."

And just that addition takes Christ crucified from a chance victim of Judeo-Roman politics – twice humiliated – given the worst state punishment possible and made completely humiliated. Just that addition, "It is finished," *Consummatum Est*, becomes a superordination of the compulsory. It says, "Ah, of course. All according to my plan. According to my father's plan. This is all foreseen, and we've done it." It's an athletic statement.

John, according to Sloterdijk, has *athleticized* the passion. His Christ is saying something like "mission accomplished." That statement, that superordination of the circumstances literally changes history and reorganizes the Western narrative. This is one of the greatest statements

possible. And how did he do it from a position of ultimate weakness and humiliation? This is the core of the Death Athletic, the core of the death performance.

Christian Death Athletics may reach its deepest clarity in Tertullian of Carthage. Latin Christianity begins in Africa, by the way. “We wuz Christians.”

Tertullian says to those martyrs, or to those suffering under under Severus, the standard account of Christians thrown to the lions, he writes in these letters: “Look, your prison is a training ground, okay? And if these slaves and these gladiators are going to compete for these perishable crowns, how much *more* should your performance be when you know you’re competing for an eternal one?”

This pep talk, you could call it, has such depth that I think it’s worth mentioning in the context of Death Athletics. It is an ultimate statement of performance in the face of not just the impossible, but the surely terminal. I don’t have to just keep this religious. Thanks to Austin Jones for giving us the inspiration, but of course, the *other* primal death scene from Old Europe is the death of Socrates.

It’s the same thing here. Why is this such a momentous occasion in all of thought, in all

of philosophy? It's because essentially the old man, through his wisdom, uses his ability to appropriate this compulsory sentence, which is unjust, and everyone's weeping about; he uses it and cooperates with the authorities to such a degree that it's like he organized the passion play himself.

In the dialogue *Crito*, Socrates says, "I hear the voice of the gods. The laws are talking to me. I know what I must do. I have to still follow this path." It's the same thing here. It's this Death Athletic ethos.

He has used his skill to superordinate the voluntary over the compulsory. This is incredible stuff, incredible technique. And so, now we see the sophistication of the Yes Chad meme at a deeper level. What does the Yes Chad mean? Is it just negation? Is it just this kind of happy circumstance? No, I think there's a much deeper thing here. I think it's about the superordination of the voluntary over the compulsory or the accidental.

A primary technique, then, of Defense Distributed (politicians, performers anonymous): Insert whatever authority you want. The ATF, New Jersey, the State Department. I do not care. I do not care what arbitrary thing, what rule, what law, what guidance, or, in the ATF's case

(as we've learned) what *secret* guidance they will deploy. We say "Yes."

We say, "Of course, it's all going according to our plan." This may be the most demonstrable recently from us in the example of the 0% receiver. It was most important in that episode for Old Man Biden to say, "I've solved the ghost gun problem. I've got this new rule. You can't even make a gun from a kit at home anymore. Take *that*, you incels."

So what do we say? We say, "Of course. Exactly. The fulfillment of the Ghost Gunner Project. We've been working at this for years. I can't believe the fools did it. The age of 0% has begun!" This is the superordination of the voluntary over the compulsory. It is the use of ability to integrate the compulsory. Okay? Think about it. This is the core of the Death Athletic ethos.

Returning to JStark, we are thinking about taking the venture. Alright? What does it mean? It means we're pursuing this thing which we know is absurd. I'm not saying freedom is not worth pursuing, but I am saying you probably won't see the other shore. But you *will* suspend the tragedy in the beauty of the attempt.

The *salto mortale* is about defying death, directing the gaze. And I have seen in our example

alone the total suspension of belief, even on the part of this authority. They are stunned. Even a year ago, the State Department was stunned. They cannot believe what is happening. They feel like they are trapped in this prison with us. Do you understand?

It is this will, it is this agonal ethos, which is the difference-maker, and I think can be taught by the example of 3D printed guns. I think it's worth speaking about here today. I think it honors the death of JStark.

And so, in the interest of disclosure, because I'm always considered to be so secretive, here's my roadmap. Okay? Here's my roadmap. I hope to get any of this done in '22. I know I won't because I've been working on that top one for ten fucking years. All that top one means is recognizing that 3D files are protected by the First Amendment. Is that a meaningful thing to do, Cody? Didn't last year you tell us the pursuit of the political was super gay or something?

That's not the point. I'm teaching you the agonal ethos. I know it's strictly speaking absurd and impossible to get the Supreme Court or the federal government to recognize that the First Amendment protects 3D printed gun files. What I'm saying is making that attempt, making that improbable thing, *accidentally* conquering

that is such a startling, disturbing thing for the orders that be that it literally scrambles the coordinates of the possible worse than super AI from Google. It's worth doing for that reason alone. The pursuit of it literally suspends the tragedy which is otherwise happening.

Just in the shadow cone of this large contest we've had with the State Department and the Commerce Department, pursuing this First Amendment recognition of 3D files, we forestalled that authority's other pretenses. It's all been bound up in the shadow cone of this event, and our entire culture has grown up in the shadow of this stupid high wire performance of the 3D printed gun and First Amendment conversation. It was worth doing for that reason alone.

I've already mentioned the 0% thing. I think it's worth doing because there's a similar contest there about the question of "what is a gun?" What is even the literal definition of a gun? If I'm allowed the chance to monkey around with that, I don't think authority is prepared for the consequences. I think it's worth pursuing for that reason.

And then there's California. They're always doing such cool things in California. What a great laboratory for democracy, and especially

regulations of gun parts. And so, a new regime begins in California this summer for precursor parts and other things. And I'm told that they plan to ban our machine, the Ghost Gunner, in January. Amazing. I would love to be the first person to have the standing there to argue about the right to make guns and gun parts. What the hell can happen in that ten-year conference? But the point is I almost know that I can't accomplish any of these things. Who can even expect to participate in a 10-year federal battle? I've literally already died twice on the way.

So, I pursue these things in a Nietzschean, in a Jungian sense. I pursue these things knowing I will likely perish in the attempt. I think that's the example of JStark. I think that's the example of the Death Athletic. But I swear to God, if I get that First Amendment win, you know what I'm going to do? I'm not going to get on Twitter or email Zero Hedge or and bitch about how hard it is, and that nobody recognized my shit. I'm going to take a fucking bow, and say, "Well, of course. We always knew it was going to happen. It was according to our plan."

For our kind, this is nothing.

THE PLASTIC POWER

My speech is called The Plastic Power.³⁸ It's a summary of ten years of 3D gun printing and the completion of the last few talks I've tried to give about the things I've learned. Maybe you can apply these lessons, not just within 3D-printed guns, but to any hacking project. I think it fits within the dialectics of hacking, to use my friend Söderberg's term.³⁹

Anyway, we have three segments. We'll start with the uses of history, which is borrowed from Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*. I like Nietzsche, and I try to be a Nietzschean. The second part will be about poetic misreading, or what's called misprision in Harold Bloom. In the final part we'll talk about technologies; other powers like prolificity. In general, the theme that should unite this is the plastic power.

38 Originally delivered at the penultimate *Hackers Congress Paralelní Polis (HCPP)* in Prague on September 30, 2023.

39 Söderberg, Johan, and Maxigas. *Resistance to the Current: The Dialectics of Hacking*. The MIT Press, 2022.

Plastic. That's a word we're familiar with. It comes from Greek. The word itself might even be pre-Greek, and might even predate Indo-European language. It means to mold.

This is an Attic vase. It's to represent one, anyway. In classical Greek culture, these types of vases, if they started on the wheel were finished by hand. In the classical period they were made in two-part molds and the artisan finished them by hand. You mold it yourself in the end, and they take on these fantastic and mythic figures. The point is to mold and to have that power to mold, to take and to shape and to use what is past and foreign and to integrate it. This is what Nietzsche calls the plastic power in his *Untimely Meditations*.

Death Athletic is now a film and some of you will see it later.⁴⁰ But the *Death Athletic*, I think if I could re-describe it, is one of the greatest plastic powers. I'm not sure that that will come through in this documentary, but it's the plastic power applied to even the idea of death. How can I recruit my death or involve my death to the point where even my death is part of a display or performance, on the stage of metaphysics, or you can define the performance.

40 Solce, Jessica, director. *Death Athletic: A Dissident Architecture*. Encode Productions, 2023.

I gave a talk on this once. This is exemplified by the death of Socrates, who this is the height of the psychodrama of old Europe before Christ. He involves the specter of his death in a way where he controls the Passion play. He superordinates the voluntary over the compulsory. Yes, the court hands him down this sentence, but he recruits it in a way that he's directing the passion play himself. It's a beautiful death performance. And, of course, it restructures the thinking, like I said, of Old Europe before Christ. He is a death athlete.

Nietzsche says we have to use plastic powers, and we have to use history in specific ways to overcome the accumulation of history and of science, which itself is stultifying. It suffocates life. And ultimately, if there is a use of history at all in Nietzsche's essay, it's to support life, to support action, our projects, and to help us integrate what has come, what has passed, what is foreign, to take the brute facts of what is and to help us say what *shall be*. I hope I'm not being too grandiose right now.

USE OF HISTORY

There are three forms of historiography in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*.⁴¹ These are the three uses of history that all people can make, according to Nietzsche. They are:

The monumental form, which is my favorite,

The antiquarian form, and

The critical form.

Each of these forms is kind of like the Aristotelian forms of government. They exist independently. They have their own sovereignties. No one should control the others, or everything's out of balance. You wreck yourself if you just rely on one. You have to know when to apply each of the forms, when to use history to the advantage of life, and not *misuse* the others. Perhaps you're not the right person to use one of these forms of history. Not the right person *yet*.

The first of the great forms of historiography to Nietzsche is called the monumental form. It's my favorite. It's very romantic. It's Nietzsche's favorite. He thinks superior people with excellent projects should think this way. Why do

41 Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life." *Untimely Meditations*. Edited by Daniel Breazeale, Cambridge University Press, 2022.

we need history? We need examples. We need great models. We need reminders that greatness is possible, and that defying the odds is achievable. We need consolation in times, especially like in modernity, we need consolation that “what is” is not “what has to be.” We don’t have to settle.

These are just glancing, sketch remarks. But the important characterization of this form of history is that you can think of history as links in a great chain of being. Like these mountaintops. There are people, there are great men or great women, who have sent letters to each other from across the ages. They are senders and receivers.

We think of Machiavelli’s letter to Vettori: “I come into the court of the ancients. I am received with kindness. I spend time with them, and they answer my questions.”⁴² A beautiful statement of the European Renaissance. Now, is Machiavelli a figure of the European Renaissance? I don’t know, but he believed in the monumental form of history. This is something we find among the old Florentines. We study the classics to meet a model, but not just to meet them, because we need help trying to *exceed* them. We’re trying to do something beautiful.

42 Letter from Machiavelli to Francesco Vettori, 1513.

We're trying to do something artistic, or something that's never been done before.

You can think of Cellini in his autobiography when he makes the Perseus, or when he makes even these small things in the court of Francis or other people. He's most pleased when the pope or someone compliments him and says, "This is better than anything that the Romans ever made." It's a beautiful form of history.

It, of course, has a negative side. The negative side of the monumental form is you really overlook a lot. You're not interested in what's down below the peaks of these mountains, and then, of course, that requires a lot of glossing, a lot of distortion. Ultimately, it's an ahistorical point of view. You condense a lot of causes and effects. You ignore them, and you have this completely distorted sense of why things actually happen. You might convince yourself into something suicidal or fanatical if you only have the monumental form of history.

The second form is the antiquarian form. That form is perhaps more comfortable to some of us who have a technology background or an internet cultural background. We have a craze for collecting, for minutiae, or for trivia. We edit Wikipedia and we love it.

The antiquarian form makes sense so that we can preserve and identify. It supports a certain kind of piety, and certain kinds of norms. As humans we love to collect. We like to bound ourselves and define a horizon of community and belonging, togetherness. It's amazing and we should be very thankful for the antiquarians because they have preserved identities and customs and avoided destruction. There are a number of reasons to praise the antiquarian form, and, of course, it's a form that I'm familiar with in the gun space and we'll get to that.

But, of course, the form's downside is that you begin to lose perspective. Everything gets a close look, everything yields to a mania, or can engender a mania: that of collecting books, or museum-ification. Things begin to take on an unwarranted share of your study and unwarranted attention. It can ultimately become a cynical kind of thing, and you can adopt a super-historical point of view which bleeds events, items, people of their urgency, of their passion, or of why they did what they did. You see them all from a merely *antiseptic* point of view.

The final form of history in Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditation* is the critical form. I know, especially in internet circles, we may disagree about things like the French Revolution, the

necessity of Terror, the necessity of political violence. The critical form should be employed, according to Nietzsche, in these rare moments where we are actually oppressed, we are desperate to overcome, and we need desperately to judge and destroy and dispense with what has come before: an institution, a custom, a way of looking at things. The critical mode is good for destroying.

But, of course, if something's very good for destroying, life cannot exist in that environment. It's not good to terminate something new. It's only good to destroy. And as a friend of mine has said, when you're destroying things, it almost doesn't matter *how* you do it. When you're building important things, those initial environmental conditions very much matter. So the critical form is quite a dangerous thing.

I've applied each of these at times, like we all have in our work. We should apply the different modes of history, the different uses of history in different ways. Like I printed a gun one time. I thought that what I was doing – and maybe it doesn't matter what I thought, maybe it doesn't matter what we think when we use history, we're still mediated by it. We're still conscious of our historical faculty and our reason – was attacking the symbolic fictions of the United States. I know that the United States doesn't

actually want me to print a gun, and worse, I know that the United States doesn't want me to put that gun on the internet, because the United States is a world-striding hegemon. It believes it *controls* the internet.

So the 3D gun was at least this two-form criticism of the mythical foundations of the United States, which at least has to pay lip service to this folk idea of the Second Amendment, the citizen's right to keep and bear arms. We know that it's actually institutionally hostile to that. It's a great military industrial power. It has no time for an active investment in the civic republican idea of an armed people, a militia, or something like that. Of course, this is a particularly American idea, but this is where you are. And Nietzsche says that when you use history, you should be in a place of trying to build the future and trying to understand the present.

So that's what I thought I was doing with the 3D gun. Okay, I put the gun on the Internet, and then I realized, "Wow, I'm in a lot of trouble." I've applied the critical form. I've destroyed the Internet, to some degree, and I've destroyed my life. Now what am I doing?

Well, the next phase of my project for those years after *Liberator* was about building a company, an institution, recruiting a bunch

of people and building equipment, machinery, and taking over an existing market in the United States – called the kit gun market or the 80% market. This slide represents an 80% receiver. These are important in the United States, but I realized what I was doing then was no longer active criticism. You could say it had an artistic dimension or, again, these are just my descriptions of it, so take them at face value. I realized I needed consolation, I needed examples, I needed mentors. I didn't have those.

I had to use history to tell myself, "Okay, here's a rough analogy for how you build a company under adverse circumstances. Maybe here's a plan for how I can go into the US courts and just kind of hold the door, or put my foot in or..." I was engaged with our institutions in a way to where I couldn't just be a critic anymore. I had to build, and I needed history and a monumental form of history, I think, to find examples and to use them.

I was comforted – I've mentioned Machiavelli earlier in the speech – I was comforted by Machiavelli. He would say, "Good arms make good laws." And I thought, "Well, what do plastic arms make?" I was able to engage with history in a way that I hadn't before, and for years, because I *needed* to.

As I move on to the final form, I think where I've been an antiquarian – and I don't know that it's often – has been in the building of this site DEFCAD, which I have tried to launch three or four different times. To me that site has been an active effort to collect everything; everything that was made, that is made. I recognize the half-life of these gun developers on the internet is normally only a couple of years. They come, they go, they disappear. There's link rot. You can't find where they deposited this stuff. It's not collected. And then occasionally it is actively purged from the platforms that you find it on. You can think of platforms like Thingiverse.

These days you can think of Odysee. The link rot is still significant at places like Odysee, and even when [the files] don't disappear, [they are] difficult to find. This effort of mine is not (necessarily) from a great love of the creators of 3D-printed guns, but it is from this feeling I have: this kind of parental feeling, or this feeling of, "I know that you're young, I know that you're active and your culture should be active and looking forward. I will do the gray-haired work of assigning metadata to what you have built. I will collect it. I will make it to where other people can find it."

I never thought I'd be in a position like that. Perhaps it's a position that only a mature person

can be in. Not saying that I'm a mature person, but I am saying this felt like and still feels like antiquarian work. It's work that we do every day. We employ lots of people. We've even worked with Odyssey to define universal record identifiers, applications of library science, and all these things I never thought I'd be doing. I thought I was a badass world-beating anarchist. It turns out most of what you do in 3D guns on my end is library science. That's antiquarianism for you.

Anyway, I think I've applied a lot of these, and all of us at different times in our lives, we apply these forms of history. Back to our theme, the plastic power, we have to still recognize, or at least I think we should recognize, that when we're moving and we're acting, and though we think we're acting in a historical way and being mediated by a certain particular form of history, it is nevertheless true that our historical conscience – or really all conscience – shrinks down to a point, and we must still assume the abyssal act.

We have to act, as Goethe says, “without conscience.” This is in Nietzsche's essay as well. But what I'm struck by in the movie that you may see later is that when I look back at this person, who I don't often like to look back at, this Cody Wilson from ten years ago, seven years ago,

five years ago – when I see him in that thing, I see someone who’s so in love with what he is doing. Yes, it came from a particular orientation, a political point of view, but he’s only giving the rights for *that thing* to exist. And it’s almost as if nothing else has the right to exist. There is only this project.

That’s almost what’s required when we try to usher something new into being, and it is un-historical. Nietzsche’s thesis is that ultimately action and production don’t really come from these studied schools or scholarship. They can’t be conferred upon you by a book. You have to act unhistorically, without conscience and without respect for existence. But, we need balance in our lives. We have to balance our un-historical capacity with our use of history. And this is why Nietzsche prescribes the plastic powers.

So, when I was taken down the first time, what was left was this vacuum, but also this invitation. I had refined the old Texan Gonzales motto, “Come and Take It,” which has adopted itself historically from *Molon Labe*. This idea at Thermopylae, this provocation to authority. “Okay, you want our arms? Please, come and take them.” That flatters the Texan and American conscience to some degree. It fits with American gun politics, but I thought it’s just as

good in the digital space, and there are these extra dimensions when it's digital.

You see there's a file folder there now, instead of a cannon.⁴³ I've seen some of you have the Gonzales cannon on your shirts. Very cool. With that file folder, though, there's this addition of the *problematic* of digitality. Well of course you can come and take it, right? It's infinite, it can be replicated. I always thought that was beautiful. I named my book *Come and Take It* because of that.⁴⁴

But I think there's a third order at least to *Come and Take It*, which is a particular provocation to the community at large. It is now a mantle for *you* to come and take. Your precursors have perhaps been destroyed. Can you come and take and do what is being done here? This is an invitation to follow in my footsteps and those of people before me. In my time I called on Julian Assange and tried to give a certain... I tried to pronounce what our culture is. It's open source. It gives the files to the internet. Why does it do that? I gave a certain political

43 *Come and Take It* 2.0, now 3D2A's most famous symbol.



44 Wilson, Cody. *Come and Take It: The Gun Printer's Guide to Thinking Free*. Gallery Books, 2015.

program and a persona, you could say. I asked other people to come and do that, but I also asked people to misread what I was doing and to apply plastic powers.

MISREADING

And so we're at section two already. Misprision is the idea here, and it's basically a poetic form of misreading. I've taken it from Harold Bloom, a literary theorist.⁴⁵ My background is in literature, but you can think of it to mean strong misreading, poetic misreading.

According to Bloom, misprision is the central poetic act. According to his book, *Anxiety of Influence*, the artist encounters true difficulty when he sees the master and when he experiences the poetry of the master. He thinks, "God, I need some way to clear imaginative space, and I must overcome this master." This poetic theory is disputed, but I think it's beautiful, and I think it explains our historical and ahistorical drives to not be the *last born*. None of us wants to be the last born, or late to the party. We would all like to be first-born in our way.

45 Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

We may arrive at a culture, an ongoing scene, a hacking project, and realize, “Well, there are certain ways in which I can refound this,” or “there are certain ways in which this is wrong. And, in fact, what I’m doing is the true way to do it.” And this has happened in my space as well, I think, through creative acts of poetic misreading.

I can use just a little bit of McLuhan here. When we march into the future, McLuhan says, we are always marching backwards.⁴⁶ McLuhan’s beautiful point here is that the advent of television, at least in America, is what really first allowed people to live on the western frontier, what he called “Bonanza Land.” Every night, when you got home from your total industrial alienation, you could check out what was happening in Bonanza Land. The big screens allowed us to imagine the frontier in a new way. And I think that’s happening with the internet. I think that’s what’s happening with 3D printing.

In my particular culture of 3D-printing guns in America, we see communities of people who now, through this technology, have found a way to engage with, let’s say, the generation of gun-making a hundred years ago: figures like

⁴⁶ McLuhan, Marshall. *The Medium Is the Massage*. Gingko Press, 2005.

Browning, stories of the formation of Winchester and Colt. 3D-printing guns was my way of finding the biography of Sam Colt, for example.

We're always marching backwards. These technologies allow us a diversion into an imagined past. And our misreading, this active misreading is not necessarily anything new, mediated by the 20th century. My favorite part of the Second Amendment, and this feels... this feels like I'm going to do Harrington dirty, but I have to do it. My favorite part of the Second Amendment is that it comes from a huge historical misreading of Harrington. Now, this is a long story, so I'll try to get to the end of it.

The Anglo origins of the Second Amendment come from the history of common law, let's say before the King-in-Parliament. This idea that the common law and the rights of Englishmen are immemorial. They're very deeply located beyond time and memory. Perhaps they go as far back as the Saxon chieftains. And this was a real dispute. In the late 1600s, people began to actively investigate and historically verify, "Hey, just how old is Parliament? Just how old are the laws of England?"

That great exponent of military populism that became the core of the Second Amendment, James Harrington, his innovation was to say,

“Actually the ancient constitution of England was what was in the way. And the *immemoriality*, the sanctity of our laws, these were actually always infirm things. And *that’s* why our government failed, and *that’s* why there was a civil war. And so if we’re to refound as a Republic, the good old cause, we have to be a people under arms, and we can never return to the institutional forms that we had.”⁴⁷

Only 25 years later, Neville in his *Plato Redivivus* says: actually, the militia was always with us. We can read about it in Tacitus. The English militia is one of those features of the ancient constitution of England.⁴⁸ This is a deep historical and poetic misreading of Harrington, and it extends to the American Constitution and the way that we talk about the Second Amendment today: “It’s always been with us, the militia.”

No, it was an innovation.

This is a significant misreading, and it is an abuse of history, and yet the ideology is essen-

47 Harrington, James. *Harrington: “The Commonwealth of Oceana” and “A System of Politics.”* Edited by J. G. A. Pocock, Cambridge University Press, 1992..

48 Caroline Robbins makes the case that Neville was only reluctantly persuaded of England’s ancient foundations.

tial.⁴⁹ I love it. I think it's great, and we have to recognize both of these things. We take a super-historical point of view.

I think in the culture of 3D-printed guns that the antiquarian form dominates. And that's because there's a certain type of person who builds things. There's a certain type of person who is software-first, a coder. I'm trying to be gentle. I'm here at the Hackers Congress, I'm outnumbered. But my point is that the antiquarian form is comfortable and already existing on the Internet.

That form, I'll talk about how things are grafted onto that form, but that form asks a bunch of questions from a position that it doesn't recognize as a *luxury position*. It asks, "Well, why did Cody Wilson say that 3D-printed guns need to be open source? That doesn't make sense. Can't we use the Creative Commons Non-Commercial 4.0, or can't we use X license?" Or, "Why did Cody Wilson put Liberator out? That's a shitty gun. Why would he do that? Why wouldn't he *test* it? Why wouldn't he build an SMG that could *really* help people all over the world instantaneously?"

49 For more on this, I recommend Pocock, J. G. A. *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

These are questions from a point of view of antiquarian interest, and they're kind of bled of the understanding of just how desperate, threadbare; just how hot your blood has to be that you would actually – if I had the plans for an SMG, I would have published an SMG. So the idea is the antiquarian form doesn't quite understand why things got here, but once it has a hold on them, it's comfortable kind of turning them over, and it misreads them.

I put this next slide in here to suggest what I think is happening in a more monumental form of history. *We're just looking for the shore*. When we're building something new, it is a storm. We know we have *one* chance. We know that there are not funds, there is not time, and our lives are short. We are just looking for the shore. If we could just make landfall, we will find the fair harbors, I promise you. We will scout, and we will find a better way to do this, but please, just help me find the shore.

The Second Amendment culture online has at least recognized the weakness of personality which can come from an antiquarian form. And Nietzsche says these different forms of history, when misapplied, breed weakness of personality. And so I will use a weak personality that Second Amendment figures have identified.

This is the Fudd. I should ask if any of you know him, but he's more of an American figure.

The Fudd is a casual, and his point of view is pretty Boomer-esque. He says things like, "Fine. It's great to have shooting and sporting rifles. I like the old NRA purposes and propaganda for firearms, but cool it with all that revolutionary rhetoric. That's really not the idea. And if I hear too many bullets fired in too much succession at the range, I'm probably going to call the range officer or the ATF." These are the ideas of the Fudd.

Let me show you how he's used in memes. When he's used in memes, here's a soldier, a young man says, "Hey, look, Uncle Jun. Look Grandpa, here's my new SIG rifle." And our Fudd, our Uncle Jun, he says, "Yeah, that's nice, but in my day we had the M4, and we really don't need anything more than the M4." When we move on, we see Uncle Jun is there even in the American Revolution. "Grandpa, the British are coming. I've got this Brown Bess, we're really going to do it." Grandpa says, "No, thanks. I'll stick with my matchlock. It's okay. It was good enough for Dad. It's good enough for me." When we see Grandpa again in the far future, we say, "Hey, Grandpa, Spartan lasers!" He's says, "Ah, I'll stay out."

So we begin to understand something because of the gun meme culture from the weakness of this personality. Yet this is a dangerous thing to understand. This is a piece of wisdom, and Nietzsche says we should acquire this wisdom. But it's also a poison, because this super-historical point of view kind of tells us there's no real need, there's no real *urgency* to adopt a strong position. You can recognize the absurdity of both sides. There will always be youth, always advocating for what is new. There will always be wisdom and Uncle Jun saying, "Nah, that's a gimmick."

That can lead you to not act.

PROFILICITY

Now, this is the state of gun printing on the Internet right now. You would be forgiven for thinking that the real purpose of 3D gun printing online is as a form of profile creation, identity creation. And by the way, for this slide I worked really hard to find the *least* homosexual gun project on the Internet right now.

So it turns out that printing guns is a technology of identity, and we shouldn't be too surprised at that. We're printing ourselves, we're using history. We're integrating our project as

a way of enunciating what's interesting and beautiful about us. We always involve ourselves in what we do, and accusations like, "your project is invalid because it's too much about you," while perhaps a legitimate criticism about authenticity or sincerity, are insufficient on the internet; there's no way to *not* involve yourself in your projects.

I bring up the word proficity in this section because it's something we all actually innately now understand. We all act in *profylic* ways.⁵⁰ We build profiles, we build accounts. We understand that profiles are contextual. There are different profiles for different purposes, and we understand second-order observation, but let's explain what that is.

This is Niklas Luhmann. He's a great social systems theorist. His book, *The Reality of Mass Media*, check it out.⁵¹ Anyway, when he applies media theory, and he does it before social media, right? He dies in the late '90s, but he gives us this term for second-order observation. He says there was the world of first-order observation and facts, but now there's the world of the *pre-*

50 Moeller, Hans-Georg, and Paul J. D'Ambrosio. *You and Your Profile: Identity after Authenticity*. Columbia University Press, 2021.

51 Luhmann, Niklas. *The Reality of the Mass Media*. Translated by Kathleen Cross, Stanford University Press, 2000.

sentation of facts, and what we have is a new, complex form of communication and observation. It's complex and probably better and more intelligent.

What I'm about to do here is critical only in a basic sense. I'm not saying it's bad. We all understand how we can't go back to that world of, "Well, here's a picture." We live in the world of, "Why am I seeing this picture? Who put it out, and why did they stage it that way, and not another way?" This is an interesting and intelligent way of engaging things, and we understand that we now make up our minds about observations by how they're observed by *other people*. Proficiency is a technology just like 3D printing. It's a technology of creating identity under conditions of second-order observation. I'll tell you why this is important to me very soon.

Here's a 3D printer, and here's a little dwarf, and like Amir said, my constant angst when I started this project was the feeling that the discourse was just being built by the powers-that-be, Amazon and everyone. "3D Printing: What a fun new diversion for you. What a fun consumer project for you to announce your quaint particular inwardness. Gee, what a nice toy – to *make* toys. Can it make anything else? Well, we're not going to talk about that."

When I wrote my book, this is from my book, by the way. These words are almost 10 years old. I wrote this in 2014. I'm not saying it's particularly good poetry or anything, but I'm saying it expressed something of my frustration of youth like, damn. The journos kept asking, "Why don't you print anything else? Print a prosthetic." I was like, "Fuck, you guys. The printer *is* the fucking prosthetic." Under conditions of second order observation, it's just an extension of this endless navel-gazing.

Here's a review of my book by a prominent creator on the Internet, and this is from 2018, so we have to cut him some slack. "The book blew me away."⁵² Well, great. His account there is verified on Amazon. "Hearing a rumor about 3D guns, I checked this book out." Now, what does he tell you in the review? He tells you actually nothing contained in the book at all, and that there's a personal use exemption for guns, which doesn't mean anything. That doesn't mean anything in US law. I guess he's trying to say, "There's a story here. It got me into a hobby. It made me realize there's a legal way to make guns."

52 Amazon verified review by Alex Holladay, better known as CtrlPew, August 24, 2018: "D Thanks Cody, for getting me started on this mad journey." You're welcome.

Okay, that's something. And it's difficult for me to be fair here. I don't know that I should be, but the point of my book, if anything – and these are just words from the author here – is I wasn't trying to teach you, "Hey, it's fun and cool to have a hobby building legal guns." I was trying to say something about the structure of the law itself. It attempts to encapsulate an activity that can't be encapsulated, and that (ultimately) you can *play* with the law, like the toys that you want to print.

This was missed by the reviewer, but we recognize that even when we review things, we do so under second-order observation. Just like me writing the book, right? I'm not excused from this.

This is captured better again, in a great gun meme. If the origins of 3D guns were in privacy, escaping, knowing that I have something that the government can't know about, under conditions of second-order observation and proficity, I have to keep talking about it. In fact, I *can't stop* talking about it. And even when I'm a prolific creator, I say, "Hey, folks, all you private gun printers out there, use my Amazon link for this great discount code on Chinese 3D-printable plastic."

The guy in this slide is actually in the movie that you'll see later, and he says, well, you can read what he says. It's very important that we are observed being observed. And this guy spends a lot of time crafting a public persona of being very private, right? But then you recognize the tension under prolificity. Why do I have to keep telling you that I'm private? Why do I have to produce all this information and metadata about just how private I am, and that I need you to know?

It may feel like I'm being mean or something. But this is just where we are. To bring McLuhan in again, it's like we think the content of our projects and our messages in these new media is the posts we make, the words we say. And McLuhan would remind us that the content is actually the character of that media, the *type of person* being created.

So you'll see this guy later. See if you can find the guy in the mask later in the movie, and make a judgment about that character.

This is JStark. Anyone in the audience, you must have all heard of JStark by now? Some of you? He is a great figure in the movement and now represents a certain martyrdom, and that's very useful, right? There's a use of history in

presenting him that way. A monumental form, I would say.

Yet his death under conditions of prolificity presents lots of problems, and I would now like to assess some of the less humorous plastic powers, or lack thereof, of the current 3D gun community in the wake of his death. This slide shows Freeman1337, one of the prominent figures online, and, of course, his persona is equally as dedicated as that other guy's to this public idea of privacy. You've got to know that this guy thinks he's very private, okay? No one's going to find out who he is. Here he is in this tweet making fun of another guy. This is one of dogs that our community regularly beats, and he walks back, like a beaten dog, to be beaten again.

Freeman is making fun of this guy for doxxing himself. And here's the tweet with the document, so he's actually helping that guy now be doxxed. 50,000 people saw it. The important thing here is that you know that our creator, Mr. Freeman, is very intelligent and doesn't doxx himself, won't be doxxed.

Somehow we know after JStark that it's very important to *not be identified*, and to print in an anonymous fashion. Okay, message received. And I've also received a message about who

this Freeman person is. But here is a court order from a federal court in New York just a few days ago, September 27th. Mr. Freeman was in a lawsuit with us against Everytown for Gun Safety.⁵³ He was a co-defendant. I had organized the common defense agreement of that lawsuit with the Firearms Policy Coalition. We settled every defendant out of that case, except for Freeman.

If you can see there, Freeman is being ordered by the court to provide his name and address to the court by October 4th. I guess that's what, next week? It's next week. Now, I don't think Freeman will deliver his name and address to the court. The problem is that his motion to dismiss was denied. He is now stuck in this lawsuit with a judge who has asserted jurisdiction, and he has flaunted the fact online that he *will not* provide that information to the judge. You see here in a March 23rd Reddit thread, Freeman says, "Hey, I settled the lawsuit. Everything's settled. Ask me anything." Critical mistake. He's still in the lawsuit.

You know how you've had that dream where you're in high school or college, you're about to graduate, and you realize, "Oh, shit. I didn't go to that one class for the whole year." You know the dream I'm talking about? That guy's living

⁵³ *Everytown for Gun Safety v. DEFCAD, Inc. et. al.*, No. 1:21-cv-08704-PGG-RWL (S.D. NY).

this dream. He will never be out of this lawsuit, and the plaintiffs will always pursue his identity. You can see one of these ironies, where we promote an idea that we will be private, and now a federal judge is very interested in who we are.

Nietzsche calls this inability to stop fucking talking *impotentia*, and he borrows it from the Romans. The Romans thought when you employ the critical faculty, when you cannot stop writing criticism down, when you cannot turn it off, you are enfeebled, and you are made weak. My community has been made impotent by this inability to stop crafting profiles from our proposed, supposed values.

This is a harder point to make, but there was a group built after my company, Defense Distributed. They called themselves Deterrence Dispensed, and they accepted the mantle, the charge that I had given them. They announced in '21, "Please bear with us. We're going to transition to a new website called the Gatalog." Here's them promoting my site DEFCAD, by the way. Despite all the abuse they've given me, they still haven't taken that down.

The idea I'm trying to convey here is that this transition lasted three years, and they weren't

able to make it.⁵⁴ For some reason, they couldn't move past this requirement to change or shift identity. And I would say this is one of the more notable examples of *impotentia* in the 3D2A space, and I think I have an explanation as to why.

We're back to JStark. When even the death of our hero, the person who got us into the movement, has just become *bricolage*; something that we can just apply in this constant need to update our profiles, we are blind to the fact that we are stuck. We have overused a certain form of history; that antiquarian form has dominated, and we get really negative consequences.

There are taboos now in the 3D gun space. Taboos which are antithetical to the original propositions, or let's say values, of 3D-printed guns. And these taboos come from, I believe, this sequence of events. This sequence of events is the invention itself of "The Gatalog." We know a few things now about JStark's death. He was raided by German authorities in June of '21.⁵⁵ This is shortly after he released the FGC-9 Mk II. It was released in mid-April of '21. Deter-

54 The State of California suspended The Gatalog before it could achieve an organizational basis in 2026.

55 Basra, Rajan. ICSR. King's College London, 2023, *Behind the Mask: Uncovering the Extremist Messages of a 3D-Printed Gun Designer*.

rence Dispensed became upset that they didn't make any money on the release of that gun. It was conveyed to me they made a mere \$25. They didn't like that.

So DD2 asked for \$2,500 to license the FGC-9 Mk II open source at DEFCAD. And if you go check out the origins of the FGC-9 Mk II, you'll see it was originally released at DEFCAD. And I will tell you, it was for \$2,500. There was quite a bit of controversy about using money to license a file open source, but it happened.

Shortly after it happened, though, JStark died. In the meantime, this foundation was formed in Florida to be the way they were going to license their files or something. They had imagined that they'd build an institution that would, presumably, use Firearms Policy Coalition money to take their grand designs, issue them and continue to make money on putting them out open source.

It all kind of makes sense, and I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it. They don't have to be accountable for experimenting and doing something new. But this sequence created a taboo because their plans to transition, as you saw in the earlier slide, were interrupted with the death of their founder. You could say they

may have felt responsible for the death of their founder.

As we learned, it's not often commented upon now, but it was a financial service who gave information on JStark to German authorities. A British financial services provider, I believe, is what they called it. Some people think it was Coinbase. But my point is it was how they were moving money that identified JStark. It was because they weren't actually being careful *at all*. They were too caught up in the creation of their profiles – not just of JStark – and they forgot the realities. They forgot that authority was actively interested in who they were and would destroy them.

There's almost a Greek tragic element here. For reasons of profligacy and youth, they killed their founder and their trauma created a permanent aversion for the commercial side of open-source firearms. Speaking to journalists is now also deeply taboo in the space.

If there's going to be a use of history in my space, the 3D gun space, it has to come from a realization of a need for unity. That there are plastic powers allowing us to take what is adverse to us, the fact that what we're doing will never *be allowed to win* – and it's true that one story about what we're doing will always be a

long defeat – we have to take that, and we have to integrate it. We must have the reserves, the horizon and the strong plastic powers within ourselves to use it nevertheless, and to make it *our blood*. Those are words from Nietzsche.

This is also the idea in the Death Athletic. I would use my own death to complete my project if I could. I would recruit it, I would involve it. I would have it be the capstone in its deployment. This may be the strongest use of a plastic power, but there are others: I've given speeches in the past. One involved "building an igloo." I borrowed that from Sir William Parry. The idea was from Parry's observation that the Eskimos had found all these powers to protect themselves against the cold, and that they did it all with ice. You can use the rules of the powers that be, and you don't have to submit to them. You can use the rules of the powers that be and even take shelter in them. There are many plastic powers that mean you don't just have to become a fanatical, suicidal maniac.

My point is we must pursue this unity because there's only peril with an imbalance. In only thinking unhistorically, you'll kill yourself and you'll kill others. But if you only think historically, you won't find the power to do anything. You have to find a way to *do both*. Your inwardness and your outwardness, they are in

tension. But you can make them match. You can find the plastic power to take that binary and mold it.

GUNCAD: HISTORY AND VALUE

Mr. Cody Wilson, welcome to our therapy session.⁵⁶

It's my pleasure to be here, Garret. I think all those victims, the aggrieved, those suffering trauma – they deserve answers. They deserve warm counsel and comfort. I'm happy that we could do this. It took some convincing. You had to convince me, didn't you?

I knew that it was the right thing to do. Trauma is a cycle, and I think we can stop the cycle here.

Hurt people hurt people, man. I know people want answers. The people demand it, and we're nothing if not admirers of folk theories of democracy around these parts. Let the people have what they want.

⁵⁶ Original interview recorded with Garret Walliman in February 2024.

We're nothing but communicative, right? That's what people think when they think of Defense Distributed.

Yes. Access, communication, clarity. I guess you'd like to model this on how we have conversations on the phone. In those conversations, I feel like you're often a really good advocate for the community, and it's almost like what they say: "You know the right thing, Garret. Help him do the right thing." But there's so much history, there's so much context, and so much to say. It's boring and exhausting for me to even contemplate it. How could I ever say it all? Who would ever sit around to listen to it?

My own theory of history is that the point of it is to make things *harder* to understand, not easier. So I almost feel like being an antagonist with you tonight, but tell me what we're going to do.

I appreciate you fluffing me up, and I'm sure that that's going to be taken as truth by those who are hearing this, that this is my role.

You walked right into that one, man. I don't know what to tell you.

What are we doing tonight? I looked up information about how therapy is conducted, and it looks like

when a trauma has happened, there are Three Steps to healing from that trauma. The First is finding safety and stabilization. So that is to say, what is the actual truth? Your mind might be telling you one thing, but what is the actual truth of the matter? What is the frame in which you are actually operating? The Second Step of healing from trauma is remembrance and mourning. So, looking back onto your own history perhaps with the person or the group who traumatized you, and what actually happened there. And Step Three is reconnection and integration. How do we proceed from the trauma? How do we learn to live with the trauma? Maybe how can we even grow from the trauma? And I don't know if we'll be able to stick to this basic frame, but that's the rough order that I'd like to proceed in.

That feels warm and empowering. It feels like you're lifting up silenced voices, Garret, and giving hope.

Those really are our interlocutors here: the silenced voices.

I feel that. A lot of people woke up last week, and the week before, and realized they were working in a free software culture. Oops. That had to hurt. So you know what? We're here. I'm here. Don't let it be said that I wasn't responsive.

SAFETY AND STABILIZATION

I don't think that will ever be said about you. Okay, you give me a good segue into Step One: safety and stabilization. Let's figure out the actual reality in which we're operating. What is the actual history of DEFCAD? What is the actual history of FOSS and 3D2A? I don't intend that we go too deep into this because, number one, it's too easy to get bogged down. It's a long history that we have, both FOSS and Defense Distributed, and much longer than most of the people in this community have been around for. So let's hit some of the major highlights, starting with the fact that DEFCAD is founded in 2012 so that we can host the files that we're creating: the AR-15 lower, the AR magazine, and soon The Liberator.

You make the intentional decision when setting up DEFCAD to found it as a FOSS website and to put the files you're releasing on DEFCAD out under FOSS licenses. Is that correct, and can you tell us about that?

That's right. We thought at the time – this is August, 2012 – we don't even necessarily have anything to publish yet. We're just getting after it. We think we're going to publish on Thingiverse. After our first successful test in 2012, the Sandy Hook shooting happens in December. The first casualty was: no more gun files on

Thingiverse. So we were like, “what’s our theory, then, of a platform and can we build one?”

We called back to the original meeting that we had with the Institute for Justice and other attorneys when we formed Defense Distributed in July of 2012. We asked then, “Hey, what’s going to happen here? We’re going to make a gun or some gun parts and put it online. What’s the most likely way that the feds are going to try to stop us?”

Remember Obama is president. I remember Clark Neily was on that call, and he highlighted the ITAR.⁵⁷ And, as we would end up learning not a year later, it was the ITAR that we would have to fight. So we had to settle a way to publish files, both to signal – like we wanted to people who were advocates of WikiLeaks and advocates of free software – that what we were doing was open source and free, and also to publish in a way that the ITAR would *deem* as published, where we could at least have an argument when we got in trouble and went to court that we thought we were complying with the ITAR; because we thought that was the most likely thing they’d come after us for.

57 For more on Clark Neily, I recommend Brian Doherty’s *Gun Control on Trial: Inside the Supreme Court Battle over the Second Amendment*. Cato Institute, 2009.

So, we knew we'd need to settle on some kind of open source license. We deferred what license that would be, but we did decide it *wouldn't* be Creative Commons.⁵⁸ We knew we were going to pick some type of OSI or free software license.

Sure. There are certainly varying degrees of FOSS, of open source. Some licenses are more and some are less, but our intent was definitely to pick the most open one that we could find.

Liberator ended up being, when we did Liberator, and we had different licenses for the stuff before that – you mentioned the AR-15 receiver, for example – it was a modified BSD three clause.⁵⁹ We had Tor Ekeland look at that, we had Michael Weinberg at Public Knowledge, and we notified EFF of what we were doing beforehand, because we knew something was going to happen and we were going to get sued. There was just too much attention on what we were doing. So it both needed to signal the praxis of, “you release your stuff,” and you let people do whatever they want with it. But it also had to still meet the feds' kind of cynical media

58 Richard Stallman: “I therefore find myself constrained to reject Creative Commons entirely.”

59 Original Liberator license: <https://github.com/danry25/dd-liberator>

theory as well; there needs to be an argument that this is “published.”

And we learned later, we had inklings of it then from The R Street Institute and others, that they may use the eminent domain power and, just on the theory of copyright, take the files and say, “well, we own this now.”⁶⁰ So even in the publication we wanted to say: the rights are disclaimed here. This is an open-source activity regardless of what happens to the immediate file.

Right. So there are almost three major senses that we're pursuing when we're publishing under FOSS. One of which is, as you mentioned, there's simply an instrumental case for doing this. We argue that these files are FOSS, they're in the public domain, meaning that ITAR does not apply. Second is, as you mentioned, that if these are published open source, that takes away certain other weapons that the feds are able to utilize to try to censor these files. And there is a third sense, of which ESR goes into deeply in his work: This is that FOSS is simply the best way to organize a community of developers who are collaboratively working on software, or in this case on gun files. This is the theoretical way that produces the most innovation. And I don't think we were

60 Duan, Charles. “Copyright Law Could Stop 3-D Printed Guns. Should It?” *R Street*. Aug. 31, 2018.

thinking about that one quite as much when we set up DEFCAD because there really was no community at the time. It was more the first two, but it's that third item that we have since actually seen bear the most fruit.

People were using GPL licenses on Thingiverse at the time, and it was known, even when this was a small group of people, maybe even less than 12 people doing this online – we would call it free software activity. We were saying that. It was intentional in that way, and I took the WikiLeaks approach. We became friends with the Swedish Pirate Party, we used the Kopimi logo on one of the old DEFCADs.⁶¹ We were friends with the Pirate Bay guys. We were doing everything we could to say, “Hey, everybody, copy this.” This is one way of getting outside of any strictures or bad faith attempts to say, “actually the files are property and we’re doing it for safety.”

There was also a knowledge that it might be dangerous to do this commercially, so we wanted to do it for free for that reason too. We didn’t want there to be an argument that we were selling the files, and I’m sure you want to

61 For more on the Swedish Piracy Movement and the Missionary Church of Kopimism, see “The Information Will Get Out: A New Religion for File-Sharers.” *The Atlantic*. April 10, 2011.

get into that in this talk as well. A ton of this stuff was being talked about then, and, like now, there just wasn't a settled license standard. But we wanted to be sure that we were signaling to all sides of the community that this was for them too.

You make a very good point, that it's not like we were literally the only people doing this at the time. But in that earliest of communities, containing people HaveBlue and possibly Deuce, some of these guys were sharing their stuff, others were just sort of posting pictures of it, and there wasn't really this universal sense that if you make a gun file, you should share it. And if you do share it, you should make sure that other people can modify it, can remix it. That sense just didn't exist in the way that it does now, and I think that we must credit our introduction of FOSS norms into this community to build that sense.

That's true, but it may be overstating it. HaveBlue put his stuff up on Thingiverse and there was an early testing culture too.⁶² HaveBlue showed the finite element analysis he did on his .22 receiver, and we tried to do the same thing. When we actually released the AR-15 receiver, we called that our "version five," and

62 HaveBlue. "Gunsmithing with a 3D printer – Part 1." Haveblue.org. June 28, 2012.

on our blog at the time we showed, “these are the steps we took. This is how things broke. We think before we release it, it should go through another round of testing. Maybe it should do a hundred rounds before we release it.”

Even that is not necessarily open source, and we weren't (yet) thinking “Open Source” as the ultimate value to control all other values, but you could see there was early testing culture, there was early publication and discussion. And then, actually, the Thingiverse ban helped because everyone just met up at DEFCAD, on the IRC or in the forums, and then shared what they were doing. This is probably the first time that “the community” gets together and starts talking about, “this is how I'm doing it,” and sharing notes.

Right. And this is 2012. Liberator comes in 2013, and I'll briefly detour through our legal history in a second, but maybe it's more interesting to note that after we have to take down the Liberator due to threats from the government, the community sort of splits off from us at that point and becomes FOSS-CAD. Perhaps you can talk more about that.

I like the way you set that up, because it contains the assumption that we had to stop and had to sue the government. That was not obvious at the

time, and that actually is one of the bigger reasons that FOSSCAD emerges and splits off from DEFCAD. Everybody called themselves DEF-CAD back then, even though I would say, and said then, DEFCAD was Defense Distributed's operation. So what was the accusation and the attack from that time? The accusation was, "Hey, you guys shouldn't stop. You guys are abandoning your open-source ethos by taking an operational pause and thinking about how to fight the feds. You should ignore them. If you were real heroes, you'd just keep on going and we'd force this constitutional crisis right here, right now." People in the US were saying that, and people worldwide were saying that.

I wasn't saying, "You can't keep doing this work at DEFCAD", but that was the big conflict and there were other conflicts about commercialization, etc. But FOSSCAD takes its name as a kind of attack on the values of DEFCAD, *from* the open-source direction – saying "DEFCAD is not open source enough, and DEFCAD is not actually devoted to free software. They want to play politics and fight Big Government. So we are 'FOSSCAD,' and we are going to carry the torch and communicate the actual values of free and open source [FOSS]." That is the origin of that community; they were not just a bunch of shitheads on Reddit.

A rather strange state of affairs. I'm going to ask you to justify later on why it is necessary to fight the government. Maybe FOSSCAD was right, but let's take a short tour now through the legal history, because of course we do get – is threatened the right word? – by the State Department over publishing the Liberator under ITAR. Give us a brief overview of that.

I know people didn't tune in here to listen to ancient history, but when I see that transcript of the *FrojeCast* with PLA.boi, and we've got to hit on that as much as we can, because it's like the most innocent and pure distillation of current community thinking. It's just so ripe for analysis. He says, with these other dudes on this cast, "That ITAR stuff, I mean that's for nuke codes and that's for heavy weapons. That could have never actually been something that anyone had to deal with! Why is Odysee up?" And versions of that conversation were happening then. Because GrabCAD stayed up in 2012 and 2013. Nobody fucked with GrabCAD. There was a constant accusation like, "Hey, you don't have to do this. You don't have to fight the State Department." And it was misunderstood at the time.

"Okay, you got a *letter*. So what?" Well, it wasn't just a letter. They said we had violated the ITAR and that they were proceeding with

enforcement actions. Then we had to do what's called a commodity disclosure.⁶³ So we got forced into this *thing*, and as soon as you get forced into the thing, the outcome is always going to be some type of civil or criminal penalty.

You say, why do we have to do this? It's not obvious that we had to do it. But the *hope was*, if we took the moment and didn't just rely on the mercy of the State Department to let us go, that we could – like our heroes in the crypto-anarchy and cypherpunk movement, those hackers of the 1990's who liberated PGP as like a public technology – bring that old band of libertarians back together. These were literally some of the same people, like Cindy Cohn and EFF. We hoped that we could fight *our own* version of the Crypto Wars, this time for guns, this time with the same arguments: code is free speech, etc., even if that's not exactly what was going on. But we were able to shape it that way.

We took the time, we recruited Alan Gura, these specialists in ITAR, and we actually crafted a First Amendment attack which made the government look pretty bad.⁶⁴ It seemed like a legitimate play. I was excited to make this play

63 DDTC sent Defense Distributed a "directed disclosure" letter invoking 22 CFR § 127.12.

64 Alan Gura of *Heller* fame wrote every brief in *Defense Distributed v. U.S. Department of State I*.

because getting *the standing* to do something like that is very rare. It was almost a responsibility.

Yes, absolutely. So we start the fight against the State Department in 2013. Fast forward to 2018, which is when that essentially resolves itself. This whole time, the question is: Can we put these 3D files up, and can we put them up for free? Just to make this clear: DEFCAD did not work the way it does now back then. We were putting these files up as direct downloads, essentially Odysee before Odysee, and this is the question: Are we allowed to do so? Is code actually free speech? So we reach 2018 and we reach a settlement with the State Department. Give us a brief overview of that.

Sure. We take five years. That's not just five years of hoping things work out, of, "let's just work on Ghost Gunner and forget about the files." That's five years of saying, "alright, how can we run DEFCAD when we win? When we get this weird outcome," because something's going to happen where the government doesn't *entirely win*. "How can we run DEFCAD?" We ran all these different simulations and ways of doing it infrastructurally, ways that conformed with the EAR and other things that we thought we'd be vulnerable to.

While that's all happening, we finally get to this place where – and even we didn't expect it – there's a kind of rapid settlement. And then we begin behind the scenes negotiations with the Department of Justice, and we say, "Okay, this thing's coming back up." Now, it's not going to be like it was – it probably can't be commercial. We're not going to run Google Ads on it or something. It's going to be a highly contested site. But we still thought the files could all be direct download, free, anywhere in the world. And if not anywhere in the world, whatever license we would get would allow us very limited restrictions. So we were preparing to build a site while we were doing these negotiations with the Department of Justice in early 2018. And you want me to say, "then what?"

Yes, then what? We do build such a site though, and this is around the time that I joined the company, so I'm part of building that first, or second, iteration of DEFCAD. I have very fond memories of that, and so we put it up and of course the other shoe drops and twenty six, I think, attorneys general, like every blue attorney general in the nation, all band together.

And there were whistleblowers within the bureaucracy. We did a big thing with *Wired* and all these state governments said, "this settlement is scheduled to go into effect. We're going to run to

court and we're going to stop this before it even happens." And we played this game where we were telling people August 1st, August 1st, but we got the files up even earlier. It didn't matter. There was one day we had to do three or four injunction hearings in a row in different federal courts across the country. Finally we got tagged. It was in Washington, and the next five years is us doing the same thing again. This time not just fighting the feds, but now fighting, like you said, twenty something states in a federal court and it's hopelessly muddled. The questions are not clean.

The questions are now: Do the states even have the right to be here? Is DD even a necessary party? Why do we have to get rope-a-doped into this thing? This is a fight between them and the feds. It was a mess, and of course I made it even messier with my hijinks – Assange-style running all over the world. So this was a crazy time, and yet the conflict is still over whether we can put those files up for free, which we did every time we got an opening in court. We did it like three or four times.

Right? I think 2018 is attempt number two. And we'll come back to this story because it's important for the community's history. This is, as well, the place where Deterrence Dispensed is founded, but we'll

get back to that. 2018 is attempt number two to put the files up. I think they're up for five days and then yes, the states come in and we take them back down. Fast forward again to 2020 and we get yet another opportunity, right?

That's right. Now, like you said, the community begins to be our partner in how we are building and promoting DEFCAD, from 2018 to 2020, because by and large the new groups of the community get formed in 2018 – because of how big and high-profile that fight is. And I'd say for sociological reasons, for materialist reasons, 3D printers are finally *cheap enough* that lots of people can get in on the act at this point. Chinese mass manufacture has enabled lots of people now to fight the State Department, not just these crazy dudes in Austin, Texas.

So for many reasons we're in discussions now with the community, even though we're boxed up. They're talking too about how they're doing it, LBRY is involved. Now there's different methods: there's a formal way that we're fighting power, but there's this kind of informal, positive, almost *lack of knowledge*, which is a positive function. That not knowing of just how bad or how intricate the State Department stuff is actually becomes one of the motors of the development of GunCAD. Everyone's just developing files anyway. See Codeisfreespeech.com,

and we have to start fighting New Jersey, and this is the most interesting, flowering time where people just put the files up anyway, like true hackers.

Absolutely. Enabled, perhaps in part, by the fact that we're tying up the feds in court, giving them a shadow cone, in a sense, to operate within.

I would make that claim. There's some kind of dome protecting this lower level activity, and dudes are getting sniped on Twitter, losing their accounts back then. Elon doesn't have the platform yet. But yeah, I would argue, and I've described it to you this way: the *Pax Distributada*. Even when it's difficult and we're really dug in with the feds; even in that time leading up to '21, there's not a strong enough theory for how to get us and how big the activity is. And, in fact, the states – especially when they're fighting us – are *ignoring* the fact that this is happening on Odysee and other websites. Even when we cite it and point to it, they say “Actually, I think we're entitled to findings of fact here.” There's this kind of pretense, this game, where, before a judge they're saying, “Your Honor, it's really just this one company and we can keep it all in the bottle.” So that's the game: just making them even take judicial notice of the fact that other people are doing this.

I know it's getting wildly off topic, but I have to comment on this. You're exactly correct. That's not just the argument in court, "It's DEFCAD where the files are. If we shut down DEFCAD, we shut down the files." This is not just the argument being made in court, it was the argument being made in the media. It was the argument being made on the evening news. I remember very well in the lead-up to the launch in 2018, where we say, "We're launching August 1st."

The response is: "Oh my God, 3D gun files will be on the Internet August 1st, 2018. You can go to Instagram and get an insta-gun." This conceit was that, if we just stop DEFCAD, all of these problems go away. It's no wonder that they wanted to focus on us, because that's a very convenient narrative. They can save the day just by taking out one website.

And that's what the current community works on as an assumption as well. Everything will be roses for them if they can just take down *this one website.*

Ain't that funny how the sides change over time?

Honestly. And I know you want to get to '21 because '21 is the biggest moment. COVID happens. March of '20 is interesting, because we're able to sneak DEFCAD back online, even while we're getting beat up in court, and they didn't see that coming. All these state governments

are overwhelmed by their COVID response. So Letitia James, AG Ferguson and all these people, they give up on the approach they had taken against us just a couple of years ago, and they just write it off. They literally just write a letter to the State Department saying, “Hey, these guys are definitely breaking federal law. Do something about it,” and then they go on to other things.

So DEFCAD sneaked its way back on the Internet in March of 2020 with the approval of JStark and the other figures of the community. And we begin to pilot quasi-commercial modes of operating DEFCAD because these guys *want money*. They want money for development.

I guess I'll go a bit into what we mean by quasi-commercial. There's two aspects to this. Part of the way that we sneak back onto the Internet in March of 2020, the month of COVID, is by setting up these tests. The tests that are still on the website today, right? You're required to have a membership. You're required to do some kind of personhood test, something that we've tinkered and monkeyed with over the years to find the best way to do this. The theory being that by having these tests, maybe we can actually keep the fucking files up this time. So this is option one. The other aspect of commercialization is, from the beginning, we are looking for a way to get

money into the hands of developers. Because at this point there is a large enough community now that is struggling with the challenge of: how do we self-fund, how do we pay for filament? How do we pay for ammo? And we say, okay, well how can we help with this? Well, we're by far the largest platform out there. That is still the case to this day. Most of the eyeballs are on us, so perhaps people will want to donate to these developers.

So we set up a donation tool, and we get most of the developers in Deterrence Dispensed – which was really the only group at that time– set up with this donation tool and, spoiler alert: I think we process a total of three donations through it. This is the extent to which the community was willing to donate to the creators of their files, which was a disappointment at the time.

Right. And we did our best to console them. But we were beggars too when we started with Liberator. Nobody likes to donate to this stuff, and there's better ways to do it now – SubscribeStar and all that – but it's still tough being out there begging. So our push with Deterrence Dispensed in the beginning was that they should commercialize. I'm not saying that everybody's politics have to align with that. But a lot of the work we did, beyond just setting up the DEFCAD donation portal, before we could get working with a bank and trying to process

transactions – which would take us another year – a lot of the work we did with them was to say: “Hey, you know what you should do? Rails and stuff? You should commercially produce that. You should sell that. You should turn everything you’re doing into some type of kit, and you should sell it.” And in the end, we were right. That’s the way all these things went.

Of course there’s a lot of dispute and back-biting about how all that went down, but we tried to pick every single horse that came out. That JG guy tried to make rails, we backed him. Parts Dispensed. We started buying from Parts Dispensed. We asked *you-know-who* and the great creators of the day, “Hey, just send us good manufacturing drawings and we’ll try to get good quotes and help you sell this stuff.” Of course, they weren’t as interested in doing that. They were caught up in the genius of making things. So we just went with those groups in the community that sprang up like Riptide Rails. We purchased that stuff, and we resold it. We did everything we could to promote *commercialization in the space*, because that seemed to be the only way that money was really moving.

Again, the idea being that if this space is going to survive, it must find some way to pay for itself. We cannot – and then likely should not – rely on free

labor forever. This is the only way that we're actually going to grow as a space: if we find a way to self-sustain.

That's my bid. That's what I believe. We were only ever trying to help these guys commercialize. And you could tell, even from late '19 and coming into '20, there was a certain distaste for it. In their perfect world, people should just donate to what they do because they're so great. And you know what? I almost agree with that. If you can find someone to patronize your work, that's *better*. I think for a time FPC even did support the early community. It wasn't great, but it kept them going. Anyway, there was always this insecurity about commercialization, and I think this is still the root of the problems we have now. Because there's just this post hoc justification now that if you commercialize in the space, you're somehow violating the sacred values of GunCAD.

REMEMBRANCE AND MOURNING

We're now bleeding into my intended Step Two, where we help talk the community through their own history. As you well know, at this time we're all buddy-buddy with everyone. Everyone gets along.

These are the Keybase days. There was a sort of secret high council channel at Keybase. It was called FMDA at the time. I'm in there, I'm seeing the discussion.

I see considerable dismay as Stark releases his FGC-9, and then his FGC-9 part two. And I see dismay over the fact that, "Oh my God, I'm not getting any donations over this. I'm not making any money off of this." I don't intend to cast aspersions on Stark. But he did go into his project believing that he would get the kind of attention, and funding, that we got with Liberator. And when it did not happen, it was a surprise to him.

In the end, I think he got what he wanted with the FGC-9. It's ultimate and iconic, and it lives in the way he wanted it to live. But yes, obviously he thought it would somehow be commercial, but he never put any of the work in to ensure that that could happen. So other people commercialized, and a lot of negativity begins from the fact that third parties begin to commercialize this work.

I'll point out some other things. I don't often talk about the things that JStark told me, but in a private conversation we had, he was bitter that the [FGC-9] Mark II only made \$25. He literally told me, "These fucking people don't get it. I say, 'please donate to the cause.' I get \$25." And

I said, “Dude, all you had to do was coordinate a release with us and we could have moved the needle *more than that*. I mean, damn, we could have put a button in an email saying, ‘Hey, donate to this guy, give him a hundred bucks. He’s doing cool stuff.’” We had those conversations.

Some of this was that they had to learn those lessons themselves. They have to be independent, and they have to realize they either are or are not businesses or business people, and a lot of that has settled out. But you’re right. These people just thought: *donation will happen*. It took us another year from 2020 to even build infrastructure that could handle payments, and by that time the shine’s come off. These guys don’t want to talk about DEFCAD. They don’t want to promote it in the way that they’d agreed to. They felt like, and to some degree they were led by the community understanding that it feels invasive; it feels like DEFCAD is asking for too much money. They’re feeling compromised in their relationship and kind of unsure of it because they’re not getting enough money anyway. In their mind, how does this help them?

Yes. It saddens me to say that I think a lot of the bitterness and negativity from the folks who are still in the community, who were there at the time, comes from this having to contend with the fact that it just

didn't work the way that we thought it would. They thought that we'd be able to self-fund. They thought that they would be able to just get money because, as you said, "We deserve it. We're putting out all this value into the world," and it turns out that's just not how it works. Commercialization is a different sort of thing that requires different approaches. Ones they were apparently not willing to undergo, and so well, I guess the grapes are sour. We don't actually want commercialization.

The next thing is, *we give developers money.* Everyone says, "I should be paid for my labor." And it's like, yes, that is what we do at DEF-CAD. It is a service to you, and I want to really get into this. This is actually the point of contention with The Gatalog. They became embarrassed when Black Lotus Coalition and Are We Cool Yet? began making more money than them on our platform.

Right. We have this call with CtrlPew, and his first complaint to us is, "It's wrong that you are giving Gage more money than I am getting, given that my work is so much more valuable."

And notice that this is in moral terms. "Well, it's not fair. It's wrong." And what do we say to Pew? We say, "Okay, dude, so name us a different method, and how is it ever going to be any

other way than this?" The remix culture starts to take off at this point. What was this, '22 when we're talking to CtrlPew?

Yes.

So Pew has not figured out by 2022 that it's *wrong* to take money for files. And he comes to us and says, *not*, "Hey, it's wrong that you take money for files." But, "Hey, it's wrong that I don't get *more* money for my files."

Right.

Okay, well, what do you want? Do you want to be a special editor at DEFCAD where we employ you or something? We gave him the analogy of an editor at the All Music Guide or something, and he says, "I don't know. I'll get back to you." We're still waiting, I guess!

Yes. I guess the idea there is that it is wrong for them to ask. They just want to be given things unprompted. If they have to ask for it, that's almost an insult, right?

This is true. Somewhere around 2021, let's say April, I definitely begin to understand The Gatalog is an intellectual property organization. And I would love to talk with you about that.

This didn't just start this year. This started many years ago.

That's correct. I observe, going back to Bear Arms N' Bitcoin 2021, before that event we have Deterrence Dispensed. The name "Gatalog" is not used in public to my knowledge. In Deterrence Dispensed there are several different developers. It's kind of the main space in the community. I think AWCY? does exist at this time, but they're quite small. A few months after Bear Arms N' Bitcoin, suddenly it's The Gatalog. Suddenly, several developers depart or are banned from the Deterrence Dispensed. Suddenly, their special high council chat, FMDA, goes dark and they adopt Rocket.Chat.

So there's a lot of things going on here. I think the right way to read this is they had a couple things all happen at once that necessitated some kind of split or purge, and "The Gatalog" is the result of this; everybody who didn't like IP, who didn't like the ugly and bullying attitude, they all depart for AWCY? or get thrown out. What is left over becomes The Gatalog.

That's a good history. My personal take on it – and this is because I was on the phone with everyone involved – is that The Gatalog is formed as a directly commercial organization. It is formed because people signing up for LEGIO and Defense Distributed's access to DEFCAD

confuse that membership with membership in Deterrence Dispensed. Everyone that became the leadership of The Gatalog realized there was a lot of economic value to be captured in creating a new name. So they created a foundation in Florida, and the tension doesn't really stop between our organizations after that point. By late April of '21, I'm in a TRO hearing – this might be the final day of April in 2021 – in the Western District of Texas because Export Control Reform finishes and we begin publishing, it's something like 16,000 files, on the Internet for free.⁶⁵

This is one of the next times that DEFCAD publishes all the files on the Internet again for free, and you're going to remember this Garret. We sent a big email out: "Hey everybody, we won. All the files are free again, told you we could do it. Thanks for hanging in there." And this is what puts the lie to everything I'm hearing right now on the Internet. These *FrojeCast* guys, they say, "All we're saying is we just don't want our files behind a paywall." No, we've been there. DD, DEFCAD puts all the files up for free in April, 2021. The Director of The Gatalog tells me, "No, you're not going to put our files up for free. We're somebody now. You're going to pay us to put those files up."

⁶⁵ Doc. 149 of *Defense Distributed v. U.S. Dep't. of State et. al.*, No. 1:18-cv-00637-RP (W.D. TX).

Why was DEFCAD putting these files up? Because we wanted the argument that the files were *published*, and that they weren't illegal republications according to the export control laws. We've been fighting this fight since 2013, and I'm thinking here's this beautiful chance to put the FGC-9 up within this set of files and make a court take recognition of this most popular and important online file – created by a foreign developer, by the way – so there's an *additional* argument that there's no export control.

What I learn from the Director of The Gatalog is, "No, our files are valuable. We own them. You're going to pay us for them to release them open source." Okay, then I'm negotiating with terrorists at that point. I don't want to overstate this Garret, but I've got emails where we're going for a TRO against the feds because the Department of Justice – even though Export Control Reform happens and all this stuff goes to the Commodity Classification List, and we have this argument that this stuff isn't controlled anymore – says, even though we've put the files online, "Nah, we're going to arrest your client for doing this. Nevertheless, it still violates ITAR and now it also violates the EAR." So I ditch my car and my phone and go into hiding in a fucking motel in Austin for as long

as I can until a judge hears our argument about whether these files are free or not. Again! Again.

I'm re-traumatizing myself over this bullshit, and what I learn from The Gatalog is, "No, we're somebody now, and you're going to pay us money for these free files." That was such an original sin. And I told the Director of The Gatalog at that time, "Okay, buddy, I'm going to pay you guys for this. You are oversocialized. There's a lot of shit wrong with this. I'm going to do it for the good of the motherfucking land, but we're not going to do it again, because *I don't believe in intellectual property.*"

I think it's worth going over this again just to make sure this is clear to everyone listening. DEFCAD in 2021 is operating with a membership fee, but we get the opportunity to remove that membership fee for certain files, including the Gatalog files, and put these up for free, as we have always intended. And we in fact do so for a short period of time, and as a result of doing so, number one, we get our first DMCA from The Gatalog for putting a file up for free. There is no membership fee, there are no tests, there's no information collection. We are giving the file away and we are DMCA'd for it.

They will claim you are lying if you say it was a DMCA.

Well. Didn't he quote the DMCA? What was it?

It was nothing. It was, "Hey, I'm going to lead a rebellion online and I've got Free Men Don't Ask behind me, and we're gonna cause such a shitstorm if you put our stuff up for free. So you're going to pay us money."

I'm referring to this Atmac guy. Didn't he threaten DMCA?

Oh, fuck him. He threatened DMCA years later. I'm talking about 2021, the Director of The Gatalog.

That's my memory as well. This was when we were doing this CAD/CAM distinction, right?

Yes. But you think Atmac did a DMCA back then?

Why don't we double check this real quick? Alright. May 2nd, 2021, Atmac: "I am contacting you to please remove any traces of the Big Point from your website. I under no circumstances have given..." Okay, so he doesn't say the DMCA. We are the ones who introduce the DMCA. Well then when else, aside from this takedown notice, do they demand payment for the files?

February of '22 is the next time they ask for payment, and that is CtrlPew. He's asking for money. So with Deterrence Dispensed and what becomes The Gatalog, there is the positive *obsession* with compensation and money. They were performing, in Marxist terms, valorization of their *labor* and a kind of pseudo-commoditization.⁶⁶ Even if they were uncomfortable with developing the commodity form of what they were doing, they saw it as so *valuable*; not just ethically, I mean economically. So there was always this tension.

There was also this mistrust of us because it was like we weren't sharing the secret to what unlocks the money tree. And there is no secret. That's just it. There really is no secret. Still, this mistrust begins to delay communication and every attempt we have at this point to work with Deterrence Dispensed to build things – like we did that Bear Arms N' Bitcoin – and we gave them these influencer agreements because they're Zoomers, and maybe they'll respond to that, they just rejected that stuff. I remember after Bear Arms N' Bitcoin in '21, they were saying, "You know what? You shouldn't even have

66 Though The Gatalog tried to disavow capital and its influence, their activity was nevertheless socially validated as value-producing abstract labor. This is the short road to surplus enjoyment.

had Bear Arms N' Bitcoin. You should have just given us the money.”

Right. So this is the sordid history, I suppose I'll use that term, of their transformation into our ostensible ally. There was always the sense that they playfully shat on us. Even in Ivan's earliest interviews, he's making claims we didn't care about the quality of our designs. Let's lay that out on the table, Cody: did we care about the quality of our designs?

Right. This becomes the defining ethos of the later DD2 and The Gatalog: “Actually, we *invented* the idea of testing files.” Obviously there was always a testing culture, and our very first AR-15 receiver was a version five. When I did that big *Vice* doc, I was saying, “Hey, come out with me to the range.⁶⁷ You can watch our testing procedure. Oh, look, we tested a hundred rounds on our receiver today. That's good progress. Here, we'll go back and make some adjustments.” We were always teaching this process. I think where the opportunity for identity arises is we had these, in their words, “junk files” ready to put up as placeholders on DEFCAD when we relaunched the site in

⁶⁷ *Vice/Motherboard's Click. Print. Gun.* Erin Lee Carr, director. Removed from YouTube and the subject of *Defense Distributed v. YouTube, LLC*, No. 1:25-cv-01095-ADA (W.D. TX).

2018. This is almost like – if you read that old report from that British institute on JStark – the superhero origin story of JStark and the wider community.⁶⁸

They download that AR-15 model that we got from that dude in San Marcos and they say, “Wait a minute, this bolt is totally off. You can’t even make a working AR-15 with this.” And I’m on Twitter and I tell JStark, “Okay, great. Fix it.” And he says, “I *will* fix it!” So they discover it is possible to fix it and then they think, “Wait a minute. We didn’t just fix this stuff. These guys never even cared about this in the first place. This was always symbolic for them. This was always theoryhead leftist graduate school bullshit for them. We brought principles of *engineering* to this space.” This becomes an opportunity for the accumulation of identity and meaning, and we never faulted them for that. We never gainsaid them about that.

And look, I will act as an advocate for the community at this point. There is definitely a shift in the expectations around how you release files, how you develop files, how you test files, that is at least coincident with the rise of Deterrence Dispensed. And I think

68 Basra, Rajan. ICSR. King’s College London, 2023, *Behind the Mask: Uncovering the Extremist Messages of a 3D-Printed Gun Designer*.

we must credit this to the fact that these are more established developers. They've worked in corporations developing software before, sometimes quite major ones, and they're bringing those expectations into the space in a way that they just didn't quite exist before. It's not like we weren't testing at the time, obviously, but they certainly do advance that conversation. I think we can credit them that.

I'm happy to give them that. I'm happy to give GunCAD a lot of its achievements. The FMDA stuff, the rails stuff, printed glocks, all very important. But we're doing Ghost Gunner this whole time, and if we didn't meet military specifications, sometimes multiple times over, and ship a product that didn't burn people's houses down, if we didn't do these things, we'd be out of business and we wouldn't be able to stay in the courts. It's kind of laughable to then retrospectively, after the fact, say, "Actually, Defense Distributed is entirely pantomiming." We're a deeply commercial company at this time. We were simply focusing our efforts on building a platform for people to upload files.

There's a huge trove of FOSSCAD stuff from '13 to '18. It was more about displaying what could be done at DEFCAD and promoting that with a discrete set of models for our settlement conversation back in 2018. But this is ancient history now, and everyone transitions that into

important touchstones and kernels of their own identity, and I don't want to fault them that. Yet the fantasy can run away so hard that you get these totally contradictory, paradoxical results where, "Actually, they weren't even doing this at all until we started doing it."

Which not only discredits us. Whatever, we're used to it. It discredits the large number of people who were in the community prior to this time, some of whom suffered greatly for it – Imura comes to mind – in developing GUNCAD well before these guys were even aware that it existed.

What you begin to see is once a certain value or a sense of yourself gains a power over you, it has a tendency to set itself up as the sole value *possible*. In fact, Hartmann in this Schmitt essay says "The tyrant over the whole human ethos."⁶⁹ Now testing files is not just how I define myself and my particularity as an individual. Now testing files is the reason that this even exists. And if you don't do this the way we say you do it, then you're not doing it. And in fact, we're the *only ones doing it*. This is what Schmitt calls The Tyranny of Values.

⁶⁹ Schmitt, Carl. *The Tyranny of Values and Other Texts*. Translated by Samuel Garrett Zeitlin, Telos Press Publishing, 2018.

I think there's something to this, and I liked the term you used earlier about the runaway, because that's the only way you are able to maintain your superiority over your fellow developers. "I'm the only one who's testing at all." Well, okay, we'll all start testing. We're going to build AWCY?, we're going to build Black Lotus. We're all going to test as well, maybe even better than you guys do. "Okay, well, we're the only ones testing to our secret standards." You have to tighten and tighten, and advance and advance this sense in order to maintain your profile.

And you end up in a place where – this just happened – some guy was apparently in the open beta for the OK Boomer, and he posted a picture of his frame on Reddit, and I think the frame didn't come out very well. And now I'm being told that they are demanding people in that open beta show pictures of their hands in order to compare it to the photo that was posted on Reddit! Because the worst possible thing in the world is to leak from a beta, and you better identify yourself. This is the result of this kind of pathological insistence on not just creating value through testing, in this example, but being the person who tests.

Yes. And also creating *that office* of the person who tests, and competing for spots in the beta. And I'm not saying these aren't good ways to administer this stuff, or that social Taylorism isn't a good way to manage a project. But

you can see how it becomes quasi-theological, and that there are subtleties here which are almost religious: where it's about granting people things to do in a hierarchy, giving people meaning, formal diversions from the object itself when saying, "We're conducting this process for a year," and it almost begins to look like something else. As if the purpose of this process is not to put out the gun. It is to kind of socialize a group of people into a way of being, into a way of knowing, and I don't think that's just theory. I think that's actually what's going on.

I mean, if the purpose was to put out the gun, then the [OK] Boomer might be out by now.

It's interesting, these little detours that have been made now, and of course there's a new value that's being hit upon, which is "free". And, like I mentioned earlier, there's this conviction that there's economic value to what they're doing, and in fact it's not enough to just talk about testing now and to isolate yourself that way. It's the location of economic value and this pleasure they get in the renunciation of that economic value. The surplus enjoyment of saying, "Hey, actually this thing's so valuable, my contribution is that you *can't* make money

on it.⁷⁰ And the way I know that I'm contributing to this cause is that I give it away, but there's certain things you can't do with it, and you certainly can't make money with it because GunCAD doesn't just mean testing things; it means creating valuable things that no one should make money on." That's a very interesting religious attitude.

Which, again, is likely informed by the same cycle I'm mentioning earlier, where when your main goal is ultimately prolificity, profile creation, marketing of your identity. This is sort of the only way that you can go. This is the only way that you can remain fresh.

Is it freshness? We talked about the Tyranny of Values. It's like these guys are now willing to take their insecurity, the difficulty they have with the idea of being commercial or commercializing; they're ready to raise that up to the level of an ethic where it is wrong, it is a *moral crime* for you to sell a file. That's not what 3D2A is about, and we will cast you out.

And in fact, it's not only about value and disvalue, it's not only about friend and enemy. They're now threatening violence over the fact

70 For more on surplus (and its enjoyment), I recommend Zizek's *Surplus-Enjoyment: A Guide for the Non-Perplexed*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2023.

that some people are reselling free software. And I'm not even saying that we're reselling free software, because of course we've built a complex way of doing this to where we can't be tagged with "selling the software." We're selling a subscription which gets you access to other things. It's a long story, but this accusation to them rises to the level of enmity and to the level of violence. Someone sent me that screenshot on Reddit where they write, "All pirates are going to be hung." They're advertising that someone is going to be the guy to bring the DMCA in here, and we're going to figure this out.⁷¹ I mean, this is the full horseshoe at this point.

We've now come full circle. We start this community fighting the government, and now we're invoking the government to fight people on the same side as us. I would like to say it's a very strange state of affairs, but this is how these communities tend to go. We see this historically. We see this with every leftist community that's ever existed. This is how it happens.

Yes, this is organic, but it's almost stranger than, "They're using the government to fight us." In their bizarre counter-transfer, the psychic manipulation necessary, *we* are the government and *they* are the anarchists fighting us. Again,

⁷¹ Preview of *Larosiere v. Wilson*, No. 6:24-cv-01629-AGM-LHP (M.D. FL).

that's PLA.boi from that transcript that I mentioned to you. He says, "We're against the system, right? We're anarchists. I don't care about the NFA. I'm a silencer developer. I don't care about any laws. DEFCAD is the system." So there's this idea that, somehow we're not using the modern state, and we're not violating libertarianism by upholding the intellectual property system when we fight DEFCAD. Because DEFCAD is the feds. It's this perfect way to completely avoid what you're actually doing.

I don't want to hit PLA.boi too hard. It's not like that's stopping him from hitting us, but you're absolutely right. Yes, he's going to fight the NFA by posting silencers. That's not nothing, posting a good silencer design out there that facilitates people creating their own silencers. Last time I checked though, the NFA is still there. In fact, I'm pretty sure it's going to be there no matter how many silencers you print. If you're going to fight the NFA, you have to fight it in court. But for some reason they're not willing to do that, so, "who can I fight? DEFCAD. I can fight DEFCAD. They're the real feds."

Well said. I think that's an elementary case. I think that is how it's actually operating. If we want to call it ideology, it's working on that level. There's a little more there though, where, let's say the NFA has some kind of reality to this

guy PLA.boi. He knows it well, probably, and could tell you about the NFA. And yet the ITAR, for example, or the EAR, these things don't. These things are not real. Or really, probably, anything else. There are a number of digital statutes this guy probably doesn't know about, and so they would probably take issue with what you said, Garret. "The only way I can fight the NFA is to sue? No, that's some Boomer talk. That's like conservative stuff. You're not going to win in court against the NFA. The only way to fight the NFA is to put a bunch of silencers on the Internet to where everyone has a silencer." Okay, I understand that. Are you doing that? Is that what's actually happening?

And then I think this is where we introduce the idea of the *object-cause of desire*. It's more interesting for these people to take the bigger restrictions, like the NFA, and then kind of create enough distance from their activity, and actually fighting these things, so that they can sustain intense desire and intense fantasy about that opposition.⁷² Austin Jones is of course the best example of this. He's been fighting the ATF and their ammunition restrictions for about as long as we've been doing Defense Distributed. But he's only been fighting it *in his mind*, and

72 Lacan, Jacques. *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, Polity, 2017.

what keeps him safe, this surplus enjoyment for him, is the fact that there's no risk that he will actually have some kind of deadly encounter with the ATF. It is the same thing I think with PLA.boi. It's enough if they can have some kind of encounter on social media with DEFCAD. That's the closest brush they want to have with any of these *powers*, to your point.

Sure. But let me put back on my community advocate hat here. You've brought it up and I'll repeat it. Why is it that there is any value in trying to fight these statutes in court, and why can we not just be anonymous on Twitter and put these designs out and print 5 million FTNs and 5 million Super Safeties, and effectively defeat these rules, these laws, without actually having to fight them in court? Why can't we do that?

Well, it has happened. That's what the community does. The Super Safety is out.⁷³ Everybody puts this stuff up anyway, and Odysee is unimpeded. We all won, right? Because enough people do it. It's the same thing as in the file sharing wars. There's just no way to police intellectual property on the Internet. No one can really do it. Every now and then you catch somebody and you give them a really tough sentence, but,

73 Or is it? *ABC IP, LLC v. Hoffman et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-00389-CLC-CHS (E.D. TN).

in the end, we've strongly degraded certain regimes of IP. And in the end we've strongly degraded *gun control* because this stuff is just out there.

Everybody gets that much, and it is all still true, but when you have the opportunity to force some of these constitutional questions – and these are rare things – I'm saying, you should consider taking the opportunity. And I will not be personally, and as an organization, we won't be shamed into settling those conflicts simply because everyone thinks "Well, Odysee's up, we're good. We don't need it." That's to misunderstand how precarious the situation is. Odysee itself is hanging by a thread.

Indeed.

There's a billionaire in Thailand or wherever. If he wakes up tomorrow and decides he's done, Odysee's over.⁷⁴ Alright, there's some functional autonomy there – in this ignorance and this not knowing – and we need that to happen. If it was just Defense Distributed doing shit all the time, we'd be stuck in court forever, stuck in a bottle, and nothing would be getting done. So you need both. But I'm not trying to evangelize or

74 Odysee was later purchased by a venture capital firm connected to Arweave.

persuade anyone to our argument at this point. I'm just not going to be cowed into telling you that, "Oh, you're right, intellectual property is real and we respect you." I don't.

We may get to intellectual property in a moment. We started this conversation with this safety and stabilization concept. How did we get here? And I think we've done a decent job of going through the legal history and the current legal state of play. Guys, surprise, surprise. Even though you are broadly able to ignore it, the files are still considered controlled by the feds.⁷⁵

But now I remember a point I was trying to make earlier. For the longest time I was convinced by this idea that it is good if people are generally ignorant of the actual legal threat they face, because acting in that ignorance – it's the same idea of flooding the market with 5 million Super Safeties – is in itself valuable. Not just because that produces a great surplus of designs, but because it creates sort of a zeitgeist. How can you enforce a law that everyone is flagrantly violating? And I'm not saying I don't believe this idea any longer, but we are now seeing people taking action based on an understanding that is directly detrimental to the GunCAD community.

75 As of 2026, the U.S. Department of Commerce claims control of most 3D gun receiver files. 3D silencers and machine gun receivers are still listed on the USML.

I'm talking about bringing copyright back into the community as a way to fight the "real enemy," who is not the ATF, who is not Everytown, but is DEFCAD. That's who we've got to fight, and to do this, we have to adopt the weapons of our enemies, the things that could otherwise destroy this community. So, is it wise to let these people ignore the foundations of their own ethos?

To some degree I'm ambivalent. But I agree with you on a point of mass politics. Yeah, there's a critical mass of stupidity saying, "DEFCAD is doing something that I don't understand. It makes me feel bad, and when I follow the leader, he says I should feel bad, so I'm just going to do something stupid to fight that something stupid that *they're doing.*" And now it becomes a kind of intentional clusterfuck. Weaponized "knownothing."

Let's lay this out here. I think this is important, and I hope our therapy patients can walk away with this. Why should they avoid copyright? What will happen if they embrace "copywriting" their files?

You know what? To each his own, Garret, but copyright is not a great method for censoring speech, and I would argue that that's the greatest lesson of copyright. Back to our discussion about commercialization, copyright was built

to help you commercialize an idea. It's a civil privilege you get that gives you a monopoly for a little bit to help you make some money on something. It's not a speech control. It's not used very *well* that way. We can get to the fundamental questions like, "Is IP real though?" Or we can just go to basic questions of liberal property norms in this country. I'm happy to do it on any level, wherever you want to take it.

It's worth going into this. Your point so far is that it's not going to have the effect that you think it will. It's not going to stop us. We're going to keep doing what we're doing. We have good reasons for doing what we're doing. What effects will it have, perhaps?

With law you're always rolling the dice, so there are always these really cool, unintentional effects. Maybe we'll create a cool new religion of copyright people. Or we see all these people workshopping a new kind of license like an "everybody but DEFCAD" license. I mean, that'll be fun. Let's let people work on that, but – back to the earlier criticism – I think it's enough for people to just playact at that. I don't think anyone's actually doing it. It's just this thing you do online for continual profile validation and to signal to other people your particular group identity and your affiliation in whatever the drama is of the day.

And that's the real product of this community. It's mostly a lot of drama, and sometimes you've got to give 'em what they want. Okay, they're going to use copyright. Well, I don't want to walk them through how easy this is going to be to beat. But the first question you should ask yourself is: Do I have the copyright in this Turkish pistol that I ripped off? Can I establish that I have the copyright? Or like Uberclay, that gentleman that you were so patient with in that Ghost Gunner stream, he went ahead and gave himself the copyright *and* Free Men Don't Ask. Well, it doesn't quite work that way.

Right. Right. I think playacting is the right word for that. If I'm supposed to be a community advocate, I'm not doing a very good job of it. There is a sense when they talk about laws in general as if these things are magic wands. You wave your magic wand of copyright and things just magically get better. You wave your magic wand of constitutionality: "Did you know, guys, that the ATF is unconstitutional? The NFA is unconstitutional?"

Oh, for sure. Hoover's going to be a free man.⁷⁶ Just you wait.

⁷⁶ Matthew Hoover was released from prison on compassionate grounds in 2025.

It just doesn't work that way, right? It just doesn't work that way, as I suppose they will find out.

There are just different levels of engagement here, and it's always going to be that way. This is now, like I said, a mass public. Alright, there's a legacy of 20th and 21st-century political science studying how people hold beliefs and what's actually going on. Garret, I think you see the best in people. You want to do this podcast with me because you think our community is at least rationally ignorant; they can actually be led to, if given enough time, a broadly correct opinion.

I think there are some therapy patients who cannot be reached, but, in general, I would like to believe that. Here's a point that we may make more strongly later, but to face the sound and the fury that we're seeing over this latest issue, we have the numbers guys. We have technology that monitors the entirety of GunCAD. The copyright people represent a single digit percentage of what GunCAD is. There's a much broader world of GunCAD outside of this little Twitter space, and with whom we have very friendly relations. They're the ones who are showing up to the events that we sponsor, they're the ones showing up to SHOT Show, and these are the guys this episode is meant to reach. Because I think these guys sometimes see the copyright thing and they don't know what's going on. They don't necessarily know

what to believe about it. These are the second-order patients who might otherwise be damaged by those "hurt people hurting people."

Well said, Garret. Let this be a document people can come back to to get the fill-in on the history and IP, and, "What should I think about this? What should I think about that?" They'll at least get the American counterpoint. Great. It should exist for that reason. I'm sure I don't do enough of that. I just don't *care to* anymore, but today that guy Zurad, he messages me, "Hey, what's this thing going on about DMCA? I don't understand." So I try to fill him in on what's going on, and people should be filled in. But you know, Zurad's a good example. That guy comes into GunCAD, he develops interesting technology. He commercializes it – because that is one option available to you in the space – and what does he say when I explain the DMCA thing? He's says, "Dude, it's not even worth talking about. They're just a bunch of Discord LARPer."

Yes. That is ultimately what I believe as well, but here's where I'll get back to "What is the effect of this copyright fight?" Because these Twitter guys, these LARPer, as we might call them, we have seen they do have some kind of effect, at least among the spaces they police, where, by my calculations, they have

now caused more people to leave GunCAD than are currently active in their space.

That's an interesting study. I haven't seen the numbers. Obviously it's very lonely in the Deterrence Dispensed chat.

Yes, as we learned that from "Dr. PC" recently. Their chat is not all that active, but imagine how much worse this might get if suddenly every time someone gets into a kerfuffle around credit, we get a Rare Breed versus WOT situation, right?

That would be interesting at least, but instead we get a simulated version of that. We get the LARP version of it where, and I think the first time I noticed this was that Vinh Nguyen guy – this was the first use of copyright I was aware of in the space – where somebody else was doing a 1911. Do you remember this?

Oh, yeah. That may be the primary example I've seen of people getting bullied out of the space. The 1911 specifically. So much effort has been spent, and so much damage has been done, in order to preserve Freeman's claim to being the first developer to make a printed 1911.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Defendant turned cooperating witness in *United States v. Celentano*, No. 1:24-mj-01204, (W.D. NY)

Was this about Freeman? Is that where this starts with the Vinh thing?

The 1911 thing, yeah. He's had this frame in development now for two years, and anybody else who tries to develop one, they bully him out of the space so that Freeman doesn't have to change his Twitter bio.

Okay, and what do we see Vinh doing? We see him using copyright as a way of telling people that he's homesteading the idea and the work. Obviously this is an abuse, and it is convenient now that they find themselves in these places to say, "GunCAD is what we say it is, because we found ourselves here," and, "We weren't good at anything else, and therefore what we do, that's what there is to do. And everything else is a scam."

Right. It's another example of what we were talking about earlier. And I can very much understand the impetus; the is idea that, "Hey, don't I own my work? Shouldn't it be the case that people can't just profit off of my work?" I get where this is coming from, and again, we have very friendly relations with the other 97% of GunCAD. We're able to work with them to try to smooth over problems they may have with our method of operation, but this remainder, they take these understandable impetuses and they hothouse

them on their Discord servers to the point where it becomes pathological, and we're seeing the result.

And that's because it's connected with identity. If I can take something that I'm doing – say I'm Freeman – and if I can make hay out of the fact that I'm working on this one gun for two years, that's a good deal for me. Not in the *gun space*, of course, because that's a disaster and it's not commercial. You're not delivering anything to anybody. But in terms of profile value, *profile validation*, and the constant updates required there, this is great. I can milk this for a long time and get a ton of personal value out of it, a kind of surplus enjoyment. I don't care for the 1911. I don't care to necessarily commercialize the 1911, but I'm somehow, in this parallel and virtual way, the *guy who reinvented* the 1911. That infuses me with a sense of meaning and identity, and that is worth *fighting* people over. That is what is operative.

There is the sense, and here's where we can get back to radical FOSS ethics. There I think is a sense from this Gatalog side of the space that the worst possible thing you can do is release a design, because when you release a design it must live up to the expectations you've built around it, and so we're only going to release this design when we have lovingly crafted every single little detail. That might sound like a good

thing, and in some ways it is, but FOSS says that it is far better to release early and to release often, so that you can get to the maximal number of eyes on your design, so that you can as quickly as possible get this thing out there, in case something ever happens to you, and so somebody else can take the idea and run with it. This is what this space is supposed to be about. We're all going to work together to make guns, right?

Yeah, and “spread the signal,” right? Everybody knows that ethic now, spread the signal. It is an embarrassing fact that for most of the 3D guns you find online, DEFCAD has done a better job of spreading the signal than some closeted, buried Odysee page.

Again, we know the numbers there. Except for extreme outliers like the FGC-9, every gun that we have hosted on DEFCAD has been downloaded more than its equivalent on Odysee.

I'm sure that there are exceptions there. There would have to be exceptions.

There are, but not nearly as many as you would expect.

Checking those numbers, but – nevertheless – if the goal was to rapidly develop gun technology to defeat gun control, oppose Everytown and

the brain trust writing gun control laws, and to spread the motherfucking signal so that people can discover what is going on here, DEFCAD is more than accomplishing that goal. So it is *threatening* to this object-cause or desire if there's actually a group like us out here doing what we say we are doing. That's very threatening. I don't mean to laugh at it, but—

Here's the second point that I was leading us to, then, because I know what the will be: "Okay, if you put out a new version of WinZip and it doesn't work, so what? If you put out a bad version of a gun, it's going to blow up and maim people." They accuse DEFCAD endlessly of having trash files; that this is guaranteed to result in some kind of catastrophic injury, and let's test that assumption. Let's pretend this is true, because of course we know that there are lots of 3D gun files. In fact, the vast majority of 3D printed gun files are not developed under Gatalog (or any) standards. If it was the case that all of these designs were inherently unsafe, then shouldn't half of Reddit be walking around with their hands blown off right now? Well, that's clearly not the case. Given that that observation is so easy to make, how do we then justify this continued adherence to the idea that "anything less than testing for two years," and "only letting like five people into the beta," is the only "safe" way to do it? How do we justify this?

I can only assume, number one, that this comes from a sense of corporate solidarity, where the worst possible thing that can happen is that our reputation gets besmirched – even a little bit. And obviously that will happen if somebody hurts themselves, but it will also happen if somebody prints a gun and it doesn't work. This is again what we saw with the OK Boomer, where someone prints the frame of the Boomer, it doesn't work, and they share it on Reddit. They completely chimp out over the fact that Freeman looks a little stupid now that his two-year beta gun didn't work.

I think it's also a prolificity thing, where the only way you can justify your idea of superiority is by ironically conjuring the horrible threat of 3D printed guns themselves. It is deeply ironic that the same person who spends all day on Twitter mocking politicians for saying that 3D printed guns are going to blow up will then turn around and say, "If you put those rail files out there, those guns will blow up." That is totally absurd, and I think can only be explained by a pathological need to cultivate the ego.

Nice. The only thing I'd add is that this is where the idea of authorship becomes something more than what's contained in liberal theory. "Authorship" itself is an ideological state apparatus (ISA).⁷⁸ It's something used to

⁷⁸ Althusser, Louis. *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. Verso, 2014.

control, it's a *function* used to precede a work, to limit it, and to be a discursive valve.⁷⁹ Maybe The Gatalog thinks it's only practicing brand management, and they're allowed to do that however they want. In fact, they've spec'd into that as the *only* thing that they do, because the files are to have no other destiny.⁸⁰ Still, this promotes a certain consumer attitude, which is actually aligned with Everytown for Gun Safety and other liberals who concern troll the whole question of product liability. There's a nostalgia for, like we've mentioned earlier, engineering standards and commercial product standards.

What's funny is while these are invoked for intentionally non-commercialized components, you've actually done a lot of the work here to get yourself into trouble. You've almost taken up all the downside without any of the upside of commercializing these things. Because, in the interest of preserving the idea of authorship – reproducing that capitalist function, which is what copyright's for – you have accidentally given implied warranties, let's say, about the merchantability of your product, or its fitness for the purpose of shooting. So, if I'm Everytown for Gun Safety, now I say, "Great." I go

79 Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" *The Foucault Reader*. Edited by Paul Rabinow, Vintage Books, 2010.

80 *Habent sua fata libelli et balli*

after The Gatalog because they represent the files as safe, they represent the guns as safe. When they blow up, now I can nail them with a judge. You understand the irony there?

Of course. I know that we're going to be accused, when people listen to this, we're going to be accused of saying, "There should be no testing standards. There should be no engineering standards. It turns out engineering standards are bad things." No, that's not what we're saying. To simply reiterate what Cody said, when Google, or when Boeing, have public standards for how they test, maybe 10% of that is about actually ensuring their product will work as designed, and the other 90% is about maintaining their reputation. Maintaining that company's not just reputation in an ethical sense, but also a legal sense.

Well, the open source approach is: What if we strip away all of that reputational stuff? What if we say, "Fuck my reputation. I don't care. I'm just going to develop stuff. I'm going to have good testing standards, and I'm going to have good engineering standards. But I'm not going to let corporate bullshit, HR bullshit, get in my way of putting out actual work, and putting it out quickly." I think the rest of GunCAD gets this.

We can agree to disagree.

RECONNECTION

Would you want to talk about our final section, where we actually try to offer some advice?

Is it time for reconnection?

I think it may be. Let's try to end this therapy session on a positive note. For those who are listening to this, and who are at least intrigued by our approach, what can they do to try to move forward in a healthier way? What can they do to increase the health of GUNCAD? Well, I have some ideas for this, and Cody, feel free to jump in here as I go. But let's start with "words matter." We all know that if you're the kind of person who fucks up and then says, "Oh, I'm so stupid, I'm so stupid," that's not healthy, right? Similarly, if you're the kind of person who sees DEFCAD open-sourcing a file and you think "They're stealing it," that's not healthy. The word "stealing" has a strong emotional connotation. If you actually look into the legal definition of stealing, you will find this data cannot be stolen, at least not in the legal manner. Data that has been put out there for "free" cannot be stolen. This is the fundamental insight that justifies copying music, that justifies copying movies. It justifies copying our files as well. So I suggest we consider our use of hurtful language.

Instead of saying, "We are stealing files," perhaps say, "We are liberating files." Your thoughts on that?

I'm not going to be the most radical libertarian possible here. Like I said earlier, I don't believe in intellectual property. But I'm not going to say that you can't find a justification for theories of intellectual property in the libertarian tradition. Okay? There's credible scholarship where you can find a Lockean moral definition for intellectual property. Alright, but it just so happens that our legal fiction, the mythos in our country, is Jeffersonian.⁸¹ Our legal tradition, for now, is that IP is not your natural right. That's where we *are* legally, but I understand that it's intuitive to feel like you can somehow own an ideal thing. Of course, Thomas Jefferson didn't believe that. So when you see the big Thomas Jefferson quote at Gatalog, think, "What did Thomas Jefferson think about intellectual property?" You may not like that and God, whatever you do, *do not* Google "Sally Hemings."

Anyway, I would say there's room for disagreement in this space and that FOSS and FOSS licenses, these are how hackers traditionally have negotiated working on projects and how groups can work with each other. But we have to recognize that FOSS licenses, free software

81 *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1 (1966).

licenses, are a *compromise* with a traditional, liberal idea of authorship in the first place.

Right. And I guess the community must ask themselves, to what degree do they wish to compromise with The State, that they at least nominally reject, right?

I don't know that they do. I see some of them pretend to reject The State, I just don't know that they do.

Well, you can be in GunCAD and not be an anarchist, right? You don't have to be crazy like me and Cody. All we ask is that you do not get in our way.

I'm not even asking that you don't get in the way. This is a reconnection. People ask, "what can we do?" Okay, you can consider, like Garret says, the subtleties of ideas of property, or you can sue. I encourage you to sue. That will make you stronger. We will learn something about the law, we'll advance the conversation, there will be less bitterness, and nature will heal. So suing is good too. If you feel really strongly for this, you *should sue*. Because if you feel strongly about anything, you should risk something for it.

And I'm here for that. I was here for that when Everytown sued on a theory of trademark

that was very cynical. No one here believes in Everytown's theory of trademark, right? We're all social bandits. We understand the good of abusing Everytown's trademark. Alright, well, do you believe in some kind of GunCAD group's trademark? Surely you don't. But if you do, well then, sue. I respect every federal court in this country. If you get a federal court order, Garret and I are going to respect that federal court order.

That's an interesting comment.

Did I say too much?

Are you telling the truth that we will respect the court order? I guess we'll have to.

Well Goddamn, all we've ever done is respect court orders around here. I mean this is very easy to do.

You may have to convince me in the final cut to leave that in this interview. But let's talk about another therapeutic idea that may help the listener. This is a common bit of advice for people who have been gaslit, for people who have been lied to, which is: to begin asking for proof. Don't just take claims at face value. Begin asking for proof of those claims. When someone has been proven to have lied multiple times, begin

asking for proof. When you hear that there's some French guy out there who is maliciously editing files and releasing them, ask for proof. It turns out you might not find any.

If you hear that DEFCAD asks for Social Security numbers, or when you hear that we've been "hacked and dumped multiple times," ask for proof.⁸² Turns out you won't find any. Make this part of your habit when interacting with accusers like this. Ask for proof and you will find that your life will become much simpler when you realize that they generally cannot back up the things that they have to say. Ask us for proof as well. We can provide it.

But everyone knows better than to ask for proof about this. How long have I been available in this space? And you make yourself more than available, Garret. Anyone can ask us questions about these things, and yet over the years they prefer not to. In fact, every time everyone's whipped into a frenzy on Twitter, it doesn't quite seem to translate. Maybe that leads to an argument about just accepting this as noise, or some kind of Two Minutes Hate, but I think in essence everyone understands that though there's something fictional to the accusations, the truth can yet come *in the form of a lie*. Something essentially true is still being conveyed,

⁸² *Defense Distributed v. Elik et. al.*, No. 9:25-cv-81197-DMM (S.D. FL).

even though the facts themselves don't check out. We spoke about that earlier. This is why, I think, it functions.

PLA.boi, for example, attempts to tell a story where he says that he once reached out to us and that we refused to talk to him, except on our own terms. And the truth is the opposite, where we offered to have a phone call and talk about any subject under the sun. But he refused to talk to us because, number one, he didn't want to make a phone call. I thought that might have been because he didn't want his voice out there. But he's okay with going on FrojeCast, so who knows about that?

He was double-booked, Garret. He had a two hour podcast booked.

Must have been. Must have been. In any case, yeah, he was not interested in talking unless we immediately conceded his point, and that we were going to take his files down. I'm sorry guys, that's just not how negotiation works. You don't approach a negotiation saying, "My condition for talking is that I win."

That's funny. He did use the word "ethic" – and, of course, I don't think he knows what that word means – but ethical licenses, PLA.boi, have been addressed in open-source licensing.

This was the big dispute that got ESR in trouble back in like 2020.⁸³ Maybe you're aware, Garret, but a bunch of developers were fighting Amazon's kind of reabsorption, Capital's "recuperation" of some of their open-source projects, and some of the difficult personalities – like we have in our space, who are more *challenged* in their sexual orientations or their gender identity – these people seem to be the loudest in these discussions; they argued for a new type of open-source license on the basis of ethics, just like PLA.boi wanted, and they said, just like the people in our space are considering now: "Well, we'll come up with an everybody *but* DEFCAD license." Same thing. These so-called open-source developers were trying to come up with an "everybody but fascists license," or an "everybody but the people who persecute the Palestinians license."

This is being done, and people can look at the history of these fights right now with the Open Source Initiative, and I'm not going to say it's all good news. But this has been an active topic of discussion and confrontation, and there's just nothing to recommend it. Absolutely nothing. I just don't think this is going to be a fruitful way

83 Byfield, Bruce. "The Decline and Fall of Eric S. Raymond." *Linux Magazine*. Dec 22, 2015.

to fight DEFCAD, and I doubt anyone has the stones to enforce it against us.

Indeed. Maybe I'll leave us with this, which is that when you got into this space. I'm talking to everyone now, no matter when you got into the [3D2A] space, you got into the space based on this very radical notion that you have a right to print a gun. You have a right to make your own gun in the privacy of your own home and use that as you see fit. That is something that was almost once rejected by 99% of the rest of this country. But you said, "I don't care. I'm going to do it anyway. That is my legal right and ethical right." Let me suggest this as well: When we got into this space, we said, "We're going to liberate files. We're going to ensure that the files stay up on the Internet because it is inherently valuable for this information to be preserved."

We do not care whether people say, "I don't want my file on your website." We don't care whether people say, "We're going to sue you. You need to take it down," because we reject the fundamental premises of intellectual property. It's the same kind of radicalism applied to a very similar topic. You're comfortable applying it to 2A, and we are applying it to 1A. Have the courage of your convictions. Don't just be a radical over, "I want to print a machine gun," be a radical in the sense that "I reject intellectual property entirely", and not just 80 Percent

Arms' intellectual property. You're very comfortable with that, right? But also your intellectual property, and – you know what? – mine as well. Reject all of it. Be an actual radical.

I think that's well said, and I might even help people listening a little more. It seems that there's more comfort, for example, with denying that the product of Defense Distributed is anyone's specific property. No one would object to finding our stuff, and, in fact, there's even this additional deconstruction where Cody Wilson himself is *not an author*, and doesn't have authorial interests or intellectual property in what he does. That's great. That's how I feel about everyone else! So simply apply that. Think of *me* when you look at a file, and think, "Huh, that can't be anyone else's property."

The author function itself is, as I said, ideological. And it's convenient for you now. But we resist copyright not just for historical reasons, like that its origins are in censorship, and that it actually promoted piracy. There are good libertarian stories for rejecting copyright. Specifically, though, like Garret mentioned about the First Amendment, copyright is an instrument of the modern capitalist state. Copyright is an excuse to assert and reduplicate new types of control, new types of subjection under the law – through agencies of the United Nations, like the

World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Trade Organization, things like TRIPS, SOPA, PIPA, these kinds of things – and we're fighting that.

So, like JStark says, if GunCAD is about the First Amendment and the Second Amendment, the two are blended. And if you promote a censorship regime, or a way of constricting the flow of information, you are also restricting the *Second Amendment*.

Just keep it in mind.

CONCLUSION

Spectres haunt the world, and everything begins by waiting for their apparition. The first 3D gun was named *Liberator*. Its appearance was a repetition. Born *by coming back*, it returned to the world already illegal. The laws broken by its (re)birth would need a few more years to pass, but for the courts this history is now the unofficial version. Its 3D files were not the product of the rational, gradual progress of the sciences, but of the disappointed expectation of the Internet's pirate utopias. Where was the coming crypto anarchy?⁸⁴ Wasn't cyberspace supposed to yield a *place*?

John Walker brought me to Neuchâtel to say he still believed in that place. The father of AutoCAD predicted the 3D guns and had been waiting. He would sponsor their apparition to deliver a direct blow for global freedom, but even then that dream felt like dated science fic-

84 May, Timothy. "The Crypto Anarchist Manifesto." *The Satoshi Nakamoto Institute*.

tion to me. Anachronistic or misplaced. Hadn't the Internet begun to confuse and shrink our utopias? Those of History's agents I'd met seemed to advance only on the left foot, in cramped spaces, increasingly by accident and in the dark. A cold apartment in Bratislava littered with casascius coins, a half-kitchen on the ground-floor of a London embassy, thirty-nine days in the Moscow airport's transit section. The discourse of freedom was about identifying remains. The only real spaces, and real thoughts, left to encounter it had been (psychically) dimensioned by urban paranoia and political indifference. To traverse these was to be haunted by history and the absence of the future. This is the secret origin of the term "ghost gun."

But power will also chase ghosts, and in so doing become chased and ghostly. Our 3D guns are the remixed after-images of a history of American military and economic domination. Open Source (like *avante garde*) is a military term. The Internet is a geopolitical weapon; a domain of warfare that thinks and multiplies its own possibilities for weaponization. *You can download a gun.* To regulate here is to fight the tide of commodities and COTS procurements of This Postmodern Life.⁸⁵ As the Dadaists knew

85 Perry, William. "Specifications & Standards – A New Way of Doing Business." 1994

cinema was ballistic, we know our 3D guns are cinema. Totally virtual. Totally plastic. "Defense Distributed Presents" Rep. Gipson's latest bill to regulate the phantom grip of all third-order simulacra. What do you think the NSA guys post in *their* group chats?

ANNO DOM 1628:

"So as when the Indeans saw the execution that a peace would doe, they became madd, as it were, after them... accounting their bowes and arrowes but bables in comparison to them.

And here I take occasion to bewaile the mischief that this wicked man began in these parts... and made this thing comone, notwithstanding any laws to the contrary; so as the Indeans are full of peeces all over, both fouling peeces, muskets, pistols, etc. They have their moulds to make shotte, of all sorts, as muskett bullets, pistoll bullets... Yea, some have tould them how gunpowder is made, and all the materialls in it, and that they are to be had in their owne land... O the horibleness of this vilanie! Oh! that princes and parlements would take some timely order to prevent this mischeefe, and at length suppress it... before their collonies

in these parts be over throwne by these barbarous savages, thus armed with their owne weapons...”

– William Bradford, Dec. 27⁸⁶

For 2D2A questions the *Bruen* Court demands historical method. “Only if a firearm regulation is consistent with this Nation’s historical tradition may a court conclude that the individual’s conduct falls outside the Second Amendment’s ‘unqualified command.’”⁸⁷ Modern American gun laws must be evaluated by direct analogy to history. But we are the savages of a new Nation *without* history.

The End of History, in the end, had nothing to do with tradition and democratic fulfillment. It was a technical diagnosis. A status notification in the global program of the complete policing and prevention of events. If there will always be a world system that nothing must disturb, then it will always be The Time of Assassins.⁸⁸ Any invention or event becomes a threat, and history itself will be classified as “dangerous

86 Brooks, Lisa / Wisecup, Kelly, editors. *Plymouth Colony: Narratives of English-Indian Encounter from the Mayflower to King Philip’s War*. Library of America, 2022.

87 *New York State Rifle & Pistol Ass’n v. Bruen*, 597 U.S. 1 (2022).

88 Clark, T.J. “A Brief Guide to Trump and the Spectacle.” *London Review of Books*, Vol. 47 No. 1. 23 January, 2025.

and unusual." We will pass laws against history. Possessing it will aggravate our crimes. [*Comment from Licensing Officer(s): This paragraph is classified as 0E501.a and is controlled for National Security (NS1), Regional Stability (RS1), Crime Control (CC2), Anti-Terrorism (AT1) and UN (see 746.1(b) of the EAR) reasons. Please review the Country Chart, Supplement No. 1 to Part 738 for licensing requirements*]

Right of resistance. Right of self-defense. I have tried to imagine the political present historically and to derive a philosophical law. To find the plastic powers to embody that law: that the historical desire to protect ancient things leads to the most radical transformations. Machiavelli predicted the citizen army. Harrington thought any alternative was an economic impossibility. Pocock saw the U.S. Constitution as one of the final acts of Renaissance humanism – a humanism that is now in a painful process of revision and reversal. The Right to bear arms became the Duty to do the same, and spawned the patriotic armies of European total war. What's left of the "palladium of liberty" is in Elsa Dorlin's prattling, or Jameson's bet that the U.S. Army is our last, best utopia.⁸⁹ But I'm no prophet – nor a reporter.

⁸⁹ Jameson, Fredric. *An American Utopia: Dual Power and the Universal Army*. Edited by Slavoj Žižek, Verso, 2016.

I have seen these concepts reconciled in terror. And I have seen the White Terror of World Order and, in short, *it was so gay*.

There is no 3D2A, and we never called ourselves that. If we do so now it's only from our nostalgia for media-led events. There is no 3D2A because there is no 2D2A. The Second Amendment of 1791 was an ideological concession to preserve the reality (of the sign) of Federalist power. Neither in law nor history has it ever existed. Jefferson himself completed the American nationalist military project by 1802.⁹⁰ 3D2A refers to the realistic hologram of an historical unreality. At the heart of the greatest military industrial establishment ever conceived is an idea that forgot to die. Moved onto its symbolic reservation, we enjoy the cold and spectral glow of its artificial survival.

Guns, like the sexual body, now tend toward artifice. Even casual observers of 3D2A culture note its correspondence with transgenderism on the timeline. The union suggests the uneasy conclusion that our political and sexual cultures share the same model (and will suffer the same fate). But that's a word we can work with. GunCAD is not about dignifying labor, "doing the work," achieving progress, personality, or

90 McDonald, Robert M. S. *Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy: Founding West Point*. University of Virginia Press, 2004.

property. It is not about bearing witness to suffering. We will not be “taken seriously” as hobbyists, artists, or craftsmen. We will not, through the Supreme Court, win a second term for the Rights of Man. We are the censored, the disavowed, and the dead. Ours is an impossible communion that can only be maintained at the height and intensity of death.

“That alone is what Orpheus came to seek in the Underworld. All the glory of his work, all the power of his art, and even the desire for a happy life in the lovely, clear light of day are sacrificed to this sole aim: to look in the night at what night hides...”

There will be no assurance of our work. Our ruin is certain while the moment of our models will always be uncertain. You can break the law, but you can never break the rules of this game. Every culture believes in fatality, and that *other* night concealing ghosts. Below our cultural awareness there is more to hope for in a world condemned to guns.

JStark was a suicide who knew suicide is the only completely successful act. He does not live on through his church. His death is not sublated in the coming of some future justice or society. He does not rest in Agarthia with Charlie

Kirk. His community is the presentation to its members of their mortal truth. JStark dies a little more than we do. He dies at the right time.⁹¹ He goes on dying and by his death we are his fellow creatures. He knows petitioning for rights in this struggle is idiotic. Fanatically soft. He teaches insouciance and the sacrificial gift.

Not a right– a Fate to bear arms.

91 Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On Voluntary Death." *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 1982.

APPENDIX I

EPITOME OF ELIK

THE FUDDNESS UNTO BUST

From a post now deleted, we read the Redditor:

“In a conversation about ‘the signal,’ it’s my conviction that undertested, crapped out [3D] projects are ‘the noise,’ ... thus why bureaucracy is important. Imposing barriers on the circulation of projects until their limits are understood ensures that shoddy DNA doesn’t propagate.”

These are the words of a former spokesman. But just who is speaking here? Is it the developer IvanTheTroll, concerned with selling a scientific method of gun design? Is it the author NavigoBoom, professing certain “literary” ideas of community management? Is it universal wisdom? *The New York Times* says it is the man John Elik, endowed by his experience with a kind of practical authority, but it’s impossible

to know.⁹² If we combine each possible speaker, however, and let this Elik-as-composite speak, we discover the underground of 3D2A politics and identity.

Every culture has its obscene subconscious, its suppressed and unacknowledged desires, fears and taboos beneath the surface of its explicit norms and values. 3D2A publicly espouses rational principles of hardware and software engineering, and Elik's deleted post appears to use these terms to defend The Gatalog's once-living beta test hierarchy. But in this retired administrator's text something is off. Why the metaphors of excrement and genetic impurity? In the space of 150 words Elik writes "shoddy DNA" four times. Equally prominent are the terms "infecting" and "injected," "spoiled," "crapped," and "conviction." Employing a theme of defilement, our speaker makes a surprisingly religious justification of science. This is the language of *abjection*.

Cultures must draw meaningful boundaries. They must know their insides from their outsides and locate the borders of their living conditions. There are realities that can, if acknowledged, collapse all meaning and annihilate a

92 Dearden, Lizzie, and Thomas Gibbons-Neff. "He's Known as 'Ivan the Troll.' His 3D-Printed Guns Have Gone Viral." *The New York Times*, 10 Sept. 2024.

culture. *The abject* serves to keep these realities permanently expelled beyond social reason. Abjection is therefore a cultural primer that keeps us safe.⁹³ But we describe a theoretical solution that is also a theoretical problem.

A tweet Elik did not delete before his retirement:

"Maybe you like systemic racism, but I think it's pretty uncool, not a vibe."

Compare this to The Gatalog's system of "imposing barriers" on racialized 3D gun projects so their shitty "DNA doesn't propagate." It's incredible that 3D2A's most out and proud group of racial misfits once uncritically endorsed the biologization of information. Why did their spokesman privately require the figure of the racial infiltrator to make his argument? Why did he publicly disavow the principles of genetic prejudice and surveillance so clearly central to their work? If digital files are life forms, their abjection becomes something more than mere censorship. It offers a troubling new reading of the words "unfit to print." Elik's thousands of deleted comments function as the simultaneous

93 Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S Roudiez, Columbia University Press, 1982.

(political) discussion and demonstration of the life that does not deserve to live.⁹⁴ Bureaucrat, he writes, is “not really the right word” for the agent of such a system of control. And that’s true. The right word is *biocrat*.

We abject that which threatens our subjective selfhood. Our “own clean self.” Elik, from another post long deleted, when asked to stop beating a dead horse:

“A lame horse that shit itself so badly that it can no longer walk, while it mooches resources that are much better invested in outfits that aren’t dead ends, it needs to be beat, have a bullet put between its eyes.”

This is more than obscenity. To induce and enforce a herd instinct for conformity, and thereby security, Elik relies on the power of the horror of corporeal reality. He stages an animal subject grounded in filth. The Elikian imaginary locates the sickening extremes of defecation and disability that demand a “dead end.” Picture a shit so bad that it justifies medico-military intervention. We know high disgust sensitivity is related to the authoritarian mode. This paradigm of waste and revolt, distinguishing the “not me”

94 Agamben, Giorgio. *The Omnibus Homo Sacer*. Stanford University Press, 2017.

of group identity, yields a reliable political formula. But it is also the paradigm of *the camp*, and it is no surprise that GunCAD's first historian would also be guilty of its first epistemicide.⁹⁵

95 Jenzen-Jones, N.R. & Patrick Senft (eds). "About the Authors & Editors." *Desktop Firearms: Emergent Small Arms Craft Production Technologies*. Perth: Armament Research Services (ARES). 2023 Update.

APPENDIX II

TABLE OF CASES

- + *Defense Distributed et al v. U.S. Dept of State* (W.D. Tex.)
1:15-cv-00372
- + *Defense Distributed et al v. U.S. Dept of State* (5th Cir.)
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- + *Washington v. Defense Distributed et al* (W.D. Wash.)
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