

bolo'bolo
guides to
anarchism,
anarchy and
anarchists



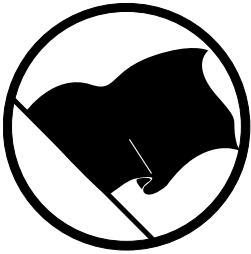
ANARCHY 101

Covering classic and contemporary writings from a wide range of anarchists spanning the globe, this new introductory compilation from the bolo'bolo collective explores the theories and practices of anarchism and reflects on what it means to be an anarchist in the early 21st century.



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1: ANARCHY 101



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All rites reversed. We fight for a world without property
of any kind.



About the bolo'bolo guides



WHAT IS ANARCHISM? What does it look like? What does it envision? Now that more and more people from various walks of life are beginning to move past the tedious clichés – anarchy as chaos, irresponsible hyper-individualism or something to do with youthful angst and punk music – we feel it's vital for us, as anarchists, to answer these questions in as clear and non-sectarian a way as possible. A surprisingly large amount has been written on the subject and it can be daunting for anarcho-curious folks to find a suitable entry-point into the 160-odd years of anarchist history and ideas that form our broad tradition. The project of this series, then, is to provide some loose, non-dogmatic guides and reference points for those setting out to explore this, the most radical, hopeful and liberatory contemporary (anti-)political philosophy we know of, for the first time.

Beyond outlining the theory and practice of anarchism, we hope to map some of the more interesting and productive ways in which it intersects with other movements aimed towards freedom and equality. What do anarchists have to say about patriarchy, racism or animal exploitation? What is the history of anarchist involvement in grassroots environmental movements? Is there an anarchist spirituality? Finally, we also aim to explore what everyday life could be like under conditions of anarchy. How would communities function? What would families look like? How would we care for ourselves and each other? What would we do?

A final note: our approach in producing these guides is to compile as broad a range of voices as possible, representing different times, places, positionalities and practices without being tokenistic. Some might caution against this kind of pluralism; after all, if you ask ten anarchists what anarchism is you'll get at least eleven different answers...but that's exactly why we've asked even more!

Yours in hope,
the bolo'bolo anarchist collective

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Introduction



THE FIRST TIME THE TRUE SCOPE of anarchism really struck me was several years back. It was late November 2010, a month into an ambitious six month tour of the contemporary international anarchist milieu I'd embarked on with a friend, and we were in Buenos Aires visiting the *Biblioteca-Archivo de Estudios Libertarios*, a famous anarchist archive housed on the first floor of a rickety wooden building that was at that time the home of the *Federación Libertaria Argentina*, a venerable local anarchist organisation.

As I walked along the rows of dusty cupboards and the hundreds of tattered cardboard boxes containing tens of thousands of books, periodicals and assorted artifacts, I experienced a deep sense of awe, almost immediately followed by panic (amplified by the fact that several of the people in the space were casually smoking, seemingly oblivious to the highly combustible nature of our immediate environment): I wanted to know what was written on every page of every publication in every box! What could I learn about the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Sydney from the box marked "Australia: 1930s"? What was in "*La Revista Blanca* 1904-1923"? What was it like to be an anarchist in Argentina 120 years ago? "Argentinos 1890" held the answer. And then there was the locked metal drawer labeled "Kropotkin: original correspondence"...

Here in this humble storage area, probably unknown to most of the locals passing by the building and certainly unknown to most of the rest of the world, were the stories of countless women and men who had lived and loved and struggled and lost and won together. Who had dreamed of something better – a society where the freedom of each was bound up in the freedom of all – and had tried, in so many different ways, both in word and deed, to move towards it and to reflect their aspirations in the conduct of their everyday lives.

One dropped cigarette, I thought, and all this would be gone.

I never did get to read much of what was inside those boxes, and the archive is now jealously hoarded by a small clique of sectarians, but what has stuck with me ever since is the importance of sharing at least some of the radical spirit they held within them: the history of the perennial

struggle for freedom and equality that has rallied millions of common people under the black flag – the flag that signifies an end to all flags – for over a century and a half.

In this, the first book in our anarchist guide series, we hope to have captured at least enough of this spirit to ignite a small flame of resistance and hope in the heart of every person who, looking at the world around them, sees, and thinks to themselves, *‘it cannot go on like this.’*

Within the pages that follow you will find various explanations of what anarchism is and what anarchists want. There are articles, letters, manifestos, poems, rants and disquisitions from a motley array of anarchists stretching from the late 1800s right through to the present day. Some were written at the writing desks of the great libraries of Europe, others by gas lamp in the living quarters of rural communes, others still were dispatched directly from the barricades at the front lines of revolutions.

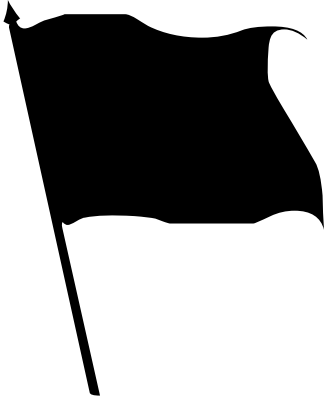
Our hope is that when you’re through with this book – and perhaps some of those that follow – you will not only have a better understanding of why it is that anarchists want to get rid of, among other things, capitalism, the State and organised religion, or what they mean by *mutual aid*, *prefiguration*, *direct action*, *class war* or *federalism*, but, more importantly, you will realize why so many people continue to proudly identify as anarchists, no matter how impossible our ideals may sometimes seem.

Finally, this book is also an invitation: an invitation for all of us to live life as it really could be lived, together. Today, as we teeter on the edge of compounded social and ecological crises, more and more of us are beginning to recognise the relevance of the anarchist vision and, while an anarchist society may still be far off on the horizon, perhaps further away than we’ll ever reach, it is also right here between us, in how we treat ourselves and each other, in our words and actions and in our myriad individual and collective refusals of the logics of hierarchy and domination.

Anarchists, let’s take our lives back from them!

For the wild,

Aragorn Eloff (editor)



SECTION ONE: IN A NUTSHELL

*“Anarchism is the movement for social justice through freedom. It is concrete, democratic and egalitarian. It has existed and developed since the seventeenth century, with a philosophy and a defined outlook that have evolved and grown with time and circumstance. Anarchism began as what it remains today: a direct challenge by the underprivileged to their oppression and exploitation. It opposes both the insidious growth of state power and the pernicious ethos of possessive individualism, which, together or separately, ultimately serve only the interests of the few at the expense of the rest.” - **Stuart Christie***

1: Alexander Berkman

What do you want out of life?



ALEXANDER BERKMAN (November 21, 1870 – June 28, 1936) was an anarchist known for his political activism and writing. He was a leading member of the American anarchist movement in the early 20th century and spent 14 years in prison after a failed attempt to assassinate the industrialist Henry Clay Frick. He was the partner of Emma Goldman and the editor of the Mother Earth journal. These excerpts are from his well-known 1929 book, What Is Anarchism?



WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT ANARCHISM.

I want to tell you what Anarchism is, because I think it is well you should know it. Also because so little is known about it, and what is known is generally hearsay and mostly false. I want to tell you about it, because I believe that Anarchism is the finest and biggest thing man has ever thought of; the only thing that can give you liberty and well-being, and bring peace and joy to the world. I want to tell you about it in such plain and simple language that there will be no misunderstanding it. Big words and high sounding phrases serve only to confuse. Straight thinking means plain speaking. But before I tell you what Anarchism is, I want to tell you what it is not.

That is necessary because so much falsehood has been spread about Anarchism. Even intelligent persons often have entirely wrong notions about it. Some people talk about Anarchism without knowing a thing about it. And some lie about Anarchism, because they don't want you to know the truth about it. Anarchism has many enemies; they won't tell you the truth about it. Why Anarchism has enemies and who they are, you will see later, in the course of this story. Just now I can tell you that neither your political boss nor your employer, neither the capitalist nor the policeman will speak to you honestly about Anarchism. Most of

them know nothing about it, and all of them hate it. Their newspapers and publications — the capitalistic press — are also against it.

Even most Socialists and Bolsheviks misrepresent Anarchism. True, the majority of them don't know any better. But those who do know better also often lie about Anarchism and speak of it as 'disorder and chaos'. You can see for yourself how dishonest they are in this: the greatest teachers of Socialism — Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels — had taught that Anarchism would come from Socialism. They said that we must first have Socialism, but that after Socialism there will be Anarchism, and that it would be a freer and more beautiful condition of society to live in than Socialism. Yet the Socialists, who swear by Marx and Engels, insist on calling Anarchism 'chaos and disorder', which shows you how ignorant or dishonest they are.

The Bolsheviks do the same, although their greatest teacher, Lenin, had said that Anarchism would follow Bolshevism, and that then it will be better and freer to live. Therefore I must tell you, first of all, what Anarchism is not.

It is not bombs, disorder, or chaos.

It is not robbery and murder.

It is not a war of each against all.

It is not a return to barbarism or to the wild state of man.

Anarchism is the very opposite of all that. Anarchism means that you should be free; that no one should enslave you, boss you, rob you, or impose upon you. It means that you should be free to do the things you want to do; and that you should not be compelled to do what you don't want to do. It means that you should have a chance to choose the kind of a life you want to live, and live it without anybody interfering. It means that the next fellow should have the same freedom as you, that every one should have the same rights and liberties. It means that all men are brothers, and that they should live like brothers, in peace and harmony. That is to say, that there should be no war, no violence used by one set of men against another, no monopoly and no poverty, no oppression, no taking advantage of your fellow-man. In short, Anarchism means a condition or society where all men and women are free, and where all enjoy equally the benefits of an ordered and sensible life.

'Can that be?' you ask; 'and how?'

'Not before we all become angels,' your friend remarks.

Well, let us talk it over. Maybe I can show you that we can be decent and live as decent folks even without growing wings.

...

"Can you tell us briefly," your friend asks, *"what Anarchism really is?"*

I shall try. In the fewest words, Anarchism teaches that we can live in a society where there is no compulsion of any kind. A life without compulsion naturally means liberty; it means freedom from being forced or coerced, a chance to lead the life that suits you best. You cannot lead such a life unless you do away with the institutions that curtail your liberty and interfere with your life, the conditions that compel you to act differently from the way you really would like to. What are those institutions and conditions? Let us see what we have to do away with in order to secure a free and harmonious life. Once we know what has to be abolished and what must take its place, we shall also find the way to do it.

What must be abolished, then, to secure liberty? First of all, of course, the thing that invades you most, that handicaps or prevents your free activity; the thing that interferes with your liberty and compels you to live differently from what would be your own choice. That thing is government. Take a good look at it and you will see that government is the greatest invader; more than that, the worst criminal man has ever known of. It fills the world with violence, with fraud and deceit, with oppression and misery. As a great thinker once said, "its breath is poison." It corrupts everything it touches.

"Yes, government means violence and it is evil," you admit; *"but can we do without it?"*

That is just what we want to talk over. Now, if I should ask you whether you need government, I'm sure you would answer that you don't, but that it is for the others that it is needed. But if you should ask any one of those "others," he would reply as you do: he would say that he does not need it, but that it is necessary "for the others." Why does every one think that he can be decent enough without the policeman, but that the club is needed for "the others"?

"People would rob and murder each other if there were no government and no law," you say.

If they really would, why would they? Would they do it just for the pleasure of it or because of certain reasons? Maybe if we examine their reasons, we'd discover the cure for them.

Suppose you and I and a score of others had suffered shipwreck and found ourselves on an island rich with fruit of every kind. Of course, we'd get to work to gather the food. But suppose one of our number should declare that it all belongs to him, and that no one shall have a single morsel unless he first pays him tribute for it. We would be indignant, wouldn't we? We'd laugh at his pretensions. If he'd try to make trouble about it, we might throw him into the sea, and it would serve him right, would it not?

Suppose further that we ourselves and our forefathers had cultivated the island and stocked it with everything needed for life and comfort, and that some one should arrive and claim it all as his. What would we say? We'd ignore him, wouldn't we? We might tell him that he could share with us and join us in our work. But suppose that he insists on his ownership and that he produces a slip of paper and says that it proves that everything belongs to him? We'd tell him he's crazy and we'd go about our business. But if he should have a government back of him, he would appeal to it for the protection of "his rights," and the government would send police and soldiers who would evict us and put the "lawful owner in possession."

That is the function of government; that is what government exists for and what it is doing all the time. Now, do you still think that without this thing called government we should rob and murder each other? Is it not rather true that with government we rob and murder? Because government does not secure us in our rightful possessions, but on the contrary takes them away for the benefit of those who have no right to them, as we have seen in previous chapters.

If you should wake up to-morrow morning and learn that there is no government any more, would your first thought be to rush out into the street and kill someone? No, you know that is nonsense. We speak of sane, normal men. The insane man who wants to kill does not first ask whether there is or isn't any government. Such men belong to the care of physicians and alienists; they should be placed in hospitals to be treated for their malady. The chances are that if you or Johnson should awaken to find that there is no government, you would get busy arranging your life under the new conditions.

It is very likely, of course, that if you should then see people gorge themselves while you go hungry, you would demand a chance to eat, and you would be perfectly right in that. And so would every one else, which means that people would not stand for any one hogging all the

good things of life: they would want to share in them. It means further that the poor would refuse to stay poor while others wallow in luxury. It means that the worker will decline to give up his product to the boss who claims to "own" the factory and everything that is made there. It means that the farmer will not permit thousands of acres to lie idle while he has not enough soil to support himself and family. It means that no one will be permitted to monopolize the land or the machinery of production. It means that private ownership of the sources of life will not be tolerated any more. It will be considered the greatest crime for some to own more than they can use in a dozen lifetimes, while their neighbors have not enough bread for their children. It means that all men will share in the social wealth, and that all will help to produce that wealth. It means, in short, that for the first time in history right justice, and equality would triumph instead of law.

You see therefore that doing away with government also signifies the abolition of monopoly and of personal ownership of the means of production and distribution. It follows that when government is abolished, wage slavery and capitalism must also go with it, because they cannot exist without the support and protection of government. Just as the man who would claim a monopoly of the island, of which I spoke before, could not put through his crazy claim without the help of government. Such a condition of things where there would be liberty instead of government would be Anarchy. And where equality of use would take the place of private ownership, would be Communism. It would be Communist Anarchism.

"Oh, Communism," your friend exclaims, "but you said you were not a Bolshevik!"

No, I am not a Bolshevik, because the Bolsheviks want a powerful government or State, while Anarchism means doing away with the State or government altogether.

"But are not the Bolsheviks Communists?" you demand.

Yes, the Bolsheviks are Communists, but they want their dictatorship, their government, to compel people to live in Communism. Anarchist Communism, on the contrary, means voluntary Communism, Communism from free choice.

"I see the difference. It would be fine, of course," your friend admits. "But do you really think it possible?"

2: Errico Malatesta

The word 'anarchy'



ERRICO MALATESTA (December 14, 1853 – July 22, 1932) was an Italian anarchist. He spent much of his life exiled from Italy and in total spent more than ten years in prison. Malatesta wrote and edited a number of radical newspapers and was a friend of Mikhail Bakunin. This excerpt is from his popular 1891 book Anarchy, translated into English by Freedom Press.



THE WORD “ANARCHY” WAS UNIVERSALLY USED in the sense of disorder and confusion; and it is to this day used in that sense by the uninformed as well as by political opponents with an interest in distorting the truth.

We will not enter into a philological discussion, since the question is historical and not philological. The common interpretation of the word recognises its true and etymological meaning; but it is a derivative of that meaning due to the prejudiced view that government was a necessary organ of social life, and that consequently a society without government would be at the mercy of disorder, and fluctuate between the unbridled arrogance of some, and the blind vengeance of others.

The existence of this prejudice and its influence on the public's definition of the word “anarchy” is easily explained. Man, like all living beings, adapts and accustoms himself to the conditions under which he lives and passes on acquired habits. Thus, having been born and bred in bondage, when the descendants of a long line of slaves started to think, they believed that slavery was an essential condition of life and freedom seemed impossible to them. Similarly, workers who for centuries were obliged, and therefore accustomed, to depend for work, that is bread, on the goodwill of the master, and to see their lives always at the mercy of the owners of the land and of capital, ended by believing that it is the master who feeds them, and ingenuously ask one how would it be possible to live if there were no masters.

So, since it was thought that government was necessary and that

without government there could only be disorder and confusion, it was natural and logical that anarchy, which means absence of government, should sound like absence of order. Nor is the phenomenon without parallel in the history of words. In times and in countries where the people believed in the need for government by one man (monarchy) the word republic, which is government by many, was in fact used in the sense of disorder and confusion — and this meaning is still to be found in the popular language of almost all countries.

Change opinion, convince the public that government is not only unnecessary but extremely harmful, and then the word anarchy, just because it means absence of government, will come to mean for everybody: natural order, unity of human needs and the interests of all, complete freedom within complete solidarity.

Those who say, therefore, that the anarchists have badly chosen their name because it is wrongly interpreted by the masses and lends itself to wrong interpretations, are mistaken. The error does not come from the word but from the thing; and the difficulties anarchists face in their propaganda do not depend on the name they have taken, but on the fact that their concept clashes with all the public's long established prejudices on the function of government, or the State as it is also called.

3: Stuart Christie

Anarchy: a definition



STUART CHRISTIE (born 10 July 1946) is a Scottish anarchist writer and publisher, best known for being arrested as an 18-year-old while carrying explosives to assassinate the Spanish dictator General Franco. He was later alleged to be a member of the Angry Brigade, an insurrectionary British 'urban guerrilla' group, but was acquitted of related charges. This excerpt comes from an undated text found on the Kate Sharpley Library website.



ANARCHISM IS THE MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL justice through freedom. It is concrete, democratic and egalitarian. It has existed and developed since the seventeenth century, with a philosophy and a defined outlook that have evolved and grown with time and circumstance. Anarchism began as what it remains today: a direct challenge by the underprivileged to their oppression and exploitation. It opposes both the insidious growth of state power and the pernicious ethos of possessive individualism, which, together or separately, ultimately serve only the interests of the few at the expense of the rest.

Anarchism promotes mutual aid, harmony and human solidarity, to achieve a free, classless society — a cooperative commonwealth. Anarchism is both a theory and practice of life. Philosophically, it aims for perfect accord between the individual, society and nature. In an anarchist society, mutually respectful sovereign individuals would be organised in non-coercive relationships within naturally defined communities in which the means of production and distribution are held in common.

Anarchists are not simply dreamers obsessed with abstract principles. We know that events are ruled by chance, and that people's actions depend much on long-held habits and on psychological and emotional factors that are often anti-social and usually unpredictable. We are well aware that a perfect society cannot be won tomorrow. Indeed, the struggle could last forever! However, it is the vision that provides the

spur to struggle against things as they are, and for things that might be.

Whatever the immediate prospects of achieving a free society, and however remote the ideal, if we value our common humanity then we must never cease to strive to realise our vision. If we settle for anything less, then we are little more than beasts of burden at the service of the privileged few, without much to gain from life other than a lighter load, better feed and a cosier berth.

Ultimately, only struggle determines outcome, and progress towards a more meaningful community must begin with the will to resist every form of injustice. In general terms, this means challenging all exploitation and defying the legitimacy of all coercive authority. If anarchists have one article of unshakeable faith then it is that, once the habit of deferring to politicians or ideologues is lost, and that of resistance to domination and exploitation acquired, then ordinary people have a capacity to organise every aspect of their lives in their own interests, anywhere and at any time, both freely and fairly.

Anarchism encompasses such a broad view of the world that it cannot easily be distilled into a formal definition. Michael Bakunin, the man whose writings and example over a century ago did most to transform anarchism from an abstract critique of political power into a theory of practical social action, defined its fundamental tenet thus: In a word, we reject all privileged, licensed, official, and legal legislation and authority, even though it arise from universal suffrage, convinced that it could only turn to the benefit of a dominant and exploiting minority, and against the interests of the vast enslaved majority.

Anarchists do not stand aside from popular struggle, nor do they attempt to dominate it. They seek to contribute to it practically whatever they can, and also to assist within it the highest possible levels both of individual self-development and of group solidarity. It is possible to recognise anarchist ideas concerning voluntary relationships, egalitarian participation in decision-making processes, mutual aid and a related critique of all forms of domination in philosophical, social and revolutionary movements in all times and places.

Elsewhere, the less formal practices and struggles of the more indomitable among the propertyless and disadvantaged victims of the authority system have found articulation in the writings of those who on brief acquaintance would appear to be mere millenarian dreamers. Far from being abstract speculations conjured out of thin air, such works have, like all social theories, been derived from sensitive observation. They reflect the fundamental and uncontainable conviction nourished by a conscious minority throughout history that social power held over people is a usurpation of natural rights: power originates in the people, and they alone have, together, the right to wield it.

4: Emma Goldman

What I Believe



EMMA GOLDMAN (June 27, 1869 – May 14, 1940) is undoubtedly one of the world's best-known anarchists and remains highly regarded for her political activism, her writing, her rousing speeches and her prescient views on feminism, prisons, atheism, freedom of speech, militarism, capitalism, marriage, free love and homosexuality. She played a pivotal role in the development of anarchist political philosophy in North America and Europe in the first half of the 20th century. A Russian immigrant, she was an early critic of the Russian Revolution, although she remained supportive of revolutionary uprisings throughout her life, travelling to Spain in 1936 to support the anarchist revolution that was sweeping through the land. This text was originally published in the July 19, 1908 edition of the New York World newspaper.



"WHAT I BELIEVE" has many times been the target of hack writers. Such blood-curdling and incoherent stories have been circulated about me, it is no wonder that the average human being has palpitation of the heart at the very mention of the name Emma Goldman. It is too bad that we no longer live in the times when witches were burned at the stake or tortured to drive the evil spirit out of them. For, indeed, Emma Goldman is a witch! True, she does not eat little children, but she does many worse things. She manufactures bombs and gambles in crowned heads. B-r-r-r!

Such is the impression the public has of myself and my beliefs. It is therefore very much to the credit of The World that it gives its readers at least an opportunity to learn what my beliefs really are.

The student of the history of progressive thought is well aware that every idea in its early stages has been misrepresented, and the adherents of such ideas have been maligned and persecuted. One need not go back two thousand years to the time when those who believed in the gospel of Jesus were thrown into the arena or hunted into dungeons to realize

how little great beliefs or earnest believers are understood. The history of progress is written in the blood of men and women who have dared to espouse an unpopular cause, as, for instance, the black man's right to his body, or woman's right to her soul. If, then, from time immemorial, the New has met with opposition and condemnation, why should my beliefs be exempt from a crown of thorns?

"What I believe" is a process rather than a finality. Finalities are for gods and governments, not for the human intellect. While it may be true that Herbert Spencer's formulation of liberty is the most important on the subject, as a political basis of society, yet life is something more than formulas. In the battle for freedom, as Ibsen has so well pointed out, it is the struggle for, not so much the attainment of, liberty, that develops all that is strongest, sturdiest and finest in human character.

Anarchism is not only a process, however, that marches on with "sombre steps," coloring all that is positive and constructive in organic development. It is a conspicuous protest of the most militant type. It is so absolutely uncompromising, insisting and permeating a force as to overcome the most stubborn assault and to withstand the criticism of those who really constitute the last trumpets of a decaying age.

Anarchists are by no means passive spectators in the theatre of social development; on the contrary, they have some very positive notions as regards aims and methods.

That I may make myself as clear as possible without using too much space, permit me to adopt the topical mode of treatment of "What I Believe":

I. AS TO PROPERTY

"Property" means dominion over things and the denial to others of the use of those things. So long as production was not equal to the normal demand, institutional property may have had some *raison d'être*. One has only to consult economics, however, to know that the productivity of labor within the last few decades has increased so tremendously as to exceed normal demand a hundred-fold, and to make property not only a hindrance to human well-being, but an obstacle, a deadly barrier, to all progress. It is the private dominion over things that condemns millions of people to be mere nonentities, living corpses without originality or power of initiative, human machines of flesh and blood, who pile up mountains of wealth for others and pay for it with a gray, dull and wretched existence for themselves. I believe that there can be no real wealth, social wealth, so long as it rests on human lives — young lives, old lives and lives in the making.

It is conceded by all radical thinkers that the fundamental cause of this terrible state of affairs is:

- that man must sell his labor;
- that his inclination and judgment are subordinated to the will of a master.

Anarchism is the only philosophy that can and will do away with this humiliating and degrading situation. It differs from all other theories inasmuch as it points out that man's development, his physical well-being, his latent qualities and innate disposition alone must determine the character and conditions of his work. Similarly will one's physical and mental appreciations and his soul cravings decide how much he shall consume. To make this a reality will, I believe, be possible only in a society based on voluntary co-operation of productive groups, communities and societies loosely federated together, eventually developing into a free communism, actuated by a solidarity of interests. There can be no freedom in the large sense of the word, no harmonious development, so long as mercenary and commercial considerations play an important part in the determination of personal conduct.

II. AS TO GOVERNMENT

I believe government, organized authority, or the State is necessary only to maintain or protect property and monopoly. It has proven efficient in that function only. As a promoter of individual liberty, human well-being and social harmony, which alone constitute real order, government stands condemned by all the great men of the world.

I therefore believe, with my fellow-Anarchists, that the statutory regulations, legislative enactments, constitutional provisions, are invasive. They never yet induced man to do anything he could and would not do by virtue of his intellect or temperament, nor prevented anything that man was impelled to do by the same dictates. Millet's pictorial description of "The Man with the Hoe," Meunier's masterpieces of the miners that have aided in lifting labor from its degrading position, Gorki's descriptions of the underworld, Ibsen's psychological analysis of human life, could never have been induced by government any more than the spirit which impels a man to save a drowning child or a crippled woman from a burning building has ever been called into operation by statutory regulations or the policeman's club. I believe — indeed, I know — that whatever is fine and beautiful in the human expresses and asserts itself in spite of government, and not because of it.

The Anarchists are therefore justified in assuming that Anarchism — the absence of government — will insure the widest and greatest

scope for unhampered human development, the cornerstone of true social progress and harmony.

As to the stereotyped argument that government acts as a check on crime and vice, even the makers of law no longer believe it. This country spends millions of dollars for the maintenance of her "criminals" behind prison bars, yet crime is on the increase. Surely this state of affairs is not owing to an insufficiency of laws! Ninety per cent of all crimes are property crimes, which have their root in our economic iniquities. So long as these latter continue to exist we might convert every lamp-post into a gibbet without having the least effect on the crime in our midst. Crimes resulting from heredity can certainly never be cured by law. Surely we are learning even to-day that such crimes can effectively be treated only by the best modern medical methods at our command, and, above all, by the spirit of a deeper sense of fellowship, kindness and understanding.

III. AS TO MILITARISM

I should not treat of this subject separately, since it belongs to the paraphernalia of government, if it were not for the fact that those who are most vigorously opposed to my beliefs on the ground that the latter stand for force are the advocates of militarism.

The fact is that Anarchists are the only true advocates of peace, the only people who call a halt to the growing tendency of militarism, which is fast making of this erstwhile free country an imperialistic and despotic power.

The military spirit is the most merciless, heartless and brutal in existence. It fosters an institution for which there is not even a pretense of justification. The soldier, to quote Tolstoi, is a professional man-killer. He does not kill for the love of it, like a savage, or in a passion, like a homicide. He is a cold-blooded, mechanical, obedient tool of his military superiors. He is ready to cut throats or scuttle a ship at the command of his ranking officer, without knowing or, perhaps, caring how, why or wherefore. I am supported in this contention by no less a military light than Gen. Funston. I quote from the latter's communication to the New York Evening Post of June 30, dealing with the case of Private William Buwalda, which caused such a stir all through the Northwest. "The first duty of an officer or enlisted man," says our noble warrior, "is unquestioning obedience and loyalty to the government to which he has sworn allegiance; it makes no difference whether he approves of that government or not."

How can we harmonize the principle of "unquestioning obedience"

with the principle of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”? The deadly power of militarism has never before been so effectually demonstrated in this country as in the recent condemnation by court-martial of William Buwalda, of San Francisco, Company A, Engineers, to five years in military prison. Here was a man who had a record of fifteen years of continuous service. “His character and conduct were unimpeachable,” we are told by Gen. Funston, who, in consideration of it, reduced Buwalda’s sentence to three years. Yet the man is thrown suddenly out of the army, dishonored, robbed of his chances of a pension and sent to prison. What was his crime? Just listen, ye free-born Americans! William Buwalda attended a public meeting, and after the lecture he shook hands with the speaker. Gen. Funston, in his letter to the Post, to which I have already referred above, asserts that Buwalda’s action was a “great military offense, infinitely worse than desertion.” In another public statement, which the General made in Portland, Ore., he said that “Buwalda’s was a serious crime, equal to treason.”

It is quite true that the meeting had been arranged by Anarchists. Had the Socialists issued the call, Gen. Funston informs us, there would have been no objection to Buwalda’s presence. Indeed, the General says, “I would not have the slightest hesitancy about attending a Socialist meeting myself.” But to attend an Anarchist meeting with Emma Goldman as speaker — could there be anything more “treasonable”?

For this horrible crime a man, a free-born American citizen, who has given this country the best fifteen years of his life, and whose character and conduct during that time were “unimpeachable,” is now languishing in a prison, dishonored, disgraced and robbed of a livelihood.

Can there be anything more destructive of the true genius of liberty than the spirit that made Buwalda’s sentence possible — the spirit of unquestioning obedience? Is it for this that the American people have in the last few years sacrificed four hundred million dollars and their hearts’ blood?

I believe that militarism — a standing army and navy in any country — is indicative of the decay of liberty and of the destruction of all that is best and finest in our nation. The steadily growing clamor for more battleships and an increased army on the ground that these guarantee us peace is as absurd as the argument that the peaceful man is he who goes well armed.

The same lack of consistency is displayed by those peace pretenders who oppose Anarchism because it supposedly teaches violence, and who would yet be delighted over the possibility of the American nation soon being able to hurl dynamite bombs upon defenseless enemies from flying machines.

I believe that militarism will cease when the liberty-loving spirits of the world say to their masters: "Go and do your own killing. We have sacrificed ourselves and our loved ones long enough fighting your battles. In return you have made parasites and criminals of us in times of peace and brutalized us in times of war. You have separated us from our brothers and have made of the world a human slaughterhouse. No, we will not do your killing or fight for the country that you have stolen from us."

Oh, I believe with all my heart that human brotherhood and solidarity will clear the horizon from the terrible red streak of war and destruction.

IV. AS TO FREE SPEECH AND PRESS

The Buwalda case is only one phase of the larger question of free speech, free press and the right of free assembly.

Many good people imagine that the principles of free speech or press can be exercised properly and with safety within the limits of constitutional guarantees. That is the only excuse, it seems to me, for the terrible apathy and indifference to the onslaught upon free speech and press that we have witnessed in this county within the last few months.

I believe that free speech and press mean that I may say and write what I please. This right, when regulated by constitutional provisions, legislative enactments, almighty decisions of the Postmaster General or the policeman's club, becomes a farce. I am well aware that I will be warned of consequences if we remove the chains from speech and press. I believe, however, that the cure of consequences resulting from the unlimited exercise of expression is to allow more expression.

Mental shackles have never yet stemmed the tide of progress, whereas premature social explosions have only too often been brought about through a wave of repression.

Will our governors never learn that countries like England, Holland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, with the largest freedom of expression, have been freest from "consequences"? Whereas Russia, Spain, Italy, France and, alas! even America, have raised these "consequences" to the most pressing political factor. Ours is supposed to be a country ruled by the majority, yet every policeman who is not vested with power by the majority can break up a meeting, drag the lecturer off the platform and club the audience out of the hall in true Russian fashion. The Postmaster General, who is not an elective officer, has the power to suppress publications and confiscate mail. From his decision there is no more appeal than from that of the Russian Czar. Truly, I believe we

need a new Declaration of Independence. Is there no modern Jefferson or Adams?

V. AS TO THE CHURCH

At the recent convention of the political remnants of a once revolutionary idea it was voted that religion and vote getting have nothing to do with each other. Why should they? "So long as man is willing to delegate to the devil the care of his soul, he might, with the same consistency, delegate to the politician the care of his rights. That religion is a private affair has long been settled by the Bis-Marxian Socialists of Germany. Our American Marxians, poor of blood and originality, must needs go to Germany for their wisdom. That wisdom has served as a capital whip to lash the several millions of people into the well-disciplined army of Socialism. It might do the same here. For goodness' sake, let's not offend respectability, let's not hurt the religious feelings of the people.

Religion is a superstition that originated in man's mental inability to solve natural phenomena. The Church is an organized institution that has always been a stumbling block to progress.

Organized churchism has stripped religion of its naïveté and primitiveness. It has turned religion into a nightmare that oppresses the human soul and holds the mind in bondage. "The Dominion of Darkness," as the last true Christian, Leo Tolstoi, calls the Church, has been a foe of human development and free thought, and as such it has no place in the life of a truly free people.

VI. AS TO MARRIAGE AND LOVE

I believe these are probably the most tabooed subjects in this country. It is almost impossible to talk about them without scandalizing the cherished propriety of a lot of good folk. No wonder so much ignorance prevails relative to these questions. Nothing short of an open, frank, and intelligent discussion will purify the air from the hysterical, sentimental rubbish that is shrouding these vital subjects, vital to individual as well as social well-being.

Marriage and love are not synonymous; on the contrary, they are often antagonistic to each other. I am aware of the fact that some marriages are actuated by love, but the narrow, material confines of marriage, as it is, speedily crush the tender flower of affection.

Marriage is an institution which furnishes the State and Church with a tremendous revenue and the means of prying into that phase

of life which refined people have long considered their own, their very own most sacred affair. Love is that most powerful factor of human relationship which from time immemorial has defied all man-made laws and broken through the iron bars of conventions in Church and morality. Marriage is often an economic arrangement purely, furnishing the woman with a life-long life insurance policy and the man with a perpetuator of his kind or a pretty toy. That is, marriage, or the training thereto, prepares the woman for the life of a parasite, a dependent, helpless servant, while it furnishes the man the right of a chattel mortgage over a human life.

How can such a condition of affairs have anything in common with love? — with the element that would forego all the wealth of money and power and live in its own world of untrammelled human expression? But this is not the age of romanticism, of Romeo and Juliet, Faust and Marguerite, of moonlight ecstasies, of flowers and songs. Ours is a practical age. Our first consideration is an income. So much the worse for us if we have reached the era when the soul's highest flights are to be checked. No race can develop without the love element.

But if two people are to worship at the shrine of love, what is to become of the golden calf, marriage? "It is the only security for the woman, for the child, the family, the State." But it is no security to love; and without love no true home can or does exist. Without love no child should be born; without love no true woman can be related to a man. The fear that love is not sufficient material safety for the child is out of date. I believe when woman signs her own emancipation, her first declaration of independence will consist in admiring and loving a man for the qualities of his heart and mind and not for the quantities in his pocket. The second declaration will be that she has the right to follow that love without let or hindrance from the outside world. The third and most important declaration will be the absolute right to free motherhood.

In such a mother and an equally free father rests the safety of the child. They have the strength, the sturdiness, the harmony to create an atmosphere wherein alone the human plant can grow into an exquisite flower.

VII. AS TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE

And now I have come to that point in my beliefs about which the greatest misunderstanding prevails in the minds of the American public. "Well, come, now, don't you propagate violence, the killing of crowned heads and Presidents?" Who says that I do? Have you heard me, has any

one heard me? Has anyone seen it printed in our literature? No, but the papers say so, everybody says so; consequently it must be so. Oh, for the accuracy and logic of the dear public!

I believe that Anarchism is the only philosophy of peace, the only theory of the social relationship that values human life above everything else. I know that some Anarchists have committed acts of violence, but it is the terrible economic inequality and great political injustice that prompt such acts, not Anarchism. Every institution to-day rests on violence; our very atmosphere is saturated with it. So long as such a state exists we might as well strive to stop the rush of Niagara as hope to do away with violence. I have already stated that countries with some measure of freedom of expression have had few or no acts of violence. What is the moral? Simply this: No act committed by an Anarchist has been for personal gain, aggrandizement or profit, but rather a conscious protest against some repressive, arbitrary, tyrannical measure from above.

President Carnot, of France, was killed by Caserio in response to Carnot's refusal to commute the death sentence of Vaillant, for whose life the entire literary, scientific and humanitarian world of France had pleaded.

Bresci went to Italy on his own money, earned in the silk weaving mills of Paterson, to call King Humbert to the bar of justice for his order to shoot defenseless women and children during a bread riot. Angelino executed Prime Minister Canovas for the latter's resurrection of the Spanish inquisition at Montjuich Prison. Alexander Berkman attempted the life of Henry C. Frick during the Homestead strike only because of his intense sympathy for the eleven strikers killed by Pinkertons and for the widows and orphans evicted by Frick from their wretched little homes that were owned by Mr. Carnegie.

Every one of these men not only made his reasons known to the world in spoken or written statements, showing the cause that led to his act, proving that the unbearable economic and political pressure, the suffering and despair of their fellow-men, women and children prompted the acts, and not the philosophy of Anarchism. They came openly, frankly and ready to stand the consequences, ready to give their own lives.

In diagnosing the true nature of our social disease I cannot condemn those who, through no fault of their own, are suffering from a widespread malady.

I do not believe that these acts can, or ever have been intended to, bring about the social reconstruction. That can only be done, first, by a broad and wide education as to man's place in society and his proper

relation to his fellows; and, second, through example. By example I mean the actual living of a truth once recognized, not the mere theorizing of its life element. Lastly, and the most powerful weapon, is the conscious, intelligent, organized, economic protest of the masses through direct action and the general strike.

The general contention that Anarchists are opposed to organization, and hence stand for chaos, is absolutely groundless. True, we do not believe in the compulsory, arbitrary side of organization that would compel people of antagonistic tastes and interests into a body and hold them there by coercion. Organization as the result of natural blending of common interests, brought about through voluntary adhesion, Anarchists do not only not oppose, but believe in as the only possible basis of social life.

It is the harmony of organic growth which produces variety of color and form — the complete whole we admire in the flower. Analogously will the organized activity of free human beings endowed with the spirit of solidarity result in the perfection of social harmony — which is Anarchism. Indeed, only Anarchism makes non-authoritarian organization a reality, since it abolishes the existing antagonism between individuals and classes.

5: Colin Ward

Anarchism - a short introduction (excerpts)



COLIN WARD (14 August 1924 – 11 February 2010) was a British anarchist writer. He has been called “one of the greatest anarchist thinkers of the past half century, and a pioneering social historian.” Ward’s philosophy aimed at removing authoritarian forms of social organisation and replacing them with self-managed, non-hierarchical forms. This form of federalism was put forward in part by Kropotkin and Proudhon and is based upon the principle that, as Ward put it, “in small face-to-face groups, the bureaucratising and hierarchical tendencies inherent in organisations have least opportunity to develop.” These excerpts are from his 2004 book, Anarchism - a very short introduction.



THE WORD ‘ANARCHY’ comes from the Greek *anarkhia*, meaning contrary to authority or without a ruler, and was used in a derogatory sense until 1840, when it was adopted by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon to describe his political and social ideology. Proudhon argued that organization without government was both possible and desirable. In the evolution of political ideas, anarchism can be seen as an ultimate projection of both liberalism and socialism, and the differing strands of anarchist thought can be related to their emphasis on one or the other of these.

Historically, anarchism arose not only as an explanation of the gulf between the rich and the poor in any community, and of the reason why the poor have been obliged to fight for their share of a common inheritance, but as a radical answer to the question ‘What went wrong?’ that followed the ultimate outcome of the French Revolution. It had ended not only with a reign of terror and the emergence of a newly rich ruling caste, but with a new adored emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, struggling through his conquered territories.

The anarchists and their precursors were unique on the political Left in affirming that workers and peasants, grasping the chance that arose

to bring an end to centuries of exploitation and tyranny, were inevitably betrayed by the new class of politicians, whose first priority was to re-establish a centralized state power. After every revolutionary uprising, usually won at a heavy cost for ordinary populations, the new rulers had no hesitation in applying violence and terror, a secret police, and a professional army to maintain their control.

For anarchists the state itself is the enemy, and they have applied the same interpretation to the outcome of every revolution of the 19th and 20th centuries. This is not merely because every state keeps a watchful and sometimes punitive eye on its dissidents, but because every state protects the privileges of the powerful. The mainstream of anarchist propaganda for more than a century has been anarchist-communism, which argues that property in land, natural resources, and the means of production should be held in mutual control by local communities, federating for innumerable joint purposes with other communes. It differs from state socialism in opposing the concept of any central authority. Some anarchists prefer to distinguish between anarchist-communism and collectivist anarchism in order to stress the obviously desirable freedom of an individual or family to possess the resources needed for living, while not implying the right to own the resources needed by others.

Anarcho-syndicalism puts its emphasis on the organized industrial workers who could, through a 'social general strike', expropriate the possessors of capital and thus engineer a workers' take-over of industry and administration. There are, unsurprisingly, several traditions of individualist anarchism, one of them deriving from the 'conscious egoism' of the German writer Max Stirner (1806–56), and another from a remarkable series of 19th-century American figures who argued that in protecting our own autonomy and associating with others for common advantages, we are promoting the good of all. These thinkers differed from free-market liberals in their absolute mistrust of American capitalism, and in their emphasis on mutualism. In the late 20th century the word 'libertarian', which people holding such a viewpoint had previously used as an alternative to the word 'anarchist', was appropriated by a new group of American thinkers. Pacifist anarchism follows both from the anti-militarism that accompanies rejection of the state, with its ultimate dependence on armed forces, and from the conviction that any morally viable human society depends upon the uncoerced goodwill of its members.

These and other threads of anarchist thought have different emphases. What links them all is their rejection of external authority, whether that of the state, the employer, or the hierarchies of administration and

of established institutions like the school and the church. The same is true of more recently emerging varieties of anarchist propaganda, green anarchism and anarchy-feminism. Like those who believe that animal liberation is an aspect of human liberation, they claim that the only ideology consistent with their aims is anarchism.

It is customary to relate the anarchist tradition to four major thinkers and writers. The first was William Godwin (1756–1836), who in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, published in 1793, set out the anarchist case against government, the law, property, and the institutions of the state. He was the partner of Mary Wollstonecraft and the father of Mary Shelley, and was an heir of both the English tradition of radical nonconformity and of the French philosophes. His book brought him instant fame, soon followed by hostility and neglect in the political climate of the early 19th century, but it had an underground life in radical circles until its rediscovery by the anarchist movement in the 1890s.

The second of these pioneers was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65), the French propagandist who was the first one to call himself an anarchist. He became famous in 1840 by virtue of an essay that declared that ‘Property is Theft’, but he also claimed that ‘Property is Freedom’. He saw no contradiction between these two slogans, since he thought it obvious that the first related to the landowner and capitalist whose ownership derived from conquest or exploitation and was sustained only through the state, its property laws, police, and army; while the second was concerned with the peasant or artisan family with an obvious natural right to a home, to the land it could cultivate, and to the tools of a trade, but not to ownership or control of the homes, land, or livelihood of others. Proudhon was criticized for being a mere survivor of the world of peasant farmers and small artisans in local communities, but he had a ready response in setting out the principles of successful federation.

The third of the classical anarchist luminaries was the Russian revolutionary Michael Bakunin (1814–76), deservedly famous for his disputes with Marx in the First International in the 1870s, where, for his successors, he predicted with remarkable accuracy the outcome of Marxist dictatorships in the 20th century. ‘Freedom without socialism,’ he said, ‘is privilege and injustice, but socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality.’ His elaborations on this perception are cited in innumerable books published since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and subsequently of the regimes it imposed on its satellites. Typical of Bakunin’s observations was a letter of 1872 in which he remarked:

I believe that Herr Marx is a very serious if not very honest revolutionary, and that he really is in favour of the rebellion of the masses, and I wonder how he manages to overlook the fact that the establishment of a universal dictatorship, collective or individual, a dictatorship which would create the post of a kind of chief engineer of world revolution, ruling and controlling the insurrectionary activity of the masses in all countries, as a machine might be controlled – that the establishment of such a dictatorship would in itself suffice to kill revolution and warp and paralyse all popular movements...

The last of these key thinkers was another Russian of aristocratic origin, Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921). His original reputation derived from his work as a geographer, and in a long series of books and pamphlets he sought to give anarchism a scientific basis. *The Conquest of Bread* (1892) was his manual on the self-organization of a post-revolutionary society. *Mutual Aid* (1902) was written to confront those misinterpretations of Darwinism that justified competitive capitalism, by demonstrating from the observation of animal and human societies that competition within species is far less significant than cooperation as a precondition for survival.

Fields, Factories and Workshops (1899) was Kropotkin's treatise on the humanization of work, through the integration of agriculture and industry, of brain work and physical work, and of intellectual and manual education. The most widely read on a global scale of all anarchist authors, he linked anarchism both with subsequent ideas of social ecology and with everyday experience.

Some anarchists would object to the identification of anarchism with its best-known writers. They would point out that everywhere in the world where anarchist ideas have arisen, there is a local activist conspiring to get access to a printing press, aware of the anarchist undercurrent in every uprising of the downtrodden all through history, and full of ideas about the application of anarchist solutions to local issues and dilemmas. They point to the way in which anarchist aspirations can be traced through the slave revolts of the ancient world, the peasant risings of medieval Europe, in the aims of the Diggers in the English Revolution of the 1640s, in the revolutions in France in 1789 and 1848, and the Paris Commune of 1871. In the 20th century, anarchism had a role in the Mexican Revolution of 1911, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and most notably in the revolution in Spain that followed the military uprising that precipitated the civil war in 1936.

In all these revolutions the fate of the anarchists was that of heroic

losers. But anarchists do not necessarily fit the stereotype of believers in some ultimate revolution, succeeding where all others had failed, and inaugurating Utopia. The German anarchist Gustav Landauer declared that:

The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.

Moreover, if the anarchists have not changed society in the ways that they hoped were possible, the same is true for the advocates of every other social ideology of the past century, whether socialist or capitalist. But, as I stress, they have contributed to a long series of small liberations that have lifted a huge load of human misery.

Anarchism has, in fact, an enduring resilience. Every European, North American, Latin American, and Asian society has had its anarchist publicists, journals, circles of adherents, imprisoned activists, and martyrs. Whenever an authoritarian and repressive political regime collapses, the anarchists are there, a minority urging their fellow citizens to absorb the lessons of the sheer horror and irresponsibility of government.

The anarchist press re-emerged in Germany after Hitler, in Italy after Mussolini, in Spain after Franco, in Portugal after Salazar, in Argentina after the generals, and in Russia after 70 years of brutal suppression. For anarchists this is an indication that the ideal of a self-organizing society based on voluntary cooperation rather than upon coercion is irrepressible. It represents, they claim, a universal human aspiration. This is illustrated by the way that people from non-European cultures took Western anarchist ideas and concepts and linked them to traditions and thinkers from their own countries.

Anarchist ideas were brought to Japan by Kotoku Shusui in the very early years of the 20th century. He had read Kropotkin's writings while in prison during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. When released he visited California, making contact with the militant anarcho-syndicalists of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and returned to Japan to publish an anti-militarist journal, *Heimen*. Kotoku claimed that there was always an anarchist undercurrent in Japanese life, deriving from both Buddhism and Taoism. He was one of 12 anarchists executed in 1911, accused of plotting against the Emperor Meiji. All through the first half of the century, a series of successors continued propaganda and industrial action against militarism, and

were suppressed by government, to reappear in a changed climate after the horrors of the Second World War. Chinese anarchism emerged at much the same time, through the influence of students who had been to Tokyo or to Paris. Those who studied in Japan were influenced by Kotoku Shusui, and stressed the links with a long-established stream in Chinese life. As Peter Marshall explains,

Modern anarchism not only advocated the Taoist rural idyll, but also echoed the peasant longing embedded in Chinese culture for a frugal and egalitarian millennium which had expressed itself in peasant rebellions throughout Chinese history. It further struck a chord with two traditional concepts, Ta-t'ung, a legendary golden age of social equality and harmony, and Ching-t'ien, a system of communal land tenure.

Those young Chinese who studied in Paris were attracted by the writings of Bakunin and Kropotkin, as well as by Darwinian evolutionary theory. They rejected attempts to link anarchism with Lao Tzu's Taoism and with agrarian history. With the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911, both anarchist factions thought that their hour had come. But in fact the revolutionary ideology that slowly triumphed in the turbulent history of 20th-century China was that of the Marxist-Leninists. And as we shall see, the programmes imposed by force on the Chinese were a dictatorial parody of anarchist aspirations.

Korea, too, has an anarchist tradition linked with 19th-century hopes for peasant communism, but due to 35 years of Japanese occupation fiercely resisted by the anarchists, among other political factions, their reputation is that of patriots in a country where the North is a Marxist dictatorship while the South is a model of American-style capitalism.

In India the history of the first half of the 20th century, and the struggle to end British rule, was dominated by Mohandas K. Gandhi, who built a unique ideology of non-violent resistance and peasant socialism from a series of semi-anarchist sources and linked them with Indian traditions. From Tolstoy he evolved his policy of non-violent resistance, from Thoreau he took his philosophy of civil disobedience, and from a close reading of Kropotkin his programme of decentralized and autonomous village communes linking agriculture with local industry. After independence was achieved, his political successors revered his memory but ignored his ideas. Later in the century Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya movement sought a non-violent land-based revolution, rejecting the politics of central government.

In Africa, Mbah and Igarewey, the authors of a study of the failure of

state socialism imposed by governments, draw attention to the seemingly endemic problem of ethnic conflicts across the continent; the continued political and economic marginalization of Africa at the global level; the unspeakable misery of about 90 per cent of Africa's population; and, indeed, the ongoing collapse of the nation state in many parts of Africa.

They argue that:

Given these problems, a return to the 'anarchic elements' in African communalism is virtually inevitable. The goal of a self-managed society born out of the free will of its people and devoid of authoritarian control and regimentation is as attractive as it is feasible in the long run.

The reader may wonder why, if ideas and aspirations similar to those of the anarchists can be traced through so many cultures around the world, the concept is so regularly misunderstood or caricatured. The answer is to be found in a very small episode in anarchist history.

There was a period, a century ago, when a minority of anarchists, like the subsequent minorities of a dozen other political movements, believed that the assassination of monarchs, princes, and presidents would hasten popular revolution. Sad to say, the most deserving victims, Mussolini, Franco, Hitler, or Stalin, were well protected, and in terms of changing the course of history and ridding the world of its tyrants the anarchists were no more successful than most subsequent political assassins. But their legacy has been the cartoonist's stereotype of the anarchist as the cloaked and bearded carrier of a spherical bomb with a smoking fuse, and this has consequently provided yet another obstacle to the serious discussion of anarchist approaches. Meanwhile, modern political terrorism on an indiscriminate scale is the monopoly of governments and is directed at civilian populations, or is the weapon we all associate with religious or nationalist separatism, both of them very far from the aspirations of anarchists. In the entry for 'Anarchism' that Kropotkin wrote in 1905 for the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, he began by explaining that it is

the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government – harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements, concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also

for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilised being.

Implicit in this definition is the inevitability of compromise, an ordinary aspect of politics which has been found difficult by anarchists, precisely because their ideology precludes the usual routes to political influence.

...

In the course of the revolutionary outbreaks that spread across Europe in 1848 the Prefect of Police in Paris is said to have remarked of the anarchist Michael Bakunin, 'What a man! On the first day of the revolution he is a perfect treasure; but on the next day he ought to be shot.' His observation epitomizes both the role and the ultimate fate of the anarchists and their precursors in a long series of European popular uprisings.

Chroniclers of all political movements invariably discover antecedents from the past, and the anarchists found ancestors in the slave revolts of the Roman Empire and in all subsequent revolutionary upheavals of the downtrodden. They have similarly identified precursors in such risings as the Peasants' Revolt that began in England in 1391, in the insurrection of the Taborites in Bohemia in 1493 and that of the Anabaptists a century later. In the English Revolution of the civil war years leading up to 1649, the anarchist element was illustrated by the activities of the Diggers, Ranters, and Levellers, who, having helped to ensure Cromwell's success, were described by one pamphleteer as 'Switzerising anarchists' and were rapidly eliminated once the Protector was securely in power, only to be followed by the eventual return of the monarchy. But the people who dared to remove a king had opened the way to more radical thoughts on the relationship between the individual and the community and between society and the state. The American and French revolutions of the following century brought a message beautifully expressed in Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* in 1776:

Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries by a government which we might expect in a country without a government, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence: the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise.

Political ideas crossed the Atlantic almost as rapidly in the 18th century as in the 21st, and the American Revolution made the French Revolution inevitable. Jefferson, Paine, and Franklin had a role in both, while William Godwin in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* was arguing the anarchist case from first principles. Meanwhile, a series of brave opponents of the new French state, known as the Enragés and gathered around Jacques Roux and Jean Varlet, opposed the new rulers. Varlet, who actually survived the Terror, observed that

Despotism has passed from the palace of kings to the circle of a committee. It is neither the royal robes, nor the sceptre, nor the crown, that makes kings hated, but ambition and tyranny. In my country there has been only a change in dress.

Anarchism reappeared in the European revolutions of 1848. In the following year, after the failure of the revolution in Dresden, Bakunin was imprisoned, condemned to death, and after a year handed over to the Austrians, condemned again, but in the next year handed over to the Russians. After six years in the Peter-and-Paul fortress at St Petersburg he was exiled to Siberia, whence he eventually escaped to London by way of Japan, San Francisco, and New York. After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, Proudhon's federalist ideas shaped the short-lived Paris Commune and its *Manifesto to the French People* of April 1871, which urged:

The absolute autonomy of the Commune extended to all the localities of France, assuring to each its integral rights and to every Frenchman the full exercise of his aptitudes, as a man, a citizen, and a worker. The autonomy of the Commune will have for its limits only the equal autonomy of all other communities adhering to the contract; their association must assure the liberty of France.

(Needless to say, although the Commune had an admired anarchist heroine, Louise Michel, its Manifesto did not extend these rights to Frenchwomen.)

In the major revolutions of the 20th century there were recognizable anarchist elements, but in each of them the anarchists were victims of the new rulers. In Mexico, Ricardo Flores Magon and his brothers had in 1900 begun publication of an anarcho-sindicalist newspaper *Regeneración*, building up opposition to the dictator Porfirio Diaz,

slipping across the border into California when publication became too difficult. With the fall of Diaz, Magon established contact with the peasant revolutionary Emiliano Zapata in the state of Morales in the South, fighting the efforts of large landowners to annex the land of poor growers. Magon is said to have made Zapata literate through reading and discussing Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread*. Zapata was ambushed and killed in 1919, while Magon was jailed in the United States and was murdered in Leavenworth Penitentiary in 1923. Ironically, both men are celebrated in the Rotunda of Illustrious Men in Mexico City. The contemporary EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) is Mexico's modern incarnation of Zapata's campaign, as is, for example, the MST (Movement of Landless Rural Workers) in Brazil. Both of these are campaigns of dispossessed peasants for communal control of land seized by large-scale cattle-ranching oligarchies.

In the Russian Revolution of 1917 the Bolshevik seizure of power was pushed through with anarchist slogans like 'Bread and Freedom' and 'All Power to the Soviets', which were very far from daily experience in the new regime. The anarchist hero of the revolution was the Ukrainian peasant Nestor Makhno, organizing peasant land seizures and defending them from both the Bolsheviks and the Whites. Returning Russian exiles included Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, deported from the United States, and Kropotkin, who had been obliged to live abroad for 40 years. Kropotkin addressed critical letters to Lenin and wrote a *Letter to the Workers of Western Europe* describing for them the lessons of the Russian Revolution. His funeral in 1921 was the last occasion when the Russian anarchists were at liberty until the slow releases from Stalin's prison camps after 1956.

Goldman and Berkman tried to tell the truth about Lenin's Russia when they left the country, but found that the political Left in the West rejected their message, seeing it as 'counter-revolutionary'. The same kind of exclusion by the political Left faced continual anarchist attempts to reveal the truth about the Soviet Union, while Stalinist infiltration destroyed the integrity of a long series of workers' organizations in the West.

Italy's anarchist tradition began when Bakunin settled there in 1863, recommended to fellow revolutionaries by Garibaldi and Mazzini, whose nationalism he actually opposed in the name of communal autonomy and federalism. To this period of Bakunin's life belong his polemics against Marx which, accurately and uniquely, foresaw the evolution of Marxist dictatorships in the 20th century. His disciple Errico Malatesta, who died under house arrest in Mussolini's Italy, initiated streams of anarchist propaganda in Italy and Latin America, which still flow to this

day in the form of an impressive spread of publications and campaigns. In the Far East, the habit of sending young men from affluent families to complete their education in Europe led to a string of revolutionary students bringing back to China from Paris the anarchist message of Kropotkin in his propagandist books *The Conquest of Bread*, *Mutual Aid*, and especially *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. Many of the shifts and turns of Communist Party policy in China in the 1950s and 1960s have recognizable links with Kropotkin's agenda, although, of course, they were imposed with the utmost indifference to human suffering. The celebrated novelist Pa Chin (Li Pai Kan) saw Emma Goldman as his 'spiritual mother' and constructed his pseudonym from one syllable each of the names Bakunin and Kropotkin. Needless to say, he was subjected to 're-education' several times, and, in 1989, at the age of 84, was arrested because of his support for the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square.

But the country where anarchism put down its deepest roots was Spain, which in the 1930s had both a mass anarcho-syndicalist trade union, the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo), and the FAI (Federación Anarquista Iberica), an anarchist body which emerged periodically from an underground existence. The revolution of 19 July 1936 in Spain illustrates another gulf between the anarchist account of events and the way they are perceived and described by more influential voices.

On 18 July 1936, Spain had three Popular Front governments in the course of a single day, debating how to oppose the military revolt from the generals in Morocco, which was moving into mainland Spain, and usually concluding that resistance was futile. Meanwhile in several cities and regions, not only were the weapons of the military garrisons and the civil guards seized, but CNT members took control of factories, transport, and land. The following day marked the beginning, not only of a war against Franco's insurrection, but of a popular revolution.

Franco's rebellion was aided by weapons, troops, and bomber aircraft from Mussolini's Italy and Nazi Germany, but the Non-Intervention Agreement upheld by the British and French governments limited the supply of arms for the anti-Fascist forces to those provided (at the cost of Spain's gold reserves) by the Soviet Union. A further heavy penalty was paid for Soviet support. Stalin's foreign policy required the repudiation of the Spanish revolution in the interests of the 'Popular Front' concept. In the effort to resist growing Soviet influence, anarchist and syndicalist militants actually became ministers both in the Catalan government in Barcelona and in the central government in Madrid.

The war in Spain wound down to its desolate conclusion in April

1939, after immense loss of life. In August that year the non-aggression pact between Stalin and Hitler was signed, and in September the Second World War began. Franco's regime in Spain survived until the dictator's death in 1975. The collapse of opposition brought a relentless campaign of vengeance against those who dared to oppose Franco. There were untold numbers of executions and the prisons were filled. Millions of Spaniards lived out their lives in exile.

From the point of view of the anarchists, Spain thus provided terrible ironies. In terms of the collectivization of agriculture and industry, it gave a living and inspiring example of Kropotkin's theories about the seizure of control by the workers. In those parts of the country that had not been seized by army units supporting Franco there were large-scale seizures of land. Spain was a predominantly agricultural country, in which 67% of the land was owned by 2% of landowners. At the same time many smallholdings were too small to feed a family. Gerald Brenan, in his classic book *The Spanish Labyrinth*, explained that 'the only reasonable solution through wide tracts of Spain is a collective one'.

In 1936 it was estimated that in those parts of Spain not overrun by Franco's troops, about three million men, women, and children were living in collectivized communes. Observers from the time similarly reported on the collectivization of factories in Catalonia and of the reorganization of public services, transport, telephones, gas, and electricity in Barcelona.

The American philosopher of language Noam Chomsky remembers reading about these achievements as a boy in New York, in the Yiddish-language anarchist journal *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*. There stayed in his mind a report on a poverty-stricken Spanish town, Membrilla, in whose miserable huts eight thousand people lived, with 'no newspaper, no cinema, neither a café nor a library'. But the villagers shared food, clothing, and tools, and took in a large number of refugees. 'It was, however, not a socialisation of wealth but of poverty... Membrilla is perhaps the poorest village of Spain, but it is the most just.' Chomsky comments that

An account such as this, with its concern for human relations and the ideal of a just society, must appear very strange to the consciousness of the sophisticated intellectual, and it is therefore treated with scorn, or taken to be naive or primitive or otherwise irrational. Only when such prejudice is abandoned will it be possible for historians to undertake a serious study of the popular movement that transformed Republican Spain in one of the most remarkable social revolutions that history records.

By now the serious studies have been made, and Chomsky has stressed their significance and their lessons for the future, since, as he says,

What attracts me about anarchism personally are the tendencies in it that try to come to grips with the problems of dealing with complex organised industrial societies within a framework of free institutions and structures.

The Spanish experience hardly met the second of his criteria, but the events of 1936 amply justified his comments. These achievements were barely noticed in the news media of Western Europe outside the journals of anarchism and the non-communist far Left, and when George Orwell, back from Spain, attempted to puncture the conspiracy of silence in his *Homage to Catalonia* in 1937, his book had sold a mere 300 copies before being remaindered to the anarchist bookshop in 1940. Many decades later, Ken Loach's film *Land and Freedom* (1995) was rapturously received in Spain for dramatizing a key episode in the civil war, hitherto almost unknown in Spain itself.

Needless to say, in the years of exile, those anarchists who had survived both the war and Franco's revenge devoted endless debate to the fatal decision of the leaders of the CNT to become part of government in an effort to combat Soviet dominance. Since every variety of anarchism has opposed the structure of politics and the political system, this decision was seen as a compromise that brought no advantage and much discredit. Those anarchists who have explored the issue tend to agree with the comment of the veteran French anarchist Sébastien Faure: 'I am aware of the fact that it is not always possible to do what one should do; but I know that there are things that on no account can one ever do.' Meanwhile, decades later, a new series of popular uprisings rediscovered anarchist slogans in heroic defiance of Stalin's apparently monolithic empire. Suppressed aspirations emerged on the streets of Hungarian and Polish cities in 1956 and on those of Czechoslovakia in 1968. They were harbingers of the subsequent bloodless collapse of the Soviet Union, after decades of appalling suffering for those who, usually inadvertently, failed to please their rulers.

As the regimes of their jailers collapsed around them, there was some comfort for the surviving anarchists, with their black flags of protest against the new capitalism steered into being by their old oppressors. They were still monotonously right and their priorities remained the same.

6: Comrades of the Chaco

Anarchist manifesto

*Anarchist ideas were introduced into Latin America by European immigrants during the 1860's. The anti-authoritarian International generated significant support in several Latin American countries, and anarchists helped organize some of the first trade unions. The two largest Latin American anarchist movements were in Argentina and Brazil, but anarchists were active throughout Latin America. The following manifesto was published in 1892 by a Paraguayan anarchist communist group calling itself 'THE COMRADES OF THE CHACO' (reprinted in *El Anarquismo en America Latina*, Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1990, ed. A. J. Cappeletti and C. M. Rama). Paraguay was a particularly impoverished country plagued by seemingly interminable political conflict among its ruling classes and with neighbouring states. The English translation of this piece is by Paul Sharkey and it was originally published in Volume I of Robert Graham's phenomenal *Anarchism - A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*.*



WE ARE ANARCHIST-COMMUNISTS and, being such, mean to spread complete emancipation of the proletariat while fighting to abolish the iniquitous exploitation of man by his neighbour, and we pledge all our moral and material resources to the eradication of all tyranny and the establishment of genuine liberty, equality and fraternity in the family of man.

The essential reason for publication of this manifesto is to express our malaise. For which the current (so mistakenly described as civilized) social system is to blame; as well as to say what we are and what we want, with revolutionary selflessness and the conviction that our cries of indignation will rouse capital's new slaves from the languor of their slumbers. We are in an age of enlightenment when we can see very clearly that everything in nature, such as land, water, air, sunshine, moonlight and the other elements that go to make up the Universe, belong to every being on this planet of ours, since those elements created us and sustain our existence.

It is high time that it was acknowledged that everything artificial in our earthly home, like cities, vast tracts of uncultivated land, canals, ports, sea lanes and land routes, instruments of labour and all the advances of science, are the handiwork of many generations and of thousands upon thousands of workers and thus are equally the property of all and not the sole preserve of a privileged class, phoney politicians, swindlers, clericals, murderers of humanity who protect the big thieves and the murderers and butchers of innocents and exploiters of the working man; in short, everything around us that exists belongs to all workers since we helped create it with our sweat and our blood; we did, and not the band of leeches who, with their constitutions, codes, imaginary gods and holy madonnas have made themselves gods and governors so that they might live off the backs of the producer and steal the gold that we ourselves have extracted from the bowels of the earth...

It is we workers, bricklayers, who erect magnificent, grand, airy palaces and it is a crime if we allow others who command and kill us in the name of fatherland and law to live there while we live in a filthy hovel and, in most instances, do not even have a roof over our heads.

It is we who produce the food and it is a crime for us to allow our children to perish of hunger just so that those who do not lift a finger, other than to turn our wives and children into prostitutes, can stuff themselves until they die. It is we that weave the rich tapestries and cashmere, make elegant garments and go about in rags as a result of letting ourselves be robbed without putting up any resistance, whereupon these thieves treat us as filthy scoundrels on account of our cravenness and we find ourselves in the ranks of the degraded.

We are the ones who make picture books for our education and then vegetate in the crassest ignorance because we let them be read by those who think themselves superior to us, and who reward our slavishness by calling us ignoramuses and brutes; rightly so, because any man who does not bridle at a tyranny that diminishes his human dignity, is a lesser animal than the rest, since they, who have no capacity for reason, rebel against those who would enslave them.

In short, we workers are the producers of all the wealth of society and in repayment for so very many sacrifices, we find ourselves enslaved, humiliated, oppressed and exploited; in short, we are the victims of this struggle and warfare in the workers' ranks, a struggle and a war stoked by politicians who are driven to provoke butchery in the family of man because of their ambition to rule and rob.

7: Itō Noe

The facts of anarchy



ITŌ NOE (1895 - 1923) was a Japanese anarchist feminist and later the companion of Ōsugi Sakae, with whom she was murdered by the Japanese military police in 1923. She was a leading figure in the Japanese feminist Bluestocking Society, and translated Emma Goldman into Japanese. The following excerpts are taken from her article, The Facts of Anarchy, originally published in 1921 in Rōdō Undō (the Labour Movement). Itō argues that the Japanese peasant village was a functioning anarchist society based on mutual agreement and mutual aid. The translation by Yoshiharu Hashimoto, originally published in A Short History of the Anarchist Movement in Japan (Tokyo: Idea Publishing, 1979), has been modified for stylistic reasons. The English translation of this piece was originally published in Volume I of Robert Graham's Anarchism - A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas.



WE HAVE OFTEN HEARD THE ABUSE that the ideal of anarchist communism is an unrealizable fancy. Everyone clings to the superstitious belief that autonomy cannot be achieved without the support of a central government. In particular, some socialists sneer at the “dream” of anarchism. Yet I have found that it is not a dream, but something aspects of which have been realized in the autonomy of the villages inherited from our ancestors. In some remote districts where there is no so-called “culture,” I have discovered a simple mutual aid and a social life based on mutual agreement. It is completely different from “administration” under central government, being a mutual aid organization generated by necessity and continued in parallel with the official administration since before the time when there was an “administrative organ.”

Now I want to depict the facts that I have seen personally at my native village...

There are sixty to seventy houses divided into six small associations, and these six associations federate with each other as the occasion demands. There are no chains of command or officials. The

spirit of the associations, inherited from their ancestors, is “to assist each other in times of trouble.” [At village meetings] everyone frankly speaks his own thoughts. There is no fearful atmosphere to make one too timid to express his own opinion. In fact, there is no discrimination, whether he is a village master or a daily labourer. There is neither haughtiness nor humility.

How are decisions made? They do it together. Generally, if it is practical or based on clear facts, even more if everyone has offered his knowledge and opinions, the decision will be reached spontaneously...

When a sick person must take to his bed, the news will be reported to the association. The members will rush to the house. Some will get a doctor, others will report it to his relatives; they go on these errands or nurse him kindly. In cases of childbirth, the women of the association come together. They take care of everything until the mother rises again. Everything else, whenever help is needed, the association will provide it without complaint. Of course there will be two or three families out of favour with the members. With respect to helping such families, although the members may speak ill of them or even complain, they will never refuse to help, for they distinguish between their work for the association and their personal antipathies.

Administrative tasks are shared by the members. If a particular task is long lasting, shifts are arranged so that there is no inconvenience. The responsibility of each member to the association is not coerced or unwilling. He performs his role so as to follow his conscience. No command or supervision is needed. After the satisfactory resolution of a particular task, an association formed for that purpose is dissolved. The unit of federation [in each village] is not the association, but each home.

The police seem useless to the association. Quarrels are mainly settled by the association. A couple from a certain family stole something. The victim had proof and previous knowledge. The victimized family summoned the couple [before the association] and scolded them. Both the victims and the thieves agreed as a settlement of the matter to the announcement that the couple would be expelled from the assembly if they committed the crime again. Expulsion is the last resort. When one receives this punishment, no one dares to associate with him. So they think of the seriousness of this punishment and do not impose it on someone unless his deed is intolerable. As far as I know, I have not heard of this great punishment being imposed on a family.

Egoistic urban life is intolerable to those accustomed to village life. Where there is no hope of success besides poverty, it is far more comfortable and warm to support each other under the protection of the association.

8: The bolo'bolo collective

Statement of values

THE BOLO'BOLO COLLECTIVE is an anarchist affinity group based in Cape Town, South Africa. We run a radical infoshop and vegan coffee house in one of the more Bohemian suburbs of Cape Town and publish a variety of anarchist zines and books (including the one you're reading right now), as well as our in-house newspaper, Incendiary Times. This is our original collective statement of values.



WE HAVE A PASSIONATE COMMITMENT to liberty and equality. We believe that these two values are not at odds with each other but instead form two parts of a deeper principle of equal-liberty which in turn forms the basis of real freedom, both for individuals and for communities. (Or, as Mikhail Bakunin said, none of us are free until all of us are free.)

We believe that society works best for everyone if it runs on principles of mutual aid, solidarity, consensus and voluntary cooperation; that we do better when we collaborate than when we compete and that we are all bound up with each other, affecting others directly or indirectly by our actions and being affected by theirs in return.

We are opposed to capitalism in all its forms and, more broadly, to any formalised model of exchange or competition that seeks to attribute a quantifiable value to everything and reduces social participation to the logic of markets, thereby reducing the complexity of human life and human beings to nothing more than tradeable (replaceable) commodities.

We are opposed to the existence of the State form, to all governments, past, present and future and to all other coercive, top-down social arrangements that seek to separate us from the power we can hold together as equals.

Beyond this, but equally importantly, we are opposed to all other relations of hierarchy, domination and exploitation, to any instance where one group or individual holds power over another group or individual. This includes, but is not limited to, sexism, racism, organised religion, speciesism, ableism and heteronormativity.

We take an abolitionist, revolutionary approach towards achieving our goals as opposed to a reformist one; we do not believe that it is sufficient, or wise even, to appeal to those in power via the false forms of political participation they have presented to us. This includes the electoral apparatus and the legal system. To put it more succinctly, we believe in the power of direct action over that of a politics of demand.

We believe that in order to reach the society we envisage, we need to oppose the logic of contemporary class divided society where a small minority of rulers holds near-absolute political and economic power over the rest of us. We call this opposition class warfare, although we must always remember that we did not start this war: we were born into it.

We acknowledge that the class war can only be won by the broad masses of oppressed people and not by small groups of vanguardists or elites who, more often than not, are fighting not for real changes but for superficial ones which tend to uphold the dominant arrangements of power. Our role is that of a spark lighting a flame.

We further acknowledge, however, that we do not need to, nor should we, wait until after the revolution to experience anarchy. We can prefigure it here and now, practicing and experimenting with life as we know it could be lived, in glorious insurrectionary defiance of the current order. We proudly self-identify as anarchists and see no point in concealing this fact through euphemism or obfuscation. Through this we are able to draw attention to the rich history and ideals of anarchism and challenge common misconceptions about them.

We remain critical of the Left with whom we enjoy a complex and uneasy relationship. We are especially opposed to the dogma and authoritarianism of many Leftist groups and individuals.

We practice non-specieism as a logical extension of the anarchist principle of equality. We believe that the objectification of other animals is profoundly problematic and reject hierarchical relations towards them. For us, this entails veganism as an ethical baseline.

We do not see ourselves as separate from the rest of humanity, from other living creatures or from the natural world. We see the capitalist exploitation of the environment as profoundly at odds with the interests of all species, including humankind. Although necessary, we do not believe that reducing or changing our consumption on an individual level is sufficient; in addition, we need to challenge the myopic, destructive logic of capitalism itself.

We entertain a plurality of ideas between us and do not always reach agreement on everything. We do, however, all agree that both evolutionary and revolutionary struggles will likely form part of any sustained movement towards anarchy and we are thus open to embracing a diversity of strategies and tactics without dogmatically renouncing them in advance. In this we try to remain as non-sectarian as possible.

Perhaps most importantly, we are committed to struggling together joyously and tirelessly, with courage and compassion, in hope and solidarity, as free and unique equals walking the long, winding roads towards liberation.



SECTION TWO: WHAT MUST GO

In this section, we examine some of the oppressive ideologies, institutions and social relations that anarchists seek to eradicate, including the State, capitalism and religion. We also look at anarchist critiques of hierarchy and domination in general, noting some of the alienating, stratifying and disempowering effects of all top-down arrangements of power.

THE STATE

9: Donald Rooum

The origin of government and democracy



DONALD ROOUM (born 20 April 1928) is an English anarchist cartoonist and writer. He was an editor of Freedom Press during the '40s and has remained a supporter ever since - Freedom have published seven volumes of his Wildcat anarchist cartoons. Rooum was a founding member of the Malatesta Club, an anarchist social club and venue that opened in London on May Day 1954. In 1963 he played a key role in exposing Harold Challenor, a corrupt police officer who tried to frame him. This excerpt is from Donald Rooum and Freedom Press (ed.). What Is Anarchism? An Introduction. London: Freedom Press, 1995.



THE ORIGIN OF GOVERNMENT

For most of its existence, the entire human species lived by foraging. Modern foraging societies inhabit widely different environments, in rain forests, tropical deserts and the Arctic. Nevertheless they have similar ways of social organisation, so it seems reasonable to suppose that prehistoric foragers were similarly organised.

There are no rulers, bosses, chieftains, or elected councils. Day-to-day decisions are made by consensus. The rules of good behaviour are decided by custom and consensus, and enforced by what some anthropologists call “diffuse sanctions”.

Anarchists do not advocate return to a foraging economy, but use the fact that our ancestors lived for a million years without government as evidence that societies without government are viable.

This leaves anarchists with a question to be answered. If the first human societies were anarchies, then the first government must have arisen out of anarchy. How can this have happened?

There is no historical record of the event, because writing was not invented until governments were well established. But there are plausible conjectures, consistent with archeological and anthropological evidence.

Farming people, unlike foraging people, need to predict the cycle of seasons, so that they know when to do the planting. For early farmers, the method of prediction was to observe and remember the movements of the stars, a skilled job which must be done when most people are asleep. Perhaps early farmers had specialists in weather prediction. Perhaps these specialists acquired a reputation for actually controlling the weather, and were given privileges in return for ensuring that the seasons followed the required sequence.

A reputation for magical power does not in itself, however, make anyone into a boss. Anarchists see a more likely origin of government in systematic robbery.

Early farmers were probably harassed by foragers, who would of course regard a field of crops as a bonanza. There may also have been ex-farmers turned robbers because their crops had failed. Perhaps some of the robbers learned to take only part of the produce, leaving the farmers enough to live on. Perhaps they made themselves tolerable to the farmers by driving other would-be robbers away.

Anyway, by the time writing was invented the functions of weather controller and robber-defender were combined in the same person. A formidable combination of magic and coercion.

All over the world, there were royal families considered to be demigods, and a member of the royal family was chosen to become a god or the messenger of God, chief priest, absolute ruler, law-giver, and supreme commander of the armed forces.

Monarchy remained the universal form of top government for thousands of years, and most states retain some of the ritual trappings of monarchy.

DEMOCRACY

“Government of the people, by the people, for the people” is a poetic phrase which uses “the people” in three different senses: the people as a collection of individuals, the people as the majority, and the people as a single entity. In prosaic terms, it means power over individuals, exercised by the majority through its elected officers, for the benefit of the whole population. This is the ideal of democracy.

Voters in a democratic election contribute to the choice of who shall exercise power on behalf of the majority, and in doing so consent to be ruled by whoever the majority chooses.

For five thousand years, monarchy was the mark of civilisation. In less than two hundred years, the norm of civilisation has become democracy. Military usurpers used to claim, either that the throne was rightfully theirs, or that they were acting on behalf of the monarch. Military dictators today claim, either that they have a mandate from the people, or that they are going to organise elections when order has been restored.

It used to be generally accepted that people had a duty to surrender their power unconditionally to a hereditary monarch. Now the accepted form is for citizens to surrender their power periodically, to rulers chosen by majority voting.

Anarchists are against the surrender of power, and therefore against democracy. Not just against the perversion of democracy (though that is often mentioned), but against the democratic ideal. They do not want people to give power to whoever they choose; they want people to keep their power for themselves.

THE STATE

10: Mikhail Bakunin Man, Society and Freedom



MIKHAIL ALEXANDROVICH BAKUNIN (30 May 1814 – 1 July 1876) was a Russian revolutionary anarchist, and founder of collectivist anarchism. He is considered among the most influential figures of anarchism, and one of the principle founders of the “social anarchist” tradition. Bakunin’s enormous prestige as an activist made him one of the most famous ideologues in Europe, and he gained substantial influence among radicals throughout Russia and Europe. This excerpt is from Bakunin on Anarchy, translated and edited by Sam Dolgoff, 1971. Man, Society and Freedom is taken from a long, unfinished note to The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution, actually penned by Bakunin’s close associates Carlo Cafiero and Élisée Reclus in 1871.



THE DOCTRINAIRE LIBERALS, reasoning from the premises of individual freedom, pose as the adversaries of the State. Those among them who maintain that the government, i.e., the body of functionaries organized and designated to perform the functions of the State is a necessary evil, and that the progress of civilization consists in always and continuously diminishing the attributes and the rights of the States, are inconsistent. Such is the theory, but in practice these same doctrinaire liberals, when the existence or the stability of the State is seriously threatened, are just as fanatical defenders of the State as are the monarchists and the Jacobins.

Their adherence to the State, which flatly contradicts their liberal maxims, can be explained in two ways: in practice, their class interests make the immense majority of doctrinaire liberals members of the bourgeoisie. This very numerous and respectable class demand, only for themselves, the exclusive rights and privileges of complete license. The

socioeconomic base of its political existence rests upon no other principle than the unrestricted license expressed in the famous phrases *laissez faire* and *laissez aller*. But they want this anarchy only for themselves, not for the masses who must remain under the severe discipline of the State because they are “too ignorant to enjoy this anarchy without abusing it.” For if the masses, tired of working for others, should rebel, the whole bourgeois edifice would collapse. Always and everywhere, when the masses are restless, even the most enthusiastic liberals immediately reverse themselves and become the most fanatical champions of the omnipotence of the State.

In addition to this practical reason, there is still another of a theoretical nature which also leads even the most sincere liberals back to the cult of the State. They consider themselves liberals because their theory on the origin of society is based on the principle of individual freedom, and it is precisely because of this that they must inevitably recognize the absolute right [sovereignty] of the State.

According to them individual freedom is not a creation, a historic product of society. They maintain, on the contrary, that individual freedom is anterior to all society and that all men are endowed by God with an immortal soul. Man is accordingly a complete being, absolutely independent, apart from and outside society. As a free agent, anterior to and apart from society, he necessarily forms his society by a voluntary act, a sort of contract, be it instinctive or conscious, tacit or formal. In short, according to this theory, individuals are not the product of society but, on the contrary, are led to create society by some necessity such as work or war.

It follows from this theory that society, strictly speaking, does not exist. The natural human society, the beginning of all civilization, the only milieu in which the personality and the liberty of man is formed and developed does not exist for them. On the one hand, this theory recognizes only self — sufficient individuals living in isolation, and on the other hand, only a society arbitrarily created by them and based only on a formal or tacit contract, i.e., on the State. (They know very well that no state in history has ever been created by contract, and that all states were established by conquest and violence.)

The mass of individuals of whom the State consists are seen as in line with this theory, which is singularly full of contradictions. Each of them is, considered on the one hand, an immortal soul endowed with free will. All are untrammelled beings altogether sufficient unto themselves and in need of no other person, not even God, for, being immortal, they are themselves gods. On the other hand, they are brutal, weak, imperfect, limited, and altogether subject to the forces of nature which

encompass them and sooner or later carry them off to their graves....

Under the aspect of their earthly existence, the mass of men present so sorry and degrading a spectacle, so poor in spirit, in will and initiative, that one must be endowed with a truly great capacity for self-delusion, to detect in them an immortal soul, or even the faintest trace of free will. They appear to be absolutely determined: determined by exterior nature, by the stars, and by all the material conditions of their lives; determined by laws and by the whole world of ideas or prejudices elaborated in past centuries, all of which they find ready to take over their lives at birth. The immense majority of individuals, not only among the ignorant masses but also among the civilized and privileged classes, think and want only what everybody else around them thinks and wants. They doubtlessly believe that they think for themselves, but they are only slavishly repeating by rote, with slight modifications, the thoughts and aims of the other conformists which they imperceptibly absorb. This servility, this routine, this perennial absence of the will to revolt and this lack of initiative and independence of thought are the principle causes for the slow, desolate historical development of humanity. For us, materialists and realists who believe in neither the immortality of the soul nor in free will, this slowness, as disastrous as it may be, is a natural fact. Emerging from the state of the gorilla, man has only with great difficulty attained the consciousness of his humanity and his liberty.... He was born a ferocious beast and a slave, and has gradually humanized and emancipated himself only in society, which is necessarily anterior to the birth of his thought, his speech, and his will. He can achieve this emancipation only through the collective effort of all the members, past and present, of society, which is the source, the natural beginning of his human existence.

Man completely realizes his individual freedom as well as his personality only through the individuals who surround him, and thanks only to the labor and the collective power of society. Without society he would surely remain the most stupid and the most miserable among all the other ferocious beasts.... Society, far from decreasing his freedom, on the contrary creates the individual freedom of all human beings. Society is the root, the tree, and liberty is its fruit. Hence, in every epoch, man must seek his freedom not at the beginning but at the end of history. It can be said that the real and complete emancipation of every individual is the true, the great, the supreme aim of history....

The materialistic, realistic, and collectivist conception of freedom, as opposed to the idealistic, is this: Man becomes conscious of himself and his humanity only in society and only by the collective action of the whole society. He frees himself from the yoke of external nature

only by collective and social labor, which alone can transform the earth into an abode favorable to the development of humanity. Without such material emancipation the intellectual and moral emancipation of the individual is impossible. He can emancipate himself from the yoke of his own nature, i.e. subordinate his instincts and the movements of his body to the conscious direction of his mind, the development of which is fostered only by education and training. But education and training are preeminently and exclusively social ... hence the isolated individual cannot possibly become conscious of his freedom.

To be free ... means to be acknowledged and treated as such by all his fellowmen. The liberty of every individual is only the reflection of his own humanity, or his human right through the conscience of all free men, his brothers and his equals.

I can feel free only in the presence of and in relationship with other men. In the presence of an inferior species of animal I am neither free nor a man, because this animal is incapable of conceiving and consequently recognizing my humanity. I am not myself free or human until or unless I recognize the freedom and humanity of all my fellowmen.

Only in respecting their human character do I respect my own. A cannibal who devours his prisoner ... is not a man but a beast. A slave owner is not a man but a master. By denying the humanity of his slaves he also abrogates his own humanity, as the history of all ancient societies proves. The Greeks and the Romans did not feel like free men. They did not consider themselves as such by human right. They believed in privileges for Greeks and Romans and only for their own countries, while they remained unconquered and conquered other countries. Because they believed themselves under the special protection of their national gods, they did not feel that they had the right to revolt ... and themselves fell into slavery....

I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free. The freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation. It is the slavery of other men that sets up a barrier to my freedom, or what amounts to the same thing, it is their bestiality which is the negation of my humanity. For my dignity as a man, my human right which consists of refusing to obey any other man, and to determine my own acts in conformity with my convictions is reflected by the equally free conscience of all and confirmed by the consent of all humanity. My personal freedom, confirmed by the liberty of all, extends to infinity.

The materialistic conception of freedom is therefore a very positive, very complex thing, and above all, eminently social, because it can be realized only in society and by the strictest equality and solidarity among

all men. One can distinguish the main elements in the attainment of freedom. The first is eminently social. It is the fullest development of all the faculties and powers of every human being, by education, by scientific training, and by material prosperity; things which can only be provided for every individual by the collective, material, intellectual, manual, and sedentary labor of society in general.

The second element of freedom is negative. It is the revolt of the individual against all divine, collective, and individual authority.

The first revolt is against the supreme tyranny of theology, of the phantom of God. As long as we have a master in heaven, we will be slaves on earth. Our reason and our will will be equally annulled. As long as we believe that we must unconditionally obey — and *vis-à-vis* God, no other obedience is possible — we must of necessity passively submit, without the least reservation, to the holy authority of his consecrated and unconsecrated agents, messiahs, prophets, divinely inspired law-makers, emperors, kings, and all their functionaries and ministers, representatives and consecrated servitors of the two greatest institutions which impose themselves upon us, and which are established by God himself to rule over men; namely, the Church and the State. All temporal or human authority stems directly from spiritual and/or divine authority. But authority is the negation of freedom. God, or rather the fiction of God, is the consecration and the intellectual and moral source of all slavery on earth, and the freedom of mankind will never be complete until the disastrous and insidious fiction of a heavenly master is annihilated.

This is naturally followed by the revolt against the tyranny of men, individual as well as social, represented and legalized by the State. At this point, we must make a very precise distinction between the official and consequently dictatorial prerogatives of society organized as a state, and of the natural influence and action of the members of a non-official, non-artificial society.

The revolt against this natural society is far more difficult for the individual than it is against the officially organized society of the State. Social tyranny, often overwhelming and baneful, does not assume the violent imperative character of the legalized and formalized despotism which marks the authority of the State. It is not imposed in the form of laws to which every individual, on pain of judicial punishment, is forced to submit. The action of social tyranny is gentler, more insidious, more imperceptible, but no less powerful and pervasive than is the authority of the State. It dominates men by customs, by mores, by the mass of prejudices, by the habits of daily life, all of which combine to form what is called public opinion.

It overwhelms the individual from birth, It permeates every facet of life, so that each individual is, often unknowingly, in a sort of conspiracy against himself. It follows from this that to revolt against this influence that society naturally exercises over him, he must at least to some extent revolt against himself. For, together with all his natural tendencies and material, intellectual, and moral aspirations, he is himself nothing but the product of society, and it is in this that the immense power exercised by society over the individual lies.

From the angle of absolute morality, i.e., of human respect, this power of society can be beneficent and it can also be injurious. It is beneficial when it tends to the development of science, of material prosperity, of freedom, equality, and solidarity. It is baneful when it tends in the opposite direction. A man born into a society of brutes tends to remain a brute; born into a society ruled by priests, he becomes an idiot, a sanctimonious hypocrite; born into a band of thieves, he will probably become a thief; and if he is unfortunately born into a society of demigods who rule this earth, nobles, princes, he will become a contemptible enslaver of society, a tyrant. In all these cases, revolt against the society in which he was born is indispensable for the humanization of the individual.

But, I repeat, the revolt of the individual against society is much more difficult than revolt against the State. The State is a transitory, historic institution, like its brother institution, the Church, the regulator of the privileges of a minority and the real enslavers of the immense majority.

Revolt against the State is much less difficult because there is something in the very nature of the State that provokes revolt. The State is authority, force. It is the ostentation and infatuation with force. It does not insinuate itself. It does not seek to convert; and if at times it meliorates its tyranny, it does so with bad grace. For its nature is not to persuade, but to impose itself by force. Whatever pains it takes to mask itself, it is by nature the legal violator of the will of men, the permanent negator of their freedom. Even when the State commands the good it brings forth evil; for every command slaps liberty in the face; because when the good is decreed, it becomes evil from the standpoint of human morality and liberty. Freedom, morality, and the human dignity of the individual consists precisely in this; that he does good not because he is forced to do so, but because he freely conceives it, wants it, and loves it.

The authority of society is imposed not arbitrarily or officially, but naturally. And it is because of this fact that its effect on the individual is incomparably much more powerful than that of the State. It creates and molds all individuals in its midst. It passes on to them, slowly,

from the day of birth to death, all its material, intellectual, and moral characteristics. Society, so to speak, individualizes itself in every individual.

The real individual is from the moment of his gestation in his mother's womb already predetermined and particularized by a confluence of geographic, climatic, ethnographic, hygienic, and economic influences, which constitute the nature of his family, his class, his nation, his race. He is shaped in accordance with his aptitudes by the combination of all these exterior and physical influences. What is more, thanks to the relatively superior organization of the human brain, every individual inherits at birth, in different degrees, not ideas and innate sentiments, as the idealists claim, but only the capacity to feel, to will, to think, and to speak. There are rudimentary faculties without any content. Whence comes their content? From society ... impressions, facts, and events coalesced into patterns of thought, right or wrong, are transmitted from one individual to another. These are modified, expanded, mutually complimented and integrated by all the individual members and groups of society into a unique system, which finally constitutes the common consciousness, the collective thought of a society. All this, transmitted by tradition from one generation to another, developed and enlarged by the intellectual labors of centuries, constitutes the intellectual and moral patrimony of a nation, a class, and a society....

Every new generation upon reaching the age of mature thought finds in itself and in society the established ideas and conceptions which serve it as the point of departure, giving it, as it were, the raw material for its own intellectual and moral labor... . These are the conceptions of nature, of man, of justice, of the duties and rights of individuals and classes, of social conventions, of the family, of property, and of the State, and many other factors affecting the relations between men. All these ideas are imprinted upon the mind of the individual, and conditioned by the education and training he receives even before he becomes fully aware of himself as an entity. Much later, he rediscovers them, consecrated and explained, elaborated by theory, which expresses the universal conscience or the collective prejudices of the religious, political, and economic institutions of the society to which he belongs. He is himself so imbued with these prejudices that he is, involuntarily, by virtue of all his intellectual and moral habits, the upholder of these iniquities, even if he were not personally interested in defending them.

It is certainly not surprising that the ideas passed on by the collective mind of society should have so great a hold upon the masses of people, What is surprising, on the contrary, is that there are among these masses individuals who have the ideas, the will, and the courage to go against

the stream of conformity. For the pressure of society on the individual is so great that there is no character so strong, nor an intelligence so powerful as to be entirely immune to this despotic and irresistible influence....

Nothing demonstrates the social nature of man better than this influence. It can be said that the collective conscience of any society whatever, embodied in the great public institutions, in all the details of private life, serves as the base of all its theories. It constitutes a sort of intellectual and moral atmosphere: harmful though it may be, yet absolutely necessary to the existence of all its members, whom it dominates while sustaining them, and reinforcing the banality, the routine, which binds together the great majority of the masses.

The greatest number of men, and not only the masses of people but the privileged and enlightened classes even more, feel ill at ease unless they faithfully conform and follow tradition and routine. in all the acts of their lives. They reason that "Our father thought and acted in this way, so we must think and do the same. Everybody else thinks and acts this way. Why should we think and act otherwise?"

CAPITALISM

11: Wolfi Landstreicher Property: The Enclosing Fences of Capital



WOLFI LANDSTREICHER, aka Feral Faun, aka Apio Ludd, is a contemporary anarchist philosopher involved in theoretical and practical activity. He edited the anarchist publication Willful Disobedience from 1996 until 2005, and currently publishes a variety of anarchist, radical, surrealist and poetic pamphlets and booklets through his ongoing project, Venomous Butterfly Publication. His ideas are influenced by insurrectionary anarchism, Max Stirner's egoism, surrealism, the Situationist International and non-primitivist critiques of civilization, and he has been instrumental in translating a number of Italian anarchist texts into English. This excerpt is from his collection of essays, The Network of Domination.



AMONG THE MANY GREAT LIES that maintains the rule of capital is the idea that property is freedom. The rising bourgeoisie made this claim as they partitioned the earth with fences of all sorts — physical fences, legal fences, moral fences, social fences, military fences... whatever they found necessary to enclose the murdered wealth of the earth and to exclude the multitudes who were undesirable except as labor power.

Like so many lies of power, this one manages to deceive through sleight-of-hand. The multitudes “unchained” from their land were free to choose between starving or selling the time of their lives to whatever master would buy them. “Free laborers” their masters called them, since unlike chattel slaves, the masters had no need to take responsibility for their lives. It was merely their labor power that the masters bought. Their lives were their own, they were told, though in fact these had been stolen away when the capitalist masters enclosed the land and drove these

“free laborers” off to search for survival. This process of expropriation, which allowed capitalism to develop, continues at its margins today, but another sleight-of-hand maintains the bourgeois illusion at the center.

Property, we are told, is a thing and we purchase it with money. Thus, according to the lie, freedom resides in the things that we can buy and increases with their accumulation. In pursuit of this freedom that is never quite attained, people chain themselves to activities not of their choosing, giving up every vestige of real choice, in order to earn the money that is supposed to buy them freedom. And as their lives are consumed in the service of projects that have never been their own, they spend their wages on toys and entertainment, on therapy and drugs, these anesthetics that guarantee they won’t see through the lie.

Property, in fact, is not the thing that is owned. It is the fences — the fences that keep us in, the fences that keep us out, all the enclosures through which our lives are stolen from us. Thus, property is, above all, a restriction, a limit of such magnitude that it guarantees that no individual will be able to realize herself completely for as long as it exists.

To fully understand this, we must look at property as a social relationship between things and people mediated by the state and the market. The institution of property could not exist without the state that concentrates power into institutions of domination. Without the laws, the arms, the cops and the courts, property would have no real basis, no force to support it.

In fact, it could be said that the state is itself the instituting of property. What is the state if not a network of institutions through which control over a particular territory and its resources is asserted and maintained by force of arms? All property is ultimately state property since it exists only by permission and under the protection of the state. Dependent on the levels of real power, this permission and protection can be revoked at any time for any reason, and the property will revert back to the state. This is not to say the state is more powerful than capital, but rather that the two are so thoroughly entwined as to constitute a single social order of domination and exploitation. And property is the institution through which this order asserts its power in our daily lives, compelling us to work and pay in order to reproduce it.

So property is actually the razor wire, the “No Trespassing” sign, the price tag, the cop and the security camera. The message that these all carry is the same: one cannot use or enjoy anything without permission, and permission must be granted by the state and paid for in money somewhere along the line.

It comes as no surprise then that the world of property, ruled by the market and the state, is an impoverished world where lack,

not satisfaction, permeates existence. The pursuit of individual realization, blocked at every turn by yet another fence, is replaced by the homogenizing, atomizing competition to accumulate more things, because in this world the “individual” is measured only in terms of the things that he owns. And the inhuman community of the price tag strives to bury singularity beneath identities found in shop windows.

Attacking the things owned by the rulers of this world — smashing bank windows, burning police cars, blowing up the employment office or breaking machinery — certainly has its worth. If nothing else, one may get a bit of pleasure, and some actions of this sort may even hinder specific projects of the ruling order. But ultimately we must attack the institution of property, every physical, legal, moral or social fence. This attack begins from the desire we each have to take back our life and determine it on our own terms. Every moment and every space we steal back from this society of production and consumption provides us with a weapon for expanding this struggle. But, as one comrade wrote: “... this struggle is widespread or it is nothing. Only when looting becomes a large-scale practice, when the gift arms itself against exchange value, when relationships are no longer mediated by commodities and individuals give their own value to things, only then does the destruction of the market and of money — that’s all one with the demolition of the state and every hierarchy — become a real possibility”, and with it the destruction of property. The individual revolt against the world of property must expand into a social revolution that will break down every fence and open every possibility for individual realization.

CAPITALISM

12: Ricardo Flores Magón Voluntary slavery



CIPRIANO RICARDO FLORES MAGÓN (September 16, 1874 – November 21, 1922) was a noted Mexican anarchist and social reform activist. He was one of the major thinkers of the Mexican Revolution and the Mexican revolutionary movement in the Partido Liberal Mexicano. Flores Magón organised with the Wobblies (IWW) and edited the Mexican anarchist newspaper Regeneración. This excerpt is from Regeneración #21, dated January 21st, 1911.



JUAN AND PEDRO CAME OF AGE at the precise time they were expected to start working to survive. They were sons of workers, who died not having the opportunity to acquire formal education to free them from the chains of salary. But Juan was spirited. He had read in newspapers of how some men born from humble beginnings had come to be financial kings, by means of work and thrift - and dominated with the power of money, not only in the market place but in the whole world. He had read thousands of anecdotes of the Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers, the Rothchilds, the Carnegies, and all of those whom, according to La Prensa and some school reading books, are abreast of world finances not because of anything other -oh, despicable lies - than the dedication to work and the devotion to save.

Juan tenaciously threw himself into his work. He worked a year, and found himself as poor as the first day. At the turn of the following year he found himself with circumstances unchanged. He kept on working more, without dismay, without rest. Five years went by and he found that, with sacrifices, he had finally saved some money - not too much. To save those coins, he had to minimize expenditure on his nourishment, lowering his strength. He dressed in rags, and bore the torment of heat

and cold weather. His body wore out too; he lived in miserable shacks, and the unsanitary environment contributed to his weakness. But Juan kept on saving, saving money at the cost of his health. For every penny he was able to save, he lost strength. In order not to pay rent he bought a small plot and built a small home. Later, he married a young girl. The court and the priest took away a big chunk of his savings, collected with so much sacrifice.

Some years passed, but work was not steady; debts started to stress poor Juan. One day a child of his got sick. The doctor did not want to assist him since he had no money, and in the public dispensary he was given such poor attention that the child died. Juan, however, did not give up. He would remember the writings he had read about the famous virtues of being thrifty and other foolishnesses of the kind. He had to be rich because he worked so hard, and saved. Meanwhile the cost of basic necessities was rising, making him worried. Groceries were more expensive, and extremely limited the home of the innocent Juan and, much to his concern, bills were increasing so that he could not save a penny. To add insult to injury, that morning his boss fired him from work. Occupying their places were new slaves, who, like the ones before, would dream of accumulated wealth, by hard work and savings. Juan had to mortgage his home, with the hope to keep his dreams, but he was going down, sinking without help. He could not pay his debt, and had to leave it at the hands of the sharks - all the product of his sacrifice, that small plot saved for with his blood.

Obstinate, Juan wanted to save more, but it was in vain. This deprivation to which he subjected himself, so he could save, the hard work he labored for the best years of his life, had destroyed his vigor. Everywhere he asked for work. He was rejected, and was told there was no work for him. He was a machine to produce money for his employer, but now very worn out. Old machines are seen with disdain. Meanwhile Juan's family suffered hunger. In the dark shack, there was no heat, no covers to protect them from the cold; the children pled for bread with fury. Juan would go out everyday to look for work, but who wanted to hire tired old arms? And after walking all the city and the fields, he returned home, where they were waiting, sad and hungry, those loved ones, his wife, children - those loved ones who once dreamt about the wealth of the Rockefellers, the fortune of the Carnegies.

One afternoon, Juan stopped to contemplate a line of automobiles driving by with plump drivers at the wheel, and imagined the satisfaction of having a life without worries. Women chatting happily, and men, with their syrupy and insignificant flattery, attending to them with mellifluous phrases that would make other women yawn with boredom

if they had not been bourgeoisie.

It was cold; Juan shivered, thinking about his family, what they could expect inside that dark shack, that mansion of misfortune. How they would shiver in that cold weather, suffering the indescribable torture of hunger - how bitter the tears shed those very moments! The elegant parade of cars continued. It was the perfect moment for the rich to show off, those from whom Juan had learned "to work and save," like the Rothchilds, the Carnegies, the Rockefellers. A great gentleman was coming in a luxurious car. His presence was magnificent. Gray hair, but his face looked young. Juan cleaned his eyes, rubbing them, worried to be a victim of an illusion. No, no, his old and tired eyes did not fool him; that great man was Pedro, his childhood friend. "How much had he worked and saved," thought Juan, "so he could get out of his misery, and reach such a level, and gain so much distinction!"

Oh, poor Juan! He has not been able to forget the imbecilic stories about the vampires of humanity; he could not forget what he had read in schoolbooks, those things that conscientiously stupefy the population. Pedro had not worked. He was a man without scruples and with great malice. He had become aware that honesty is not a fountain of wealth, so he started cheating his fellows. As soon as he pooled some savings, he installed a shop and hired cheap labor; so he went up, up. He widened his shop, and hired more help, more and more; he became a millionaire and a great man - thanks to the many "Juans" who carefully took the advice of the bourgeoisie.

Juan continued watching the parade of the lazy and the indolent. At the next corner a man was preaching to the townsmen. Few people were there listening, but Juan was interested to hear who he was and what he had to say. Juan went to listen:

"Comrades," exclaimed the man, "the time has come to reflect. Capitalists are thieves. Only by harmful trickery can one become a millionaire. The poor fall down working, and when we cannot work anymore we are fired by the bourgeoisie as if they were retiring an old and tired horse from service. Let's bear arms to conquer our welfare and that of our families!"

Juan looked upon the man with disdain, spat on the floor with anger, and walked back to the dark shack where his loved ones waited sad, hungry, and cold. He could not let his belief die that saving and work make the man virtuous. Nor could the miserable soul, educated to be a slave, recognise the undeserved nature of his misfortune.

CAPITALISM

13: Peter Gelderloos Commoning and scarcity: a manifesto against capitalism

PETER GELDERLOOS is an anarchist and author from Virginia, USA. He is the author of the popular How Nonviolence Protects the State, as well as Anarchy Works - a comprehensive book explaining basic principles of anarchism and their historic usage - and To Get to the Other Side, a narrative of his travels through Europe's anarchist milieus.



THE COMMONS ARE A WORLD apart from capitalism. They are a source of livelihood that people share. Before the spread of capitalism, most of the planet was commons. Cultures that treated the commons as a gift from nature that had to be treated with respect, tended to have the most bountiful commons and therefore the fewest problems of survival. Cultures that treated the commons as property or an exploitable resource generally exhausted them, and either brought about their own collapse or had to resort to warfare and conquest to survive. Some of these cultures would eventually form capitalism.

Capitalism theorizes and creates scarcity. Capitalism has thrived by destroying or privatizing the commons wherever they arise. As long as people have access to the commons, they can enjoy a measure of self-sufficiency and cannot be forced to sell their labor to the wealthy in order to survive. For common people, capitalism is a blackmail: work or starve. The commons offer another option: self-sufficiency by harvesting the gifts of nature. Because the basis of the commons is the spontaneous gift, people who live in or of the commons often recreate the gift economy; sharing, cooperating, and helping each other out in order to attain a high standard of living. Also for this reason, the commons are the enemy of capitalism.

Primitive accumulation—privatizing land or seizing wealth to fuel investment, industry, and, in a word, capitalism—is not only an early phase of capitalism, as theorized by Adam Smith or Karl Marx. Privatization, legalized theft, slavery, and the imposition of labor discipline are constant activities in every moment of capitalism, from the 15th to the 21st centuries.

Likewise, the commons are not an ancient and outdated reality but an ever present possibility that repeatedly erupts into our daily lives, contradicting capitalism's myth of scarcity. After arable land was privatized and enclosed—in Europe from the 15th to the 17th centuries, in India and other colonies in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in parts of Africa today—forests, woodlands, marshes, and pastures became the principal commons because capitalism was still unable to exploit those areas effectively. In these commons, people gathered fruits, nuts, medicinal plants, fuel and construction materials, they grazed livestock, hunted, and fished. They may not have been able to get their daily bread from the forests and pastures, but they could meet most of their other needs.

Nowadays, in order to function, capitalism must base itself on an exaggerated and imprecise mass production. This creates a huge amount of garbage that capitalism is still unable to exploit effectively. This garbage is the new commons: millions of people around the world scavenge the garbage in order to gather food, clothing, construction materials, or items that can be scrapped and sold for money. Many of the people who live in this way develop cooperative cultures based on sharing and mutual aid, relating through solidarity rather than through commercialized relations.

Skills, culture, and traditional wisdom also constitute a commons. They constitute tools that help people relate with their environment, gain their livelihood, and improve their quality of life. In the past, these tools were shared within society. For about a century, capitalism has been increasingly trying to privatize knowledge and culture. Many people are resisting the privatization of the intellectual and cultural commons. Some people destroy fields of genetically modified crops owned by companies seeking to patent life itself, some indigenous communities keep out anthropologists, biologists and other researchers trying to catalogue and patent their traditional music, folk medicine, or heirloom seeds, and some people share their music and art through “creative commons” licenses rather than copyrights.

While the original pirates liberated goods that had been exploited in the massive process of primitive accumulation known as colonialism (freeing slaves, stealing gold and silver mined with slave labor, seizing

rum and sugar that came from the plantations), one of the major forms of modern piracy is the liberation of so-called intellectual property (such as movies and music) using new tools on the internet.

The scarcity on which capitalism is based never arises naturally. Sometimes it is the result of the bad choices of a society, destroying its soil, overfishing or overhunting, not balancing its population. Frequently scarcity is directly and intentionally imposed by the State. During the Irish potato famine, Ireland was forced to produce food for export by the British military occupation. The Great Famine in Ukraine was caused by the Soviet government, forcibly changing the traditional mode of agriculture. The US government killed off the seemingly endless herds of bison so that the Lakota and Cheyenne of the Great Plains (who had defeated the US in an important war) would lose their food source. Governments around the world have stopped at nothing, killing millions of people, in order to make self-sufficiency impossible. If we can take care of ourselves, we don't need government, and we don't need to work for the rich people that government exists to protect.

A related function of the State is to destroy the commons wherever they arise. The first modern legal codes in Europe served to criminalize the traditional use of the commons. A major application of the death penalty in 18th century England was to punish hunting, foraging, and other traditional uses of the forests that previously had been legal, and were even protected in Magna Carta. Today, the World Bank and IMF force debtor countries to change their laws and criminalize traditional uses of the commons, allowing them to be privatized by transnational corporations. In 1994, the NAFTA agreement with the US and Canada forced Mexico to change its Constitution and remove the protection of communal land tenure. Another major point of collaboration between world governments involves cracking down on piracy or sharing of the creative commons, so-called intellectual property. More generally, the US and other leading governments want to tame the internet entirely so it is no longer a space of sharing and anonymity—a commons—but rather a commercialized space easily controlled by the police and exploited by corporations. This is similar to how the forests and marshlands were cleared and drained for economic reasons and for military reasons simultaneously. Due to their opacity and defensive advantages, these spaces were off limits to commercial development and they were also where rebels, bandits, and revolutionaries often hid out.

Generally, the State claims to be protecting us when they destroy the commons or clear wilderness, which are often the only spaces where we can still be free. In 2008, a shipwreck off the coast of England left thousands of tons of wooden beams washed up on shore. The wood

could no longer be sold to major buyers, because it had seawater stains, but it was still perfectly usable for fuel or building. The shipwreck had brought a new commons into being, and quickly people came to collect wood. The government jumped into action and prohibited the scavenging of wood, in the name of a national emergency. Their reasoning? People could get splinters, therefore collecting the wood was dangerous.

As for the widespread commons of garbage, several governments around the world are working to criminalize and suppress it. In the US, several cities have arrested people for sharing free dumpstered food. In Spain, where bakers traditionally give away unsold loaves at the end of the day, chain bakeries have started to count all their loaves of bread, returning and destroying (or selling to livestock and other industries) every loaf that hasn't been paid for. In many cities in the Netherlands, new trash containers store the garbage underground, making it impossible to access. Once again, they prefer that people starve instead of being able to get anything for free.

With urban gardens and the planting of fruit and nut trees, many cities could come close to food self-sufficiency. The anarchist scientist Kropotkin wrote about this emerging possibility a century ago, using Paris as his model, but since then governments and urban planners have made sure to prevent this new commons. Sometimes, urban gardens are evicted and bulldozed, as in Los Angeles. In general, cities avoid planting edible plants in the urban green spaces. Athens or Barcelona, for example, are graced with thousands of orange trees, but the variety the city governments choose to plant only produce an inedible kind of orange.

One notable exception to this rule can be found in Seattle. During several months of the summer, one can harvest a variety of edible, delicious fruits and berries from trees and bushes growing in the city. However, most people have lost the traditional skills and knowledge to carry out this simple task, or to even realize that food comes from the earth and not from the supermarket. People are so alienated that most of the fruits and berries go to waste.

This sad fact demonstrates the connection between knowledge and material. Intellectual or cultural commons and commons of land or resources are inseparably related. If the State can seize the land, the know-how to live from it eventually disappears. If the State can alienate people from their traditional knowledge, they will not know how to use common land or resources even if they are right next door.

Another interesting fact about cities is that food grown in them will be contaminated by automobile pollution. For this reason it could

be easy to argue that growing food in cities is not the best idea anyway. But there is no natural connection between cities and cars. In fact, cities function far more efficiently without car traffic, using instead public transportation and bicycles.

But a focus on efficiency ignores the historically important fact that the State prefers to subsidize and implement those technologies that foster dependency, erode the commons, and create new opportunities for professionalized management (particularly within a paradigm of security or protection). Trains create new common spaces and can be self-organized by their operators. Car traffic, on the contrary, is so atomized it requires state intervention in order to be directed and organized. It creates new dangers the State must protect its citizens against, with an absurdly high number of traffic fatalities even in societies where the governments effectively manage car traffic. Last but not least, it creates the possibility—for the first time in history—of a crowd of thousands of people who are side by side, when stuck in traffic, yet totally isolated from one another and without immanent possibilities of collective action.

In sum, the commons hold a central place of importance in the struggle against capitalism. The commons can be constituted by land, wilderness, skills and experiences, scavenged goods, or public spaces. They do not only exist in peripheral societies that can still claim to be traditional; the commons are an ever present possibility in every fold of human existence, from the most developed countries to the least.

The commons are both a structure and a practice. Commoning is one of the most popular and subversive forms of action against capitalism. It is not the provenance of professional revolutionaries but an activity undertaken instinctively by people around the world.

Because commoning is instinctual, communism is a fraud. The attempt to abstract the commons or to mediate the practice of commoning through an ideology rends it from the unique conditions of daily life that give it breath and substance. The commons will be reconstituted in a different form in every different part of the world, at the hands of those people who are closest to the available matter and memory that can be transformed into the basis for collective survival. Commoning is the task of those who will become part of each new commons.

Capitalism created classes, and these classes will not destroy capitalism. Building on the material of the feudal castes, those who could wield a military and economic advantage constituted themselves as the owning class, and forcibly constituted the proletariat as those who only owned their labor power and their ability to reproduce. The same property relationship that enclosed the commons forced those

who could not resist these enclosures to become the working class. Class society and capital will be abolished by those who win the force to be able to see themselves in relation to the commons and not in relation to property.

The enemy who constantly scatters this force and tramples the commons wherever they pop up is the State. Our struggle must aim for the destruction of the State, to open up the new spaces where the commons can flourish. Commoning itself is not the property of any party or theory, but the shared potential that makes any communication possible. Anarchy is a prerequisite for the commons. The stronger the State, the narrower the margin on which new commons may arise. And the more bountiful our commons, the stronger and more sustained our attacks against the State. Whether the State is destroyed by anarchists is unimportant, except for those anarchists who share with the communists a need to author the plan that will be foisted on the new world.

What is important is that our dreams again take root in the commons, that our theories take aim on the State, and that our struggles create new commons and revitalize the old ones.

THE CLASS DIVIDE

14: Alfredo M. Bonanno

A question of class

ALFREDO MARIA BONANNO (born 1937 in Catania) is one of the main theorists of contemporary insurrectionary anarchism and is known in the English-speaking world for powerful essays such as The Anarchist Tension, At Daggers Drawn and the notorious Armed Joy, for which he was imprisoned for 18 months by the Italian government. He is the editor of Anarchismo Editions and many other publications and has been involved in the anarchist movement for over thirty years. This essay is from Insurrection Issue Five, published in 1988.



CONTRARY TO WHAT MANY BELIEVE, class is not a marxist concept. While we reject the marxist claims as to the historic role of the industrial working class above all the other exploited, it is obvious that society is still divided into opposing classes. The terms of this division are changing with the modification of capital. It is important to recognise this in order to address our attack towards the right objectives in the struggle.

Many anarchists believe that the idea of “class” is a marxist concept, therefore they have no interest in it and they try to work out other ways of accounting for social divisions.

These divisions clearly exist. Conflict and suffering dominate present day reality. The great masses who support the profiteers and their henchmen are barely managing to survive themselves.

It is therefore necessary to trace the outlines of the groupings or individuals who share the same economic, political and cultural social situation, no matter how difficult that may be.

It is true that the term “class” has been dominated by marxist mystification for the past forty years. This is not so much in Marx’s

identification of classes, as his claim that the industrial working class were historically destined to bring about not only their own liberation, but also that of the whole of humanity, through the guidance of the party that claimed to represent it.

Any anarchist can see how absurd and mistaken this concept of class is. But we should remember that this is not so much to do with the concept of class, as the deterministic and messianic role that was thrust upon the industrial working class.

We think that the concept of class is not only valid, but necessary. It is an instrument to guide us through the flux of the various aspects of social reality. What we are not interested in are the mythical claims about the destiny of the industrial working class.

One thing we can say with certainty is that the productive structures that defined class divisions in the recent past are now undergoing profound changes. What is also certain is that although different in many respects, a conflict which is just as bitter is being reproduced. The problem is to see how this is happening. What are we dealing with today? What marks the boundary between the dominating part of humanity and the rest?

This is such an important question that it puts the need to study intermediate strata into second place for the time being. Equally unimportant — for the time being — is the need to consider a repartition into three or more classes. What interests us now is the progressive disappearance of traditional class divisions and the emergence of a new one. Clearly such an argument needs more space than we can dedicate to it here, but we shall do the best we can. The preceding class division was based on a “lack”. There was something that was considered the “common good” which was divided into unequal parts. The class in power took possession of the greater part of this good (commonly known as wealth), and from this unjust profit drew the means to continue exploitation and domination. In the first place these were the cultural and ideological means on which a whole scale of values was based and which condemned the expropriated mass to what seemed an irreversible situation.

In fact, the profound contradictions within the system itself had just as radical effect on it as the struggle against such forms of domination. Recurring social problems were solved by improving working conditions.

The situation was becoming intolerable for capital and it had to strengthen its structures by increasing collaboration between States: But it has been advanced technology that has made a decisive impact by making the restructuring of production possible.

We are now heading towards a radically different situation. The

question of “lack” is becoming more hazy, while the question of “possession” is emerging. Class difference is no longer created by not possessing “as much” as the other, but by the fact — unique in the history of mankind — that one part possesses “something” that the other does not.

To understand this better we must remember that in the past the exploited class always “possessed” something, even if it was only their “working strength”, i.e. their capacity to produce. They were always forced to sell it, that is true, and often at a very low price, but the other side always needed it. The bargaining could even reach the point of these miserable vendors of their labour power being grabbed by the scruff of the neck, but no one could deny that the working class had a “possession” that was part of the same scale of values as that of the dominant class. In the past, exploiters and exploited faced each other (also within the considerable range of class stratifications) on the basis of a “possession” that was common to both, but owned unequally. Now one side possesses something that the other does not, and never will.

This “thing” is technology: the technological management of dominion, the construction of an exclusive “language” belonging to a class of “included”. They are surrounding themselves with a great wall that is far higher than the one in the past that consisted of material wealth and was defended by bodyguards and safes. This wall will be a radical separation, so clear cut as to be incomprehensible — in the short term — to those who do not find themselves within the process of inclusion. The remainder, the “excluded” will become a class of external “beneficiaries”, capable only of using secondary technology and perfectly instrumental to the project of dominion.

The “excluded” part of humanity will not be able, at least for a very long time to come, to realise what has been taken from them, because it will be a product that no longer belongs to the same scale of values. In building this new and, they hope, final separation, they are also building a new moral code that no longer belongs to the same scale of values, a kind of moral code that it no longer intends to share with others, with those who belong to the world of the excluded. In the past the Achille’s heel was precisely this moral code. It was useful in many ways towards ensuring better control, but it often resulted in the exploiters feeling the hot breath of their followers on the back of their necks.

So this new situation that is on the road to completion is building new class structures but is not abolishing the concept of class. This is not a question of terminology, but an operational necessity. At the moment the concept of class and that related to “class conflict” seem quite adequate for indicating the processes of social structures and how

they function. In the same way it is still possible to use the concept of “class consciousness” in the face of the increasing difficulty that the “excluded” are faced with concerning their own condition of exclusion.

Every revolutionary strategy we can imagine for resistance against the process of restructuring in course should bear in mind the modifications that are underway and, within certain limits, the stratification within the classes themselves. Perhaps in this early phase the margins of the included class (the enemy class) are not easy to define. We will therefore have to address our attack towards objectives that are more obvious. But this is only a question of documentation and analysis.

What is more important at this stage is to show that discussions on terminology are not going to solve the problem of finding the enemy and unmasking it. A persistence in doing this merely hides the incapacity to act.

THE CLASS DIVIDE

15: Wolfi Landstreicher

From proletarian to individual: toward an anarchist understanding of class

This excerpt is from The Network of Domination.



THE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS OF CLASS and exploitation are not simple. Workerist conceptions, which are based on the idea of an objectively revolutionary class that is defined in terms of its relationship to the means of production, ignore the mass of those world-wide whose lives are stolen from them by the current social order but who can find no place within its productive apparatus. Thus these conceptions end up presenting a narrow and simplistic understanding of exploitation and revolutionary transformation. In order to carry out a revolutionary struggle against exploitation, we need to develop an understanding of class as it actually exists in the world without seeking any guarantees.

At its most basic, class society is one in which there are those who rule and those who are ruled, those who exploit and those who are exploited. Such a social order can only arise when people lose their capacity to determine the conditions of their own existence. Thus, the essential quality shared by the exploited is their dispossession, their loss of the capacity to make and carry out the basic decisions about how they live.

The ruling class is defined in terms of its own project of accumulating power and wealth. While there are certainly significant conflicts within the ruling class in terms of specific interests and real competition for control of resources and territory, this overarching project aimed at the control of social wealth and power, and thus of the lives and relationships

of every living being, provides this class with a unified positive project.

The exploited class has no such positive project to define it. Rather it is defined in terms of what is done to it, what is taken away from it. Being uprooted from the ways of life that they had known and created with their peers, the only community that is left to the people who make up this heterogeneous class is that provided by capital and the state — the community of work and commodity exchange decorated with whatever nationalist, religious, ethnic, racial or subcultural ideological constructions through which the ruling order creates identities into which to channel individuality and revolt. The concept of a positive proletarian identity, of a single, unified, positive proletarian project, has no basis in reality since what defines one as proletarian is precisely that her life has been stolen from her, that he has been transformed into a pawn in the projects of the rulers.

The workerist conception of the proletarian project has its origins in the revolutionary theories of Europe and the United States (particularly certain marxist and syndicalist theories). By the late 19th century, both western Europe and the eastern United States were well on their way to being thoroughly industrialized, and the dominant ideology of progress equated technological development with social liberation. This ideology manifested in revolutionary theory as the idea that the industrial working class was objectively revolutionary because it was in the position to take over the means of production developed under capitalism (which, as products of progress, were assumed to be inherently liberating) and turn them to the service of the human community. By ignoring most of the world (along with a significant portion of the exploited in the industrialized areas), revolutionary theorists were thus able to invent a positive project for the proletariat, an objective historical mission. That it was founded on the bourgeois ideology of progress was ignored. In my opinion, the luddites had a much clearer perspective, recognizing that industrialism was another one of the masters' tools for dispossessing them. With good reason, they attacked the machines of mass production.

The process of dispossession has long since been accomplished in the West (though of course it is a process that is going on at all times even here), but in much of the South of the world it is still in its early stages. Since the process started in the West though, there have been some significant changes in the functioning of the productive apparatus. Skilled factory positions have largely disappeared, and what is needed in a worker is flexibility, the capacity to adapt — in other words, the capacity to be an interchangeable cog in the machine of capital. In addition, factories tend to require far fewer workers to carry on the productive process, both because of developments in technology

and management techniques that have allowed a more decentralized productive process and because increasingly the type of work necessary in factories is largely just monitoring and maintaining machines.

On a practical level this means that we are all, as individuals, expendable to the production process, because we are all replaceable — that lovely capitalist egalitarianism in which we are all equal to zero. In the first world, this has had the effect of pushing increasing numbers of the exploited into increasingly precarious positions: day labor, temporary work, service sector jobs, chronic unemployment, the black market and other forms of illegality, homelessness and prison. The steady job with its guarantee of a somewhat stable life — even if one's life is not one's own — is giving way to a lack of guarantees where the illusions provided by a moderately comfortable consumerism can no longer hide that life under capitalism is always lived on the edge of catastrophe.

In the third world, people who have been able to create their own existence, if sometimes a difficult one, are finding their land and their other means for doing so being pulled out from under them as the machines of capital quite literally invade their homes and eat away any possibility to continue living directly off their own activity. Torn from their lives and lands, they are forced to move to the cities where there is little employment for them. Shantytowns develop around the cities, often with populations higher than the city proper. Without any possibility of steady employment, the inhabitants of these shantytowns are compelled to form a black market economy to survive, but this also still serves the interests of capital. Others, in desperation, choose immigration, risking imprisonment in refugee camps and centers for undocumented foreigners in the hope of improving their condition.

So, along with dispossession, precariousness and expendability are increasingly the shared traits of those who make up the exploited class worldwide. If, on the one hand, this means that this commodity civilization is creating in its midst a class of barbarians who truly have nothing to lose in bringing it down (and not in the ways imagined by the old workerist ideologues), on the other hand, these traits do not in themselves provide any basis for a positive project of the transformation of life. The rage provoked by the miserable conditions of life that this society imposes can easily be channeled into projects that serve the ruling order or at least the specific interest of one or another of the rulers. The examples of situations in the past few decades in which the rage of the exploited has been harnessed to fuel nationalist, racist or religious projects that serve only to reinforce domination are too many to count. The possibility of the end of the current social order is as great as it ever was, but the faith in its inevitability can no longer pretend to have an objective basis.

But in order to truly understand the revolutionary project and begin the project of figuring out how to carry it out (and to developing an analysis of how the ruling class manages to deflect the rage of those it exploits into its own projects), it is necessary to realize that exploitation does not merely occur in terms of the production of wealth, but also in terms of the reproduction of social relationships. Regardless of the position of any particular proletarian in the productive apparatus, it is in the interests of the ruling class that everyone would have a role, a social identity, that serves in the reproduction of social relationships. Race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, subculture — all of these things may, indeed, reflect very real and significant differences, but all are social constructions for channeling these differences into roles useful for the maintenance of the current social order. In the most advanced areas of the current society where the market defines most relationships, identities largely come to be defined in terms of the commodities that symbolize them, and interchangeability becomes the order of the day in social reproduction, just as it is in economic production. And it is precisely because identity is a social construction and increasingly a saleable commodity that it must be dealt with seriously by revolutionaries, analyzed carefully in its complexity with the precise aim of moving beyond these categories to the point that our differences (including those that this society would define in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, etc.) are the reflection of each of us as singular individuals.

Because there is no common positive project to be found in our condition as proletarians — as the exploited and dispossessed — our project must be the struggle to destroy our proletarian condition, to put an end to our dispossession. The essence of what we have lost is not control over the means of production or of material wealth; it is our lives themselves, our capacity to create our existence in terms of our own needs and desires. Thus, our struggle finds its terrain everywhere, at all times. Our aim is to destroy everything that keeps our lives from us: capital, the state, the industrial and post-industrial technological apparatus, work, sacrifice, ideology, every organization that tries to usurp our struggle, in short, all systems of control.

In the very process of carrying out this struggle in the only way that we can carry it out — outside of and against all formality and institutionalization — we begin to develop new ways of relating based on self-organization, a commonality based on the unique differences that define each of us as individuals whose freedom expands with the freedom of the other. It is here in revolt against our proletarian condition that we find that shared positive project that is different for each one of us: the collective struggle for individual realization.

HIERARCHY & DOMINATION

16: Cindy Milstein

Hierarchy and domination in general

CINDY MILSTEIN is a member of Station 40, a San Francisco collective, and the Institute for Anarchist Studies, and has long been involved in political projects ranging from the New World from Below convergence at the U.S. Social Forum to the collective Black Sheep Books. She is the author of Anarchism and Its Aspirations (AK Press, 2010), and, with artist Erik Ruin, Paths toward Utopia: Explorations in Everyday Anarchism (PM Press, 2012). This excerpt is from Anarchism and Its Aspirations.



ANARCHISM IS DISTINGUISHED as a political philosophy by its clear, uncompromising position against both capitalism and states. There are many ways within anarchism to explain specifically what's wrong with capitalism or states, and even more ways to approach ridding the world of them. But anarchists maintain that the pair has to go because they each have power over the vast majority of the human and nonhuman world. At its heart, political philosophy is about power: who has it, what they do with it, and toward what ends. Anarchism, more sweepingly than any other political philosophy, responds that power should be made horizontal, should be held in common.

This concentration on bottom-up power arrangements leads anarchism not only to oppose capitalism and states but also hierarchy and domination in general. This was always implicit, and sometimes explicit, within anarchism from the first, but anarchism increasingly has broadened its lens of critique. Certainly, there were classical anarchists concerned with phenomena besides capitalism and the state, whether that was militarism, sexuality, or organized religion. Early anarchists also utilized categories such as hierarchy, though such voices were fewer

and further between. Even when coming from major anarchist figures, however, such articulations were still generally subservient to a focus on capitalism and the state, much as Marxists made, and often still do, all phenomena subservient (or “superstructural”) to the economy (“base”). A combination of historical events, theoretical insights, and the “intrusion” of actually existing forms of domination that fall outside capitalism and the state pushed anarchism toward a more all-encompassing horizontal libertarianism. Bookchin’s *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), which explores the emergence of hierarchy over the millennia and its intricate intertwining with the legacy of freedom, is exemplary of this rethinking of anarchism. It also reflected a flowering of experimentation with all sorts of nonhierarchical relationships and projects, both anarchist and not, from the counterculture, New Left, and autonomist movements of the long 1960s to the present—all of which transformed anarchism’s own self-understanding.

This now-pervasive shift means that more than ever, anarchism is interrogating itself and all else for ways in which hierarchy and domination manifest themselves, or develop new forms under new historical conditions. That has translated into a deeper, more sincere acknowledgment that even if capitalism and the state were abolished, many forms of hierarchies could still exist; and that even alongside capitalism and the state, many other egregious phenomena cause grave suffering.

Moreover, the shift within anarchism has involved a more complex understanding of the ways that freedom and domination interrelate. On the one hand, anarchistic efforts to “abolish work” dovetail easily with contemporary capitalism’s need for fewer employees. On the other hand, capitalism’s own technology can be utilized to thwart state surveillance or encourage nonalienated sharing. These examples point to the importance of anarchism’s revolutionary stance, which makes such double-edged interactions visible. Yet it goes deeper. There are possibilities within the present, fissures in domination that point toward freedom. The increasing inability of today’s state to protect its citizenry from almost anything ranging from sickness to violence undermines the very justification for its existence, while also creating an opening for federated grassroots innovations in how to ensure material plenty and safer communities without the state. And deeper still: as anarchists test out their ideas, newfound freedoms often uncover further layers of domination. Attempts to shatter the gender binary, for instance, reveal new manifestations of hierarchies within varied gender expression. A host of concerns have now been brought into the matrix of anarchism’s critique — and hopefully its reconstructive vision — in prominent and

meaningful ways. These range from ecology and technology to alienation and cultural production; from sex, sexuality, gender, and kinship to white supremacy and antiracism; and from ableism and ageism to physical and mental health. Anarchism will need to be ever vigilant. There is no laundry list that people can clean up once and for all. Rather than a contest between “isms,” contemporary anarchism grapples with the complex internalized and institutionalized ways that people oppress, hurt, and limit each other as well as the intersections between forms of domination and oppression. This is frequently painful work, but anarchists generally share a commitment to facing the challenge, within their own circles and outside them. It doesn’t always go well: the fact that anarchism hasn’t tackled, say, racism with as much determination as class for much of its history means there is a lot to learn and do, a lot of anger, and a long way to go. But as freedom and hierarchy battle it out, they also expose new aspects of each other.

Hierarchy and domination serve as the prism through which to see various phenomena as both distinct in their own right and deeply interconnected. They can produce, structure, or sustain each other, or operate relatively independently, yet always serve to restrain a consensual, egalitarian world. Anarchists strive to dismantle forms of social relations and social organization that allow some people to exercise mastery over other people and things. They contrast the use of power for gaining something from others, for money or status, or out of privilege or hatred, with the use of power to collectively achieve individual and social development, mutual respect, and the meeting of everyone’s needs. Anarchism’s generalized critique of hierarchy and domination, even more than its anticapitalism and antistatism, sets it apart from any other political philosophy. It asserts that every instance of vertical and/or centralized power over others should be reconstituted to enact horizontal and/or decentralized power together. This grand vision serves as a yardstick for attempts to reduce hierarchy and domination while improving the quality of life, materially and otherwise, in the here and now.

HIERARCHY & DOMINATION



17: **CrimethInc.** No gods

CRIMETHINC., also known as CWC (“CrimethInc. Ex-Workers Collective” or “CrimethInc Ex-Workers Ex-Collective”), is a decentralized anarchist collective of autonomous cells. CrimethInc. emerged in the mid-1990s, initially as the hardcore zine Inside Front, and began operating as a collective in 1996. It has since published widely read books, articles and zines for the anarchist movement. Among their best-known publications are the books Days of War, Nights of Love, Expect Resistance, Evasion, Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook, Work, The Contradictionary and the pamphlet Fighting For Our Lives (of which, to date, they claim to have printed 600,000 copies). This essay is from Days of War, Nights of Love.



NCE, FLIPPING THROUGH A BOOK on child psychology, I came across a chapter about adolescent rebellion. It suggested that in the first phase of a child’s youthful rebellion against her parents, she may attempt to distinguish herself from them by accusing them of not living up to their own values. For example, if they taught her that kindness and consideration are important, she will accuse them of not being compassionate enough. In this case the child has not yet defined herself or her own values; she still accepts the values and ideas that her parents passed on to her, and she is only able to assert her identity inside of that framework. It is only later, when she questions the very beliefs and morals that were presented to her as gospel, that she can become a free-standing individual.

I often think that we have not gotten beyond that first stage of rebellion in the hardcore scene. We criticize the actions of those in the

mainstream and the effects of their society upon people and animals, we attack the ignorance and cruelty of their system, but we rarely stop to question the nature of what we all accept as “morality.” Could it be that this “morality,” by which we think we can judge their actions, is itself something that should be criticized? When we claim that the exploitation of animals is “morally wrong,” what does that mean? Are we perhaps just accepting their values and turning these values against them, rather than creating moral standards of our own?

Maybe right now you’re saying to yourself “what do you mean, create moral standards of our own? Something is either morally right or it isn’t—morality isn’t something you can make up, it’s not a matter of mere opinion.” Right there, you’re accepting one of the most basic tenets of the society that raised you: that right and wrong are not individual valuations, but fundamental laws of the world. This idea, a holdover from a deceased Christianity, is at the center of our civilization. If you are going to question the establishment, you should question it first!

There is no such thing as good or evil
There is no universal right or wrong
There is only you...
and the values you choose for yourself.

WHERE DOES THE IDEA OF “MORAL LAW” COME FROM?

Once upon a time, almost everyone believed in the existence of God. This God ruled over the world, He had absolute power over everything in it; and He had set down laws which all human beings had to obey. If they did not, they would suffer the most terrible of punishments at His hands. Naturally, most people obeyed the laws as well as they could, their fear of eternal suffering being stronger than their desire for anything forbidden. Because everyone lived according to the same laws, they could agree upon what “morality” was: it was the set of values decreed by God’s laws. Thus, good and evil, right and wrong, were decided by the authority of God, which everyone accepted out of fear.

One day, people began to wake up and realize that there was no such thing as God after all. There was no scientific evidence to demonstrate his existence, and few people could see any point in having faith in the irrational any longer. God pretty much disappeared from the world; nobody feared him or his punishments anymore.

But a strange thing happened. Though these people had the courage to question God’s existence, and even deny it to the ones who still

believed in it, they didn't dare to question the morality that His laws had mandated. Perhaps it just didn't occur to them; everyone had been raised to hold the same beliefs about what was moral, and had come to speak about right and wrong in the same way, so maybe they just assumed it was obvious what was good and what was evil whether God was there to enforce it or not. Or perhaps people had become used to living under these laws that they were afraid to even consider the possibility that the laws didn't exist any more than God did.

This left humanity in an unusual position: though there was no longer an authority to decree certain things absolutely right or wrong, they still accepted the idea that some things were right or wrong by nature. Though they no longer had faith in a deity, they still had faith in a universal moral code that everyone had to follow. Though they no longer believed in God, they were not yet courageous enough to stop obeying His orders; they had abolished the idea of a divine ruler, but not the divinity of His code of ethics. This unquestioning submission to the laws of a long-departed heavenly master has been a long nightmare from which the human race is only just now beginning to awaken.

GOD IS DEAD—AND WITH HIM, MORAL LAW

Without God, there is no longer any objective standard by which to judge good and evil. This realization was very troubling to philosophers a few decades ago, but it hasn't really had much of an effect in other circles. Most people still seem to think that a universal morality can be grounded in something other than God's laws: in what is good for people, in what is good for society, in what we feel called upon to do. But explanations of why these standards necessarily constitute "universal moral law" are hard to come by. Usually, the arguments for the existence of moral law are emotional rather than rational: "But don't you think rape is wrong?" moralists ask, as if a shared opinion were a proof of universal truth. "But don't you think people need to believe in something greater than themselves?" they appeal, as if needing to believe in something can make it true. Occasionally, they even resort to threats: "but what would happen if everyone decided that there is no good or evil? Wouldn't we all kill each other?"

The real problem with the idea of universal moral law is that it asserts the existence of something that we have no way to know anything about. Believers in good and evil would have us believe that there are "moral truths"—that is, there are things that are morally true of this world, in the same way that it is true that the sky is blue. They

claim that it is true of this world that murder is morally wrong just as it is true that water freezes at thirty two degrees. But we can investigate the freezing temperature of water scientifically: we can measure it and agree together that we have arrived at some kind of objective truth [that is, insofar as it is possible to speak of objective truth, for you postmodernist motherfuckers!]. On the other hand, what do we observe if we want to investigate whether it is true that murder is evil? There is no tablet of moral law on a mountaintop for us to consult, there are no commandments carved into the sky above us; all we have to go on are our own instincts and the words of a bunch of priests and other self-appointed moral experts, many of whom don't even agree. As for the words of the priests and moralists, if they can't offer any hard evidence from this world, why should we believe their claims? And regarding our instincts—if we feel that something is right or wrong, that may make it right or wrong for us, but that's not proof that it is universally good or evil. Thus, the idea that there are universal moral laws is mere superstition: it is a claim that things exist in this world which we can never actually experience or learn anything about. And we would do well not to waste our time wondering about things we can never know anything about. When two people fundamentally disagree over what is right or wrong, there is no way to resolve the debate. There is nothing in this world to which they can refer to see which one is correct—because there really are no universal moral laws, just personal evaluations. So the only important question is where your values come from: do you create them yourself, according to your own desires, or do you accept them from someone else... someone else who has disguised their opinions as “universal truths”?

Haven't you always been a little suspicious of the idea of universal moral truths, anyway? This world is filled with groups and individuals who want to convert you to their religions, their dogmas, their political agendas, their opinions. Of course they will tell you that one set of values is true for everybody, and of course they will tell you that their values are the correct ones. Once you're convinced that there is only one standard of right and wrong, they're only a step away from convincing you that their standard is the right one. How carefully we should approach those who would sell us the idea of “universal moral law,” then! Their claim that morality is a matter of universal law is probably just a sneaky way to get us to accept their values rather than forging our own, which might conflict with theirs.

So, to protect ourselves from the superstitions of the moralists and the trickery of the evangelists, let us be done with the idea of moral law. Let us step forward into a new era, in which we will make values

of our own rather than accepting moral laws out of fear and obedience. Let this be our new creed: There is no universal moral code that should dictate human behavior. There is no such thing as good or evil, there is no universal standard of right and wrong. Our values and morals come from us and belong to us, whether we like it or not; so we should claim them proudly for ourselves, as our own creations, rather than seeking some external justification for them.

But if there's no good or evil, if nothing has any intrinsic moral value, how do we know what to do?

Make your own good and evil. If there is no moral law standing over us, that means we're free—free to do whatever we want, free to be whatever we want, free to pursue our desires without feeling any guilt or shame about them. Figure out what it is you want in your life, and go for it; create whatever values are right for you, and live by them. It won't be easy, by any means; desires pull in different directions, they come and go without warning, so keeping up with them and choosing among them is a difficult task—of course obeying instructions is easier, less complicated. But if we just live our lives as we have been instructed to, the chances are very slim that we will get what we want out of life: each of us is different and has different needs, so how could one set of “moral truths” work for each of us? If we take responsibility for ourselves and each carve our own table of values, then we will have a fighting chance of attaining some measure of happiness. The old moral laws are left over from days when we lived in fearful submission to a nonexistent God, anyway; with their departure, we can rid ourselves of all the cowardice, submission, and superstition that has characterized our past.

Some misunderstand the claim that we should pursue our own desires to be mere hedonism. But it is not the fleeting, insubstantial desires of the typical libertine that we are speaking about here. It is the strongest, deepest, most lasting desires and inclinations of the individual: it is her most fundamental loves and hates that should shape her values. And the fact that there is no God to demand that we love one another or act virtuously does not mean that we should not do these things for our own sake, if we find them rewarding, which almost all of us do. But let us do what we do for our own sake, not out of obedience to some deity or moral code!

But how can we justify acting on our ethics, if we can't base them on universal moral truths?

Morality has been something justified externally for so long that today we hardly know how to conceive of it in any other way. We have always had to claim that our values proceeded from something external to us, because basing values on our own desires was (not surprisingly!) branded evil by the preachers of moral law. Today we still feel instinctively that our actions must be justified by something outside of ourselves, something “greater” than ourselves—if not by God, then by moral law, state law, public opinion, justice, “love of man,” etc. We have been so conditioned by centuries of asking permission to feel things and do things, of being forbidden to base any decisions on our own needs, that we still want to think we are obeying some higher power even when we act on our own desires and beliefs; somehow, it seems more defensible to act out of submission to some kind of authority than in the service of our own inclinations. We feel so ashamed of our own aspirations and desires that we would rather attribute our actions to something “higher” than them. But what could be greater than our own desires, what could possibly provide better justification for our actions? Should we be serving something external without consulting our desires, perhaps even against our desires?

This question of justification is where so many hardcore bands have gone wrong. They attack what they see as injustice not on the grounds that they don’t want to see such things happen, but on the grounds that it is “morally wrong.” By doing so, they seek the support of everyone who still believes in the fable of moral law, and they get to see themselves as servants of the Truth. These hardcore bands should not be taking advantage of popular delusions to make their points, but should be challenging assumptions and questioning traditions in everything they do. An improvement in, for example, animal rights, which is achieved in the name of justice and morality, is a step forward at the cost of two steps back: it solves one problem while reproducing and reinforcing another. Certainly such improvements could be fought for and attained on the grounds that they are desirable (nobody who truly considered it would really want to needlessly slaughter and mistreat animals, would they?), rather than with tactics leftover from Christian superstition. Unfortunately, because of centuries of conditioning, it feels so good to feel justified by some “higher force,” to be obeying “moral law,” to be enforcing “justice” and fighting “evil” that these bands get caught up in their role as moral enforcers and forget to question whether the idea of moral law makes sense in the first place. There is a sensation of power that comes from believing that one is serving a higher authority, the same one that attracts people to fascism. It’s always tempting to paint any struggle as good against evil, right against wrong; but that is not just

an oversimplification, it is a falsification: for no such things exist. We can act compassionately towards each other because we want to, not just because “morality dictates,” you know! We don’t need any justification from above to care about animals and humans, or to act to protect them. We need only to feel in our hearts that it is right, that it is right for us, to have all the reason we need. Thus we can justify acting on our ethics without basing them on moral truths simply by not being ashamed of our desires: by being proud enough of them to accept them for what they are, as the forces that drive us as individuals. And our own values might not be right for everyone, it’s true; but they are all each of us has to go on, so we should dare to act on them rather than wishing for some impossible greater justification.

But what would happen if everyone decided that there is no good or evil? Wouldn’t we all kill each other?

This question presupposes that people refrain from killing each other only because they have been taught that it is evil to do so. Is humanity really so absolutely bloodthirsty and vicious that we would all rape and kill each other if we weren’t restrained by superstition? It seems more likely to me that we desire to get along with each other at least as much as we desire to be destructive—don’t you usually enjoy helping others more than you enjoy hurting them? Today, most people claim to believe that compassion and fairness are morally right, but this has done little to make the world into a compassionate and fair place. Might it not be true that we would act upon our natural inclinations to human decency more, rather than less, if we did not feel that charity and justice were obligatory? What would it really be worth, anyway, if we did all fulfill our “duty” to be good to each other, if it was only because we were obeying moral imperatives? Wouldn’t it mean a lot more for us to treat each other with consideration because we want to, rather than because we feel required to?

And if the abolition of the myth of moral law somehow causes more strife between human beings, won’t that still be better than living as slaves to superstitions? If we make our own minds up about what our values are and how we will live according to them, we at least will have the chance to pursue our desires and perhaps enjoy life, even if we have to struggle against each other. But if we choose to live according to rules set for us by others, we sacrifice the chance to choose our destinies and pursue our dreams. No matter how smoothly we might get along in the shackles of moral law, is it worth the abdication of our self-determination? I wouldn’t have the heart to lie to a fellow human being

and tell him he had to conform to some ethical mandate whether it was in his best interest or not, even if that lie would prevent a conflict between us. Because I care about human beings, I want them to be free to do what is right for them. Isn't that more important than mere peace on earth? Isn't freedom, even dangerous freedom, preferable to the safest slavery, to peace bought with ignorance, cowardice, and submission?

Besides, look back at our history. So much bloodshed, deception, and oppression has already been perpetrated in the name of right and wrong. The bloodiest wars have been fought between opponents who each thought they were fighting on the side of moral truth. The idea of moral law doesn't help us get along, it turns us against each other, to contend over whose moral law is the "true" one. There can be no real progress in human relations until everyone's perspectives on ethics and values are acknowledged; then we can finally begin to work out our differences and learn to live together, without fighting over the absolutely stupid question of whose values and desires are "right." For your own sake, for the sake of humanity, cast away the antiquated notions of good and evil and create your values for yourself!

HIERARCHY & DOMINATION

18: CrimethInc Divided and conquered



This essay is from Days of War, Nights of Love.



OVER A CENTURY AGO, a famous writer quipped that the industrial worker was “a mere appendage of flesh on a machine of iron.” Today, that description can be applied across the board: each of us is no more than an appendage of flesh on the vast machine that is our society, for our lives and communities are atomized into isolated sectors. If we want to change the whole of life, we must first become whole again.

SEPARATION: THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE SELF

Modern man's activity is compartmentalized: it is divided and subdivided into separate components which can only interfere with each other. He experiences life as an ongoing conflict between achievement, romance, social responsibility, fitness, relaxation, adventure, and so on, because all these pursuits seem to be mutually exclusive. He would like to spend more time with his wife, but if he doesn't stay at the office another hour he won't be able to advance his career, and then he has to go to the gym to firm up his belly and ward off poor health... and there's that damn vacation at the beach to plan for, and world news to catch up on, before he even gets to think about being romantic with her. Perhaps he buys that Mozart CD that the advertisements said would relieve stress and help focus his concentration skills—hoping some new medication will serve to fend off the symptoms of a life in which he never does anything for its own sake! Perhaps he would like to get involved with some sort of volunteer social work, but doesn't know where he would fit it into his

schedule; he has a hard enough time just taking the time out to watch his favorite sitcom, and even that doesn't provide him with much relief from his busy life. Meaning, of course, is absent everywhere when life is disjointed; without unity of self in his pursuits, the modern man can find no lasting satisfaction in any one of them.

Compare this with the integrated, holistic life of the "savage" or young adventurer. For her, there is no distinction between working and playing, between spending time with her friends and lovers, taking care of her practical needs, and seeking pleasure. She moves through the world, finding sustenance and getting exercise from the same activities, using her creativity with her friends to weave a daily life that is both challenging and familiar, at once adventure, livelihood, and religious ceremony.

Perhaps you've experienced this kind of lifestyle before, when you were doing something that incorporated every aspect of your being into a perfect equilibrium. We all need to find ways to integrate our lives, so that we will not always be trying to make impossible choices between equally necessary pieces of ourselves... and if we want to make this world a better place, we have to find ways of living that are revolutionary in their very nature; for politics, activism, or social responsibility as a separate domain of life, as a hobby or part-time operation, can never outweigh the effects of the rest of life.

Example:

My friend Mark practices Yoga to focus and relax himself. He is also an artist and musician, who often travels around the country with his work. Mark realized one day that when he neglects his exercises on the road, he still feels focused and relaxed in ways that he simply couldn't at home without Yoga. He concluded that the voyage itself must be a kind of Yoga, perhaps the same kind of Yoga referred to by Ken Kesey in his eulogy for Neil Cassady:

"His life was the yoga of a man driven to the cliff-edge by the grassfire of an entire nation's burning material madness. Rather than be consumed by this he jumped, choosing to sort things out in the fast-flying but smog-free moments of a life with no retreat. In this commitment he placed himself irrevocably beyond category."

SPECIALIZATION: THE SUB-DIVISION OF LABOR

Just as our individual lives are fragmented by compartmentalization, our society is fragmented by ever-increasing specialization. Every sphere of life is relegated to the care of an elite core of specialists, who administer it without consulting the rest of us. Every profession is divided and subdivided: from scientist to chemist, from chemist to biochemist, from biochemist to pharmaceutical neurobiologist until no one outside a handful of experts can understand what is going on. At that point, the division of knowledge itself becomes authoritarian, for it grants small groups of people vast powers over others who cannot even fathom what those powers are.

Becoming a specialist is a self-selecting process: only those willing to concentrate on learning one subject to the exclusion of all else can excel at it. Thus the engineers and computer programmers with the greatest skills are willing to work for the government building weapons of mass destruction and cracking the codes of “subversive” groups, for they have never taken the time to reflect on what the effects of their efforts might be. They simply do what they have been taught to do, for whoever provides the chance to do it.

Each expert in this system of specialization is able to do his job well, in a vacuum, but unable to see the larger whole. Without an analysis of the part he plays in society, he sees it as an external force, acting on him without his participation. And the people who form the various parts of the machine are unable to relate to each other to take action together when they want to change something about the world they are making, separated as they are spatially and socially and psychologically into their individual spheres; in fact, each tends to conceive of problems in terms of its needs versus those of the other components of the machine: the library would get the funding it needed if only it wasn't going to the linguistics department, etc.

Specialization also discourages the rest of us from being well-rounded and understanding the workings of our society. Painting is left up to artists, the maintenance of our cars to automechanics, social change to professional politicians or amateur activists. The more complicated technologies become, and the more alienating the terminology used by those who work with them, the fewer of us are able to exercise any control over our environments: “Call the repair man,” we chant, waiting in intimidated ignorance and powerlessness. Similarly, all of us but the recognized “artists” miss out on the joys of being creative in the aesthetic world. The true value of a painting cannot be captured by purchasing it in a gallery and hanging it on the wall; it lies in the moment when the

painting is conceived, when the artist is comparing sketches with her comrades late one night, arguing about narrative and form, and has a sudden, exhilarating insight. This is something we must all take part in, each with our unique talents. The supposed divinity of artists, and the expert credentials of the art critics who deify them, just like the genius of scientists and the arcane knowledge of locksmiths, have fooled us into denying ourselves this irreplaceable pleasure.

The role of the political activist as authority and expert paralyzes the rest of humanity in correspondingly disastrous ways. Saddest and most absurd of all is the way so many political activists unconsciously act to alienate others, the very others with whom they hope in theory to find common cause. Conditioned to believe that they need to be superior to others to have value of their own, and believing in the scarcity economy of self which demands that they stake out their identity in contrast to the identities of those around them, today's insecure activists mistakenly presume that they somehow benefit from showing off how much more knowledgeable, more committed, and more ethical they are than everyone else.

Specialization within political circles is equally crippling. Oblivious to each other's efforts and the strength they could wield as an alliance, single-issue activists agitate about their chosen topics in parallel ghettos; marginalized into a thousand individual campaigns, they exhaust themselves trying to cure the symptoms of the dominant system, rather than developing a resistance that could undermine the world order that is ultimately responsible.

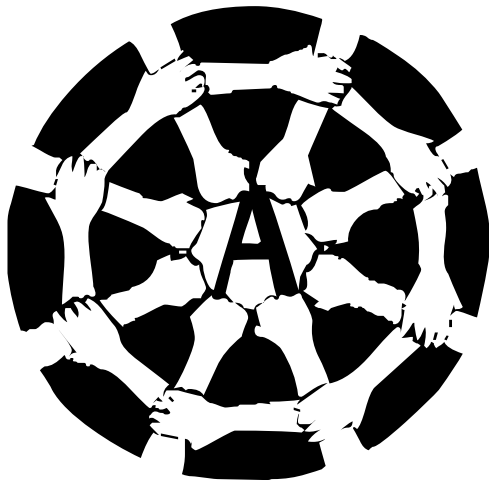
When being active is no longer an off-putting specialty, and partisans of different struggles are able to find common cause, the world will finally change.

END SEGREGATION! INTEGRATE OUR LIVES!

Somewhere across the world there is an underground circus or punk rock band on tour as you read this. Unbeknownst to themselves and others, they carry with them the seeds of a new and yet ancient social structure, which could totally transform the ways all of us live and interact. Within the group, responsibilities are shared and valued equally, and whenever someone wants a break from doing something or is curious to learn about something else, people switch roles. No one member's participation is less important than anyone else's, whatever their individual strengths may be, for the cooperation and contentment of each is crucial to the functioning of the group. Each member's daily activities satisfy her various desires: she feels at home with her

friends while she travels through new environments, she makes art that simultaneously entertains and educates others, she gets exercise and learns new things repairing the van, she has adventures collecting food and other supplies through an urban hunting and gathering that does not conflict with her anti-consumerist ethics. Best of all, she no longer has to distinguish between her own needs and those of the people around her, which eliminates the greater part of the stress of human interaction. Together all the participants function as an extended family, and the positive atmosphere is so strong that over time they are able to lose some members and gain others without losing any momentum.

Yes, we'd have to downsize and restructure our whole civilization to follow the lead this merry little band offers, but for the past few centuries we've been struggling to deal with the difficulties of not living in such communities—and we haven't had much success. If we're going to struggle anyway, it might as well be towards a utopia in which our lives can encompass everything the cosmos has to offer.



SECTION THREE: WHAT WE WANT

In this section, we look at the values anarchists hold, what kind of world they want to live in and the practical application of the anarchist ethos towards reaching this world. Among the subjects discussed are: freedom and equality as a single principle, mutual aid, (r)evolution, direct action, prefiguration, federalism, internationalism and self-management.

FREEDOM & EQUALITY

19: Errico Malatesta Majorities and minorities

This short piece is taken from Malatesta: Life and Ideas, edited by Vernon Richards and published in English by Freedom Press in 1965.



WE DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE RIGHT of the majority to impose the law on the minority, even if the will of the majority in somewhat complicated issues could really be ascertained. The fact of having the majority on one's side does not in any way prove that one must be right. Indeed, humanity has always advanced through the initiative and efforts of individuals and minorities, whereas the majority, by its very nature, is slow, conservative, submissive to superior force and to established privileges.

But if we do not for one moment recognize the right of majorities to dominate minorities, we are even more opposed to domination of the majority by a minority. It would be absurd to maintain that one is right because one is in a minority. If at all times there have been advanced and enlightened minorities, so too have there been minorities which were backward and reactionary; if there are human beings who are exceptional, and ahead of their times, there are also psychopaths, and especially are there apathetic individuals who allow themselves to be unconsciously carried on the tide of events.

In any case it is not a question of being right or wrong; it is a question of freedom, freedom for all, freedom for each individual so long as he does not violate the equal freedom of others. No one can judge with certainty who is right and who is wrong, who is closer to the truth and which is the best road to the greatest good for each and

everyone. Experience through freedom is the only means to arrive at the truth and the best solutions; and there is no freedom if there is not the freedom to be wrong.

In our opinion, therefore, it is necessary that majority and minority should succeed in living together peacefully and profitably by mutual agreement and compromise, by the intelligent recognition of the practical necessities of communal life and of the usefulness of concessions which circumstances make necessary.

As well as their reason and experience telling them that in spite of using all the alchemy of elections and parliament one always ends up by having laws which represent everything but the will of the majority, anarchists do not recognize that the majority as such, even if it were possible to establish beyond all doubt what it wanted, has the right to impose itself on the dissident minorities by the use of force.

Apart from these considerations, there always exists the fact that in a capitalist regime, in which society is divided into rich and poor, into employers and employees whose next meal depends on the absolute power of the boss, there cannot be really free elections.

FREEDOM & EQUALITY

20: Nestor Makhno The anarchist revolution



NESTOR IVANOVYCH MAKHNO (October 26, 1888 – July 6, 1934) was a Ukrainian anarcho-communist revolutionary and the commander of an independent anarchist army in Ukraine during the Russian Civil War that attempted to reorganize life in the Gulai-Polye region of the Ukraine along anarchist-communist lines. This summary of Makhno's views seems to have first been published in around 1932 in Probuzdeniye, an anarchist newspaper, and was later published in English as part of the 1996 collected volume The struggle against the state and other essays, edited by Alexandre Skirka and translated by Paul Sharkey.



ANARCHISM MEANS FREEDOM; socialism cannot destroy chains or bondage. I am an anarchist and a revolutionary myself, and I took part in the activities of the revolutionary peoples of the Ukraine. The Ukrainians are a people who grasp instinctively the meaning of the anarchist ideas and who act them out. They suffered incredible hardship, but have never ceased to talk of their freedom and freedom in their form of life. I often made tactical errors on this difficult path, as I was often weak and unable to make judgements. But because I correctly understood the goal towards which I and my brothers were working I was able to observe the effect of living anarchism during the struggle for freedom and independence. I remain convinced on the grounds of my practical fighting experience that anarchism is as revolutionary, as diverse, and as sublime in every facet as is human life itself. Even if I only felt the remotest glimmer of sympathy for anarcho-revolutionary activity I would still call on you, reader and brother, to take up the struggle for the ideal anarchism, for only if you fight for this ideal and uphold it will you understand it properly. Anarchism is revolutionary in this and many other aspects. The more awake a man

is, the deeper his thoughts about his situation are. He will recognize his state of slavery and the anarchistic and revolutionary spirit within him will wake and show itself in his thoughts and actions. It is the same for every man and woman, even if they could never have heard of it.

Anarchism plays a considerable role in the enrichment of human life, a fact recognized by the oppressors as well as by the oppressed. The oppressors do their best to distort the ideal of anarchism; the others do their best to carry it further. Modern civilization has succeeded in making anarchism ever more prominent for both masters and slaves, but has never been able to lull or extinguish this fundamental protest of human nature, for it has been unable to stamp out the independent intellects who have proven that God does not exist. Once this has been proven it was easy to draw back the veil which hides the artificiality of the priesthood and the hierarchies which it supports.

But various other ideas have been propounded alongside anarchism: "liberalism", socialism and bolshevik communism. These doctrines, despite their large influence on modern society, despite their triumph over both reaction and freedom, are on shaky ground because of their artificiality, their disavowal of organic development and their tendency towards paralysis.

The free man, on the other hand, has thrown away the trammels of the past together with its lies and brutality. He has buried the rotten corpse of slavery and the notion that the past is better. Man has already partially liberated himself from the fog of lies and brutality, which enslaved him from the day of his birth, from the worship of the bayonet, money, legality, and hypocritical science.

While man frees himself from this insult he understands himself better, and once he has understood himself, the book of his life is opened to him. In it he immediately sees that his former life was nothing but loathsome slavery and that this framework of slavery has conspired to stifle all his innate good qualities. He sees that this life has turned him into a beast of burden, a slave for some or a master over others, or into a fool who tears down and tramples on all that is noble in man when ordered to do so. But when freedom awakes in man, it treads all artificialities into the dust and all that stands in the way of independent creativity. This is how man moves in his process of development. In former times he moved in spans of a generation or so, but now the process is moving year by year; man does not wish to be an academic mouthpiece of the rule over others or to tolerate the rule of others over himself. Once man is free from earthly and "heavenly" gods, free from "good manners" and from his morality, which depends on these Gods, he lifts up his voice and struggles against the enslavement of mankind

and the distortion of his nature.

The man of protest, who has fully grasped his identity and who now sees with his eyes fully open, who now thirsts for freedom and totality, now creates groups of free men welded together by the ideal and by the action. Whoever comes into contact with these groups will cast off his status of lackey and will free himself from the idiot domination of others over him. Any ordinary man who comes from the plough, the factory, the bench of the university or the bench of the academic will recognize the degradation of slavery. As man uncovers his true personality, he will throw away all artificial ideas, which go against the rights of his personality, the Master/Slave relationship of modern society. As soon as man brings to the fore the pure elements in his personality through which a new, free human community is born, he will become an anarchist and revolutionary. This is how the ideal of anarchism is assimilated and disseminated by men; the free man recognizes its deep truth, its clarity, and its purity, its message of freedom and creativity.

The idea of anarchism, the teaching of a renewed life for man as an individual and as a social being, is therefore bound up with man's self-awareness and his awareness of the suppurating sore of injustice in modern society. Anarchism exists therefore only illegally or semi-legally, never in total legality.

In the modern world, society does not live for itself but for the preservation of the Master/Slave relationship, the State. One could go further and say that society has completely de-personalized itself. In human terms, it does not exist at all. It is widely believed however that the State is Society. But is "Society" a group of men who live it up while sitting on the shoulders of all humanity? Why is man as an individual or as a mass numbering hundreds of millions nothing in comparison with this slothful group of "political leaders"? These hyenas, rulers both of right and left wing, are rightly upset with the idea of anarchism. The bourgeois at least are frank about this. But state-socialists of all denominations, including Bolsheviks, are busy swapping the names of bourgeois rule with those of their own invention, while leaving its structure essentially unchanged. They are therefore trying to salvage the Master/Slave relationship with all its contradictions. And although they are aware that these contradictions are totally irreconcilable with their professional ideas, they nevertheless uphold them in order to forestall the putting into practice of Anarchist Communism. In their programs, the state-socialists said that man must be allowed to free himself "socially". But of man's spiritual freedom, of his human freedom, no word was spoken. Instead, they are now making sure that such a liberation of man outside their tutelage cannot be carried through. "Liberation" under the

management of any government or political set-up — what's that got to do with freedom? The bourgeois, who never applies himself to the task of making anything beautiful or useful, says to the worker: "Once a slave, always a slave. We cannot reform social life because we have got too much capital in industry and in agriculture. Besides, modern life is pleasant for us; all the kings, presidents, and their governments cater for our wishes and bow before us. The slaves are their responsibility." Or he says: "The life of our modern society is full of great promises!"

"No, no!" screams the bourgeois socialists and communists. "We disagree!" Then they rush to the workers, marshal them into parties, and call on them to rebel as follows: "Drive out the bourgeois from their positions and hand their power over to us. We will work for you. We will liberate you."

So the workers, whose hatred of government is even greater than their hatred of parasites, rise up in revolution to destroy the machinery of power and its representatives. But either because of clumsiness or naiveté, they allow socialism to come to power. This is how the communists got into power in Russia. These communists are real dregs of mankind. They tear down and shoot innocent people and hang liberty; they shoot men exactly as the bourgeois did. They shoot men who think differently to them in order to subjugate all to their power, in order to enslave them to the throne of government they have just taken over. They hire guards for themselves and killers for dealing with free men. Under the weight of the chains made by the new "Workers' Republic" in Russia, man groans and sighs as he did under bourgeois rule. Elsewhere, man is groaning under the yoke of the bourgeoisie or under that of the bourgeois socialist. The hangmen, both old and new, are strong. They have mastered the art of tactical suppression of opposition, and man only flares up briefly to contest his rights before sinking down again under the burden of authority and despair. He drops his hands as the noose is thrown around his neck again, shutting his eyes like a slave before the gleeful hangman.

From these unfolding vistas of human misery and from personal misery, man must forge convictions, call other men his brothers, and fight for freedom. Man is only free if he is prepared to kill every hangman and every power magnate if they do not wish to stop their shameful tasks. He is only free if he does not put a prime on changing his government and is not led astray by the "Workers' Republic" of the Bolsheviks. He must vouch for the establishment of a truly free society based on personal responsibility, the only really free society. His pronouncement on the State must be one of total destruction: "No. This must not be. To rebellion! Rise up, brothers, against all government,

destroy the power of the bourgeoisie and do not allow the socialists and bolshevik government to come to life! Destroy all authority and drive out its representatives!”

There are even moments when the authority of the socialists and communists is worse than the bourgeois, for they tear down their own ideas and trample on them. After fumbling about in secret for the keys to bourgeois government, the communists became guilty and furtive; they do not want the masses to see what they are doing, so they lie and cheat and deceive. If the masses notice this, they seethe with indignation. So the government falls upon them in an orgy of irresponsibility and butchers them in the name of “socialism” and “communism”. The government has of course long since thrown these ideas into the dustbin. At such moments the rule of the socialists and Bolsheviks is more degraded than that of the bourgeoisie for it is even unoriginal in its recourse to the mechanics of bourgeois oppression. While a bourgeois government strings a revolutionary up on the gallows, socialist or bolshevik-communist governments will creep up and strangle him in his sleep or kill him by trickery. Both acts are depraved. But the socialists are more depraved because of their methods.

Any political revolution in which the bourgeoisie, the socialists and state-communists struggle with each other over political ascendancy while dragging in the masses will show the traits outlined above, the most obvious example being the Russian Revolutions of February and October 1917. When the working masses that made up Tsarist Russia felt themselves partially freed from reaction, they began to work towards total freedom. They expressed this wish by expropriating landlords and monasteries and by handing over their lands to the people who wished to cultivate it with hired labor. Sometimes factories, works, presses, and other businesses were taken over by those who worked in them. Attempts were made to create liaisons between towns and villages. And while they were engaged in this activity the people were of course unaware that there were governments sitting about in Kiev, Kharkov, St. Petersburg, and elsewhere. The people were in fact laying the foundations for a new, free society that would throw out all parasites and governments and the idiocy of power. This healthy activity was especially noticeable in the Ural, in Siberia, and in the Ukraine. It was remarked upon by the old as well as the new regimes in Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev, and Tiflis. But the socialists as well as the Bolsheviks had (and still have) a widely dispersed party membership and a well-distributed network of professional killers. It must be added that, besides these professional killers, they also hired people from our own ranks. With the help of these people they managed to nip the people’s freedom in the bud. And they did a good job. The

Spanish Inquisition would have been green with envy.

We now know the real truths behind government. To the Bolsheviks and socialists we say: "Shame! Dishonor! You talked such a lot about the terror of the bourgeoisie and you took the side of revolution with great zeal. But now that you are in power you show yourself the same old fools, the same lackeys of the bourgeoisie, and slaves of their methods. You have turned yourselves into bourgeois." Looking at the experiences of bolshevik communism during recent years, the bourgeois know perfectly well that this particular brand of socialism can never manage without using their methods or without hiring them in person. It knows that the exploitation and suppression of the working majority is inherent in this system, that the vicious life of sloth is not cast aside in socialism, but that it merely masquerades under another name before spreading and taking root again.

This is the Truth! You've only got to look at the bolshevik vandals and their monopoly over the people's revolutionary conquests! Look at their spies, their police, their laws, prisons, jailers, and their armies of bailiffs. The "Red" Army is only the old army under a new name.

Liberalism, socialism, Bolshevism; they are three brothers who go their different ways to grab power over man. This power is used to block man's advance towards self-realization and independence.

To Rebellion!

This is the cry of the anarchist revolutionary to the exploited. Rebel, destroy all government and see that it never takes root again. Power is used by those who have never really lived by the work of their hands. Government power will never let workers tread the road to freedom; it is the instrument of the lazy who want to dominate others, and it does not matter if the power is in the hand of the bourgeois, the socialists or the Bolsheviks, it is degrading. There is no government without teeth, teeth to tear any man who longs for a free and just life.

Brother; drive out power in yourself. Never let it fascinate you or your brothers. A true collective life is not built with programs or with governments but with the freedom of mankind, with its creativity and its independence.

The freedom of any individual carries within it the seed of a free and complete community without government, a free society that lives in organic and decentralized totality, united in its pursuit of the great human goal: Anarchist Communism! Anarchistic Communism is a great community in total harmony. It is formed voluntarily by free individuals who form associations and federations according to their

needs. Anarchist Communism fights to secure man's freedom and his right to boundless development; it fights against all the evils and injustices that are inherent in governments.

The free, non-governed society aims to embellish life with its intellectual and manual work. It will have as its resources all that nature gave man as well as nature's own inexhaustible riches; it makes man drunk with the beauty of the earth and exhilarated by his own, self-made freedom. Anarchist Communism will let man develop his creative independence in all directions; its adherents will be free and happy with life, guided by brotherly work and reciprocity. They will need no prisons, hangmen, spies, or agents, which are products of the bourgeoisie and socialists, for they will have no need of the idiot robber and murderer that is the State. Prepare yourselves, brother, to create this society! Prepare organizations and ideas! Remember that your organizations must be safe from attack. The enemy of your freedom is the state personified in five figures:

The property owner
The lover of war
The judge
The priest
Academics who distort the truth about man

These last make up "historical laws" and "judiciary norms", and scribble slickly in order to get money; they are busy all the time trying to prove the rightfulness of the first four's claims to power that degrades human life.

The enemy is strong. For millennia he has spent his time accumulating experience in robbery, violence, expropriation, and murder. He underwent an inner crisis and is now busy changing his outward aspect, but he is only doing this because his life has been threatened with the new, emerging knowledge. This new knowledge is waking man from his long sleep, freeing him from prejudices implanted by the five, giving him a weapon to fight for his true society. This change in the outer appearance of our enemy can be seen in reformism. It was evolved to combat the revolution in which he took part. In the Russian Revolution, the five seemed to have vanished off the face of the earth... but this was only appearance. In reality our enemy changed his features momentarily and is now calling up new recruits to fight against us. Bolshevik communism is especially revealing in this matter; but it will be a long time before this doctrine will forget man's struggle for true freedom.

The only reliable method for waging a successful struggle against enslavement is social revolution that engages the masses in a continual struggle (evolution). When it first erupts, social revolution is elemental. It flattens the path for its own organizations while smashing any dam that is artificially set against it. These dams in fact only increase its power. Anarchist revolutionaries are already working for this, and any man who is aware of the burden of slavery on himself has a duty to aid the anarchist; at the same time every man should feel responsible to the whole of mankind when he struggles against the five of the State. Every man should also remember that the social revolution will require appropriate methods of realization; that is especially true of the anarchist who is scouting ahead along the road of freedom. During the destructive phase of the revolution, while slavery is being abolished and freedom beginning to spread in an elemental outburst, organization and steadfast methods are essential to secure the gains. In this phase the revolution needs you most urgently. The Russian Revolution, in which anarchists played a considerable role (which they could not carry through because action was denied them), brought home to us the truth that the masses who have torn themselves loose from their chains had no desire to put on others of a different make. In their revolutionary momentum, they sought immediately for free associations that would only aid their efforts to build up a new community but which would defend them against the enemy. If we look at this process closely, we come to the conclusion that the best method to create new collective freedom is the "Free Soviet". Proceeding from this conviction, the anarchist revolutionary will call the enslaved to struggle for these free associations. He will believe that social revolution will thus create freedom while smashing slavery altogether. This belief must be cherished and defended. The only people who can possibly provide the defense for this belief are the masses themselves who have made the revolution and who equate their lives with their principles. While the human masses create the revolution they instinctively cast about for free associations and rely on their inherent anarchism; they will uphold above all the Free Soviet. As the masses make a revolution they are bound to come upon this themselves and the anarchist must help them formulate this principle.

Economic problems in the free society will be resolved by the producer-consumer co-operatives in which the Free Soviets will act as co-ordinators and clarifiers. The nature of the Free Soviet during the social revolution must be to consolidate the masses' position by urging them to take their rightful inheritance (land, factories, works, mineral and coal mines, shipping, forestry, etc.) into their own hands. While

groups according to interest or inclination are formed, the masses will build up an entire social fabric, freely and independently.

The struggle along this road will demand great sacrifice, for it will be the final effort of nearly free man. In this struggle there will be no hesitation, no sentimentality. Life or Death!? — This question will stand before every man who considers his rights and those of humanity to be a better life. As the healthy instincts of man will have preponderance, he will embark upon this road to life as victor and creator.

Organize yourselves, brothers, call every man to your ranks. Call him from the factory, from the school; call the students and the learned. It may be that nine out of ten academics will not come to you, or it may happen that they will come in order to deceive you if they are servants of the State's five. But the tenth man will come. He will be your friend and will help you overcome the deceit of the others. Organize yourselves; call every man to your ranks; call on all the governors to stop their stupidity and the brutalizing of human life. If they do not desist, disarm the police, the army and other organizations of the five's defense. Burn their laws and destroy their prisons, kill the hangmen, the bane of mankind. Smash authority! Call to your ranks the press-ganged army; there are many killers in the army who are against you and who are bribed to kill you. But there are friends for you even in the army. They will confound the mobs of murderers and will hurry to your side.

After we have collected ourselves into a great, universal family, brothers, we will go further in the fight against darkness. On to the universal human ideal! We will live as brothers, enslaving no one. The brute force of the enemy will be answered with the force by our revolutionary army. If our enemies do not agree with our ideal, we reply by building our new life based on individual responsibility. Only hardened criminals who belong to the five will not wish to tread the road to a new life with fruitful activity. They will try to fight us in order to regain their power. They must die.

Long live the ideal of universal human harmony, and man's fight towards it! Long live the ideal of anarchist society!

FREEDOM & EQUALITY

21: Peter Kropotkin Our riches



PYOTR ALEXEYEVICH KROPOTKIN (December 1842 – 8 February 1921) was a Russian zoologist, evolutionary theorist, philosopher, scientist, revolutionary, philologist, economist, activist, geographer and writer, and is widely viewed as one of the fathers of contemporary anarchism. Kropotkin advocated a communist society free from central government and based on voluntary associations between workers. He wrote many books, pamphlets and articles, the most prominent being The Conquest of Bread, Fields, Factories and Workshops and his principal scientific offering, Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution. This excerpt is from chapter one of The Conquest of Bread.



THE HUMAN RACE HAS TRAVELLED FAR since those bygone ages when men used to fashion their rude implements of flint, and lived on the precarious spoils of the chase, leaving to their children for their only heritage a shelter beneath the rocks, some poor utensils — and Nature, vast, ununderstood, and terrific, with whom they had to fight for their wretched existence.

During the agitated times which have elapsed since, and which have lasted for many thousand years, mankind has nevertheless amassed untold treasures. It has cleared the land, dried the marshes, pierced the forests, made roads; it has been building, inventing, observing, reasoning; it has created a complex machinery, wrested her secrets from Nature, and finally it has made a servant of steam. And the result is, that now the child of the civilized man finds ready, at its birth, to his hand an immense capital accumulated by those who have gone before him. And

this capital enables him to acquire, merely by his own labour, combined with the labour of others, riches surpassing the dreams of the Orient, expressed in the fairy tales of the Thousand and One Nights.

The soil is cleared to a great extent, fit for the reception of the best seeds, ready to make a rich return for the skill and labour spent upon it — a return more than sufficient for all the wants of humanity. The methods of cultivation are known.

On the wide prairies of America each hundred men, with the aid of powerful machinery, can produce in a few months enough wheat to maintain ten thousand people for a whole year. And where man wishes to double his produce, to treble it, to multiply it a hundred-fold, he makes the soil, gives to each plant the requisite care, and thus obtains enormous returns. While the hunter of old had to scour fifty or sixty square miles to find food for his family, the civilized man supports his household, with far less pains, and far more certainty, on a thousandth part of that space. Climate is no longer an obstacle. When the sun fails, man replaces it by artificial heat; and we see the coming of a time when artificial light also will be used to stimulate vegetation. Meanwhile, by the use of glass and hot water pipes, man renders a given space ten and fifty times more productive than it was in its natural state.

The prodigies accomplished in industry are still more striking. With the co-operation of those intelligent beings, modern machines — themselves the fruit of three or four generations of inventors, mostly unknown — a hundred men manufacture now the stuff to clothe ten thousand persons for a period of two years. In well-managed coal mines the labour of a hundred miners furnishes each year enough fuel to warm ten thousand families under an inclement sky. And we have lately witnessed twice the spectacle of a wonderful city springing up in a few months at Paris, without interrupting in the slightest degree the regular work of the French nation.

And if in manufactures as in agriculture, and as indeed through our whole social system, the labour, the discoveries, and the inventions of our ancestors profit chiefly the few, it is none the less certain that mankind in general, aided by the creatures of steel and iron which it already possesses, could already procure an existence of wealth and ease for every one of its members.

Truly, we are rich, far richer than we think; rich in what we already possess, richer still in the possibilities of production of our actual mechanical outfit; richest of all in what we might win from our soil, from our manufactures, from our science, from our technical knowledge, were they but applied to bringing about the well-being of all.

We, in civilized societies, are rich. Why then are the many poor?

Why this painful drudgery for the masses? Why, even to the best paid workman, this uncertainty for the morrow, in the midst of all the wealth inherited from the past, and in spite of the powerful means of production, which could ensure comfort to all in return for a few hours of daily toil?

The Socialists have said it and repeated it unwearyingly. Daily they reiterate it, demonstrating it by arguments taken from all the sciences. It is because all that is necessary for production — the land, the mines, the highways, machinery, food, shelter, education, knowledge — all have been seized by the few in the course of that long story of robbery, enforced migration and wars, of ignorance and oppression, which has been the life of the human race before it had learned to subdue the forces of Nature. It is because, taking advantage of alleged rights acquired in the past, these few appropriate to-day two-thirds of the products of human labour, and then squander them in the most stupid and shameful way. It is because, having reduced the masses to a point at which they have not the means of subsistence for a month, or even for a week in advance, the few only allow the many to work on condition of themselves receiving the lion's share. It is because these few prevent the remainder of men from producing the things they need, and force them to produce, not the necessities of life for all, but whatever offers the greatest profits to the monopolists. In this is the substance of all Socialism.

Take, indeed, a civilized country. The forests which once covered it have been cleared, the marshes drained, the climate improved. It has been made habitable. The soil, which bore formerly only a coarse vegetation, is covered to-day with rich harvests. The rock-walls in the valleys are laid out in terraces and covered with vines bearing golden fruit. The wild plants, which yielded nought but acrid berries, or uneatable roots, have been transformed by generations of culture into succulent vegetables, or trees covered with delicious fruits. Thousands of highways and railroads furrow the earth, and pierce the mountains. The shriek of the engine is heard in the wild gorges of the Alps, the Caucasus, and the Himalayas. The rivers have been made navigable; the coasts, carefully surveyed, are easy of access; artificial harbours, laboriously dug out and protected against the fury of the sea, afford shelter to the ships. Deep shafts have been sunk in the rocks; labyrinths of underground galleries have been dug out where coal may be raised or minerals extracted. At the crossings of the highways great cities have sprung up, and within their borders all the treasures of industry, science, and art have been accumulated.

Whole generations, that lived and died in misery, oppressed and ill-treated by their masters, and worn out by toil, have handed on this

immense inheritance to our century.

For thousands of years millions of men have laboured to clear the forests, to drain the marshes, and to open up highways by land and water. Every rood of soil we cultivate in Europe has been watered by the sweat of several races of men. Every acre has its story of enforced labour, of intolerable toil, of the people's sufferings. Every mile of railway, every yard of tunnel, has received its share of human blood.

The shafts of the mine still bear on their rocky walls the marks made by the pick of the workman who toiled to excavate them. The space between each prop in the underground galleries might be marked as a miner's grave; and who can tell what each of these graves has cost, in tears, in privations, in unspeakable wretchedness to the family who depended on the scanty wage of the worker cut off in his prime by fire-damp, rock-fall, or flood?

The cities, bound together by railroads and waterways, are organisms which have lived through centuries. Dig beneath them and you find, one above another, the foundations of streets, of houses, of theatres, of public buildings. Search into their history and you will see how the civilization of the town, its industry, its special characteristics, have slowly grown and ripened through the co-operation of generations of its inhabitants before it could become what it is today. And even today, the value of each dwelling, factory, and warehouse, which has been created by the accumulated labour of the millions of workers, now dead and buried, is only maintained by the very presence and labour of legions of the men who now inhabit that special corner of the globe. Each of the atoms composing what we call the Wealth of Nations owes its value to the fact that it is a part of the great whole. What would a London dockyard or a great Paris warehouse be if they were not situated in these great centres of international commerce? What would become of our mines, our factories, our workshops, and our railways, without the immense quantities of merchandise transported every day by sea and land?

Millions of human beings have laboured to create this civilization on which we pride ourselves to-day. Other millions, scattered through the globe, labour to maintain it. Without them nothing would be left in fifty years but ruins.

There is not even a thought, or an invention, which is not common property, born of the past and the present. Thousands of inventors, known and unknown, who have died in poverty, have co-operated in the invention of each of these machines which embody the genius of man.

Thousands of writers, of poets, of scholars, have laboured to increase knowledge, to dissipate error, and to create that atmosphere of scientific thought, without which the marvels of our century could never have appeared. And these thousands of philosophers, of poets, of scholars, of inventors, have themselves been supported by the labour of past centuries. They have been upheld and nourished through life, both physically and mentally, by legions of workers and craftsmen of all sorts. They have drawn their motive force from the environment.

The genius of a Séguin, a Mayer, a Grove, has certainly done more to launch industry in new directions than all the capitalists in the world. But men of genius are themselves the children of industry as well as of science. Not until thousands of steam-engines had been working for years before all eyes, constantly transforming heat into dynamic force, and this force into sound, light, and electricity, could the insight of genius proclaim the mechanical origin and the unity of the physical forces. And if we, children of the nineteenth century, have at last grasped this idea, if we know now how to apply it, it is again because daily experience has prepared the way. The thinkers of the eighteenth century saw and declared it, but the idea remained undeveloped, because the eighteenth century had not grown up like ours, side by side with the steam-engine. Imagine the decades that might have passed while we remained in ignorance of this law, which has revolutionized modern industry, had Watt not found at Soho skilled workmen to embody his ideas in metal, bringing all the parts of his engine to perfection, so that steam, pent in a complete mechanism, and rendered more docile than a horse, more manageable than water, became at last the very soul of modern industry.

Every machine has had the same history — a long record of sleepless nights and of poverty, of disillusion and of joys, of partial improvements discovered by several generations of nameless workers, who have added to the original invention these little nothings, without which the most fertile idea would remain fruitless. More than that: every new invention is a synthesis, the resultant of innumerable inventions which have preceded it in the vast field of mechanics and industry.

Science and industry, knowledge and application, discovery and practical realization leading to new discoveries, cunning of brain and of hand, toil of mind and muscle — all work together. Each discovery, each advance, each increase in the sum of human riches, owes its being to the physical and mental travail of the past and the present.

By what right then can any one whatever appropriate the least morsel of this immense whole and say — This is mine, not yours?

22: Peter Kropotkin

Mutual aid

PETER KROPOTKIN's best-known book, Mutual Aid, provided a scientific framework for the central concept of communist anarchism: voluntary cooperation as the natural basis for society. It was also a counter to the arguments of the Social Darwinists, who held that "survival of the fittest" explained, if not justified, the innate competitive spirit of capitalism. On the eve of the Great War, Kropotkin expanded on his position, addressing the "principles of independence and free federation" in contrast to centralized government and the nation-state.



AT FIRST RECEIVED WITH DISTRUST, the idea that mutual aid and mutual support represent an important factor in the progressive evolution of animal species seems to be accepted now by many biologists. In most of the chief works of Evolution appearing lately in Germany, it is already recognized that two different aspects of the struggle for life must be distinguished: the struggle of the whole, of large divisions, of a species against adverse natural conditions and rival species, and the struggle between individuals within the species; in other words: *exterior* warfare and *inner* war. At the same time it begins also to be recognized that the struggle for life *within* the species has been exaggerated and that *mutual aid* is, to say the least, *as much a fundamental principle in Nature as mutual struggle*, while for *progressive evolution* it is without doubt the most important of the two.

The value of this recognition cannot be overlooked. Darwin already foresaw it. Once it is recognized that the social instinct is a permanent and powerful instinct in every animal species, and still more so in man, we are enabled to establish the foundations of Ethics (the Morality of Society) upon the sound basis of the observation of Nature and need not

look for it in supernatural revelation. The idea which Bacon, Grotius, Goethe, and Darwin himself (in his second work, *The Descent of Man*) were advocating is thus finding a full confirmation once we direct our attention to the extent to which mutual aid is carried on in Nature. We see at once what a powerful weapon it represents even for the feeblest species in their struggle against adverse natural conditions, the longevity it secures to the individuals, the accumulation of experience, and the development of higher instincts and intelligence that it renders possible within the species.

To show this importance of the social instinct as a basis of Ethics is the work which I am now engaged in.

Another important consideration to which the study of mutual aid in Nature brings us is that it enables us better to realize how much the evolution of every animal species, and still more so of human societies and separate individuals, depends upon *the conditions of life under which they are developing*. This idea, so energetically advocated by the French Encyclopaedists at the end of the eighteenth century, and by their Socialist and Anarchist followers in the succeeding century, beginning with Godwin, Fourier, and Robert Owen, is bitterly combated by the defenders of Capitalism and the State, as well as by the religious preachers; and we all know what advantage they took of the struggle-for-life idea for the defence of their position—much to the despair of Darwin himself. Now that we see that the idea of an inner struggle within the species had been grossly exaggerated by Darwin's followers, we understand that if in his works, subsequent to his *Origin of Species* (*The Descent of Man* and especially *Variation in Animals and Plants*), he gave more and more importance to the action of exterior conditions in determining the lines of evolution of all living beings—he did not make “a concession” to his opponents, as we are told by some of his English followers. He merely summed up the result of the immense researches he had made into the causes of variation after he had published in 1859 his first epoch-making work, *The Origin of Species*.

A careful, dispassionate study of the effects of environment upon the development of both societies and individuals can thus be made now, and it is sure to open new, important vistas upon Evolution as a whole, while at the same time it frees the social reformer from the doubts he might have had concerning his efforts of changing first the present conditions of life of mankind and saying that better conditions of social life, based on mutual support and equality, would already raise man's moral conceptions to a level they never could attain under the present system of slavery and exploitation of man by man.

A third point upon which the researches made can throw a new

light is *the origin of the State*. Some ideas upon this subject, derived from the studies of the development of Society, and contained in *Mutual Aid*, I have embodied in a pamphlet, *The State and Its Historical Role*. But much more could be said upon this important subject; and, as every careful reader will see himself, the chapters I give in the book to *Mutual Aid in the Mediaeval City* and, the preceding chapter, to the *Village Community*, open new lines of research which would be rich in important *practical* results. Unfortunately, the worship of the centralized Roman State and Roman Law, which reigns supreme in our universities, stands in the way of such researches. The more so, as such studies, if they were made, would give support to the ideas growing now in the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon communities as regards the necessity of independence, or "home rule," not only for separate nationalities but also for every geographically separate territory, every commune and parish. Such an independence—it begins now to be understood—would be the only proper way for establishing a real union between the different parts of a territory, in lieu of the artificial cohesion enforced now by a common submission to some outside authority. It has been said in some reviews of this book that I have to some extent exaggerated the good features of the mediaeval free republics. But if this book were not written for the general reader, and if I had incorporated into it the immense mass of material I have collected in the reliable contemporary sources and serious modern works on the subject, one would have seen that, far from having exaggerated, I was compelled to limit my illustrations to quite a small number of those I might have given. Those illustrations which I have in my manuscript notes alone would do to make a second volume.

Now that we see such a great movement among the workingmen of Europe and America towards themselves working out the forms which production and exchange ought to take in a society freed from the yoke of Capital and State, I earnestly advise those workers who are already thinking in that direction to meditate about what we know of the first two centuries of independent life in the mediaeval cities, after they had thrown off the yoke of feudal barons, bishops, and kings, and started a new development on the lines of freedom and federation. Of course, we must not try to imitate the past—history does not repeat itself, and I have indicated in *Mutual Aid* the mistakes the mediaeval cities committed when they worked out their freedom charts. What we have to do is to see whether the *principles of independence and free federation* were not infinitely better, leading to prosperity and a higher intellectual development, than the submission to outside authorities and the enslavement to Church and State, which characterized the epoch that followed the fall of the free cities and inaugurated the growth of

military States.

At the present time the idea of centralization and centralized States is so much in vogue, even among Socialists, that we often hear people saying that the smaller nationalities have no reason to exist; the sooner they will be swallowed by the more numerous ones, the sooner they forget their mother tongue, the better.

All my life, experience has taught me quite the reverse. All that I have learned in my life has persuaded me, on the contrary, that the surest way to bring about a harmony of aspirations among the different nations is for every fraction of mankind to further develop and to enrich the language that is spoken by the masses of that fraction of humanity. This will also be the surest way for all those fractions to agree among themselves as to the one or two languages that will be accepted later on as the chief means of international intercourse. The more so as learning a language would be a knowledge quite easy to acquire under the perfected methods of teaching languages which are already worked out now.

Besides, this is also the surest way to stimulate every nationality to develop the best that it has worked out in the course of centuries in its own surroundings; the surest way to enrich our common inheritance with those national features which give a special value to philosophical conceptions, to poetry, and to art.

23: Donald Rooum Selfishness and benevolence

This excerpt is from Donald Rooum and Freedom Press (ed.). What Is Anarchism? An Introduction. London: Freedom Press, 1995.



IT IS STILL NOT THOUGHT STRANGE to denounce bosses for pursuing their own selfish advantage, as if to suggest that they would be acceptable, if only they were all incorruptible idealists. It has become obvious that bending the knee to a god and touching the forelock to a boss are mutually reinforcing activities, but it is still not clear to everyone that calling shame on selfishness is another activity of the same kind.

There is a verbal trick, apparently proving that benevolence does not occur. *"Why are you giving a fiver to Oxfam?" "I think it might relieve someone's distress." "Do you like the thought of relieving someone's distress?" "Yes." "Then you are not doing it to relieve someone's distress, but for your own pleasure in relieving someone's distress."*

The trick is exposed if we apply the same procedure to an act which is not benevolent. *"Why are you singing in the bath?" "The reverberations make my voice sound great." "Do you like your voice to sound great?" "Yes." "Then you are not doing it to make your voice sound great, but for your own pleasure in making your voice sound great."*

Obviously there is no distinction between wanting one's voice to sound great and wanting the pleasure of one's voice sounding great. Nor is there any distinction between wanting to relieve someone's distress and wanting the pleasure of relieving someone's distress. The trick depends on the false assumption that benevolence and selfish pleasure are incompatible.

Awareness of someone else's emotions causes us to experience a semblance of the same emotions ourselves. This phenomenon is called "empathy." When the other person's emotion is painful it is called "primary distress," and the response it produces is called "empathic distress."

Empathic distress may be relieved by becoming less aware of the primary distress, for instance by running away or hiding one's eyes. Or it may be relieved by relieving the primary distress, which is a benevolent act.

To obtain maximum benevolence from others, maximise their awareness of your distress. The Ethiopian famine of 1984 was a usual type of famine, which at first provoked only a usual type of caring response. Then the first carers managed to get pictures of the suffering on television, and a massive, popular relief effort started. People were more moved to empathic distress by the sight than they had been by the news.

Empathy is not the only motive for benevolence. Species in which the invariable response to empathic distress is to run may care for their mates and young from entirely different urges. In humans, there is also the pride of perceiving oneself to be benevolent. These are all selfish motives, and all produce real benevolence.

24: Errico Malatesta

The anarchist revolution

This article is from Malatesta's anarchist revolution: polemical articles 1924-1931, published in English by Freedom Press in 1995.



THE REVOLUTION IS THE CREATION of new living institutions, new groupings, new social relationships; it is the destruction of privileges and monopolies; it is the new spirit of justice, of brotherhood, of freedom which must renew the whole of social life, raise the moral level and the material conditions of the masses by calling on them to provide, through their direct and conscientious action, for their own futures. Revolution is the organization of all public services by those who work in them in their own interest as well as the public's; Revolution is the destruction of all coercive ties; it is the autonomy of groups, of communes, of regions; Revolution is the free federation brought about by desire for brotherhood, by individual and collective interests, by the needs of production and defense; Revolution is the constitution of innumerable free groupings based on ideas, wishes, and tastes of all kinds that exist among the people; Revolution is the forming and disbanding of thousands of representative, district, communal, regional, national bodies which, without having any legislative power, serve to make known and to coordinate the desires and interests of people near and far and which act through information, advice and example. Revolution is freedom proved in the crucible of facts and lasts so long as freedom lasts, that is until others, taking advantage of the weariness that overtakes the masses, of the inevitable disappointments that follow exaggerated hopes, of the probable errors and human faults, succeed in constituting a power, which supported by an army of conscripts or mercenaries, lays down the law, arrests the movement at the point it has

reached, and then begins the reaction.

The great majority of anarchists, if I am not mistaken, hold the view that human perfectibility and anarchy would not be achieved even in a few thousand years, if first one did not create by the revolution, made by a conscious majority, the necessary environment for freedom and well being. For this reason we want to make the revolution as soon as possible, and to do so we need to take advantage of all positive forces and every favorable situation which arises.

The task of the conscious minority is to profit from every situation to change the environment in a way that will make possible the education of the whole people. And since the environment today, which obliges most people to live in misery, is maintained by violence, we advocate and prepare for violence. That is why we are revolutionaries, and not because we are desperate men thirsting for revenge and filled with hate.

We are revolutionaries because we believe that only the revolution, the violent revolution, can solve the ills we face. We believe furthermore that the revolution is an act of will — the will of individuals and of the masses; that it needs for its success certain objective conditions, but that it does not happen of necessity, inevitably, through the single action of economic and political forces.

Our task is to be revolutionary not only in the philosophical meaning of the word but also in the popular and insurrectionalist sense; and I can say this to clearly distinguish between my views and those of others who call themselves revolutionaries, but who interpret the world so as not to have to bring in the face of violence, the insurrection which must open the way to revolutionary achievements.

Anarchy cannot be achieved until after the revolution which will sweep away the first material obstacles. It is clear then that our efforts must in the first instance be directed to making the revolution and in such a way that it is in the direction of anarchy. We have to provoke the revolution with all the means at our disposal and act in it as anarchists, by opposing the constitution of any authoritarian regime and putting into operation as much as we can of our program. Anarchists will have to take advantage of the increased freedom that we would have won. We will have to be morally and technically prepared to realize within the limits of our numbers, those forms of social life and cooperation which we consider best and most suitable for paving the way for the future.

We do not want to wait for the masses to become anarchist before making the revolution, since we are convinced that they will never become anarchist if the institutions which keep them enslaved are not first destroyed. And since we need the support of the masses to build up a force of sufficient strength and to achieve our specific task of radical change of society by the direct action of the masses, we must get closer

to them, accept them as they are, and from within their ranks seek to push them forward as much as possible. That is of course, if we really intend to work for the practical achievement of our ideals, and are not content with preaching in the desert for the simple satisfaction of our intellectual pride.

We don't take revolution as synonymous with progress, with an historic view of life. In that sense all kinds of people are revolutionary. When one introduces the centuries into the argument, everyone will agree with everything he says. But when we speak of revolution, when the masses speak of revolution, as when one refers to it in history, one simply means the insurrection triumphant. Insurrections will be necessary as long as there are power groups which use their material force to exact obedience from the masses. And it is only too clear that there will be many more insurrections before the people win that minimum of indispensable conditions for free and peaceful development, when humanity will be able to advance towards its noblest objectives without cruel struggles and useless suffering.

By revolution we do not mean just the insurrection, but we must avoid replacing one state of coercion by another. We must clearly distinguish between the revolutionary act which destroys as much as it can of the old regime and puts in its place new institutions, and government which comes afterwards to halt the revolution and suppress as many of the revolutionary conquests as it can.

History teaches us that all advances that are the result of revolutions were secured in the period of popular enthusiasm, when either a recognized government did not exist or was too weak to make a stand against the revolution. But once the government was formed, so reaction started which served the interest of the old and the new privileged classes and took back from the people all that it could. Our task then is to make, and to help others make, the revolution by taking advantage of every opportunity and all available forces: advancing the revolution as much as possible in its constructive as well as destructive role, and always remaining opposed to the formation of any government, either ignoring it or combating it to the limits of our capacities.

We will no more recognize a republican constitution than we would a parliamentary monarchy. We cannot stop it if the people want it; we might even occasionally be with them in fighting attempts to bring about a restoration of a monarchy; but we will want and will demand complete freedom for those who think as we do and who wish to live outside the tutelage and oppression of the government; to propagate their ideas by word and deed. Revolutionaries yes, but above all anarchists. Destruction of all concentrations of political power is the first duty of oppressed people.

Any organization of an allegedly provisional revolutionary political power to achieve this destruction cannot be other than one trick more, and would be as dangerous to the people as are all present governments.

In refusing every compromise for the achievement of the revolution, workers of the world must establish solidarity in revolutionary action outside the framework of bourgeois politicians.

These anarchist principles which were formulated under the inspiration of Bakunin at the Congress of St. Imier, 1872, continue to point a good direction for us today. Those who have tried to act in contradiction to them have disappeared, because however defined, government, dictatorship and parliament can only lead the people back to slavery. All experience so far bears this out. Needless to say, for the delegates of St. Imier as for us and all anarchists, the abolition of political power is not possible without the simultaneous destruction of economic privilege.

There is a need for a revolution to eliminate the material forces which exist to defend privilege and to prevent every real social progress. This conviction has led many to believe that the only important thing is the insurrection, and to overlook what has to be done to prevent an insurrection from remaining a sterile act of violence against which an act of reactionary violence would be the eventual reply. For those who believe this, all for the practical questions of organization, of how to make provisions for the distribution of food, are idle questions: for them these are matters which will solve themselves, or will be solved by those who come after us. Yet the conclusion we come to is this: social reorganization is something we must all think about right now, and as the old is destroyed we shall have a more human and just society as well as one more receptive to future advances. The alternative is that 'the leaders' will think about these problems, and we shall have a new government, which will do exactly as all previous governments have done, in making the people pay for the scant and poor services they render, by taking away their freedom and allowing them to be oppressed by every kind of parasite and exploiter.

In order to abolish the police and all the harmful social institutions we must know what to put in their place, not in a more or less distant future but immediately, the very day we start demolishing. One only destroys, effectively and permanently, that which one replaces by something else; and to put off to a later date the solution of problems which present themselves with the urgency of necessity would be to give time to the institutions one is intending to abolish to recover from the shock and reassert themselves, perhaps under other names, but certainly with the same structure.

Our solutions may be accepted by a sufficiently large section of the

population and we shall have achieved anarchy, or taken a step towards anarchy; or they may not be understood or accepted and then our efforts will serve as propaganda and place before the public at large the program for a not distant future. But in any case we must have our solutions; provisional, subject to correction and revision in the light of practice, but we must have our solutions if we do not wish to submit passively to those solutions imposed by others and limit ourselves to the unprofitable role of useless and impotent grumblers.

I believe that we anarchists, convinced of the validity of our program, must make special efforts to acquire a predominating influence in order to be able to swing the movement towards the realization of our ideals; but we must acquire this influence by being more active and more effective than the others. Only in this way will it be worth acquiring. Today we must examine thoroughly, develop and propagate our ideas and coordinate our efforts for common action. We must act inside the popular movements to prevent them from limiting themselves to, and being corrupted by, the exclusive demand for the small improvements possible under the capitalist system, and seek to make it serve for the preparation of the complete and radical change of our society. We must work among the mass of unorganized, and possibly unorganizable, people to awaken in them the spirit of revolt and the desire and hope for a free and happy existence, We must initiate and support every possible kind of movement which tends to weaken the power of the government and of the capitalists and to raise the moral level and material conditions of the people. We must get ready and prepare, morally and materially, for the revolutionary act which has to open the way to the future.

And tomorrow, in the revolution, we must play an active part in the necessary physical struggle, seeking to make it as radical as possible, in order to destroy all the repressive forces of the government and to induce the people to take possession of the land, homes, transport, factories, mines and of all existing goods, and organize themselves so that there is a just distribution immediately of food products. At the same time we must arrange for the exchange of goods between communities and regions and continue to intensify production and all those services which are of use to the people.

We must, in every way possible, and in accord with local conditions and possibilities, encourage action by associations, cooperatives, groups of volunteers — in order to prevent the emergence of new authoritarian groups, new governments, combating them with violence if necessary, but above all by rendering them useless.

And if there is not sufficient support among the people to prevent the reconstitution of government, its authoritarian institutions and its organs of repression, we should refuse to cooperate or recognize it, and

rebel against its demands, claiming full autonomy for ourselves and for all dissident minorities. We should remain in a state of open rebellion if possible, and prepare the way to convert present defeat into a future success.

I do not think that what matters is the triumph of our plans, our projects and our utopias, which in any case will need the confirmation of practice and experiment, and may as a result have to be modified, developed or adapted to the true moral and material conditions of time and place. What matters most of all is that the people, all people, should lose their sheeplike instincts and habits with which their minds have been inculcated by an age-long slavery, and that they should learn to think and act freely. It is to this task of liberation that anarchists must devote their attention.

Once the government has been overthrown, or at least neutralized, it will be the task of the people, and especially of those among them who have initiative and organizing ability, to provide for the satisfaction of immediate needs and to prepare for the future by destroying privileges and harmful institutions, in the meantime seeing to it that those useful institutions which today serve the ruling class either exclusively or primarily shall operate in favor of all equally.

Anarchists have the job of being the militant custodians of liberty against all aspirants to power and against the possible tyranny of the majority.

We are agreed in thinking that apart from the problem of assuring victory against the material forces of the adversary there is also the problem of giving life to the revolution after victory.

We are in agreement that a revolution which were to result in chaos would not be a vital revolution.

But one must not exaggerate; it should not be thought that we must, and can find a perfect solution for every possible problem. One should not want to foresee and determine too much, because instead of preparing for anarchy we might find ourselves indulging in unattainable dreams or ever becoming authoritarians, and consciously or otherwise, proposing to act like a government which in the name of freedom and the popular will subject people to its domination. The fact is that one cannot educate the people if they are not in a position, or obliged by necessity, to act for themselves, and that the revolutionary organization of the people, useful and necessary as it is, cannot be stretched indefinitely: at a certain point, if it does not erupt in revolutionary action, either the government strangles it or the organization itself degenerates and breaks up — and one has to start all over again from the beginning.

I would be unable to accept the view that all past revolutions though they were not anarchist revolutions were useless, nor that future

ones which will still not be anarchist revolutions will be useless. I believe that the complete triumph of anarchy will come by evolution, gradually, rather than by violent revolution: when an earlier or several earlier revolutions will have destroyed the major military and economic obstacles which are opposed to the spiritual and material development of the people, and which are opposed to increasing production to the level of needs and desires.

In any case, if we take into account our sparse numbers and the prevalent attitude among most people, and if we do not wish to confuse our wishes with reality, we must expect that the next revolution will not be an anarchist one, and therefore what is more pressing is to think of what we can and must do in a revolution in which we will be a relatively small and badly armed minority. But we must beware of ourselves becoming less anarchist merely because the people are not ready for anarchy. If they want a government, it is unlikely that we will be able to prevent a new government being formed, but this is no reason for our not trying to persuade the people that government is useless and harmful or of preventing the government from also imposing on us and others like us who don't want it. We will have to exert ourselves to ensure that social life and especially economic standards improve without the intervention of government, and thus we must be as ready as possible to deal with the practical problems of production and distribution, remembering that those most suited to organize work are those who now do it. If we are unable to prevent the constitution of a new government, if we are unable to destroy it immediately, we should in either case refuse to support it in any shape or form. We should reject military conscription and refuse to pay taxes. Disobedience on principle, resistance to the bitter end against every imposition by the authorities, and an absolute refusal to accept any position of command.

If we are unable to overthrow capitalism, we shall have to demand for ourselves and for all who want it, the right of free access to the necessary means of production to maintain an independent existence.

Advise when we have suggestions to offer; teach if we know more than others; set the example for a life based on free agreement between men; defend even with force if necessary and possible, our autonomy against any government provocation... but command, govern or rule — never!

In this way we shall not achieve anarchy, which cannot be imposed against the will of the people, but at least we shall be preparing the way for it. We do not have to wait indefinitely for the state to wither away or for our rulers to become part of the people and to give up their power over us if we can talk them out of their position.

(R)EVOLUTION

25: CNT-FAI Comrade peasant, listen

On July 19, 1936, the Spanish Revolution and Civil War began. Anarchists in the anarcho-syndicalist trade union federation, the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), and the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) were instrumental in preventing fascist military forces from taking over Spain in one fell swoop, organizing armed resistance and collectivizing the fields and factories in areas where they were able. This is a translation of a CNT-FAI pamphlet approved at the December 6, 1936 Regional Plenum of the FAI for distribution to Spanish peasants unfamiliar with the CNT-FAI, in order to assure them that the CNT-FAI was opposed to the forced collectivization of the land, but also to convince them of the benefits of libertarian communism. The translation is by Paul Sharkey.



HO WE ARE

The National Confederation of Labour (CNT) and Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) address you. Both are made up of urban and rural workers, by workers and peasants who, like yourself, work for their poor fare and would like to live better. Of workers, and no one else. In our ranks you will not find folk who live off somebody else's labours – property-owners, capitalists, rentiers or bourgeois who purloin the fruits of another man's sweat. You and we, we and you like are members of the same family as all who produce all of the wherewithal of life and who have always, thus far, seen those who did nothing living a life of luxury and wallowing in everything while we lack life's necessities. The time has come for this to end. Listen, comrade, to what we, the peasants and workers of the CNT and FAI have to say to you.

YOUR LIFE

Your parents, your grandparents, your forebears worked on the land and made it ready for cultivation. Can you still remember them, with hoe or pitchfork in their hands? You too labour as they did. And your children will labour, as you do.

Who benefited from that toil by your forebears, your grandparents, your parents? Whom does yours profit? And tomorrow, who will benefit from your childrens', unless things change? The boss, the landlord, the proprietor. The State and the whole bureaucracy that oppress us with their levies and taxes. The middle-man who traffics in the fruits of your labour. You hand over thirty or forty per cent of your crops to the landlord. You pay very heavy taxes to the tax-collector. The middle-man charges a hundred pesetas for what he bought from you at fifty.

The fact is that right now, thanks to the revolution made by the CNT and the FAI, this has eased or stopped for a while. But that pause will be a fleeting one unless you make up your mind to join with us to ensure that the landowners, tax-collectors and middle-men cannot gain the upper hand again. When the wheat, rice, potato, orange, grape or any other harvest is good, instead of your benefiting from this, as ought to be the case, you are worse off, because, on the pretext of a glut, they pay you such a poor return that you get no reward and you are denied what you need to live. When the harvest is a poor one, you have little to sell and earn little. Everything backfires, everything works against you, the way things are organized. But the landlord carries on living the high life, the State gets its taxes and the middle-man carries on trading. Does this seem fair to you? Is it the truth or not?

WHAT WE WANT

We of the CNT and FAI want to see these injustices ended. We want to prevent others from being masters of the land that you work. We want to stop others from living off your exertions by depriving you of twenty, thirty or forty per cent of your harvests. We want an end to a situation whereby there are the rich who do nothing alongside so many of the poor who labour.

Let's look at something familiar to you. Say there is a cold snap, or a drought and a crop is destroyed. As you well know, this is a frequent occurrence. The peasants hit by it are left penniless and facing a year of wretchedness, hunger or scarcity. Is that reasonable? Is the fault theirs? Is it your fault if the rain stops falling, if there is an unexpected cold snap, killing the buds on the trees, or if a blight wipes out your cereal crops? Yes or no? And, that being the case, why should you and your family have to be denied the means to exist which can be found elsewhere, when these are sometimes wrested from you, leaving you short? We want

an end to all this. Should you be unable to market as much produce one year as you did the year before, because of the vagaries of nature, we want you to have the same access to what you need, provided, of course, that it can be drawn in from other parts. We know the circumstances in which you too would be prepared to send your produce to other peasant victims of cold snaps, drought or blight. So, in addition to doing away with those who exploit other people's labours, those who grow rich on it, we want to establish a society in which all men live in fellowship, where no one goes hungry, where everyone is ready to help anyone in need and gets such help whenever required too. This is what the CNT and the FAI stand for.

HOW IS THIS TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT?

Now let us explain to you how we mean to organize all this. We want to do it without politicians, without bureaucracy, without parliament. The world should belong to the workers. We, you and we, labour in the fields, the factories, the mines. We must look to organizing ourselves, on our own account, in our unions and our communes. Workers' associations are all that we need. Everything else is a nursery for parasites. Some peasants produce olives and grapes. Others produce rice, or wheat, or oranges. The olive- and grape-growers form one association, the rice-, vegetable-, wheat- and orange-growers another. Along with the other peasants belonging to your federation, you ship your produce to others. They send you theirs. You ship your produce to the cities. The workers in the cities in return send you clothing, footwear, furniture, tools, machinery, wireless sets, etc. Is that hard? Certainly not. It merely requires determination to do it and you need only join with us in this work of emancipation and it will be accomplished in very little time.

SMALL-HOLDING

Those who seek to keep you impoverished so that they can live off you argue that we want to strip the rural small-holder of his land. That is a strategem to ensure that you do not join with those who are pointing the way ahead. We want to take the land from him who does not work it. We want to take it from him who has more than he can cultivate. We know that most of the rural small-holders would be a lot better off if society was fairer. We understand your love of the land which supplies you with the wherewithal for living. For these reasons, we cannot target the small-holder. But we know that work is a lot more productive when the land is worked in common. If ten small-holders were to abolish the boundaries between their fields, they could use modern machinery that would reduce the exertions required of them. On the other hand, the individual small-holder cannot afford such machinery and has to labour

mightily to bring in his harvest. And his isolation leaves him defenceless in a bad year. There is work that, unlike wheat and cereal crops, does not require farm machinery; for instance, there is market gardening. Here too, joint production produces outstanding results. On the outskirts of the great cities of Europe there are three or four harvests per year, thanks to this form of farming. But it requires special piping, heating, green-housing and wintering equipment; it requires the use of special chemicals, too dear for the individual peasant to afford. The only ones who can utilize them are those who operate as collectives, or landowners who exploit eight, ten or more workers. In order to cut back on your exertions, or to ensure that your produce is at least doubled, you must, comrade peasants, work the land in common. Which does not mean that we want to impose this by force. Anybody who says that we do is a liar. We know that, over time, as they see the improvement in results, those who start out as doubters will later be won over. But we would caution you, comrades, against those who want to add to the existing number of small-holdings and who tell you that small-holdings are a necessity. They do this in order to turn you against us, so that division between the rural workers and urban workers protects them from a concerted backlash against those who keep them in wretchedness. We have no desire to forcibly wrest his land from the small-holder, but we say to him: small-holding renders farm machinery purchase, or, once bought, payments on it, impossible; it prevents proper improvements to the working of the land. And thereby keeps and will always keep the peasant owner in poverty. Property keeps the peasant at the mercy of the rich man who buys up his land for nothing in times of bad harvests. It makes him the victim of the middle-man who pays him nothing for his produce. Whoever advocates this practices wretched deception against the peasant. You should shun him as a liar, a hypocrite and a traitor.

ALL TOGETHER, COMRADE

All together, comrade, we shall build a workers' world. But it will belong to real workers, the sort who use hoe or hammer, file or axe, pick or shovel, who man the plough and the tractor. All together, comrades, we shall do away with poverty, so that our children may be strangers to shortages of food, clothing, care and education. All together, comrades, we shall prevent the return of the landlord, the owner of the land that you work, the collector of pointless taxes, the thieving middle-man. Workers and peasants together, in the CNT and in the FAI, let us set out to free ourselves forever and let us seek the triumph of justice, equality and happiness in a world redeemed and organized on our own account and to meet our needs. If this strikes you as right, comrades, join our ranks. We are waiting for you.

26: Penelope Rosemont

Disobedience: The antidote for miserablism

PENELOPE ROSEMONT (born 1942 Chicago, Illinois), is a painter, photographer, collagist (having invented a number of surrealist collage methods including the “landscapade” and “insect music”) and writer. She is the editor of Surrealist Women: An International Anthology. This article was originally published in issue 386 (Spring, 2012, Vol. 47, No. 1) of the anarchist magazine Fifth Estate.

“Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man’s original virtue.”

— **Oscar Wilde**

“...and then we go out and seize a square of singular symbolic significance and put our asses on the line to make it happen. The time has come to deploy this emerging stratagem against the greatest corrupter of our democracy: Wall Street, the financial Gomorrah of America.”

— **From Adbusters (September/October 2011 issue)**

“We are not protesting. Who is there to protest to? What could we ask them for that they could grant? We are occupying. We are reclaiming those same spaces of public practice that have been commodified, privatized and locked into the hands of faceless bureaucracy, real estate portfolios and police ‘protection.’ Hold on to these spaces, nurture them and let the boundaries of your occupations grow.”

— **Egyptian (Tahrir Square) Comrades**

Unemployed, depressed, don't know what to do next? WORK FULL-TIME! Men and women needed NOW to work on Occupy Everything! No pay; possible great future.

Guaranteed: Enormous satisfaction right now! Make your Unemployment meaningful. Take the world apart and remold it to your desires. Don't gamble in casinos for petty stakes, don't waste your nickels and dimes. Gamble big! You have a world to win!

Work as we have known it is gone! For better or for worse, the workless future is here; right now. And, it must be reckoned with. Don't ask for jobs, don't be lonesome for your exploitation; don't miss your cage, or your alarm clock. Demand instead that everyone gets an equal share; demand ownership of the products that you make, the world that you create. Demand the natural world be restored...a beauty for us now to enjoy and a way to sustain us in the future.

Jacques Vaché, one of those World War I rebels who, with André Breton, was at the root of surrealism, considered the role of the Alarm-Clock in daily-life — that materialized superego lurking in every household. The Alarm Clock, he wrote, “a monster that has always frightened me because of the regimentation glaring from its face, because of the way it — this honest man — glares at me when I enter the bedroom.” It is, “a hypocrite that detests me.”

Franklin Rosemont, co-founder of the Chicago Surrealist Group, commented that the alarm/time clock is “at the very center of the class struggle...scientific management...multiplied profits and the power of the giant trusts.” He then asks, “When will the last ten-thousand alarm-clocks be tossed on a bonfire of the last ten-million time cards?”

A good time would be now.

“Human dignity has been reduced to the level of exchange value,” wrote Surrealist Breton. “We do not accept the laws of economy and exchange, we do not accept enslavement to work.”

Occupy Wall Street (OWS), we need to note, is the precariat — those who face an uncertain future-manifesting not as the “unemployed,” as defined by pointless policy makers, but as humanity in search of its dignity.

The critique of work and the consideration of new possibilities for everyday life began in the 1880s when Paul Lafargue, Karl Marx's son-in-law, wrote an amazing book, *The Right to Be Lazy*. It was the first to recognize a disastrous dogma, “A strange delusion possesses the working classes of the nations where capitalist civilization holds its sway...[T]his delusion is the love of work, the furious passion for work, pushed even to the exhaustion of the vital force of the individual and his progeny. Instead of opposing this mental aberration, the priests, the economists

and the moralists have cast a sacred halo over work..."

This year, *The Right to Be Lazy* has come back into print at the precisely right moment with an excellent introduction by Bernard Marszalek, a Fifth Estate contributor in this issue. In his introduction, Marszalek writes, "The Right to be Lazy, after decades of obscurity, was reprinted by Solidarity Bookshop in the 60's, at a time when academics, hippies and revolutionaries questioned the future of work."

At that time, he writes, "A tiny faction of the '60s revolutionaries questioned the very necessity of work itself and advocated its abolition before the 1968 rebellion of French students and workers inspired many to think of work radically transformed. The Rebel Worker Group in Chicago, Fredy and Lorraine Perlman's Black and Red and the Fifth Estate, both in Michigan, and Black Mask in New York City, expressed their utter disdain for toil and devised schemes to avoid it. Several dissident intellectuals, like Paul Goodman and Ivan Illich, agreed with these sentiments."

The State, and the capitalism that it embodies and defends, has no solutions to offer; it can only respond by expanding its influence, economically if possible, and militarily if necessary. Ideally, however, its best method of social control is through a bewildering array of Non-Choices — breathtaking spectacles of useless products and despicable celebrity antics. A corruption geared to leave us with an acute sense of defeatism.

We can observe the truth of Fredy Perlman's often quoted passage from his *Reproduction of Daily Life*, concerning the situation of humankind in this society. They who were "previously conscious creators of their own meager existence become unconscious victims of their own activity...Men who were much but had little; now, have much, but are little." Surrealists have a word for it—"miserablism."

In *Creating Anarchy*, Ron Sakolsky writes, "Miserablism is a system that produces misery and then rationalizes it by perpetuating the idea that such misery comprises the only possible reality."

It's time to ask the question, what do we really want? Shiny-black Gucci shoes and a stone-grey Bugatti Veyron, the world's most overpriced auto to drive around through the assorted junk-yards of smashed automobiles, graveyards of abandoned tires and lonesome-bloated refrigerators that now surround our cities instead of prairies and forests? Or, an authentic life in a verdant world?

Our social world could be restructured so that work that needs to be done would be divided up among us all. Many hands make work light, as the old, old saying goes. Work could be structured so that hours would be short, variety would be possible, and it would be a pleasure

to cooperate with each other and accomplish what needs to be done. Transforming work into useful, collaborative and fun activity, means we need to call that activity something besides work.

Can the great joy in the restoration of forests and prairies and sanctuaries for animals be called work? Is the joy of creating art, work? Or, constructing beautiful buildings, or teaching and helping others, work? Those lucky scientists who have the privilege of puzzling over the universe and figuring out complicated scientific and technical problems, do they define that activity as a sacrifice of their time and energy? They may call it “their work,” but this is not working by any current definition of the activity.

If for one day, work was freely shared, was focused on needs and for the benefit of all, not only would it be necessary to find another word for what was formerly known as “work,” but also, the world would change overnight. Also, freedom from oppressive work would allow us for the first time in history to truly develop our individuality.

It is interesting to note that Marszalek’s concluding comments on Lafargue’s *The Right to be Lazy* are almost a prediction of what began in lower Manhattan as Occupy Wall Street. Marszalek’s calls for seizing space — creating communal living spaces, occupying abandoned factory sites to re-industrialize for community use, building a decentralized energy commons, doing spontaneous theater in a bank — are like the late winter blossoms in the field of a new culture, a culture of rhizomic expansion.”

These remarks especially found their concrete expression during Occupy Oakland’s General Strike on Nov 2, when a theatrically animated and inspired crowd closed down a Wells Fargo Bank by assembling a typical American living room, complete with sofas, chairs, end-tables and lamps, on the sidewalk in front of the bank.

They apparently were planning to make themselves at home and why not? It’s our world. What are you going to do about it?

Marszalek analyzes what happens when we take our daily-lives into our own hands: “Development of this sort encourages and connects diverse social projects in a non-hierarchical way to solidify pragmatic politics and to amplify human capabilities that can lead to a truly rich life.”

In other words, rebellion that creates lasting social change changes the change-maker — frees the agent of change, to, as Breton famously said, change life and transform the world.

27: Kubo Yuzuru

On class struggle and the daily struggle

KUBO YUZURU (1903 - 1961) was a Japanese anarcho-syndicalist. In this article, originally published in Kokushoku Undo in 1928, he responds to some of the criticisms of anarcho-syndicalism made by the so-called "pure anarchists." Ironically, the Zenkoku Jiren labour federation adopted a "pure anarchist" position in 1928, and the anarcho-syndicalists broke a way to form a separate anarcho-syndicalist organization. By 1931, the Zenkoku Jiren had over 16 000 members, while the anarcho-syndicalist federation, the Libertarian Federal Council of Labour Unions of Japan, had a membership of around 3 000. The "pure anarchists" did not oppose trade unions as such; rather, they argued that the unions should be animated by an anarchist spirit, with the goal of a decentralized, classless, anarchist communist society always in mind. The translation of Kubo's 1928 article by Yoshiharu Hashimoto, originally published in A Short History of the Anarchist Movement in Japan (Tokyo: Idea Publishing, 1979), has been modified by the editor for stylistic reasons.



IT IS NO WONDER THAT THE ANARCHIST promotes class struggle and the daily struggle, for there is no reason to prevent such propaganda by the deed. There may be a few intolerant ideologues among Japanese anarchists who accuse class struggle of being an amalgam of Marxism. But the tactic of class struggle is not the monopoly of the Marxists...

Capitalism divides society into two classes, such as the oppressor and the oppressed, the exploiter and the exploited. There we come face to face with the confrontation of classes and the strife between them. The existence of classes engenders class struggle. Where class struggle is a fact, there our movement will be. Really, the problem is

one of goals and the method of struggle. Then we can see two main tendencies of class struggle, one based on authoritarian Marxism, the other on free federation. According to the Marxist conception of class struggle, the proletariat will take over the position of the capitalist class by usurping political power through political struggle, its object being political power. It means the monopoly of a party; that is, Marxist class struggle does not bring an end to the strife or the contradiction of classes, but reverses the positions of the opposed classes. Nominally it is the dictatorship of the proletariat, although in fact the Marxists do not concern themselves with their fellow workers' intentions of emancipation, despite their possession of numerical strength. There, in Marxism, the ideas of free federation and spontaneity, essential factors for building the new society, are killed. Therefore, we are vehemently opposed to them.

Our class struggle is based on the principles of communal property and anti-authoritarianism, to put an end to class confrontation; in short, to create a new society where there is neither exploiter nor exploited, neither master nor slave, revived with spontaneity and mutual free agreement as an integral whole. After all, our class struggle is to achieve the radical transformation of economic and political institutions by means of the workers' organizations based on the ideal of free federation. The Marxist's goal is to replace one ruling class with another, but ours is to put an end to class antagonism. Because of the aggravation of the class struggle, you may condemn us as Marxists; then the free federations of labour unions that in the past had a revolutionary platform based on class struggle ought to be condemned as Marxist too. There are some who dismiss the class struggle but deny it by referring to the elimination of class contradictions. This is a pretext for avoiding the terminology of class struggle. It also seems to proclaim the ceasing of struggle against the master and capitalist. There are a number of tactics in Marxist strategy borrowed from the syndicalists and anarchists...you narrow-minded people remind me of the fable of a dog having a fish in its mouth who barked at its own reflection and lost the fish, as you indiscriminately accuse us of merely using the same phraseology as the Bolsheviks.

It is possible to argue that the anarchist movement is divided into economic and political phases. The movement related to the economic field deals with the struggle to obtain daily bread for the worker. The desire to obtain better bread, to conquer bread, has been, in fact, the source of modern socialism. If the workers were without the desire for the good of tomorrow, there never would have been a liberation movement. Anarchism originated from the fact of the struggle of the

workers. Without that, there would be no anarchism. Anarchism has far greater meaning than to denigrate the workers' economic struggles as mere reformism. We do not neglect the fact that there is a distance between raising wages, reforming conditions and the ideal society. Nevertheless, it is our role to move step by step against the foundations of capitalism. I need not point out that raising wages and improving working conditions are not our goals per se. On the contrary, they are nothing more than a means or rationale, yet by such means we ought to rouse direct action and cultivate a bud of anarchism through daily struggle, which I believe will be the preparation for revolution.

Besides the economic struggle, there is also the political struggle. Besides economic oppression by the capitalist, there is also political tyranny. We ought to lead a direct struggle of revolutionary movements of the people against all political institutions and oppressive measures, such as the heavy tax burden for the benefit of the capitalists. Then we create awareness of anti-authoritarianism. We should seize every opportunity in economic and political struggles so that anarchist thought may prevail. We urge grabbing every chance and utilizing any moment to shake the foundations of society. That is to say, the daily struggle is a ceaseless struggle.

28: CrimethInc

There is a Secret World Concealed Within this One

This essay is from Days of War, Nights of Love.



HIS WORLD, THE SO-CALLED “REAL WORLD,” is just a front. Pull back the curtain and you’ll see the libraries are all filled with runaways writing novels, the highways are humming with escapees and sympathizers, all the receptionists and sensible mothers are straining at the leash for a chance to show how alive they still are... and all that talk of practicality and responsibility is just threats and bluffing to keep us from reaching out our hands to find that heaven lies in reach before us.

You can taste it in the shock and roar of a first, unexpected kiss, or in the blood in your mouth that instant after an accident when you realize you’re still alive. It blows in the wind you feel on the rooftops of a really reckless night of adventure. You hear it in the magic of your favorite songs, how they lift and transport you in ways that no science or psychology could ever account for. It might be you’ve seen evidence of it scratched into bathroom walls in a code without a key, or you’ve been able to make out a pale reflection of it in the movies they make to keep us entertained. It’s in between the words when we speak of our desires and aspirations, still lurking somewhere beneath the limitations of being “practical” and “realistic.”

When poets and radicals stay up until sunrise, wracking their brains for the perfect sequence of words or deeds to fill hearts (or cities) with fire, they’re trying to find a hidden entrance to it. When children escape out the window to go wandering late at night, or freedom fighters search

for a weakness in government fortifications, they're trying to sneak into it—for they know better than us where the doors are hidden. When teenagers vandalize a billboard to provoke all-night chases with the police, or anarchists interrupt an orderly demonstration to smash the windows of a corporate chain store, they're trying to storm its gates.

When you're making love and you discover a new sensation or region of your lover's body, and the two of you feel like explorers discovering a new part of the world on a par with a desert oasis or the coast of an unknown continent, as if you are the first ones to reach the north pole or the moon, you are charting its frontiers.

It's not a safer place than this one—on the contrary, it is the sensation of danger there that brings us back to life: the feeling that for once, for one moment that seems to eclipse the past and future, there is something real at stake.

Maybe you stumbled into it by accident, once, amazed at what you found. The old world splintered behind and inside you, and no physician or metaphysician could put it back together again. Everything before became trivial, irrelevant, ridiculous as the horizons suddenly telescoped out around you and undreamt-of new paths offered themselves. And perhaps you swore that you would never return, that you would live out the rest of your life electrified by that urgency, in the thrill of discovery and transformation—but return you did.

Common sense dictates that this world can only be experienced temporarily, that it is just the shock of transition, and no more; but the myths we share around our fires tell a different story: we hear of women and men who stayed there for weeks, years, who never returned, who lived and died there as heroes. We know, because we feel it in that atavistic chamber of our hearts that holds the memory of freedom from a time before time, that this secret world is near, waiting for us. You can see it in the flash in our eyes, in the abandon of our dances and love affairs, in the protest or party that gets out of hand.

You're not the only one trying to find it. We're out here, too... some of us are even waiting there for you. And you should know that anything you've ever done or considered doing to get there is not crazy, but beautiful, noble, necessary.

Revolution is simply the idea we could enter that secret world and never return; or, better, that we could burn away this one, to reveal the one beneath entirely.

DIRECT ACTION

29: Rob Sparrow

Anarchist politics & direct action

ROB SPARROW is an Australian anarchist associated with the Rebel Worker Group, an anarcho-syndicalist organisation that was responsible for the publication of the Rebel Worker magazine. This undated article, which has been edited for inclusion in this volume, is probably from around the mid-90s.



DIRECT ACTION IS THE DISTINCTIVE contribution of anarchists in the realm of political method. While reformists advocate the ballot box, liberals have their lobbying and their letter writing, bureaucrats have their work through “the proper channels” and socialists have their vanguard parties, we anarchists have direct action. Political tendencies other than anarchism may adopt direct action as a method but its historical origins and its most vigorous proponents are anarchist. Because direct action is a political method, before we can properly understand it and its place in anarchist practice we must first examine the nature of anarchist political activity.

Ideally, anarchist political activity promotes anarchism and attempts to create anarchy. It seeks to establish a society without capitalism, patriarchy or State, where people govern themselves democratically without domination or hierarchy. As I have argued elsewhere, this is an activity which is inescapably revolutionary in nature and which is best carried out collectively in an organisation dedicated to that purpose. While anarchists remain without a political organisation of their own, the main avenue for promoting anarchism is to participate in, contribute to and provide leadership in other political movements. Our objective in participating in other political movements and campaigns should be to show that anarchist methods and ways of organising work. The best advertisement for anarchism is the intelligence of the contributions of

our activists and the success of our methods. Anarchists should strive to provide living examples of anarchy in action. As we will see, direct action is one of the best possible ways of doing this.

The distinguishing feature of direct action is that it aims to achieve our goals through our own activity rather than through the actions of others. Direct action seeks to exert power directly over affairs and situations which concern us. Thus it is about people taking power for themselves. In this it is distinguished from most other forms of political action such as voting, lobbying, attempting to exert political pressure through industrial action or through the media. All of these activities aim to get others to achieve our goals for us. Such forms of actions operate on a tacit acceptance of our own powerlessness. They concede that we ourselves have neither the right nor the power to affect change. Such forms of action are therefore implicitly conservative. They concede the authority of existing institutions and work to prevent us from acting ourselves to change the status quo.

Direct action repudiates such acceptance of the existing order and suggests that we have both the right and the power to change the world. It demonstrates this by doing it. Examples of direct action include blockades, pickets, sabotage, squatting, tree spiking, lockouts, occupations, rolling strikes, slow downs, the revolutionary general strike. In the community it involves, amongst other things, establishing our own organisations such as food co-ops and community access radio and tv to provide for our social needs, blocking the freeway developments which divide and poison our communities and taking and squatting the houses that we need to live in. In the forests, direct action interposes our bodies, our will and our ingenuity between wilderness and those who would destroy it and acts against the profits of the organisations which direct the exploitation of nature and against those organisations themselves. In industry and in the workplace direct action aims either to extend workers control or to directly attack the profits of the employers. Sabotage and “go slows” are time-honoured and popular techniques to deny employers the profits from their exploitation of their wage-slaves. Rolling and “wildcat” strikes are forms of open industrial struggle which strike directly at the profits of the employers. However, industrial action which is undertaken merely as a tactic as part of negotiations to win wage or other concessions from an employer is not an example of direct action.

As the examples of direct action in the community above suggest, there is more to direct action than responding to injustices or threats by the state. Direct action is not only a method of protest but also a way of “building the future now”. Any situation where people organise to

extend control over their own circumstances without recourse to capital or state constitutes direct action. "Doing it ourselves" is the essence of direct action and it does not matter whether what we are doing is resisting injustice or attempting to create a better world now by organising to meet our own social needs. Direct action of this sort, because it is self-directed rather than a response to the activities of capital or state, offers far more opportunities for continuing action and also for success. We can define our own goals and achieve them through our own efforts.

One of the most important aspects of direct action is the organisation involved in order for it to be successful. By organising to achieve our goals ourselves we learn valuable skills and discover that organisation without hierarchy is possible. Where it succeeds, direct action shows that people can control their own lives - in effect, that anarchy is possible. We can see here that direct action and anarchist organisation are in fact two sides of the same coin. When we demonstrate the success of one we demonstrate the reality of the other.

TWO IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

Direct action must be distinguished from symbolic actions. Direct action is bolting a gate rather than tying a yellow ribbon around it. Its purpose is to exercise power and control over our own lives rather than merely portray the semblance of it. This distinguishes it from many forms of action, for example "banner drops" such as those often engaged in by Greenpeace, that look militant but, in my opinion, aren't. These actions do not directly attack the injustices they highlight, but instead seek to influence the public and politicians through the media. Any action directed primarily towards the media concedes that others, rather than ourselves, have the power to change things.

Direct action must also be distinguished from moral action. It is not *moral* protest. By moral protest I mean protest which is justified by reference to the moral relation to some institution or injustice that it demonstrates. Moral protest usually takes the form of a boycott of a product or refusal to participate in some institution. Such actions seek to avoid our complicity in the evils for which existing institutions are responsible. No doubt this is morally admirable. But unless these actions themselves have some perceivable effect on the institutions which they target, they do not constitute direct action. Direct action must have some immediate affect to demonstrate that we can exert power. It should not rely entirely on others taking up our example. Our own action should have such an affect that we can point it out to others as an example of how they can change - and not just protest - those things which concern them. Boycotts, for instance, therefore are *not* examples

of direct action. If only those who organise a boycott participate in it, it will almost invariably be ineffective.

Of course, these distinctions are overdrawn. Any action at all involves some exercise of power. By acting at all, in any way, we overcome our passivity and deny that we are helpless to affect change. Any action short of revolution is to some extent both moral and symbolic. Capital, patriarchy and state have the power to undo all our efforts short of revolution. Any form of protest can be effectively prevented if the state is willing to employ the full range of its resources for authoritarian repression and control. The only form of “direct action” which cannot be contained by the state is popular revolution. This is the ultimate direct action that anarchists should aim for, when all people organise to destroy the existing order and cooperate to run society without capitalism, patriarchy or authority.

IMPLICATIONS

So given that any action will be less than ideal, how should we assess potential direct actions? I would suggest that possible direct actions should be assessed both as examples of direct action as described here and against the broader criteria for anarchist actions set out above. That is, of any action we should ask:

- 1) to what extent does our action affirm our own power and right to use it?
- 2) does it advance the theory and practice of anarchy and, in particular, will it build the anarchist movement?

Some further questions we can ask ourselves to help determine the answers to these are as follows. Firstly, will it draw others in? Is it the sort of activity which encourages other people to become interested and involved? Actions which necessitate a high degree of detailed organisation or secrecy are unlikely to score highly against this criterion. Will it succeed in achieving its defined objectives? For instance, will a blockade actually stop work on a site for some period? Successful actions are the best advertisement for anarchist methods. Are the politics of the action obvious or at least clearly conveyed to those who witness it? If the targets of our actions relate only obliquely to the issue which they are intended to address or the goals of our activities unclear to those not “in the know” then we are unlikely to convince others of the relevancy of anarchism. For this reason we must always be conscious of the message our activities convey to other people and try to ensure that this is the

most appropriate possible. What consequences will result from the action for those involved in it? Actions which involve a high risk of police beating or of arrest with consequent heavy fines or imprisonment may reduce the willingness or capacity of those affected to engage in further political activities, if any of these things occur. Very few people are radicalised by being hurt by the police, most are just scared. Often the hours spent dealing with legal hassles for months after an arrest could have been more productively spent in other political activity, if the arrest was not necessary. Finally, how will the action transform the consciousness of those involved in it? We should aim to engage in activities which establish within us an increased awareness of radical social and political possibilities, broaden our base of skills and leave us confident and empowered. Sometimes actions may have other, less welcome effects on the psychology of those involved. Unsuccessful actions may leave us feeling disempowered and embittered. Actions which involve a high degree of aggression, confrontation or potential violence may breed hostility and aggression within us which might hamper our ability to work productively in other political circumstances.

By assessing our political activities against these criteria and asking these questions and others like them, I believe that we can ensure that our actions have the greatest chance of achieving our goals and thus demonstrate the superiority of anarchist methods of political action.

This article has discussed and advocated the politics of direct action within the broader context of the purpose of an anarchist politics. Direct action has many virtues, not least that it is, in essence, itself anarchy in action. But direct action is not the only form of worthwhile political action. Anarchists should remain open to the possibilities of an entire spectrum of political methods. Any form of politics that involves people and transforms their consciousness in a progressive way may be useful in the struggle to build an anarchist movement and ultimately a revolution to create anarchy. Which particular political movements and methods deserve our support can only be decided within the framework of a well theorised, consciously anarchist, politics. This paper is intended as one small contribution to the project of developing such a framework.

PREFIGURATION

30: Uri Gordon Prefiguration

URI GORDON (born August 30, 1976) is an Israeli anarchist theorist and activist. One of many anarchist theorists to come of age during the anti-globalization movement at the turn of the 21st century, he has worked with anarchist and radical movements including Indymedia, Peoples' Global Action, and Anarchists Against the Wall. Apart from his book, Anarchy Alive!, Gordon has written for Anarchist Studies, The New Formulation and Perspectives on Anarchist Theory, and in 2013 edited a volume of writings by activists in Anarchists Against the Wall. This excerpt is from chapter three of Gordon's 2007 PhD thesis, Anarchism and Political Theory: Contemporary Problems.



REFIGURATION HAS BEEN DEFINED AS “the idea that a transformative social movement must necessarily anticipate the ways and means of the hoped-for new society” (Tokar 2003) or as anarchism’s “commitment to overturning capitalism by only employing a strategy that is an embryonic representation of an anarchist social future” (Morland and Carter 2004:79), an “ingression of the future into the present” (Marcuse 1969:90–1). This type of endeavour is widely recognised as the primary reference point for how anarchist groups should function, as evident from an abundance of articulations to that effect in groups’ and networks’ “hallmarks” or “principles of unity”, such as those of the Independent Media Centre network (IMC 2001):

All Independent Media Centers recognize the importance of process to social change and are committed to the development of non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships, from interpersonal relationships to group dynamics.

Another example is from a local anarchist collective in the U.S. (Unbound, undated):

We are anti-racist, anti-authoritarian, pro-queer, trans-inclusive, sex-positive, fat-positive and feminist. We don't believe in waiting until after the revolution. We believe that if you want a better world you should start acting like it now. That is why we choose to work within a nonhierarchical, anti-authoritarian structure. All decisions are made through consensus. There are no bosses. None of us wants to have a boss, and none of us wants to be a boss.

The widespread nature of such commitments allows us to view present-day anarchist formations as “explicit and conscious experiments, all ways of saying, ‘We are not just saying No to capital, we are developing a different concept of politics, constructing a different set of social relations, pre-figuring the society we want to build’” (Holloway 2003). What is encountered here is a widespread endorsement of efforts to enact anarchist transformation not only in “society” but also in the “processes, structures, institutions, and associations we create right now, and how we live our lives” (Silverstein 2002).

I would suggest that the best way of understanding the idea of prefigurative politics is as an extension and universalisation of the anarchist concept of direct action. Direct action has been defined as action without intermediaries, whereby an individual or a group uses her/its own power and resources to change reality, according to her/its own desires. Anarchists understand direct action as a matter of taking social change into one's own hands, by intervening directly in a situation rather than appealing to an external agent (typically a government) for its rectification. Most commonly, direct action is viewed under its preventative or destructive guise. If people object, for instance, to the clear-cutting of a forest, then taking direct action means that rather than petitioning or engaging in a legal process, they would intervene literally to prevent the clear cutting — by chaining themselves to the trees, or pouring sugar into the gas-tanks of the bulldozers, or other acts of disruption and sabotage — their goal being to directly hinder or halt the project. However, it is also possible to talk about direct action in a constructive way. Thus, under the premise of direct action, anarchists who propose social relations bereft of hierarchy and domination undertake their construction by themselves.

One should further differentiate this reading of prefigurative politics as direct action from a reading of prefigurative politics as “propaganda by deed”. Despite the ill repute gained by the latter term, which became

narrowly associated with bombings and attentats (particularly in the last decades on the nineteenth century), propaganda by deed can be understood more broadly as pointing to the potentially exemplary nature of all anarchist action. On such an account, the most effective anarchist propaganda will always be the actual implementation and display of anarchist social relations — i.e. the practice of prefigurative politics. It is easier for people to engage with the idea that people can exist without bosses or leaders when such existence is displayed, if on a limited scale, in actual practice rather than merely argued for on paper. Thus Gandhi's assertion that "a reformer's business is to make the impossible possible by giving an ocular demonstration of the possibility in his own conduct" (Gandhi 1915). Under the banner of direct action, however, prefigurative politics can be seen as more than an accessory to revolutionary strategy. It appears, rather, as the core of the strategy itself — the means by which anarchist social relations are created. This helps understand the Zapatista formulation that the struggle is for "the conversion of dignity and rebellion into freedom and dignity" — dignity is the means, dignity the end, there is no distinction (EZLN 1994/5, Holloway and Peláez 1998).

A clear indication of the importance that anarchists attach to prefigurative politics is its decisive role in defining their solidarity and willingness to collaborate with nonanarchist movements. Anarchists are quite often found allied, on an ad-hoc or pretty regular basis, with self-organised movements of migrant workers, peasant associations, anti-militarist initiatives, campaigns against police brutality etc., which do not have an explicitly anarchist orientation. Such groups may have no radical critique of capitalism, entirely focus their work on a single issue, or limit their political agendas to reforms in particular institutions rather than seeking the type of social transformation that anarchists endorse. If one asks, however, why anarchists are more comfortable working with some non-anarchist groups rather than others, what one find is that the choice normally pivots on the internal process of these groups. It is their general trajectory towards leaderless, face-to-face methods of organisation, and their striving to transcend sexist or racist patterns among their own members which in large part determine anarchists' solidarity and will to cooperate with them. This is not to say that anarchists won't surface their differences with such groups or question what they see as their limited perspectives — but once the basic comfort with their internal structures is in place, differences usually take the form of (sometimes heated) debates among allies, rather than calling into question the alliance itself. In a similar way, anarchists feel far less comfortable cooperating with large, bureaucratic NGOs who do

not put a strong emphasis on horizontal internal structures, even if they do take quite a radical position on capitalism, promote a multi-issue analysis, or emphasise grassroots empowerment from the teeth outward.

The centrality of prefigurative politics to the worldview of present-day anarchists is impossible to overemphasise. The effort to create and develop horizontal functioning in any collective action setting, and to maintain a constant awareness of interpersonal dynamics and the way in which they might reflect social patterns of exclusion, are accorded just as much importance as planning and carrying out campaigns, projects and direct actions. In contemporary anarchist discourse, considerations of efficiency or unity are never alleged to justify a weakening of this emphasis. The development of non-hierarchical structures in which domination is constantly challenged is, for most anarchists, an end in itself.

PREFIGURATION

31: CrimethInc Prefiguration

This definition is from CRIMETHINC's irreverant Contradictionary: a bestiary of words in revolt.



WE MUST BE THE trouble we wish to see in the world.

Anarchists have long sought to demonstrate the virtues of their vision through prefigurative projects: free food distribution, do-it-yourself health care, collective living arrangements. If only a working model of a better world could be created in microcosm, the thinking goes, everyone who experienced it would become partisans in a revolutionary struggle. Yet in a capitalist society, these experiments can only be carried out at the margins: the dregs making the best of debris.

Meanwhile, at the Googleplex, cafés staffed by world-famous chefs offer healthy organic food in all-you-can-eat buffets. Google employees drop their children off at free day-care, avail themselves of free hairstylists and laundromats, take their pets to work, and play Ping-Pong or volleyball on pristine facilities. After they ride in on the free shuttle or park their electrical cars at the charging station, free scooters wait to convey them from one shining example of sustainable architecture to another; they are encouraged to decorate their workspaces however they wish, and whimsical features ornament the campus, including a tyrannosaurus skeleton and a rocket ship. Massage therapists remedy their every complaint; a personal lifeguard watches a single swimmer exercising in a swim-in-place pool the size of a bathtub, with different speed settings for water flow. The brightest luminaries in every field are brought in on a daily basis to present free seminars to which everyone

is invited—everyone, that is, who produces enough profit to keep a foothold in this city on a hill, and doesn't flinch at swimming through a sea of blood to hold onto it.

If corporations can *prefigure* a world of abundance more effectively than revolutionaries can, what does that tell us about this strategy? Perhaps that the important thing is not to prefigure utopia—which is already available to the winners of the rat race, albeit intramurally—but rather to prefigure the *offensive* that would render it accessible to all.

FEDERALISM, INTERNATIONALISM, DECOLONIZATION

32: Daniel Guérin

From theory to practice

DANIEL GUÉRIN (19 May 1904 – 14 April 1988) was a French anarcho-communist author, best known for his work Anarchism: From Theory to Practice, as well as his collection No Gods No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism, in which he collected writings on the ideas and movements it inspired, from the first writings of Max Stirner in the mid-19th century through the first half of the 20th century. He is also known for his opposition to Nazism, fascism and colonialism, in addition to his support for the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) during the Spanish Civil War, and his revolutionary defence of free love and homosexuality This excerpt is from Anarchism: From Theory to Practice, first published in English in 1970.



FEDERALISM

The future libertarian society was to be endowed with a dual structure: economic, in the form of a federation of self-managing workers' associations; administrative, in the form of a federation of the communes. The final requirement was to crown and articulate this edifice with a concept of wider scope, which might be extended to apply to the whole world: federalism.

As Proudhon's thought matured, the federalist idea was clarified and became predominant. One of his last writings bore the title *Du Principe Federatif et de la Necessite de Reconstituer de Parti de la Revolution* (1863) and, as previously mentioned, toward the end of his life he was more inclined to call himself a federalist than an anarchist. We no longer live in the age of small, ancient cities which, moreover, even in their time, sometimes came together on a federal basis. The problem of our time is that of administering large countries. Proudhon commented: "If the State were never to extend beyond the area of a city or commune

I would leave everyone to make his own judgment, and say no more. But we must not forget that it is a matter of vast conglomerations of territory within which cities, towns, and villages can be counted by the thousand." No question of fragmenting society into microcosms. Unity is essential.

It was, however, the intention of the authoritarians to rule these local groups by the laws of "conquest," to which Proudhon retorted: "I declare to them that this is completely impossible, by virtue of the very law of unity."

"All these groups... are indestructible organisms... which can no more divest themselves of their sovereign independence than a member of the city can lose his citizenship or prerogatives as a free man.... All that would be achieved... would be the creation of an irreconcilable antagonism between the general sovereignty and each of the separate sovereignties, setting authority against authority; in other words, while supposedly developing unity one would be organizing division."

In such a system of "unitary absorption" the cities or natural groups "would always be condemned to lose their identity in the superior agglomeration, which one might call artificial." Centralization means "retaining in governmental relationship groups which are autonomous by their nature"; "... that is, for modern society, the true tyranny." It is a system of imperialism, communism, absolutism, thundered Proudhon, adding in one of those amalgamations of which he was a master: "All these words are synonyms."

On the other hand, unity, real unity, centralization, real centralization, would be indestructible if a bond of law, a contract of mutuality, a pact of federation were concluded between the various territorial units:

"What really centralizes a society of free men... is the contract. Social unity... is the product of the free union of citizens.... For a nation to manifest itself in unity, this unity must be centralized... in all its functions and faculties; centralization must be created from the bottom up, from the periphery to the center, and all functions must be independent and self-governing. The more numerous its foci, the stronger the centralization will be."

The federal system is the opposite of governmental centralization. The two principles of libertarianism and authoritarianism which are in perpetual conflict are destined to come to terms: "Federation resolves all the problems which arise from the need to combine liberty and authority. The French Revolution provided the foundations for a new order, the secret of which lies with its heir, the working class. This is the new order: to unite all the people in a 'federation of federations.'" This expression was not used carelessly: a universal federation would be too

big; the large units must be federated between themselves. In his favorite prophetic style Proudhon declared: "The twentieth century will open the era of federations."

Bakunin merely developed and strengthened the federalist ideas of Proudhon. Like Proudhon, he acclaimed the superiority of federal unity over authoritarian unity: "When the accursed power of the State is no longer there to constrain individuals, associations, communes, provinces, or regions to live together, they will be much more closely bound, will constitute a far more viable, real, and powerful whole than what they are at present forced into by the power of the State, equally oppressive to them all." The authoritarians "are always confusing... formal, dogmatic, and governmental unity with a real and living unity which can only derive from the freest development of all individuals and groups, and from a federal and absolutely voluntary alliance... of the workers" associations in the communes and, beyond the communes, in the regions, beyond the regions, in the nations."

Bakunin stressed the need for an intermediate body between the commune and the national federal organ: the province or region, a free federation of autonomous communes. It must not, however, be thought that federalism would lead to egoism or isolation. Solidarity is inseparable from freedom: "While the communes remain absolutely autonomous, they feel... solidarity among themselves and unite closely without losing any of their freedom." In the modern world, moral, material, and intellectual interests have created real and powerful unity between the different parts of one nation, and between the different nations; that unity will outlive the State. Federalism, however, is a two-edged weapon. During the French Revolution the "federalism" of the Girondins was reactionary, and the royalist school of Charles Maurras advocated it under the name of "regionalism." In some countries, like the United States, the federal constitution is exploited by those who deprive men of color of their civil rights. Bakunin thought that socialism alone could give federalism a revolutionary content. For this reason his Spanish followers showed little enthusiasm for the bourgeois federalist party of Pi y Margall, which called itself Proudhonist, and even for its "cantonalist" left wing during the brief, and abortive, episode of the republic of 1873.

INTERNATIONALISM

The federalist idea leads logically to internationalism, that is to say, the organization of nations on a federal basis into the "large, fraternal union of mankind." Here again Bakunin showed up the bourgeois utopianism of a federal idea not based on international and revolutionary socialism. Far ahead of his time, he was a "European," as people say today; he

called for and desired a United States of Europe, the only way “of making a civil war between the different peoples in the European family impossible.” He was careful, however, to issue a warning against any European federation based on states “as they are at present constituted.”

“No centralized, bureaucratic, and hence military State, albeit called a republic, could enter seriously and sincerely into an international federation. By its very constitution, such a State will always be an overt or covert denial of internal liberty, and hence, necessarily, a permanent declaration of war, a menace to the existence of neighboring countries.” Any alliance with a reactionary State would be a “betrayal of the revolution.” The United States of Europe, first, and later, of the world, can only be set up after the overthrow of the old order which rests from top to bottom on violence and the principle of authority. On the other hand, if the social revolution takes place in any one country, any foreign country which has made a revolution on the same principles should be received into a revolutionary federation regardless of existing state frontiers. True internationalism rests on self-determination, which implies the right of secession. Following Proudhon, Bakunin propounded that “each individual, each association, commune, or province, each region and nation, has the absolute right to determine its own fate, to associate with others or not, to ally itself with whomever it will, or break any alliance, without regard to so-called historical claims or the convenience of its neighbors.” “The right to unite freely and separate with the same freedom is the most important of all political rights, without which confederation will always be disguised centralization.”

Anarchists, however, did not regard this principle as leading to secession or isolation. On the contrary, they held “the conviction that once the right to secede is recognized, secession will, in fact, become impossible because national units will be freely established and no longer the product of violence and historical falsehood.” Then, and then only, will they become “truly strong, fruitful, and permanent.” Later, Lenin, and the early congresses of the Third International, adopted this concept from Bakunin, and the Bolsheviks made it the foundation of their policy on nationalities and of their anti-colonialist strategy — until they eventually belied it to turn to authoritarian centralization and disguised imperialism.

DECOLONIZATION

It is noteworthy that logical deduction led the originators of federalism to a prophetic anticipation of the problems of decolonization. Proudhon distinguished the unit “based on conquest” from the “rational” unit and saw that “every organization that exceeds its true limits and tends to invade or annex other organizations loses in strength what it gains

in size, and moves toward dissolution.” The more a city (i.e., a nation) extends its population or its territory, the nearer it comes to tyranny and, finally, disruption:

“If it sets up subsidiaries or colonies some distance away, these subsidiaries or colonies will, sooner or later, change into new cities which will remain linked to the mother city only by federation, or not at all.... When the new city is ready to support itself it will itself declare its independence: by what right should the parent city presume to treat it as a vassal, as property to be exploited? Thus in our time we have seen the United States emancipate itself from England; and Canada likewise in fact, if not in name; Australia set out on the road to separation by the consent, and with the approval, of the mother country. In the same way Algeria will, sooner or later, constitute itself an African France unless for abominable, selfish motives we keep it as a single unit by means of force and poverty.”

Bakunin had an eye on the underdeveloped countries and doubted whether “imperialist Europe” could keep 800 million Asiatics in servitude. “Two-thirds of humanity, 800 million Asians asleep in their servitude will necessarily awaken and begin to move. But in what direction and to what end?” He declared “strong sympathy for any national uprising against any form of oppression” and commended to the subject peoples the fascinating example of the Spanish uprising against Napoleon. In spite of the fantastic disproportion between the native guerrillas and the imperial troops, the occupying power failed to put them down, and the French were driven out of Spain after a five-year struggle. Every people “has the right to be itself and no one is entitled to impose its costume, its customs, its language, its opinions, or its laws.” However, Bakunin also believed that there could be no true federalism without socialism and wished that national liberation could be achieved “as much in the economic as in the political interests of the masses” and “not with ambitious intent to set up a powerful State.” Any revolution for national independence “will necessarily be against the people... if it is carried out without the people and must therefore depend for success on a privileged class,” and will thus become “a retrogressive, disastrous, counter-revolutionary movement.”

It would be regrettable if the decolonized countries were to cast off the foreign yoke only to fall into indigenous political or religious servitude. Their emancipation requires that “all faith in any divine or human authority be eradicated among the masses.” The national question is historically secondary to the social question and salvation depends on the social revolution. An isolated national revolution cannot succeed. The social revolution inevitably becomes a world revolution.

33: Errico Malatesta

Anarchism and organization

MALATESTA authored this article in 1897.



ORGANIZATION, WHICH IS, AFTER ALL, only the practice of cooperation and solidarity, is a natural and necessary condition of social life; it is an inescapable fact which forces itself on everybody, as much on human society in general as on any group of people who are working towards a common objective. Since humanity neither wishes to, nor can, live in isolation it is inevitable that those people who have neither the means, nor a sufficiently developed social conscience to permit them to associate freely with those of a like mind and with common interests, are subjected to the organization by others, generally constituted in a class or as a ruling group, with the aim of exploiting the labor of others for their personal advantage. And the age long oppression of the masses by a small privileged group has always been the result of the inability of the oppressed to agree among themselves to organize with others for production, for enjoyment and for the possible needs of defense against whoever might wish to exploit and oppress them. Anarchism exists to remedy this state of affairs...

Now, it seems to us that organization, that is to say, association for a specific purpose and with the structure and means required to attain it, is a necessary aspect of social life. A human being in isolation cannot even live the life of a beast, for they would be unable to obtain nourishment for themselves, except perhaps in tropical regions or when the population is exceptionally sparse; and they would be, without exception, unable to rise much above the level of an animal. Having therefore to join with other humans, or more accurately, finding themselves united to them as

a consequence of the evolutionary antecedents of the species, they must submit to the will of others (be enslaved) or subject others to his/her will (be in authority) or live with others in fraternal agreement in the interests of the greatest good of all (be an associate). Nobody can escape from this necessity.

Admitting as a possibility the existence of a community organized without authority, that is without compulsion — and anarchists must admit the possibility, or anarchism would have no meaning — let us pass on to discuss the organization of the anarchist movement.

In this case too, organization seems useful and necessary. If a movement means the whole — individuals with a common objective which they exert themselves to attain — it is natural that they should agree among themselves, join forces, share out the tasks and take all those steps which they think will lead to the achievement of those objectives. To remain isolated, each individual acting or seeking to act on their own without coordination, without preparation, without their modest efforts to a strong group, means condemning oneself to impotence, wasting one's efforts in small ineffectual action, and to lose faith very soon in one's aims, possibly being reduced to complete inactivity.

A mathematician, a chemist, a psychologist or a sociologist may say they have no program or are concerned only with establishing the truth. They seek knowledge, they are not seeking to do something. But anarchism and socialism are not sciences; they are proposals, projects that anarchists and socialists seek to realize and which therefore need to be formulated as definite programs.

If it is true that organization creates leaders; if it is true that anarchists are unable to come together and arrive at an agreement without submitting themselves to an authority, this means that they are not yet very good anarchists, and before thinking of establishing an anarchist society within the world they must think of making themselves able to live anarchistically. The remedy does not lie in the abolition of organization but in the growing consciousness of each individual member. In small as well as large societies, apart from brute force, of which it cannot be a question for us, the origin and justification for authority lies in social disorganization.

When a community has needs and its members do not know how to organize spontaneously to provide them, someone comes forward, an authority who satisfies those needs by utilizing the services of all and directing them to their liking. If the roads are unsafe and the people do not know what measures to take, a police force emerges which in return for whatever services it renders expects to be supported and paid, as well as imposing itself and throwing its weight around; if some article

is needed, and the community does not know how to arrange with the distant producers to supply it in exchange for goods produced locally, the merchant will appear who will profit by dealing with the needs of one section to sell and of the other to buy, and impose his/her own prices both on the producer and the consumer. This is what has happened in our midst; the less organized we have been, the more prone are we to be imposed on by a few individuals. And this is understandable. So much so that organization, far from creating authority, is the only cure for it and the only means whereby each one of us will get used to taking an active and conscious part in the collective work, and cease being passive instruments in the hands of leaders.

But an organization, it is argued, presupposes an obligation to coordinate one's own activities with those of others; thus it violates liberty and fetters initiative. As we see it, what really takes away liberty and makes initiative impossible is the isolation which renders it powerless. Freedom is not an abstract right but the possibility of acting; this is true among ourselves as well as society as a whole. And it is by cooperation with our fellow human beings that we find the means to express our activity and our power of initiative.

An anarchist organization must allow for complete autonomy, and independence, and therefore full responsibility, to individuals and groups; free agreement between those who think it useful to come together for cooperative action, for common aims; a moral duty to fulfill one's pledges and to take no action which is contrary to the accepted programme. On such bases one then introduces practical forms and suitable instruments to give real life to the organization. Thus the groups, the federation of groups, the federations of federations, meetings, congresses, correspondence committees and so on. But this also must be done freely, in such a way as not to restrict the thought and the initiative of individual members, but only to give greater scope to the efforts which in isolation would be impossible or ineffective. Thus for an anarchist organization congresses, in spite of all the disadvantages from which they suffer as representative bodies, are free from authoritarianism in any shape or form because they do not legislate and do not impose their deliberations on others. They serve to maintain and increase personal contacts among the most active comrades, to summarize and encourage programmatic studies on the ways and means for action; to acquaint everybody with the situation in the regions and the kind of action most urgently needed; to summarize the various currents of anarchist opinions at the time and to prepare some kind of statistics therefrom. And their decisions are not binding, but simply suggestions, advice and proposals to submit to all concerned, and they

do not become binding and executive except for those who accept them and for as long as they accept them. The administrative organs they nominate — Correspondence Commissions, etc. — have no directive powers, do not take initiatives except for those who specifically solicit and approve of them, and have no authority to impose their own views, which they can certainly hold and propagate as groups of comrades, but which cannot be presented as the official views of the organization. They publish the resolutions of the congresses and the opinions and proposals communicated to them by groups and individuals; and they act for those who want to make use of them, to facilitate relations between groups, and cooperation between those who are in agreement on various initiatives; each is free to correspond with whoever he/she likes direct, or make use of the other committees nominated by specific groupings.

In an anarchist organization individual members can express any opinion and use every tactic which is not in contradiction with the accepted principles and does not interfere with the activities of others. In every case a particular organization last so long as the reasons for union are superior to those for dissension; otherwise it disbands and makes way for other, more homogenous groupings. Certainly the life and permanence of an organization is a condition for success in the long struggle before us, and besides, it is natural that every institution should by instinct aim at lasting indefinitely. But the duration of a libertarian organization must be the result of the spiritual affinity of its members and of the adaptability of its constitution to the continually changing circumstances. When it can no longer serve a useful purpose it is better that it should die.

We would certainly be happy if we could all get along well together and unite all the forces of anarchism in a strong movement; but we do not believe in the solidity of organizations which are built on concessions and assumptions and in which there is no real agreement and sympathy between members. Better disunited than badly united. But we would wish that each individual joined their friends and that there should be no isolated forces, or lost forces.

It remains for us to speak of the organization of the working and oppressed masses for resistance against both the government and the employers. Workers will never be able to emancipate themselves so long as they do not find in union the moral, economic and physical strength that is needed to subdue the organized might of the oppressors.

There have been anarchists, and there still are some, who while recognizing the need to organize today for propaganda and action, are hostile to all organizations which do not have anarchism as their goal or which do not follow anarchist methods of struggle. To those

comrades it seemed that all organized forces for an objective less than radically revolutionary, were forces that the revolution was being deprived of. It seems to us instead, and experience has surely already confirmed our view, that their approach would condemn the anarchist movement to a state of perpetual sterility. To make propaganda we must be amongst the people, and it is in the workers' associations that workers find their comrades and especially those who are most disposed to understand and accept our ideas. But even when it is possible to do as much propaganda as we wished outside the associations, this could not have a noticeable effect on the working masses. Apart from a small number of individuals more educated and capable of abstract thought and theoretical enthusiasms, the worker cannot arrive at anarchism in one leap. To become a convinced anarchist, and not in name only, they must begin to feel the solidarity that joins them to their comrades, and to learn to cooperate with others in defense of common interests and, by struggling against the bosses and against the government that supports them, should realize that bosses and governments are useless parasites and that the workers could manage the domestic economy by their own efforts. And when the worker has understood this, he or she is an anarchist even if they do not refer to themselves as such.

Furthermore, to encourage popular organizations of all kinds is the logical consequence of our basic ideas, and should therefore be an integral part of our programme. An authoritarian party, which aims at capturing power to impose its ideas, has an interest in the people remaining an amorphous mass, unable to act for themselves and therefore always easily dominated. And it follows, logically, that it cannot desire more than that much organization, and of the kind it needs to attain power: Electoral organizations if it hopes to achieve it by legal means; Military organization if it relies on violent action. But we anarchists do not want to emancipate the people; we want the people to emancipate themselves. We do not believe in the good that comes from above and imposed by force; we want the new way of life to emerge from the body of the people and correspond to the state of their development and advance as they advance. It matters to us therefore that all interests and opinions should find their expression in a conscious organization and should influence communal life in proportion to their importance.

We have undertaken the task of struggling against existing social organization, and of overcoming the obstacles to the advent of a new society in which freedom and well being would be assured to everybody. To achieve this objective we organize ourselves and seek to become as numerous and as strong as possible. But if it were only our anarchist groupings that were organized; if the workers were to remain isolated

like so many units unconcerned about each other and only linked by the common chain; if we ourselves besides being organized as anarchists in a federation, were not as workers organized with other workers, we could achieve nothing at all, or at most we might be able to impose ourselves... and then it would not be the triumph of anarchism, but our triumph. We could then go on calling ourselves anarchists, but in reality we should simply be rulers, and as impotent as all rulers are where the general good is concerned.

34: Cindy Milstein

From protest to popular power

This article was written by CINDY MILSTEIN in the Autumn of 2000.



DIRECT ACTION GETS THE GOODS,” proclaimed the Industrial Workers of the World nearly a century ago. And in the short time since Seattle, this has certainly proven to be the case. Indeed, “the goods” reaped by the new direct action movement here in North America have included creating doubt as to the scope and nature of globalization, shedding light on the nearly unknown workings of international trade and finance bodies, and making anarchism and anticapitalism almost household words. As if that weren’t enough, we find ourselves on the streets of twenty-first-century metropolises demonstrating our power to resist in a way that models the good society we envision: a truly democratic one.

But is this really what democracy looks like?

The impulse to “reclaim the streets” is an understandable one. When industrial capitalism first started to emerge in the early nineteenth century, its machinations were relatively visible. Take, for instance, the enclosures. Pasture lands that had been used in common for centuries to provide villages with their very sustenance were systematically fenced off — enclosed — in order to graze sheep, whose wool was needed for the burgeoning textile industry. Communal life was briskly thrust aside in favor of privatization, forcing people into harsh factories and crowded cities.

Advanced capitalism, as it pushes past the fetters of even nation-states in its insatiable quest for growth, encloses life in a much more

expansive yet generally invisible way: fences are replaced by consumer culture. We are raised in an almost totally commodified world where nothing comes for free, even futile attempts to remove oneself from the market economy. This commodification seeps into not only what we eat, wear, or do for fun but also into our language, relationships, and even our very biology and minds. We have lost not only our communities and public spaces but control over our own lives; we have lost the ability to define ourselves outside capitalism's grip, and thus genuine meaning itself begins to dissolve.

"Whose Streets? Our Streets!" then, is a legitimate emotional response to the feeling that even the most minimal of public, noncommodified spheres has been taken from us. Yet in the end, it is simply a frantic cry from our cage. We have become so confined, so thoroughly damaged, by capitalism as well as state control that crumbs appear to make a nourishing meal.

Temporarily closing off the streets during direct actions does provide momentary spaces in which to practice democratic process, and even offers a sense of empowerment, but such events leave power for power's sake, like the very pavement beneath our feet, unchanged. Only when the serial protest mode is escalated into a struggle for popular or horizontal power can we create cracks in the figurative concrete, thereby opening up ways to challenge capitalism, nation-states, and other systems of domination.

This is not to denigrate the direct action movement in the United States and elsewhere; just the opposite. Besides a long overdue and necessary critique of numerous institutions of command and obedience, the movement is quietly yet crucially supplying the outlines of a freer society. This prefigurative politics is, in fact, the very strength and vision of today's direct action, where the means themselves are understood to also be the ends. We're not putting off the good society until some distant future but attempting to carve out room for it in the here and now, however tentative and contorted under the given social order. In turn, this consistency of means and ends implies an ethical approach to politics. How we act now is how we want others to begin to act, too. We try to model a notion of goodness even as we fight for it.

This can implicitly be seen in the affinity group and spokescouncil structures for decision making at direct actions. Both supply much needed spaces in which to school ourselves in direct democracy. Here, in the best of cases, we can proactively set the agenda, carefully deliberate together over questions, and come to decisions that strive to take everyone's needs and desires into account. Substantive discussion replaces checking boxes on a ballot; face-to-face participation replaces

handing over our lives to so-called representatives; nuanced and reasoned solutions replace lesser-of-two-(or-three-)evils thinking. The democratic process utilized during demonstrations decentralizes power even as it offers tangible solidarity; for example, affinity groups afford greater and more diverse numbers of people a real share in decision making, while spokescouncils allow for intricate coordination — even on a global level. This is, as 1960s’ activists put it, the power to create rather than destroy.

The beauty of this new movement, it could be said, is that it strives to take its own ideals to heart. In doing so, it has perhaps unwittingly created the demand for such directly democratic practices on a permanent basis. Yet the haunting question underlying episodic “street democracy” remains unaddressed: How can everyone come together to make decisions that affect society as a whole in participatory, mutualistic, and ethical ways? In other words, how can each and every one of us — not just a counterculture or this protest movement — really transform and ultimately control our lives and that of our communities?

This is, in essence, a question of power — who has it, how it is used, and to what ends. To varying degrees, we all know the answer in relation to current institutions and systems. We can generally explain what we are against. That is exactly why we are protesting, whether it is against capitalism and/or nation-states, or globalization in whole or part. What we have largely failed to articulate, however, is any sort of response in relation to liberatory institutions and systems. We often can’t express, especially in any coherent and utopian manner, what we are for. Even as we prefigure a way of making power horizontal, equitable, and hence, hopefully an essential part of a free society, we ignore the reconstructive vision that a directly democratic process holds up right in front of our noses.

For all intents and purposes, our movement remains trapped. On the one hand, it reveals and confronts domination and exploitation. The political pressure exerted by such widespread agitation may even be able to influence current power structures to amend some of the worst excesses of their ways; the powers that be have to listen, and respond to some extent, when the voices become too numerous and too loud. Nevertheless, most people are still shut out of the decision-making process itself, and consequently, have little tangible power over their lives at all. Without this ability to self-govern, street actions translate into nothing more than a countercultural version of interest group lobbying, albeit far more radical than most and generally unpaid.

What the movement forgets is the promise implicit in its own structure: that power not only needs to be contested; it must also be constituted anew in liberatory and egalitarian forms. This entails taking

the movement's directly democratic process seriously — not simply as a tactic to organize protests but as the very way we organize society, specifically the political realm. The issue then becomes: How do we begin to shift the strategy, structure, and values of our movement to the most grassroots level of public policy making?

The most fundamental level of decision making in a demonstration is the affinity group. Here, we come together as friends or because of a common identity, or a combination of the two. We share something in particular; indeed, this common identity is often reflected in the name we choose for our groups. We may not always agree with each other, but there is a fair amount of homogeneity precisely because we've consciously chosen to come together for a specific reason — most often having little to do with mere geography. This sense of a shared identity allows for the smooth functioning of a consensus decision-making process, since we start from a place of commonality. In an affinity group, almost by definition, our unity needs to take precedence over our diversity, or our supposed affinity breaks down altogether.

Compare this to what could be the most fundamental level of decision making in a society: a neighborhood or town. Now, geography plays a much larger role. Out of historic, economic, cultural, religious, and other reasons, we may find ourselves living side by side with a wide range of individuals and their various identities. Most of these people are not our friends per se. Still, the very diversity we encounter is the life of a vibrant city itself. The accidents and/or numerous personal decisions that have brought us together often create a fair amount of heterogeneity precisely because we haven't all chosen to come together for a specific reason. In this context, where we start from a place of difference, decision-making mechanisms need to be much more capable of allowing for dissent; that is, diversity needs to be clearly retained within any notions of unity. As such, majoritarian decision-making processes begin to make more sense.

Then, too, there is the question of scale. It is hard to imagine being friends with hundreds, or even thousands, of people, nor maintaining a single-issue identity with that many individuals; but we can share a feeling of community and a striving toward some common good that allows each of us to flourish. In turn, when greater numbers of people come together on a face-to-face basis to reshape their neighborhoods and towns, the issues as well as the viewpoints will multiply, and alliances will no doubt change depending on the specific topic under discussion. Thus the need for a place where we can meet as human beings at the most face-to-face level — that is, an assembly of active citizens — to share our many identities and interests in hopes of balancing both the

individual and community in all we do.

As well, trust and accountability function differently at the affinity group versus civic level. We generally reveal more of ourselves to friends; and such unwritten bonds of love and affection hold us more closely together, or at least give us added impetus to work things out. Underlying this is a higher-than-average degree of trust, which serves to make us accountable to each other.

On a community-wide level, the reverse is more often true: accountability allows us to trust each other. Hopefully, we share bonds of solidarity and respect; yet since we can't know each other well, such bonds only make sense if we first determine them together, and then record them, write them down, for all to refer back to in the future, and even revisit if need be. Accountable, democratic structures of our own making, in short, provide the foundation for trust, since the power to decide is both transparent and ever-amenable to scrutiny.

There are also issues of time and space. Affinity groups, in the scheme of things, are generally temporary configurations — they may last a few months, or a few years, but often not much longer. Once the particular reasons why we've come together have less of an immediate imperative, or as our friendships falter, such groups often fall by the wayside. And even during a group's life span, in the interim between direct actions, there is frequently no fixed place or face to decision making, nor any regularity, nor much of a record of who decided what and how. Moreover, affinity groups are not open to everyone but only those who share a particular identity or attachment. As such, although an affinity group can certainly choose to shut down a street, there is ultimately something slightly authoritarian in small groups taking matters into their own hands, no matter what their political persuasion.

Deciding what to do with streets in general — say, how to organize transportation, encourage street life, provide green space, and so on — should be a matter open to everyone interested if it is to be truly participatory and nonhierarchical. This implies ongoing and open institutions of direct democracy, for everything from decision making to conflict resolution. We need to be able to know when and where citizen assemblies are meeting; we need to meet regularly and make use of nonarbitrary procedures; we need to keep track of what decisions have been made. But more important, if we so choose, we all need to have access to the power to discuss, deliberate, and make decisions about matters that affect our communities and beyond.

Indeed, many decisions have a much wider impact than on just one city; transforming streets, for example, would probably entail coordination on a regional, continental, or even global level. Radicals

have long understood such mutualistic self-reliance as a “commune of communes,” or confederation. The spokescouncil model used during direct actions hints at such an alternative view of globalization. During a spokescouncil meeting, mandated delegates from our affinity groups gather for the purpose of coordination, the sharing of resources/skills, the building of solidarity, and so forth, always returning to the grassroots level as the ultimate arbiter. If popular assemblies were our basic unit of decision making, confederations of communities could serve as a way to both transcend parochialism and create interdependence where desirable. For instance, rather than global capitalism and international regulatory bodies, where trade is top-down and profit-oriented, confederations could coordinate distribution between regions in ecological and humane ways, while allowing policy in regard to production, say, to remain at the grassroots.

This more expansive understanding of a prefigurative politics would necessarily involve creating institutions that could potentially replace capitalism and nation-states. Such directly democratic institutions are compatible with, and could certainly grow out of, the ones we use during demonstrations, but they very likely won’t be mirror images once we reach the level of society. This does not mean abandoning the principles and ideals undergirding the movement (such as freedom, cooperation, decentralism, solidarity, diversity, face-to-face participation, and the like); it merely means recognizing the limits of direct democracy as it is practiced in the context of a demonstration.

Any vision of a free society, if it is to be truly democratic, must of course be worked out by all of us — first in this movement, and later, in our communities and confederations. Even so, we will probably discover that newly defined understandings of citizenship are needed in place of affinity groups; majoritarian methods of decision making that strive to retain diversity are preferable to simple consensus-seeking models; written compacts articulating rights and duties are crucial to fill out the unspoken culture of protests; and institutionalized spaces for policy making are key to guaranteeing that our freedom to make decisions doesn’t disappear with a line of riot police.

It is time to push beyond the oppositional character of our movement by infusing it with a reconstructive vision. That means beginning, right now, to translate our movement structure into institutions that embody the good society; in short, cultivating direct democracy in the places we call home. This will involve the harder work of reinvigorating or initiating civic gatherings, town meetings, neighborhood assemblies, citizen mediation boards, any and all forums where we can come together to decide our lives, even if only in extralegal institutions at first.

Then, too, it will mean reclaiming globalization, not as a new phase of capitalism but as its replacement by confederated, directly democratic communities coordinated for mutual benefit.

It is time to move from protest to politics, from shutting down streets to opening up public space, from demanding scraps from those few in power to holding power firmly in all our hands. Ultimately, this means moving beyond the question of “Whose Streets?” We should ask instead “Whose Cities?” Then and only then will we be able to remake them as our own.

35: The Curious George Brigade

The End of Arrogance: Decentralization and Anarchist Organizing



THE CURIOUS GEORGE BRIGADE (CGB) is an anarchist collective (or, as it styles itself, an “elusive anarchist thinktank”) based in Queens, New York. It is a part of the larger CrimethInc. network. The CGB produced the book Anarchy in the Age of Dinosaurs, a meditation on anarchism which displays tendencies of post-left anarchy along with videos, articles and a zine about urban anarchy. In 2009, bizarrely, the FBI seized and destroyed all the copies of the book then available in print. It has since been reprinted.



FOR TOO LONG, ANARCHIST PROJECTS have been mismanaged by arrogant fantasies of mass. We have unconsciously adopted the Statist, Capitalist and Authoritarian belief that “bigger equals better” and that we must tailor our actions and groups towards this end. Despite our intuitive understandings that large organizations rarely accomplish more than small, tight groups working together, the desire for mass remains strong. We must re-examine how we organize projects in order to awake from the nightmare of over-structure that inevitably leads to bureaucracy, centralization and ineffective anarchist work. This article suggests a few ideas on how anarchists can reject the trap of mass and reinvent ourselves, our groups and our work: from local community activities to large revolutionary mobilizations. The rejection of mass organizations as the be-all, end-all of organizing is vital for the creation and rediscovery of possibilities for empowerment and effective anarchist work.

THE TYRANNY OF STRUCTURE

Most mass structures are a result of habit, inertia and the lack of creative critique. Desire for mass is accepted as common sense in the same way it is 'common sense' that groups must have leaders, or that that they must make decisions by voting. Even anarchists have been tricked into accepting the necessity of super structures and large organizations for the sake of efficiency, mass, or unity. These super structures have become a badge of legitimacy and they are often the only conduits by which outsiders, whether the media, the police or other leftists, can understand us. The result is an alphabet soup of mega-groups which largely exist to propagate themselves and, sadly, do little else. Unfortunately, we haven't just been tricked into accepting super-structures as the overriding venue of our work: many of us have gone along willingly, because the promise of mass is a seductive one.

Large coalitions and super-structures have become the coin of the realm not only for leftist groups in general but also for anarchist enterprises. They appeal to activists' arrogant fantasies of mass: the authoritarian impulse to be leading (or at least be part of) a large group of people that reinforce and legitimize our deeply held ideologies and beliefs. Even our best intentions and wildest dreams are often crowded out by visions of the black clad mob storming the Bastille or the IMF headquarters.

The price of the arrogant dream of mass is appallingly high and the promised returns never come. Super-structures, which include federations, centralized networks and mass organizations, demand energy and resources to survive. They are not perpetual motion machines which produce more energy than what is poured into them. In a community of limited resources and energy like ours, a super-structure can consume most of these available resources and energies, rendering the group ineffective. Mainstream non-profits have recently illustrated this tendency. Large organizations like the Salvation Army commonly spend 2/3 of their monies (and even larger amounts of its labor) on simply maintaining their existence: officers, outreach, meetings and public appearance. At best, only 1/3 of their output actually goes to their stated goals. The same trend is replicated in our political organizations.

We all know that most large coalitions and super-structures have exceedingly long meetings. Here's a valuable exercise: The next time you find yourself bored by an overlong meeting, count the number of people in attendance. Then multiply that number by how long the meeting lasts: this will give you the number of person-hours devoted to keeping the organization alive. Factor in travel time, outreach time and the propaganda involved in promoting the meeting and that will give you a

rough estimate of the amount of activist hours consumed by the greedy maw of the super-structure. After that nightmarish vision, stop and visualize how much actual work could be accomplished if this immense amount of time and energy were actually spent on the project at hand instead of what is so innocently referred to as ‘organizing’.

AFFINITY OR BUST

Not only are super-structures wasteful and inefficient, but they also require that we mortgage our ideals and affinities. By definition, coalitions seek to create and enforce agendas. These are not merely agendas for a particular meeting but larger priorities for what type of work is important. Within non-anarchist groups, this prioritization often leads to an organizational hierarchy to ensure that all members of the group promote the overall agenda.

A common example is the role of the media person or ‘spokesman’ (and it is almost always a man) whose comments are accepted as the opinion for dozens, hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. In groups without a party line or platform, we certainly shouldn’t accept any other person speaking for us — as individuals, affinity groups or collectives. While the delusions of media stars and spokespeople are merely annoying, super-structures can lead to scenarios with much graver consequences. In mass mobilizations or actions, the tactics of an entire coalition are often decided by a handful of people. Many of the disasters of particular recent mobilizations can be squarely blamed on the centralization of information and tactical decisions on a tiny cadre of individuals within the larger coalition/organization (which might include dozens of collectives and affinity groups). For anarchists, such a concentration of influence and power in the hands of a few is simply unacceptable.

It has long been a guiding principle of anarchist philosophy that people should engage in activities based on their affinities and that our work should be meaningful, productive and enjoyable. This is the hidden benefit of voluntary association. It is arrogant to believe that members in a large structure, which again can number in the hundreds or thousands of people, should all have identical affinities and ideals. It is arrogant to believe that through discussion and debate, any one group should convince all the others that their particular agenda will be meaningful, productive and enjoyable for all. Due to this nearly impossible situation, organizations rely on coercion to get their agendas accepted by their membership. The coercion is not necessarily physical (like the State) or based on deprivation (like Capitalism) but based on some sense of loyalty or solidarity or unity. This type of coercion is the

stock and trade of the vanguard.

Organizations spend a significant amount of their time at meetings trying to convince you that your affinities are disloyal to the greater organization and that your desires and interests obstruct or remove you from solidarity with some group or another. When these appeals fail, the organization will label your differences as obstructionist or breaking ‘unity’ — the hobgoblin of efficiency. Unity is an arrogant ideal which is too often used against groups who refuse to cede their autonomy to a larger super-structure.

Many anarchists whose primary work is done in large organizations often never develop their own affinities or skills and instead, do work based on the needs of super-structures. Without affinity groups or collective work of their own, activists become tied to the mass abstract political goals of the organization, which leads to even greater inefficiency and the ever present “burn-out” that is so epidemic in large coalitions and super-structures.

LIBERTY, TRUST AND TRUE SOLIDARITY

“All Liberty is based on Mutual Trust” — Sam Adams

If we seek a truly liberated society in which to flourish, we must also create a trusting society. Cops, armies, laws, governments, religious specialists and all other hierarchies are essentially based on mistrust. Super-structures and coalitions mimic this basic distrust that is so rampant and detrimental in the wider society. In the grand tradition of the Left, large organizations today feel that due to their size or mission, they have a right to micromanage the decisions and actions of all their members. For many activists, this feeling of being something larger than themselves fosters an allegiance to the organization above all. These are the same principles that foster nationalism and patriotism. Instead of working through and building initiatives and groups that we ourselves have created and are based in our own communities, we work for a larger organization with diluted goals, hoping to convince others to join us. This is the trap of the Party, the three letter acronym group and the large coalition.

In large groups, power is centralized, controlled by officers (or certain working groups) and divvied out, as it would be done by any bureaucratic organization. In fact a great deal of its energies are devoted to guarding this power from others in the coalition. In groups which attempt to attract anarchists (such as anti-globalization coalitions) this centralization of power is transferred to certain high profile working

groups such as 'media' or 'tactical'. Regardless of how it appears on the outside, super-structures foster a climate in which tiny minorities have disproportionate influence over others in the organization.

As anarchists, we should reject all notions of centralized power and power hoarding. We should be critical of anything that demands the realignment of our affinities and passions for the good of an organization or abstract principle. We should guard our autonomy with the same ferocity with which the super-structure wishes to strip us of it.

Mutual aid has long been the guiding principle by which anarchists work together. The paradox of mutual aid is that we can only protect our own autonomy by trusting others to be autonomous. Super-structures do the opposite and seek to limit autonomy and work based on affinity in exchange for playing on our arrogant fantasies and the doling out of power. Decentralization is the basis of not only autonomy (which is the hallmark of liberty), but also of trust. To have genuine freedom, we have to allow others to engage in their work based on their desires and skills while we do the same. We can hold no power from them or try to coerce them into accepting our agenda. The successes that we have in the streets and in our local communities almost always come from groups working together: not because they are coerced and feel duty-bound, but out of genuine mutual aid and solidarity.

We should continue to encourage others to do their work in coordination with ours. In our anarchist work, we should come together as equals: deciding for ourselves with whom we wish to form affinity groups or collectives. In accordance with that principle, each affinity group would be able to work individually with other groups. These alliances might last for weeks or for years, for a single action or for a sustained campaign, with two groups or two hundred. Our downfall is when the larger organization becomes our focus, not the work which it was created for. We should work together, but only with equal status and with no outside force, neither the state, god nor some coalition, determining the direction or shape of the work we do. Mutual trust allows us to be generous with mutual aid. Trust promotes relationships where bureaucracies, formal procedures and large meetings promote alienation and atomization. We can afford to be generous with our limited energies and resources while working with others because these relationships are voluntary and based on a principle of equality. No group should sacrifice their affinity, autonomy or passions for the privilege to work with others. Just as we are very careful with whom we would work within affinity groups, we should not offer to join in coalition with groups with whom we do not share mutual trust.

We can and should work with other groups and collectives, but

only on the basis of autonomy and trust. It is unwise and undesirable to demand that particular group must agree with the decisions of every other group. During demonstrations, this principle is the foundation of the philosophy of “diversity of tactics”. It is bizarre that anarchists demand diversity of tactics in the streets but are then coerced by calls for ‘unity’ in these large coalitions. Can’t we do better? Fortunately, we can.

RADICAL DECENTRALIZATION: A NEW BEGINNING

So let us begin our work not in large coalitions and super-structures but in small affinity groups. Within the context of our communities, the radical decentralization of work, projects and responsibility strengthens the ability of anarchist groups to thrive and do work which best suits them. We must reject the default of ineffective, tyrannical super-structures as the only means to get work done and must strengthen and support existing affinity groups and collectives. Let us be as critical of the need for large federations, coalitions and other super-structures as we are of the State, religion, bureaucracies and corporations. Our recent successes have defied the belief that we must be part of some giant organization “to get anything done”. We should take to heart the thousands of anarchist DIY projects being done around the world outside super-structures. Let us come to meetings as equals and work based on our passions and ideals, and then find others with whom we share these ideals. Let us protect our autonomy and continue to fight for liberty, trust and true solidarity.

Anarchy works!

All power to the affinity groups!

AN END TO VIOLENCE

36: Wayne Price

Why I am not a pacifist

*Pacifist, revolutionary Marxist and, in recent years, revolutionary anarchist, WAYNE PRICE has had a long and nuanced political trajectory. He has been involved in numerous North American anarchist movements, including the controversial Love and Rage and the late NEFAC (Northeastern Federation of Anarchist Communists) and is the author of several books, most recently The Value of Radical Theory: An Anarchist Introduction to Marx's Critique of Political Economy. This article was originally published on the anarchist news portal **anarkismo.net** in 2009.*



REVOLUTION, VIOLENCE, AND NONVIOLENCE

While absolute pacifists are a small minority in the general population, they are a large proportion of anarchists. Pacifists are completely against war or any type of mass violence under any circumstances, even in defense from military invasion or to make a democratic revolution. Naturally many pacifists are also anarchists — being against armies, they also oppose the police. It has been said jokingly (with what truth I do not know) that during retreats of the pacifist War Resisters League, softball games are played between the anarchists and the Socialist Party members.

When I first became an anarchist, it was of the anarchist-pacifist tendency. I admired the pacifist Paul Goodman, who was perhaps the most influential anarchist of the sixties. I also admired leading radical pacifists, such as the great A.J. Muste, David Dellinger, David McReynolds, and Bayard Rustin. These people combined pacifism with a radical, even revolutionary, critique of capitalism and the war-waging state. I studied Gandhi, who was no anarchist (he led a movement for a national state for India) but was a decentralist.

It should not be surprising that many good radicals are attracted to pacifism and its nonviolent program. The history of war-making has come to its climax in the potential for nuclear war. Humanity has to find a way to end war, if it is to survive. The history of violent revolutions has produced gains, but still leaves humanity with societies ruled by minorities which exploit the workers and wage wars of extermination. "Terrorist" tactics of violence by small groups of would-be revolutionary heroes have had little result except to let the state increase repression.

But eventually I was persuaded that pacifism (and the version of anarchism which went with it) was not sufficient to make the revolution that was needed, although I still respect those who believe in it. I do not share the views of Ward Churchill (1998, *Pacifism as Pathology*, Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring) that a political belief in pacifism is a mental illness.

Rejecting pacifism does not mean that I am "for" violence. Personally I hate violence, like most sane people. But like 99.999...% of humanity, I believe that sometimes violence is justified, particularly in defense against the violence of others. I believe that there are two basic programmatic weaknesses in pacifism: nonviolence does not always work and some conflicts are irreconcilable.

NONVIOLENCE DOES NOT ALWAYS WORK

Pacifists argue that if negotiations fail, it is possible to use techniques of mass nonviolence. This includes strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, pickets, demonstrations, and other forms of civil disobedience. In mass nonviolence, the activists permit themselves to be arrested or beaten by the police or army, but do not fight back in any way. "If blood be shed, let it be our blood." Presumably this leads to winning over the opponent, to reaching out to the good that is within them. Less emphasized is that this includes a certain use of power: boycotts and strikes cause financial loss to businesspeople and pressure them to do what they do not want to do, to make a deal with the demonstrators. Similarly, brutality against peaceful demonstrators, if widely reported, can appeal to decent people elsewhere, embarrassing the government, and causing outside forces to put pressure on local powers to let up (when the local cops or vigilantes would just as soon massacre the people).

These techniques work part of the time. The problem is that they do not work all the time. Pacifists do not say 'let us consider how to use nonviolent tactics when we can, or as much as possible.' Pacifists say, 'only nonviolent tactics should be used. Violent self-defense should never be used.' To refute pacifism it is not necessary to show that nonviolence never works, just to show that it does not work all the time, and that sometimes armed struggle is necessary.

Nonviolent tactics will fail when faced with an absolutely ruthless enemy. Gandhi suggested that the Jews should have used nonviolence against the Nazis. This would have been pointless. The Holocaust could have only been prevented by a workers' revolution in Germany. Instead, it was finally ended through the Allied military victory. Similarly, a Nazi occupation of India — or a Japanese invasion, which could have happened — would have killed Gandhi and the membership of the Congress Party. Also, successful nonviolent methods require publicity, so the rest of the world knows about it and can put pressure on the oppressors. The Nazis or Imperial Japanese would not have let nonviolent campaigns be reported. Gandhi and Nehru would have vanished without the world's knowledge. The same can be said of nonviolence methods when used against other ruthless and secretive regimes.

The two most famous nonviolent campaigns are the independence struggle in India and the civil rights movement of African-Americans. In India, the movement succeeded due to the weakness of the British imperialists. In the past, they had been willing to simply massacre the Indians, as they did with the Amritsar massacre (shown in the movie "Gandhi"). But they were being replaced by the U.S. (and the Soviet Union) as the world's greatest imperialists. They no longer had the power or wealth to hold down India. The Japanese army softened them up in World War II. Had they repressed Gandhi's movement, they knew they would have faced an armed struggle instead (after all, the Chinese revolution was happening next door). Finally, they knew that the issue was not all-or-nothing for British capitalism; after independence they had more investments in India than before.

Nonviolence worked in the African-American civil rights struggle because the South was part of the larger U.S. The national capitalists, while not supporters of Black people, had no essential need for Southern racial segregation. National politicians were embarrassed internationally as they competed with the Communists. Internationally and domestically their pretense of "democracy" and "freedom" were being given the lie. So they put pressure on the Southern racists to clean up their act and end overt Jim Crow. African-Americans remained on the bottom of U.S. society but were freed from legal segregation.

But if the Southern racists had been left to themselves, uncontrolled by national forces, they would have drowned the nonviolent movement in blood.

Nonviolence was always limited. Nonviolent demonstrators were often protected at night by local Black people patrolling their neighborhoods with rifles. As mentioned, boycotts and strikes were also means of coercion against the local power structure, not just means of appealing to their consciences. Efforts to use courts and to get laws

passed are only seen as nonviolent because we are taught to ignore the violence of the state. Actually, court rulings for integration and laws against discrimination only work if they are backed by the armed power of the state. This became clear when the federal government had to call up the National Guard to integrate colleges and schools.

A test case came in South Africa after World War II. As parts of Africa won independence, the Afrikaners imposed a system of apartheid on South African Blacks. The Blacks organized a mass nonviolent movement. The apartheid regime brutally repressed the movement, shooting down demonstrators in cold blood at Sharpeville and elsewhere. The movement was disorganized and driven underground. Nelson Mandela and others had to give up nonviolence in favor of armed struggle. The system lasted for decades more, until economic weakness, combined with a violent rebellion forced the rulers to give up apartheid (although they kept the capitalist system under which Black workers remain oppressed and exploited). South Africa demonstrated that a ruthless enough power structure can defeat nonviolent methods.

SOME STRUGGLES HAVE TO BE FOUGHT THROUGH

Some social conflicts are simply irreconcilable. The two sides cannot come to an agreement. The enemy cannot be won over, except as isolated individuals here and there.

In India and the U.S. South, there were political changes but capitalism was not challenged. This was even true of South Africa. It was also true of the changes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The rich mostly kept their wealth and power (Communist bureaucrats became private capitalists). They were willing, when it was necessary, to make changes which did not take away their control and ownership of the economy.

A libertarian socialist revolution would be quite different. The workers would take away the total wealth, power, and position of the ruling class. The capitalist class has educated itself that it stands for God and civilization. It believes it stands for law and order, against chaos and barbarism. It will not permit itself to be easily overturned. It will fight with the fiercest of barbaric brutality. Right now the U.S. ruling class supports dictatorships all over the world and wages cruel warfare against the people of several countries. It would not do less inside North America if it felt it was necessary. Like the rise of German Nazism or of Pinochet's coup in Chile, the capitalist class is capable of overturning even its limited democracy and replacing it with the most horrific repression. We must not underestimate the vileness of the capitalist class of the big imperial states.

Such repression cannot be avoided by any attempt at humanistic or Christian reconciliation. I do not advocate any sort of premature or minority violence. But eventually there will be a confrontation between the working people and oppressed and the capitalists and their hangers-on and agents.

In my country, the United States of America (and in similar countries), I foresee one of two outcomes for a revolution. One is that a revolution may be a particularly bloody conflict, a vicious civil war. After all, the U.S. has a large middle class and a well-off layer of workers, with traditions of patriotism, religious superstition, racism and sexism, as well as the already-mentioned reactionary ruling class. Such forces may oppose a working class rebellion to the bitter end. It may be necessary for U.S. rebels to bring in a revolutionary army from Mexico.

On the other hand, it is possible that a U.S. revolution could be fairly peaceful and almost nonviolent. Unlike many other countries, the big majority of U.S. people are working class (perhaps 80%). Most of the military ranks are from the working class. Unity among the workers, as well as other oppressed groups, could prevent much violence. Especially if revolutions have been successful in other countries, the ruling class and its agents could be demoralized and easier to overthrow.

But even in the preferred case, violence will be kept to a minimum precisely if we are prepared, organized, and unified. The more prepared our class is to defend itself, the more likely the enemy is to be demoralized and to give up easily. And if an armed conflict becomes inevitable, as per the first possibility, then obviously it will be better to have been prepared. So either way, it is better for workers and the oppressed not to have illusions about the peaceful nature of the capitalist enemy.

Revolutions always use elements of what is otherwise regarded as "nonviolence." Revolutionary struggles often include strikes and other mass actions which are often unarmed, at least at first. Also, revolutions always try to win over the troops on the other side (and no future revolution will succeed without winning over the troops of the empire's army), as well as to raise the morale of the troops in any revolutionary army. Revolutions seek to win over the population behind the troops on the counterrevolutionary side as well as to encourage the population on the revolutionary side. Revolutions try to demoralize the core of hardened counterrevolutionary forces. These effects are done by propaganda but more than that, by politics. Revolutionaries raise demands for land, freedom, an end to poverty and oppression, and peace, and implement these ideas in whatever territory they control.

Strikes, propaganda and political moves are all part of any revolutionary struggle — but they are not enough. For example, troops will not lightly come over to the workers' side. After all, it is a very

serious matter for soldiers to disobey their officers — they can be shot. Rebellious troops must believe that the people are prepared to go all the way, to protect them through a successful revolution. Nonviolent methods may be used, but are not sufficient.

We anarchists want a world without war or any sort of violence. But to get it, there will have to be a social revolution to completely change society, overturning the ruling class and its state. We will try to keep revolutionary violence to a minimum, but the vicious, brutal, nature of the capitalist class will require at least the threat of mass violence.

AN END TO VIOLENCE

37: Wolfi Landstreicher Against the language of militancy

This short musing was written by LANDSTREICHER in 2011 and was retrieved from his personal website, <https://sites.google.com/site/vagabondtheorist/>.



ADLY, IN RECENT YEARS, too much of the writing coming out of social conflict is wrought with stiff, wooden language, a tired, dead language that seems to contradict the energy of the rebellions of which they speak. It is the language of militancy, not of freedom, not of individuality creating itself against all odds. Perhaps this is, in part, because many of the present-day conflicts spring from the harshness of the times; they are responses to the hardness of current social, political and economic realities. But how can a response in kind counter these realities? Shouldn't the very method of our response reflect our rejection of these imposed realities?

Militancy is mistaken for passion and intensity, when in fact it is just an armored straightjacket closing in one's nakedness, stiffening and limiting one's movements. Seriousness is mistaken for resoluteness, when in fact it is enslavement to the abstract, to the future, to the cause, to the past, another sort of self-imprisonment. And isn't this precisely what we resolutely need to refuse as we fight to make our lives our own in each moment?

Perhaps the problem is that so many of those involved in social conflict do not see themselves as free individuals creating their lives, encountering obstacles to this self-creative process and fighting to destroy these obstacles, but rather as oppressed people resisting their oppression.

It is not necessary to ignore the reality of oppression to recognize that when our project becomes resistance to oppression, we become centered on our oppressors. We lose our own lives, and with them the capacity to destroy what stands in our way. Since resistance focuses on the enemy's projects, it keeps us on the defensive and guarantees our defeat (even in victory) by stealing our projects from us.

If, on the other hand, we start from our own project of self-creation, insisting upon moving through the world as free and aimless beings, we will encounter rulers, exploiters, cops, priests, judges, etc., not essentially as oppressors, but as obstacles in our paths, to be destroyed rather than resisted.

It is only in this context that destruction takes on its insurgent, poetic, revolutionary meaning, as a truly gratuitous act that defies the logic of work and opens reality to the marvelous, to surprise. Only then does destruction become playful.

REINVENTING OURSELVES

38: Andrej Grubačić & David Graeber

Anarchism, Or The Revolutionary Movement Of The Twenty-first Century

Andrej Grubačić is a US-based anarchist theorist, sociologist and activist who has written on anarchism and the history of the Balkans. Grubačić is one of the protagonists of “new anarchism” and a member of the anti-authoritarian, direct-action wing of the global justice movement. He is the author of Don’t Mourn: Balkanize! DAVID GRAEBER (born 12 February 1961) is an American anthropologist, author, anarchist and activist who was a pivotal figure in the Occupy Wall Street movement. Graeber is the author of Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology, Towards an Anthropological Theory of Value, Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire, Direct Action: An Ethnography and the monumental Debt: The First 5 000 Years.



IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR that the age of revolutions is not over. It’s becoming equally clear that the global revolutionary movement in the twenty first century will be one that traces its origins less to the tradition of Marxism, or even of socialism narrowly defined, but of anarchism.

Everywhere from Eastern Europe to Argentina, from Seattle to Bombay, anarchist ideas and principles are generating new radical dreams and visions. Often their exponents do not call themselves “anarchists”. There are a host of other names: autonomism, anti-authoritarianism, horizontality, Zapatismo, direct democracy... Still, everywhere one finds the same core principles: decentralization, voluntary association, mutual

aid, the network model, and above all, the rejection of any idea that the end justifies the means, let alone that the business of a revolutionary is to seize state power and then begin imposing one's vision at the point of a gun. Above all, anarchism, as an ethics of practice — the idea of building a new society "within the shell of the old" — has become the basic inspiration of the "movement of movements" (of which the authors are a part), which has from the start been less about seizing state power than about exposing, de-legitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy and participatory management within it.

There are some obvious reasons for the appeal of anarchist ideas at the beginning of the 21st century: most obviously, the failures and catastrophes resulting from so many efforts to overcome capitalism by seizing control of the apparatus of government in the 20th. Increasing numbers of revolutionaries have begun to recognize that "the revolution" is not going to come as some great apocalyptic moment, the storming of some global equivalent of the Winter Palace, but a very long process that has been going on for most of human history (even if it has like most things come to accelerate of late) full of strategies of flight and evasion as much as dramatic confrontations, and which will never — indeed, most anarchists feel, should never — come to a definitive conclusion.

It's a little disconcerting, but it offers one enormous consolation: we do not have to wait until "after the revolution" to begin to get a glimpse of what genuine freedom might be like. As the Crimethinc Collective, the greatest propagandists of contemporary American anarchism, put it: "Freedom only exists in the moment of revolution. And those moments are not as rare as you think." For an anarchist, in fact, to try to create non-alienated experiences, true democracy is an ethical imperative; only by making one's form of organization in the present at least a rough approximation of how a free society would actually operate, how everyone, someday, should be able to live, can one guarantee that we will not cascade back into disaster. Grim joyless revolutionaries who sacrifice all pleasure to the cause can only produce grim joyless societies.

These changes have been difficult to document because so far anarchist ideas have received almost no attention in the academy. There are still thousands of academic Marxists, but almost no academic anarchists. This lag is somewhat difficult to interpret. In part, no doubt, it's because Marxism has always had a certain affinity with the academy which anarchism obviously lacked: Marxism was, after all, the only great social movement that was invented by a Ph.D. Most accounts of the history of anarchism assume it was basically similar to Marxism: anarchism is presented as the brainchild of certain 19th

century thinkers (Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin...) that then went on to inspire working-class organizations, became enmeshed in political struggles, divided into sects...

Anarchism, in the standard accounts, usually comes out as Marxism's poorer cousin, theoretically a bit flat-footed but making up for brains, perhaps, with passion and sincerity. Really the analogy is strained. The "founders" of anarchism did not think of themselves as having invented anything particularly new. They saw its basic principles — mutual aid, voluntary association, egalitarian decision-making — as as old as humanity. The same goes for the rejection of the state and of all forms of structural violence, inequality, or domination (anarchism literally means "without rulers") — even the assumption that all these forms are somehow related and reinforce each other. None of it was seen as some startling new doctrine, but rather as a longstanding tendency in the history of human thought, and one that cannot be encompassed by any general theory of ideology.

On one level it is a kind of faith: a belief that most forms of irresponsibility that seem to make power necessary are in fact the effects of power itself. In practice though it is a constant questioning, an effort to identify every compulsory or hierarchical relation in human life, and challenge them to justify themselves, and if they cannot — which usually turns out to be the case — an effort to limit their power and thus widen the scope of human liberty. Just as a Sufi might say that Sufism is the core of truth behind all religions, an anarchist might argue that anarchism is the urge for freedom behind all political ideologies.

Schools of Marxism always have founders. Just as Marxism sprang from the mind of Marx, so we have Leninists, Maoists, Althusserians... (Note how the list starts with heads of state and grades almost seamlessly into French professors — who, in turn, can spawn their own sects: Lacanians, Foucauldians....)

Schools of anarchism, in contrast, almost invariably emerge from some kind of organizational principle or form of practice: Anarcho-Syndicalists and Anarcho-Communists, Insurrectionists and Platformists, Cooperativists, Councilists, Individualists, and so on.

Anarchists are distinguished by what they do, and how they organize themselves to go about doing it. And indeed this has always been what anarchists have spent most of their time thinking and arguing about. They have never been much interested in the kinds of broad strategic or philosophical questions that preoccupy Marxists such as 'are the peasants a potentially revolutionary class?' (anarchists consider this something for peasants to decide) or 'what is the nature of the commodity form?' Rather, they tend to argue about what is the truly democratic way to go

about a meeting, at what point organization stops empowering people and starts squelching individual freedom. Is “leadership” necessarily a bad thing? Or, alternately, about the ethics of opposing power: What is direct action? Should one condemn someone who assassinates a head of state? When is it okay to throw a brick?

Marxism, then, has tended to be a theoretical or analytical discourse about revolutionary strategy. Anarchism has tended to be an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice. As a result, where Marxism has produced brilliant theories of praxis, it’s mostly been anarchists who have been working on the praxis itself.

At the moment, there’s something of a rupture between generations of anarchism: between those whose political formation took place in the 60s and 70s — and who often still have not shaken the sectarian habits of the last century, or simply still operate in those terms — and younger activists much more informed by, among other elements, indigenous, feminist, ecological and cultural-critical ideas. The former organize mainly through highly visible Anarchist Federations like the IWA, NEFAC or IWW. The latter work most prominently in the networks of the global social movement, networks like Peoples Global Action, which unites anarchist collectives in Europe and elsewhere with groups ranging from Maori activists in New Zealand and fisherfolk in Indonesia to the Canadian postal workers’ union. The latter — what might be loosely referred to as the “small-a anarchists”, are now by far the majority. But it is sometimes hard to tell, since so many of them do not trumpet their affinities very loudly. There are many, in fact, who take anarchist principles of anti-sectarianism and open-endedness so seriously that they refuse to refer to themselves as ‘anarchists’ for that very reason.

But the three essentials that run throughout all manifestations of anarchist ideology are definitely there — anti-statism, anti-capitalism and prefigurative politics (i.e. modes of organization that consciously resemble the world you want to create. Or, as an anarchist historian of the revolution in Spain has formulated “an effort to think of not only the ideas but the facts of the future itself”.) This is present in anything from jamming collectives and on to Indymedia, all of which can be called anarchist in the newer sense. In some countries, there is only a very limited degree of confluence between the two coexisting generations, mostly taking the form of each following what the other is doing, but not much more.

One reason is that the new generation is much more interested in developing new forms of practice than arguing about the finer points of ideology. The most dramatic among these has been the development

of new forms of decision-making process, the beginnings, at least, of an alternate culture of democracy. The famous North American spokescouncils, where thousands of activists coordinate large-scale events by consensus, with no formal leadership structure, are only the most spectacular.

Actually, even calling these forms “new” is a little bit deceptive. One of the main inspirations for the new generation of anarchists are the Zapatista autonomous municipalities of Chiapas, based in Tzeltal or Tojolobal — speaking communities who have been using consensus process for thousands of years — only now adopted by revolutionaries to ensure that women and younger people have an equal voice. In North America, “consensus process” emerged more than anything else from the feminist movement in the 70s, as part of a broad backlash against the macho style of leadership typical of the 60s New Left. The idea of consensus itself was borrowed from the Quakers, who again, claim to have been inspired by the Six Nations and other Native American practices.

Consensus is often misunderstood. One often hears critics claim it would cause stifling conformity but almost never by anyone who has actually observed consensus in action, at least, as guided by trained, experienced facilitators (some recent experiments in Europe, where there is little tradition of such things, have been somewhat crude). In fact, the operating assumption is that no one could really convert another completely to their point of view, or probably should. Instead, the point of consensus process is to allow a group to decide on a common course of action. Instead of voting proposals up and down, proposals are worked and reworked, scotched or reinvented, and there is a process of compromise and synthesis until one ends up with something everyone can live with. When it comes to the final stage, actually “finding consensus”, there are two levels of possible objection: one can “stand aside”, which is to say “I don’t like this and won’t participate but I wouldn’t stop anyone else from doing it”, or “block”, which has the effect of a veto. One can only block if one feels a proposal is in violation of the fundamental principles or reasons for being of a group. One might say that the function which in the US constitution is relegated to the courts, of striking down legislative decisions that violate constitutional principles, is here relegated with anyone with the courage to actually stand up against the combined will of the group (though of course there are also ways of challenging unprincipled blocks).

One could go on at length about the elaborate and surprisingly sophisticated methods that have been developed to ensure all this works; of forms of modified consensus required for very large groups;

of the way consensus itself reinforces the principle of decentralization by ensuring one doesn't really want to bring proposals before very large groups unless one has to, of means of ensuring gender equity and resolving conflict... The point is this is a form of direct democracy which is very different than the kind we usually associate with the term — or, for that matter, with the kind of majority-vote system usually employed by European or North American anarchists of earlier generations, or still employed, say, in middle class urban Argentine *asambleas* (though not, significantly, among the more radical *piqueteros*, the organized unemployed, who tend to operate by consensus.) With increasing contact between different movements internationally, the inclusion of indigenous groups and movements from Africa, Asia, and Oceania with radically different traditions, we are seeing the beginnings of a new global reconception of what “democracy” should even mean, one as far as possible from the neoliberal parliamentarianism currently promoted by the existing powers of the world.

Again, it is difficult to follow this new spirit of synthesis by reading most existing anarchist literature, because those who spend most of their energy on questions of theory, rather than emerging forms of practice, are the most likely to maintain the old sectarian dichotomizing logic. Modern anarchism is imbued with countless contradictions. While small-a anarchists are slowly incorporating ideas and practices learned from indigenous allies into their modes of organizing or alternative communities, the main trace in the written literature has been the emergence of a sect of Primitivists, a notoriously contentious crew who call for the complete abolition of industrial civilization, and, in some cases, even agriculture. Still, it is only a matter of time before this older either/or logic begins to give way to something more closely resembling the practice of consensus-based groups.

What would this new synthesis look like? Some of the outlines can already be discerned within the movement. It will insist on constantly expanding the focus of anti-authoritarianism, moving away from class reductionism by trying to grasp the “totality of domination”, that is, to highlight not only the state but also gender relations, and not only the economy but also cultural relations and ecology, sexuality, and freedom in every form it can be sought, and each not only through the sole prism of authority relations, but also informed by richer and more diverse concepts.

This approach does not call for an endless expansion of material production, or hold that technologies are neutral, but it also doesn't decry technology per se. Instead, it becomes familiar with and employs diverse types of technology as appropriate. It not only doesn't decry

institutions per se, or political forms per se, it tries to conceive new institutions and new political forms for activism and for a new society, including new ways of meeting, new ways of decision making, new ways of coordinating, along the same lines as it already has with revitalized affinity groups and spokes structures. And it not only doesn't decry reforms per se, but struggles to define and win non-reformist reforms, attentive to people's immediate needs and bettering their lives in the here-and-now at the same time as moving toward further gains, and eventually, wholesale transformation.

And of course theory will have to catch up with practice. To be fully effective, modern anarchism will have to include at least three levels: activists, people's organizations, and researchers. The problem at the moment is that anarchist intellectuals who want to get past old-fashioned, vanguardist habits — the Marxist sectarian hangover that still haunts so much of the radical intellectual world — are not quite sure what their role is supposed to be. Anarchism needs to become reflexive. But how? On one level the answer seems obvious. One should not lecture, not dictate, not even necessarily think of oneself as a teacher, but must listen, explore and discover. To tease out and make explicit the tacit logic already underlying new forms of radical practice. To put oneself at the service of activists by providing information, or exposing the interests of the dominant elite carefully hidden behind supposedly objective, authoritative discourses, rather than trying to impose a new version of the same thing. But at the same time most recognize that intellectual struggle needs to reaffirm its place. Many are beginning to point out that one of the basic weaknesses of the anarchist movement today is, with respect to the time of, say, Kropotkin or Reclus, or Herbert Read, exactly the neglecting of the symbolic, the visionary, the overlooking of the effectiveness of theory. How to move from ethnography to utopian visions — ideally as many utopian visions as possible? It is hardly a coincidence that some of the greatest recruiters for anarchism in countries like the United States have been feminist science fiction writers like Starhawk or Ursula K. LeGuin.

One way this is beginning to happen is as anarchists begin to recuperate the experience of other social movements with a more developed body of theory, ideas that come from circles close to, indeed inspired by anarchism. Let's take for example the idea of participatory economy, which represents an anarchist economist vision par excellence and which supplements and rectifies anarchist economic tradition. Parecon theorists argue for the existence of not just two, but three major classes in advanced capitalism: not only a proletariat and bourgeoisie but a "coordinator class" whose role is to manage and control the labor

of the working class. This is the class that includes the management hierarchy and the professional consultants and advisors central to their system of control — as lawyers, key engineers and accountants, and so on. They maintain their class position because of their relative monopolization over knowledge, skills, and connections. As a result, economists and others working in this tradition have been trying to create models of an economy which would systematically eliminate divisions between physical and intellectual labor. Now that anarchism has so clearly become the center of revolutionary creativity, proponents of such models have increasingly been, if not rallying to the flag, exactly, then at least emphasizing the degree to which their ideas are compatible with an anarchist vision.

Similar things are starting to happen with the development of anarchist political visions. Now, this is an area where classical anarchism already had a leg up over classical Marxism, which never developed a theory of political organization at all. Different schools of anarchism have often advocated very specific forms of social organization, albeit often markedly at variance with one another. Still, anarchism as a whole has tended to advance what liberals like to call ‘negative freedoms,’ ‘freedoms from,’ rather than substantive ‘freedoms to.’ Often it has celebrated this very commitment as evidence of anarchism’s pluralism, ideological tolerance, or creativity. But as a result, there has been a reluctance to go beyond developing small-scale forms of organization, and a faith that larger, more complicated structures can be improvised later in the same spirit.

There have been exceptions. Pierre Joseph Proudhon tried to come up with a total vision of how a libertarian society might operate. It’s generally considered to have been a failure, but it pointed the way to more developed visions, such as the North American Social Ecologists’ “libertarian municipalism”. There’s a lively developing, for instance, on how to balance principles of worker’s control — emphasized by the Parecon folk — and direct democracy, emphasized by the Social Ecologists.

Still, there are a lot of details still to be filled in: what are the anarchist’s full sets of positive institutional alternatives to contemporary legislatures, courts, police, and diverse executive agencies? How to offer a political vision that encompasses legislation, implementation, adjudication, and enforcement and that shows how each would be effectively accomplished in a non-authoritarian way — not only provide long-term hope, but to inform immediate responses to today’s electoral, law-making, law enforcement and court system, and thus, many strategic choices. Obviously there could never be an anarchist party

line on this, the general feeling among the small-a anarchists at least is that we'll need many concrete visions. Still, between actual social experiments within expanding self-managing communities in places like Chiapas and Argentina, and efforts by anarchist scholar/activists like the newly formed Planetary Alternatives Network or the Life After Capitalism forums to begin locating and compiling successful examples of economic and political forms, the work is beginning. It is clearly a long-term process. But then, the anarchist century has only just begun.



SECTION FOUR: CAUTIOUS UTOPIAS

Anarchists seldom make blueprints for the future society they would one day like to live in (and which they prefigure in their everyday actions); this is seen as authoritarian and an imposition on the free will and imagination of those born into conditions of anarchy. Still, as Oscar Wilde once said, a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at. In this final section, we have a look at some anarchist visions of the future.

39: Errico Malatesta

Towards anarchism

This article first appeared in English in the Depression era anarchist periodical MAN! Its original date of publication in Italian is unknown.



IT IS A GENERAL OPINION THAT WE, because we call ourselves revolutionists, expect Anarchism to come with one stroke — as the immediate result of an insurrection which violently attacks all that exists and replaces it with institutions that are really new. And to tell the truth this idea is not lacking among some comrades who also conceive the revolution in such a manner.

This prejudice explains why so many honest opponents believe Anarchism a thing impossible; and it also explains why some comrades, disgusted with the present moral condition of the people and seeing that Anarchism cannot come about soon, waver between an extreme dogmatism which blinds them to the realities of life and an opportunism which practically makes them forget that they are Anarchists and that for Anarchism they should struggle.

Of course the triumph of Anarchism cannot be the consequence of a miracle; it cannot come about in contradiction to the laws of development (an axiom of evolution that nothing occurs without sufficient cause), and nothing can be accomplished without adequate means.

If we should want to substitute one government for another, that is, impose our desires upon others, it would only be necessary to combine the material forces needed to resist the actual oppressors and put ourselves in their place.

But we do not want this; we want Anarchism which is a society based on free and voluntary accord — a society in which no one can force his wishes on another and in which everyone can do as he pleases and together all will voluntarily contribute to the well-being of the community. But because of this Anarchism will not have definitively and universally triumphed until all men will not only not want to be

commanded but will not want to command; nor will Anarchism have succeeded unless they will have understood the advantage of solidarity and know how to organise a plan of social life wherein there will no longer be traces of violence and imposition. And as the conscience, determination, and capacity of men continuously develop and find means of expression in the gradual modification of the new environment and in the realisation of the desires in proportion to their being formed and becoming imperious, so it is with Anarchism; Anarchism cannot come but little by little, slowly but surely, growing in intensity and extension.

Therefore, the subject is not whether we accomplish Anarchism today, tomorrow, or within ten centuries, but that we walk towards Anarchism today, tomorrow, and always.

Anarchism is the abolition of exploitation and oppression of man by man, that is, the abolition of private property and government; Anarchism is the destruction of misery, of superstitions, of hatred. Therefore, every blow given to the institutions of private property and to the government, every exaltation of the conscience of man, every disruption of the present conditions, every lie unmasked, every part of human activity taken away from the control of the authorities, every augmentation of the spirit of solidarity and initiative, is a step towards Anarchism.

The problem lies in knowing how to choose the road that really approaches the realisation of the ideal and in not confusing real progress with hypocritical reforms. For with the pretext of obtaining immediate ameliorations these false reforms tend to distract the masses from the struggle against authority and capitalism; they serve to paralyse their actions and make them hope that something can be attained through the kindness of the exploiters and governments. The problem lies in knowing how to use the little power we have — that we go on achieving, in the most economical way, more prestige for our goal.

There is in every country a government which, with brutal force, imposes its laws on all; it compels all to be subjected to exploitation and to maintain, whether they like it or not, the existing institutions. It forbids the minority groups to actuate their ideas, and prevents the social organisations in general from modifying themselves according to, and with, the modifications of public opinion. The normal peaceful course of evolution is arrested by violence, and thus with violence it is necessary to reopen that course. It is for this reason that we want a violent revolution today; and we shall want it always — so long as man is subject to the imposition of things contrary to his natural desires. Take away the governmental violence and ours would have no reason to exist.

We cannot as yet overthrow the prevailing government; perhaps tomorrow from the ruins of the present government we cannot prevent the arising of another similar one. But this does not hinder us, nor will it tomorrow, from resisting whatever form of authority — refusing always to submit to its laws whenever possible, and constantly using force to oppose force.

Every weakening of whatever kind of authority, each accession of liberty will be a progress towards Anarchism; always it should be conquered, never asked for; always it should serve to give us greater strength in the struggle; always it should make us consider the state as an enemy with whom we should never make peace; always it should make us remember well that the decrease of the ills produced by the government consists in the decrease of its attributions and powers, and the resulting terms should be determined not by those who governed but by those who were governed. By government we mean any person or group of persons in the state, country, community, or association who has the right to make laws and inflict them upon those who do not want them.

We cannot as yet abolish private property; we cannot regulate the means of production which is necessary to work freely; perhaps we shall not be able to do so in the next insurrectional movement. But this does not prevent us now, or will it in the future, from continually opposing capitalism or any other form of despotism. And each victory, however small, gained by the workers against their exploiters, each decrease of profit, every bit of wealth taken from the individual owners and put at the disposal of all, shall be a progress — a forward step towards Anarchism. Always it should serve to enlarge the claims of the workers and to intensify the struggle; always it should be accepted as a victory over an enemy and not as a concession for which we should be thankful; always we should remain firm in our resolution to take with force, as soon as it will be possible, those means which the private owners, protected by the government, have stolen from the workers.

The right of force having disappeared, the means of production being placed under the management of whoever wants to produce, the result must be the fruit of a peaceful evolution.

Anarchism could not be, nor would it ever be if not for these few who want it and want it only in those things they can accomplish without the co-operation of the non-anarchists. This does not necessarily mean that the ideal of Anarchism will make little or no progress, for little by little its ideas will extend to more men and more things until it will have embraced all mankind and all life's manifestations.

Having overthrown the government and all the existing dangerous

institutions which with force it defends, having conquered complete freedom for all and with it the means of regulating labour without which liberty would be a lie; while we are struggling to arrive at this point, we do not intend to destroy those things which we little by little will reconstruct.

For example, there functions in the present society the service of supplying food. This is being done badly, chaotically, with great waste of energy and material and with capitalist interests in view; but after all, one way or another we must eat. It would be absurd to want to disorganise the system of producing and distributing food unless we could substitute for it something better and more just.

There exists a postal service. We have thousands of criticisms to make, but in the meantime we use it to send our letters, and shall continue to use it, suffering all its faults, until we shall be able to correct or replace it.

There are schools, but how badly they function. But because of this we do not allow our children to remain in ignorance — refusing their learning to read and write.

Meanwhile we wait and struggle for a time when we shall be able to organise a system of model schools to accommodate all.

From this we can see that, to arrive at Anarchism, material force is not the only thing to make a revolution; it is essential that the workers, grouped according to the various branches of production, place themselves in a position that will insure the proper functioning of their social life — without the aid or need of capitalists or governments.

And we see also that the Anarchist ideals are far from being in contradiction, as the “scientific socialists” claim, to the laws of evolution as proved by science; they are a conception which fits these laws perfectly; they are the experimental system brought from the field of research to that of social realisation.

40: Ricardo Flores Magón

New life

This article, translated from Spanish by Mitchell Cowen Verter, was originally printed in Regeneration number 212 November 13, 1915. While there is some lingering sexism and vanguardism in the piece, it remains a worthy reflection of what may unfold immediately following a revolutionary period.



WHAT DO WE DO NOW,” the workers ask themselves, not without a certain anxiety.

They have successfully taken the city in blood and fire. There does not remain a single capitalist in it, nor a priest, nor a representative of the government, except for those who hang from telephone posts or lay on the ground, showing their fat dead bodies to the sun. These bold workers understand that, if they allow a single one of these parasites to escape, they will soon return in the shadows leading a troop of mercenaries to stab them in the back.

“What do we do now?” The anguished question is repeated by thousands and thousands of convulsing lips. These men, who do not fear shrapnel and who enthusiastically salute the roar of enemy canons that sends them death in each ball, feel timid in presence of Life, which offers them abundance, beauty, goodness, and sweetness.

The men scratch their heads shyly and thoughtfully; the women nibble the ends of their shawls; the kids, innocently free from the preoccupations of their elders, take advantage of the absence of policemen who usually are always around, and invade fruit stores. For the first time in their lives, they satisfy their appetites until their bellies are full.

Before this spectacle, the multitude stirs: it was children who, with their sincerity, were educating their elders about what must be done. It is more natural for children to work like this, because their intelligence is corrupted by neither the preoccupations nor the prejudices which shackle the minds of adults. They do the right thing: they take it from where they find it. The multitude moves about, its undulation mimicking a sea of palm fronds. Our father the sun kisses the rags of these dignified people, generously allowing them a portion of its life, of its gold, of its

beauty, and those clothes shine like the cheerful flags of victory.

In the middle of this sea, the most virile man surges forward, like a modest boat sailing proudly towards life. It is Gumersindo, the austere peasant farmer who had just been seen in the most dangerous places holding aloft his scythe, simultaneously the harvester of the heads of evildoers and the symbol of fecund and noble work. Gumersindo loosens the peasant blanket that covers him. The multitude quiets down. The breathing of a child can be heard. Emotionally, Gumersindo says:

“The children grant us an example. Let us imitate them. The indispensable thing is to eat; that is our primary task. Let us take from the shops and the grocery stores what we need to satiate our appetites. Comrades: for the first time in our lives, we may eat as we like.”

In an opening and closing of eyes, the multitude invades shops and grocery stores, taking whatever they need. In other sections of the city, the same thing occurs. For the first time in the history of the population, there is not a single human being who does not satisfy the necessities of his stomach. A great happiness reigns in all the city. The houses are vacant: everyone is on the street. Bands improvising music roam the streets playing joyous tunes. Everyone salutes each other, calling each other brother and sister. Even though they did not know each other a few hours earlier, they dance in the middle of the street, sing to each other, laugh, cry out, joke about fraternally, and frolic to the four winds: The tyrannical regulations of the police have ceased!

Night comes. No one thinks about sleeping. The celebration of Liberty continues, with more joy than can be contained. The municipal service was disbanded when the principle of Authority disappeared. In its place, men and women of good will take care of public lighting. They empty the streets of dead bodies. Everything goes cheerfully, needing neither government orders nor district regulations. Already a new day is dawning, and the celebration, the great celebration of liberty, does not show any signs that it will end soon. And why should it? The death of centuries of oppression deserves to be celebrated not with a few hours of abandon, not with one day, but rather until the body, exhausted by the debauchment of pleasure, reclaims slumber.

While the entire population is abandoned to pleasures, pleasures they have always dreamed of, the comrades, both men and women, of the group “The Equals” work day and night. The noble builders of the new social order barely sleep. They are dirty and unshaven from continuously watching over the population all night. Nevertheless, they are still active, enthusiastic, and valiant.

Upon their shoulders rests the gigantic task of constructing on top of the debris of a past of slavery and infamy. They avail themselves of

the meeting hall of the extinct Municipal Government to hold their sessions. The peasant railway man Ramon speaks enthusiastically. He has barely slept during the five days since the city was taken by proletarian forces. He is radiant. His square, bronzed face, in which one can read frankness, resolution, boldness, and sincerity, gleams as if behind his dark skin a sun is blazing. He sweats; his eyes shining intensely, he says:

“Finally, the people are enjoying themselves; finally, they avenge thousands of years of sadness; finally, they know the pleasures of life. Let us rejoice in this blessing, like the father finds recreation seeing his children play. Our brothers and sisters enjoy until they are exhausted from pleasure. Meanwhile, we work: we finish the plans for social reconstruction.”

The joyous notes of a waltz arise from the street, making all the faces turn toward the windows. The waltz ends, followed by an explosion of cries, whistles, hearty laughter, all sorts of sounds produced by striking all kinds of objects against each other.

“The people are enjoying themselves,” says Ramon. “We are working.”

And the men and the women of the group “The Equals” continue their labors.

Ten days have passed since the proletarian forces took the city. The entire population rests, fatigued by the week of pleasure during the celebration of Liberty. Numerous groups of proletarians assemble in the plazas asking each other what would be the right thing to do now. The comrades of the group “The Equals” have completed their plans for social reconstruction. They have affixed announcements to the street corners, inviting the residents of various city neighborhoods to congregate in specific sites in each neighborhood to discuss affairs of common interest. Everyone responds to the call, because they are all yearning to do something. For many, the future is uncertain. For others the horizon is limited. There even some who believe that the skies will soon discharge its anger against the men who executed the priests. The terror of the ignorant is widespread. The anxious crowd begins to murmur.

The comrades of the group “The Equals” distribute themselves in the various city neighborhoods. In plain language, they explain the excellence of communist anarchism to the people. The people crowd around. They do not want words: they want deeds. They are right: they have been deceived too much! But no: this time no one is trying to deceive them. The orators lecture with all clarity about where they should go next, without delay, on the march of progress. The first thing

they must do is investigate, with the greatest possible exactitude, the number of residents in the city. They must make a thorough inventory of the food and clothing in all the shops and department stores. With this information, they must calculate how long they will be able to feed and clothe the population with the assets they have on hand.

The problem of the adequate shelter still remains. It was partially resolved during the days of the Festival of Liberty. On their own initiative, some residents of the city housed themselves in the dwellings of the bourgeoisie and other parasites, who have finally disappeared forever. However, many families still remain living in tiny neighborhood rooms and shacks. On hearing this, the masons leap forward, saying that they will make as many cozy, lovely houses as would be necessary. Without needing anyone to order them around, they themselves organize commissions to investigate precisely how many houses must be built to lodge those who are still living in tiny rooms and shacks.

The murmuring ends: fears and suspicions dissipate from the gathered crowd. No; "This is serious," they say and confidence is reborn in their hearts, that, like an amiable fire, frees up the enthusiasm that is so necessary in all human enterprise. More than enough people of good will volunteer to perform the census of the population and to take inventories of all the articles in the shops. It is necessary to take inventory not just of the food and of the clothing, but of all items useful in domestic and industrial settings.

The applause repeat again and again, not so much to praise the merit of the volunteers, but to express the joviality of their spirits. These simple people understand that the fulfillment of duty does not need to be rewarded. The sea of palm hats stirs cheerfully under the rays of an amiable sun. The people display their satisfaction, cleaning the clothing taken from the shops. For the time being, the kids suspend their frolicking, because they all have furious bellyaches from stuffing themselves so fully. Convoys of parrots fly joyfully above the crowd, leaving an impression of openness, of freshness of health, of youthfulness, of spring. All dawns are beautiful, why shouldn't this dawn of Liberty and Justice be beautiful as well?

The conclusion of yesterday's meetings was postponed until today at two in the afternoon. The volunteer commissioners are all present. Not one is missing. All carry exact data about the number of residents in the city, as well as the existence of food and the other articles contained within the shops and grocery stores.

The day is splendid, one of the last days in April, when all is light, perfume, color, youth, love. In all the gardens, now tended by female volunteers, the flowers show their petals of silk, their exquisite, smooth,

warm, humid vegetable lips that invite caresses and kisses.

In the same sites of yesterday's meetings, people speak animatedly. "How well and how quickly everything comes together when Authority does not intervene," they say in their conversations. Their hearts palpitate violently. Gumersindo does not take a moment of rest for himself. He roams all the neighborhoods in an expropriated automobile, now property of the community. Its usage is now absolutely necessary, because it unifies the resolutions made in each city neighborhood. He does not abandon his scythe, tying it to the hood of the automobile, giving prestige and luster to a machine that yesterday was merely aristocratic. The blanket that covers the shoulders of this rural peasant guarantees his modesty and concern.

Now they know how many residents there were in the city as well as the quantity of all kinds of manufactured goods. Despite their inability to find a mathematician on hand, they rapidly calculate how much longer they can continue to live off the provisions, a necessary calculation for regulating production. Hundreds of working hands plot the figures with expropriated pencils.

In a few minutes, these men of the hammer, of the shovel, of the saw, and of the chisel explain that this quantity of food is needed to provide daily subsistence for that many residents. They say that, because this quantity of foodstuff has been found, the entire population can subsist for that length of time.

Everyone is satisfied. "My goodness, this is going well" they say. Not a single complaint can be heard. "Truthfully, one needs only anarchists to arrange things," they add. Cries of "Long live Anarchy" thunder throughout the space, in well-justified ovations that finally accept the sacred ideal. Ramon, the peasant railway man, cries with emotion and shakes a red bound booklet above him, saying in a voice broken with sobs:

"This is our masterpiece!"

It is the Manifesto of September 23, 1911, issued by the Organizing Council of the Mexican Liberal Party.

Ramon is magnificent. Like all heroes, his square face, which looks like it has been hewn by ax blows in the strongest wood, radiates light. However, a hero is not a god, because anarchists do not have gods. Rather, it is a being who, through his actions, elevates himself above us as an example, as a great and beneficial teaching. Whether or not one wants to admit it, he shines like a sun.

Ramon explains that, considering the quantity of supplies, all the workers in the each industry must assemble to agree upon how work will be organized in their industry. Once they obtain this agreement,

delegates from all the industries must also come to an accord on how to produce what the population needs. All approve of the idea, and Gumersindo lets all the assemblies in the different city neighborhoods know of this agreement. They all receive this idea with grand gestures of enthusiasm. An era of prosperity and progress is opening up before the redeemed city. From now on, the production will be adjusted to the needs of the population rather than to enrich some bandits.

Volunteers from the many trades have completed the construction of vast galleries in various locations in each of the neighborhoods which divide the city. Other volunteers have carried to these galleries all the items that always are found in great quantity in the shops, stores, and other warehouses. These articles are classified carefully. They have been distributed in the storehouses made expressly for containing them, where people who need them can go take them. In these galleries will be deposited all the articles that the many industries produce.

The comrades of the group "The Equals" do not rest. What an enormous task they have! What colossal responsibilities will flatten them if the new order comes to nothing. However, they work with great faith in its success, the intense faith that is born from a profound conviction. Nevertheless, some details preoccupy them. The city can not get beyond a certain point without the aid of the farm workers. The peasant farmers must give the city worker what they need to eat, as well as the primary materials for industry such as cotton, wool, wood, cactus leaves, and many other things. In exchange, the peasant farmers will have the right to take from the city's storehouses everything they need: clothing, prepared or manufactured food, furniture, machinery, and utensils for work. In a word, everything they need. The metallurgic industries need the miners to cooperate with metals. In exchange, they obtain all that they need, like their brothers the peasant farmers.

"Yes!" Ramon cries enthusiastically, "we need the cooperation of the peasant farmer, of the miner, of the quarrymen, of all who work outside the city, and we have obtained it!"

A cloud of volunteer commissioners scatter to the region conquered by the workers' firearms. They invite their brothers to cooperate in the great work of social production, as has been said before. All accept with enthusiasm, and promise to send what they produce to the city, in exchange for what the city workers produce.

The anarchist society is finally a reality. Everyone works, everyone produces according to his strengths and aptitudes and consumes according to his needs. The old and the invalid do not work. All live contentedly, because they all feel free. No one orders and no one obeys. In all fields of work, the greatest harmony reigns between everyone,

without needing taskmasters or bosses. There is very great traffic on streetcars, on railroads, on automobiles, and on carts, because now everyone has the right to transport himself from one place to another according to his whim.

Some five or six days is all it has taken to obtain such a cheerful result. Finally, humanity has been regenerated through the adoption of the principles of communist anarchism. One can not even understand the depth of feeling in Gumersindo and Ramon when they emotionally contemplate the beautiful work in which they played such a large part. From the nearby hill, on the route to the city, they look with eyes dampened by emotion upon the tranquil city, the peaceful city, the city of brothers and sisters. The murmur of the immense metropolis breathing comes to them. It is no longer the breathing of fatigue nor the death rattle of an agonized population of slaves, but the ample, profound, healthy breathing of a city of free and happy beings.

41: Peter Marshall

Dancing in the new millenium

PETER MARSHALL is a philosopher, historian, travel writer and poet. Widely recognized as a bold and original thinker, Marshall has made a major contribution to fields as diverse as anarchism, ecology and archaeology and has written a number of books, including the highly regarded history of anarchism Demanding The Impossible, which has become the standard reference work for anyone interested in the history of anarchism. This excerpt is from the conclusion to that book.



THE ANARCHIST SENSIBILITY, as I have argued, is much older than biblical or classical times and has existed ever since humans first evolved in Africa and spread across the world. Anarchy has flourished wherever they have rejected authority, hierarchy and domination. Left to themselves, humans have always managed their own affairs creatively and well. Indeed, for most of human evolution and history people have lived peaceful, co-operative lives without rulers, leaders, politicians, soldiers, policemen and taxmen. Anarchism today is not only with us in remote areas of the globe outside the reach of the tentacles of the State but also in the free spaces within society which escape its heavy hand. Even in the harshest State environment, a free society exists in embryo ready to break through the shell of the old. Anarchist and libertarian ideas are no longer dormant seeds in the desert, dreaming for life-giving rain. The period of hibernation is over. New shoots are growing up' everywhere, all over the world; not only in the crevices and cracks of centralized States, but in expanding enclaves of freedom. Appearing and disappearing like the sun behind clouds, anarchism reveals itself in the most common aspects of everyday life. Just as the world is turning green, so people, especially the young, are acting in an anarchistic way, often without being aware of it.

In most countries, it is now accepted that the onus is on authoritarians to justify their assertions of authority, rather than on libertarians to defend the principle of freedom. It is increasingly recognized that

freedom is the mother and not the daughter of order. It is not the honest advocate of freedom who would turn the world upside down, but the brazen juggler of imposed authority and naked power. Freedom is like water: it cannot be contained and wears away the hardest rock.

In these circumstances, anarchism is even more relevant today than in the early nineties when *Demanding the Impossible* was first published. It is still realistic to demand the impossible; indeed, it is more urgent than ever if we are to survive the ecological crisis and reverse the growing injustice and inequality in the world. We need to imagine and realize an alternative future and social reality, one based on autonomy, individuality, community, solidarity and a deep concern for the natural world.

When it comes to choosing between different currents of anarchism, it need not be a question of either / or. They are not mutually exclusive and all flow in the great river of freedom. Like Malatesta, Reclus and Voltairine de Cleyre more than a century ago, I advocate 'anarchism without adjectives', anarchism which embraces rather than spurns, which encourages mutual tolerance between different strands and schools. It does not try to impose a common economic system: mutualism can evolve into collectivism, which in turn can develop into voluntary communism. As in republican Spain during the Civil War, land can be held in common while at the same time allowing some to work their own plots. Individualism and community, no more than liberty and equality, are not necessarily opposed. Individualism can be supported by community just as every person should have the equal claim to be free. Indeed, the ideal would be a form of communal individuality in which the maximum degree of individuality is encouraged compatible with social solidarity. The health of an anarchist society might then be judged by the number of so-called 'parasites' it could support and the degree of diversity, individuality and eccentricity it could tolerate. You can be an individualist on your own or join up with other individualists, forming what Stirner called 'a union of conscious egoists'. You can be a social anarchist who values both her autonomy and individuality. So-called 'life-style' anarchism is not necessarily opposed to anarcho-syndicalism, self-management or libertarian municipalism. You can adopt an anarchist life style, challenge authority and domination in the workplace, participate in unions striving for better and freer conditions, and at the same time defend the wilderness and other species and enjoy the sensuality and adventure of the natural world.

You can run free in the woods (where they still exist), dive into the sea (where it is not polluted) as well as link up with neighbours and friends in affinity groups where you live and love. You can be rooted

in your own bioregion, promoting its diversity and well-being. You can create horizontal webs of co-operation to replace pyramids of power. You can become involved in alternative networks of communication which have no central control. You can undermine and dissolve coercive power, whether it be in yourself, at home, in the streets, in the workplace, or in the institutions of the State. You can challenge the mechanical reason which leads to the Panopticon and the Pentagon and celebrate the imagination, intuition, the playful, the magical, the marvellous, the wild and the free. You can transform yourself and the world around you. No one path is paramount: there are many different ways up a mountain.

The threats to human freedom and equality are local and global; the response cannot fail to be interconnected. The organized warfare of modern States, the ruthless exploitation of transnational corporations and the blind hatred of religious fundamentalists can be subverted by an ethos of universal love, justice and reverence for all life. There is no need to despair or feel powerless, for as the 'velvet revolutions' in the former Soviet bloc, the self-managing citizens of Argentina and the Zapatista peasants of Chiapas in Mexico have shown, if enough people do not accept those in power they cannot stay there for long.

In the meantime, we can challenge and dissolve relations of power and domination. We can form convivial affinity groups, develop libertarian communities and co-operatives, create permanent as well as temporary autonomous zones within the fissures of authoritarian society. We can develop grassroots, participatory institutions. Depending on how it is used, the Internet can also create networks of like-minded people all over the world sharing their experiences and knowledge and organizing protest and resistance.

This history of anarchist thought and action demonstrates that anarchism constantly reinvents itself in new guises according to changing conditions and has flourished at different times at a local and national level. Many experiments were short-lived and often in times of social dislocation, but the fact they took place at all shows that they are part of the creative experience of humanity. If it has happened on a small scale in the past, it can take place on a larger scale in the future. If the free citizens of Athens could set up a form of direct and participatory democracy two and a half thousand years ago, then with all our subsequent experience the creation of a free and ecological society is well within the realm of possibility. It is realistic to demand what others find impossible.

In one sense, anarchism is utopian in that it imagines the world as it could be. But it is also realistic in that it conserves and develops

ancient traditions of self-help and mutual aid and profound libertarian tendencies within society. Above all, anarchism addresses itself to homo ludens (playful humanity) along with homo faber or homo sapiens (working or thinking humanity). Emma Goldman allegedly once said: 'If I can't dance, it's not my revolution.' I would add, if there be no joy, imagination, spontaneity, conviviality and fun, it isn't my free society.

42: Federico Arcos

Empyrean

FEDERICO ARCOS was one of several Spanish refugees who, after the great anarchist revolution in Spain had been crushed, helped keep alive the bright light of the Spanish anarchist experience by creating a vast archive of historical materials. He also wrote poetry.

Tho' the continents sink
the Oceans dry up,
or the rays of the Sun be extinguished,
and the darkness permeates the Earth;

Tho' the poles compress
and meet at the equator,
or the Planet be pulverized,
vanishing in the Ether.

Tho' the Universe lose its rhythm
the Worlds shatter
and everything disintegrates
in the Infinite.

Tho' Eternity be today;
today, a minute;
the minute and instant,
and the Instant Nothing.

Tho' everything be lost,
that nothing remains Nothing
and the Cosmic vacuum
be without end or boundary;

There always will be a flame
perhaps minuscule, but visible,
which will show us, as a perennial guide,
the way of Hope.

43: Peter Gelderloos

Untitled

This is short, untitled poem is from the beginning of PETER GELDERLOOS's book, Anarchy Works.

There are hidden stories all around us,
growing in abandoned villages in the mountains
or vacant lots in the city,
petrifying beneath our feet in the remains
of societies like nothing we've known,
whispering to us that things could be different.
But the politician you know is lying to you,
the manager who hires and fires you,
the landlord who evicts you,
the president of the bank that owns your house,
the professor who grades your papers,
the cop who rolls your street,
the reporter who informs you,
the doctor who medicates you,
the husband who beats you,
the mother who spansks you,
the soldier who kills for you,
and the social worker who fits your past and future into a
folder in a filing cabinet
all ask
"WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITHOUT US?
It would be anarchy."

And the daughter who runs away from home,
the bus driver on the picket line,
the veteran who threw back his medal but holds on to his
rifle,
the boy saved from suicide by the love of his friends,
the maid who must bow to those who can't even cook for
themselves,
the immigrant hiking across a desert to find her family on
the other side,
the kid on his way to prison because he burned down
a shopping mall they were building over his childhood
dreams,
the neighbor who cleans up the syringes from the vacant
lot, hoping someone will turn it into a garden,
the hitchhiker on the open road,
the college dropout who gave up on career and health
insurance and sometimes even food so he could write
revolutionary poetry for the world,
maybe all of us can feel it:
our bosses and tormentors are afraid of what they would
do without us,
and their threat is a promise —
the best parts of our lives are anarchy already.

APPENDIX 1: TYPES OF ANARCHISTS

This brief overview of some of the better-known types of anarchism was put together by ARAGORN ELOFF from his entry on the anarchy101.org website, with additions made by US-based post-left anarchist DOT MATRIX. It is worth noting that some of these forms of anarchism/anarchy, e.g., anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-feminism, represent a focus on specific tactics or focuses as opposed to entirely distinct schools of thought. Note also that there are many other terms anarchists use to describe themselves that we've omitted for reasons of space - anarcho-pacifism, queer anarchism and Platformism, for instance.

ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

Anarchist communism, first formulated in the late 1800s by anarchists like Kropotkin and Malatesta, proposes that the freest form of social organisation would be a society composed of self-managing communes with collective use of the means of production, organised democratically and using consensus decision-making, and related to other communes through federation. In anarchist communism there would be no money but everyone would have free access to the resources and surplus of the commune. Anarchist communism is thus said to operate on a gift economy. Anarchist communist of various forms is the most prominent type of anarchism around in the early 21st century.

COLLECTIVISM

Collectivist anarchism, an earlier form of anarchism conceived of by Bakunin and others, is similar to anarchist communism, except for the fact that in collectivism workers would be compensated for their work on the basis of the amount of time they contributed to production, rather than goods being distributed “according to need” as in anarcho-communism. Some collectivist anarchists do not oppose the use of currency. Some support workers being paid based on the amount of time they contributed to production. These salaries would be used to purchase commodities in a communal market. There are almost no collectivists around today and anarchists since Kropotkin have been critical of the model.

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

Syndicalism focuses on radical trade unions as a potential force for revolutionary social change, seeking to replace capitalism and the state with a new society that is democratically self-managed by the workers. Important principles of syndicalism include workers' solidarity, direct action (such as general strikes and workplace recuperations) and workers' self-management. Anarcho-syndicalism is sometimes seen as simply a specific strategic focus within communist or collectivist anarchism as opposed to a distinct type of anarchism in itself.

INSURRECTIONARY ANARCHISM

Insurrectionary Anarchism opposes formal organizations such as labor unions and federations that are based on a political programme and periodic congresses. Instead, insurrectionary anarchists support informal organization and small affinity group based organization. Insurrectionary anarchists put value in attack, permanent class conflict, and a refusal to negotiate or compromise with class enemies. Contemporary insurrectionary anarchism most often inherits the views and tactics of anti-organizational anarcho-communism.

ANARCHA-FEMINISM

Anarcha-feminism is a form of anarchism that synthesizes radical feminism and anarchism. It was inspired in the late 19th century by the writings of early feminist anarchists such as Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre. Anarcha-feminists criticize and advocate the abolition of traditional conceptions of family, education and gender roles and believe that the feminist struggle against sexism and patriarchy is an essential component of the anarchist struggle. As Susan Brown puts it, "*as anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist.*"

GREEN ANARCHISM

Green anarchism (or eco-anarchism) is a school of thought within anarchism that puts an emphasis on environmental issues. Green anarchists criticize the main currents of anarchism for not focusing explicitly on the destruction of the natural world as a form of domination and for lacking a nuanced analysis of the social and ecological impacts of many of the technological aspects of modern life we take for granted.

ANARCHO-PRIMITIVISM

Anarcho-primitivism is an anarchist critique of the origins and progress of civilization. According to anarcho-primitivism, the shift from hunter-gatherer to agricultural subsistence gave rise to social stratification, coercion, and alienation. Anarcho-primitivists advocate a return to “non-civilized” ways of life through deindustrialisation, abolition of the division of labour or specialization, and abandonment of large-scale organization technologies. There are other non-anarchist forms of primitivism, and not all primitivists point to the same phenomena as the source of modern, civilized problems. Anarcho-primitivism is seen as extreme by some anarchists, but it does provide a useful counterbalance to the cheerful Industrial Revolution optimism expressed by the late 19th and early 20th Century anarchists (and some modern ones too!) that technology and technological progress are inherently liberatory and should be pursued by anarchists in a post-revolutionary society.

POST-LEFT ANARCHY

Post-leftism, a tradition emerging largely from the pages of the US-based anarchist magazine *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, argues that the Left, even the revolutionary Left, has become anachronistic and incapable of creating change and that, furthermore, anarchism is not strictly speaking even a part of the Left at all. Post-leftism is especially critical of hoary old workerist approaches to class struggle and of uncritical coalition building between anarchist groups and broad Left movements, arguing that historically anarchists and their ideas have always been silenced within such coalitions. Additionally, post-leftists are critical of overly-formalised organisational models (for example, Platformism) and argue instead for adaptable, situation-specific forms of organisation like affinity groups. Post-leftists tend to refer to themselves as ‘anti-ideological’ and, influenced by the work of Max Stirner, are critical of normative morality and other ‘spooks’.

POST-STRUCTURALIST ANARCHISM / POST-ANARCHISM

The prefix “post-” does not mean ‘after anarchism’, but refers to the challenging and disruption of typically accepted assumptions within frameworks that emerged during the Enlightenment era. This means a basic rejection of some of the essentialist or reductionist notions of traditional anarchism, although these are often overstated. Post-anarchists argue, with reference to Foucault, Deleuze and others, that capitalism and the state are not the only sources of domination in the time in which we live, and that new approaches are needed to combat the network-type structures of domination that characterize late modernity.

INDIVIDUALIST/EGOIST ANARCHISM

Individualist anarchism is the idea that the individual is the real base for all decisions (although society tries to hide that fact), and that society (as understood through morality, religion, ideology, etc) has either little use or no use (except as a hindrance to the desires of individuals). Individualists de-emphasize the importance of revolution (as a single event that radically changes everything for the better), since revolutions tend to just install new leaders, and recommend slow, experientially based change instead. This covers wide territory, and many individualists disagree with each other. Egoists are a subset of individualist anarchists.

SYNTHESISM / ANARCHISM WITHOUT ADJECTIVES / TYPE-3 ANARCHISM

Anarchism without adjectives is an attitude that tolerates the coexistence of different anarchist schools. Anarchism without adjectives emphasizes harmony between various anarchist factions and attempts to unite them around their shared anti-authoritarian beliefs. Rudolf Rocker once said that the different types of anarchism presented “*only different methods of economy, the practical possibilities of which have yet to be tested, and that the first objective is to secure the personal and social freedom of men no matter upon which economics basis this is to be accomplished.*” Or, as CrimethInc puts it, *fight where you stand!*

A NOTE OF CLARIFICATION

It is important to note that a large number of self-defined anarchists might use more than one of these labels to describe themselves depending on what they are doing or what kinds of group structures they find themselves operating in: some anarchists prefer durable, structured groups where members commit to certain ideological and tactical principles while others are more comfortable working in flexible, small-scale affinity groups that come and go as needed. Often, members of these latter groups express concerns about how formal organisation can tend towards bureaucracy and the perpetuation of the life of the group for its own sake.

OH, AND THEN THERE'S THAT OTHER STUFF...

There are a number of other types of so-called anarchism that are problematic. Perhaps the worst of these is 'anarcho'-capitalism - an oxymoronic view stemming from the belief that personal freedom entails being free to compete in a capitalist-type market. 'Anarcho'-nationalism, a crypto-racist form of right wing libertarianism, is similarly self-contradictory.

APPENDIX 2: ANARCHISM IN POINT FORM

This pithy summary of anarchism is excerpted from ALFREDO BONANNO's 1974 text, Rivoluzione, violenza, anti-autoritarismo, translated into English by Jean Weir as Revolution, Violence and Anti-authoritarianism.

WHO DO ANARCHISTS STRUGGLE AGAINST

- Against the State seen as the centralised organisation of power in all spheres (administrative, financial, political, military, etc.)
- Against government which is the political executive organ of the State and makes all decisions concerning repression, exploitation, control, etc.
- Against Capitalism which can be considered both as the flux of productive relations in course and individual capitalists, their activity, their projects and their complicity in this form
- Against the individual parts that the State and capital are divided into. In other words the police, judiciary, the army, school, newspapers, television, trade unions, the large multinational firms, etc.
- Against the family, which forms the essential nucleus upon which the State structure is based
- Against the world of politics, therefore against political parties (all of them), Parliament which is the expression of bourgeois democracy, and the political ideology which serves to mask real social problems
- Against fascists and all the other instruments of repression used by the State and Capital
- Against religion and the Church which constitute a potent ally to repression
- Against the army which is an armed force that is used against the people
- Against prisons which institutionalise the repression of the poorest of the exploited classes
- Against asylums which repress the different

WHAT FALSE IDEAS DO ANARCHISTS STRUGGLE AGAINST?

- Against reformism which wants to set social problems right by using laws, political parties, parliaments, referendums, votes, etc.
- Against efficientism which wants to reduce man to an automat always capable of working and obeying
- Against humanitarianism which calls for peace and safety of an abstract idea of man but does not act concretely to attack class enemies
- Against nonviolence which blocks the just violence of the exploited which is their only arm of liberation
- Against patriotism which feeds the absurd idea of the homeland in preference to other nations, whereas the exploited have no homeland but are brothers of the exploited of the whole world
- Against militarism which justifies the function of armies with the swindle that their role is the defence of the homeland
- Against racism which defines a part of the human race as inferior
- Against male chauvinism which reduces women to sex objects
- Against the type of feminism which closes itself within an asphyxiating inverted male chauvinism
- Against the delegate which separates the exploited from direct action
- Against hierarchy which educates towards social stratification
- Against obedience which represses all individuality
- Against authority which prevents the autonomous development of the individual
- Against progressivism, a modern version of evolutionism which is the ideological covering of reformism
- Against economism which puts the economics at the centre of the history of class exploitation
- Against trade unionism which is the direct product of economism and which means to limit the class struggle to claiming at the level of the workplace. Anarcho-syndicalism, with all its revolutionary declarations does not escape this reformist limitation

WHAT ANARCHISTS WANT

- Abolition of the State, Government, Capitalism, the family, religion, the army, prisons, asylums and every form of power which uses the law to force others to do something. Therefore refusal also of any kind of workers' or socialist State and of any form of dictatorship of the proletariat
- Elimination of the private property of land, the tools of labour, materials, machines, factories, the land and anything else required for the production of what is necessary in order to live
- Abolition of salaried work and reduction of work to a minimum organised by individual groups federated on the basis of their own aptitudes and sympathies as well as on the basis of their own needs
- Substitution of the traditional family with life in common based on love and reciprocal affinity and on the basis of real sexual equality
- Organisation of life, such as that of production, based on free associations differing according to the problems to be faced, interests to be defended and affinities to be developed. The whole of these organisations federated on a local basis, by groups of communes, then widening the relations to a larger federation until it reaches the maximum possible of the liberated areas of the revolution
- Education free and aimed at an awakening of individual aptitude which in a liberated society will be meaningful only in the limits in which this liberation is realised
- The spreading of atheism and anti-religious propaganda, always necessary because on these problems even the liberation that has come about cannot exercise more than a limited clarification
- Completion of the social revolution until all domination of man over man be abolished.

THE MEANS ANARCHISTS WANT TO USE

- The specific anarchist organisation which is an active minority of conscious individuals who share personal and political affinity and give themselves the aim of calling on the exploited to organise themselves with a view to revolution.
- A federation of different anarchist groups who while changing nothing of their particular specific structure, link with each other with informal, federative pacts in order to better coordinate their own action

- Propaganda to explain through books, pamphlets, newspapers, leaflets, graffiti, etc. what the intentions of the ruling structure are and the dangers facing the exploited. Also to supply indications of the anarchist struggle and show who anarchists are, or to urge the exploited to rebel, denouncing the consequences of obedience and resignation
- The struggle to claim better conditions — Although we are not reformists, the struggle to obtain improvements in one's immediate situation (wages, habitation, health, education, occupational, etc.) sees anarchists present although they do not see these moments as ends in themselves. They push the exploited towards this form of struggle so that they can develop the elements of self-organisation and refusal of the delegate which are indispensable in order to develop direct action at all other levels
- Violent struggle to realise the social revolution along with the exploited. The attack against the class enemy (State, government, capital, church, etc.) must necessarily be violent, in the case of the contrary it would only be a sterile protest and would determine a reinforcement of class dominion. This attack could be:
 - isolated attacks against individual structures or people who are responsible for repression
 1. an insurrectional attack by a specific minority
 2. a mass insurrectional attack
 3. a mass revolutionary attack

Each of these levels, starting from the first, may or may not create the conditions leading to the successive one to develop. Political and economic analyses can foresee this possibility within certain limits, but cannot give an absolute response: action itself is the only test for action. The moral foundation of violent struggle already exists in the fact of repression as it has been exercised by power for centuries.

APPENDIX 3: COMMON QUESTIONS

In this section the editors briefly answer a number of questions you might still have after reading through this collection. We'll answer more questions in future volumes, so feel free to send us emails detailing your most pressing concerns!

Isn't libertarian socialism an oxymoron?

Unlike most approaches that see these two components as at odds with each other, anarchists see liberty (libertarianism, or negative freedom) and equality (socialism, or positive freedom) as bound up with each other as part of one deeper principle of equal-liberty: equality is the soil that nourishes individual freedom and free individuals in turn serve to enrich that soil.

Isn't anarchist organisation a contradiction?

Anarchism, silly stereotypes aside, is actually just about a different type of organisation, one that's voluntary, empowering, non-coercive and non-hierarchical. From the anarchists in the free areas during the Spanish Civil War through to the Occupy movement, it's obvious that anarchists are able to organise themselves exceptionally well in line with their ethos.

But we've always had hierarchy!

Don't say that to an anthropologist! In fact there are many examples of so-called acephalous or leaderless societies/cultures in the anthropological record, including some where there are explicit practices aimed at warding off the formation of hierarchies (see the work of Pierre Clastres, for example). Additionally, even if it were the case that human society had always been structured hierarchically that would just be an argument from precedent; we have enough examples of non-hierarchical social practices in the contemporary world to imagine that we could structure our affairs otherwise.

But wouldn't hierarchies re-emerge in even the most anarchist society?

All sorts of things might re-emerge, but they're less likely to if they don't form part of the values and structures of a society. We're also confident enough about the benefits of living in conditions of anarchy that we couldn't imagine people having much incentive to re-establish hierarchical, oppressive social relations.

People are naturally selfish.

Anarchists tend to steer away from simplistic portrayals of essential human nature, arguing that all we really can say about our natural proclivities is that we're highly adaptive: pit us against each other in competitive, hyper-individualistic social contexts and we'll behave like assholes; put us together in egalitarian communities of sharing

and togetherness and we tend to behave much better. And in fact, if you look at all the powerful examples of support and solidarity that spontaneously emerge in times of crisis – the communities that come together to rebuild destroyed houses and feed each other after natural disasters, for example – it seems that, if anything, most of us are far nicer to each other than some people like to assume.

How would you deal with sociopaths?

Well, for one thing we wouldn't reward them with social and economic prestige, which is kind of what happens in the contemporary world. Look at all the self-serving, remorseless assholes in the upper echelons of the corporate elite, for example! No, we'd have solid community defense practices in place to ward off any predatory sociopathic behaviour.

I'm a free market anarchist. Why do you hate me?

Free market 'anarchists', aka 'anarcho-' capitalists operate with a completely abstract, ahistorical understanding of the complex relations between the state and capitalism, imagining that markets can operate without any type of coercion or the formation of any kinds of entrenched hierarchies. SimCity fantasies notwithstanding, it seems pretty clear that in the real world, any set of formalised market relations would quickly lead to large disparities in wealth and power, leading to the formation of private security to defend ill-gained property, leading in turn to a kind of neo-feudalism that would resemble, in almost all ways, the contemporary state.

How would decisions get made?

We'd make decisions the same way we make them between friends: by discussing stuff together fairly and openly and reaching informed consensus. In larger groups we could use a decentralised federalist model where entirely accountable representatives come together to relay the views of the groups, communities and so forth they are part of.

Would we still have iPhones?

Some people might coordinate to make complex technological artifacts, sure. It would depend on various factors though, like what people who were free from the tyranny of exploitative labour and artificial scarcity really felt like doing with their time and whether or not a specific piece of technology was viewed as particularly meaningful or necessary by enough people. It's unlikely we'd find enough people to go digging around in ecologically disastrous coltan mines of their own free will, but then again who knows? At the very least, it would be a decision we made collectively as equals, not one imposed on us by a capitalist technological elite.

Can't we just create the new society from the safety of our eco-villages? We'll recycle and everything!

Well, it's only your eco-village until Shell finds natural gas underneath it and starts fracking...Historically these idyllic utopias have only lasted as long as they didn't pose a threat to the values – or property rights – of the reigning order. Unfortunately there are probably too many people with powerfully entrenched interests in the current system for us to reach a saner society without at least a little conflict and revolutionary fervour. We can, however, hope to keep the violence to a minimum and to make sure we create at least as much as we destroy.

Why would people want to do anything - there'd be no incentive?

Why do village doctors heal poor people when they could work in private clinics and earn tons more money? Why do poets write poetry? Why do physicists research quantum mechanics? Money and power are in fact very poor incentives for most people; what we really enjoy is helping each other out, recognition, solving problems and exploring the rich mysteries of the world we live in. If anything, there'd be far more incentive to get good stuff done in a world where people felt genuinely empowered.

Who would take out the trash?

We'd all take it out. It would start smelling bad after a while if we didn't. Who takes the trash out where you live?

What do anarchists think of Marx?

Marx had a great analysis of exploitation and alienation under capitalism (some of which he cribbed from Proudhon, interestingly enough) and we appreciate him for that. His economic reductionism is problematic though, as are his views on how to solve the problems created by capitalism (e.g., by taking state power – a position most famously critiqued by Bakunin back during the time of the First International).

Why don't anarchists vote?

As Emma Goldman once said, if voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal. When you vote you're essentially denying your responsibility to determine the trajectory of your own life and instead giving power away to an elected representative who has their own interests tied into that position. If we want to create radical, meaningful, lasting social change, lending legitimacy to the structures that perpetuate the current order doesn't seem a particularly good way to go about it.

If you don't have a detailed blueprint of what you'd like to replace the things you want to destroy with, why should I listen to you?

Anarchists find the idea that we can plan the minutia of a future society from the perspective of the present deeply authoritarian. We can imagine what life would be like, which is something several anarchist utopians have done (Ursula Le Guin and Starhawk, for example), but it will be up to the people who form part of any given future society to decide on the details for themselves. Also, pointing out that something is bad and should be gotten rid of is often useful all by itself...that tick on your neck, for example.

Why do anarchists hate liberals so much? Aren't we on the same side?

Anarchists view liberals as having some good ideas about personal freedom but pandering altogether too much to the current system. Essentially it boils down to a crisis of vision: liberals operate with an erroneous assumption that society as it currently stands is fine apart from a few parameters that can be tweaked from within the structures that make up the dominant order, whereas anarchists recognise that these structures are not set up in our interests and cannot be leveraged to overcome themselves.

What do anarchists say about ‘call-out’ culture? Do they support it?

In recent years there has, unfortunately, been an encroachment of the worst kind of identity politics into anarchist circles. Anarchists tend to be critical of the reification, moral accounting and essentialism that goes into these essentially reformist politics, however, and argue instead that we should address these issues together in a compassionate and issue-specific way instead of enacting morality plays and overwrought polemics every time patriarchal, racist, statist, capitalist, ableist, speciest or other oppressive behaviour raises its ugly head.

What about crime?

Not only would there be a lot less crime in a society that didn't create abject poverty and desperation for so many people, but we'd also figure out proper, restorative ways to deal with people who behaved badly, aiming to heal instead of just punish or avenge. We'd defend ourselves too, when we had to, through stuff like community defense committees and neighbourhood watch programs.

How would healthcare work?

It would look pretty much the same as now (with far more of a focus on prevention and healthy living than on commodified cures), without being something anyone has to pay for. In other words, we'd all look after each other: people who valued being doctors/healers would look after the health of their communities and their communities would look after them in turn. Life would also, on the whole, be a lot healthier if we all had a say in how our food was made, what transport looked like, how we lived, what we built things with and so on.

Wouldn't anarchy leads to a tragedy of the commons?

In fact, some recent research in economics has suggested that anarchy – the idea of a collectively managed commons – works better than either state or economic regulation of property...which makes sense when you think about the fact that humans have held commons together for thousands of years and that their enclosure is in fact a relatively recent phenomenon.

You want anarchy? Look at Somalia!

Somalia, that perennial example of ‘anarchy,’ is in fact a society rife with various forms of hierarchy and domination perpetuated by many of the same powermongers who previously held political, economic or military power in the country. In essence, Somalia is an example of what happens when a state fails and there aren't enough anarchist-minded people or existing alternative social practices to recreate egalitarian social relations. Somalia, in other words, may suffer precisely from a lack of anarchy, not too much anarchy.

How can I get involved in stuff?

Read more. Find a local anarchist group or infoshop. Research local community struggles and see how you can participate. Talk to your friends and commit to exploring anarchist ideas and practices together. Think about what you can change in your own life and how you can share anarchy with your community. Most importantly, start now!

FURTHER READING

Want to know more? Check out some of the following books, mostly available either free online or directly from bolo'bolo.

CLASSICS

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon - *What is property?*

Mikhail Bakunin - *Marxism, freedom and the state*

Mikhail Bakunin - *God and the State*

Peter Kropotkin - *The conquest of bread*

Peter Kropotkin - *Mutual aid: a factor of evolution*

Peter Kropotkin - *Memoirs of a revolutionist*

Errico Malatesta - *Anarchy*

Errico Malatesta - *At the cafe*

Emma Goldman - *Anarchism and other essays*

Emma Goldman - *Living my life (2 vols.)*

Alexander Berkman - *The ABC's of anarchist communism*

Daniel Guerin - *No Gods, no masters: an anthology of anarchism*

MODERN CLASSICS

Peter Marshall - *Demanding the impossible*

Albert Meltzer & Stuart Christie - *The floodgates of anarchy*

Colin Ward - *Anarchism: a very short introduction*

Cindy Milstein - *Anarchism and its aspirations*

Peter Gelderloos - *Anarchy works*

Ruth Kinna - *Anarchism: a beginner's guide*

OTHER AUTHORS TO CHECK OUT

Rudolf Rocker, Eric Muhsam, Gustav Landauer, John Zerzan, Kevin Tucker, Lawrence Jarach, Jason McQuinn, Wolfi Landstreicher, Hakim Bey, p.m., Bob Black, Todd May, Saul Newman, Richard Day, Lewis Call, Nathan Jun, Daniel Colson, Lucien vd Walt & Michael Schmidt, scott crow, Wayne Price, Uri Gordon, AK Thompson, David Graeber and a million more...

WEBSITES

www.theanarchistlibrary.org

www.anarchy101.org

www.infoshop.org/AnAnarchistFAQ

www.crimethinc.com

www.anarkismo.net

www.zabalaza.net

www.anarchistnews.org

PLACES TO GET BOOKS

www.littleblackcart.com

www.akpress.org

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www.bolobolo.co.za!

CURRENT & FORTHCOMING TITLES

SOME THEMES WE'LL EXPLORE IN FORTHCOMING TITLES IN THE BOLO'BOLO GUIDE SERIES

- Anarchists against the State
- Anarchists against capitalism
- Understanding the anarchist critiques of hierarchy and domination
- Anarchist views on gender and sexuality
- Anarchist views on race, ethnicity, nationalism and decolonization
- Anarchism and ecology
- Anarchism and animal liberation
- Different threads of anarchy
- Anarchist strategies and tactics
- Anarchy and anthropology
- Anarchism and other political tradition
- The anarchy of everyday life
- Anarchist views on justice
- Anarchism and spirituality
- Anarchism and utopianism
- Anarchism and philosophy

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM BOLO'BOLO BOOKS

- **Jesús Sepúlveda** - *The Garden of Peculiarities*
- **Sam Mbah and I.E. Igariway** - *African Anarchism*
- **p.m.** - *bolo'bolo* (the utopian anarchist classic we got our name from!)
- *Incendiary Times* - bolo'bolo's irregular in-house anarchist newspaper
- We also publish a wide range of zines, both reproductions of classic texts and some of our own writing

GET IN TOUCH

Email us on us@bolobolo.co.za, or visit us at www.bolobolo.co.za.

Alternatively, if you're in Cape Town then pop into our infoshop and vegan coffee house at 76 Lower Main Rd., Observatory.

ABOUT THE ANARCHY 101 GUIDE

This book – the first in the bolo'bolo guide series on anarchism – is a wide-ranging introduction to the theories and practices of anarchists from around the globe, featuring writings spanning over 120 years. It is intended to serve as an initial basis for imagining a better world, one in which we exist as free equals, living life as it could be lived without hierarchy, exploitation or domination of any form.

Whether you are a seasoned anarchist, a fresh-faced young insurrectionary or simply anarcho-curious, this guide will give you an overview of the key principles of anarchism, a brief survey of its historical trajectory and scope and also, we hope, a sense of its rich possibilities as a protean, liberatory and revolutionary practical philosophy of personal and collective change.

Anarchists, let's take our lives back from them!



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