**Opinion: Anonymous in Disarray: Their Greatest Enemy is Themselves**

Today’s piece is going to be an opinion piece. The only things I can comment on have been things I’ve observed, and none of it can or should be taken as fact. This shouldn’t even be taken as an expert’s observation: I’m an outsider, and occasional insider, looking in.

**Anon’s Multifarous Missions**

Since the early to mid 2000’s, Anonymous has taken up a multitude of missions. In the beginning, Anonymous fought the good fight against the Church of Scientology, a cultish collective of well-funded wackos that decided they would turn their legal power on the web. At the time, a video had been posted showing Tom Cruise’s bizarre, outlandish interview concerning the pseudo-religion, and the internet was having a hay day turning the religious soap-boxing into a meme. The Scientologists decided against calling their alien overlords down to wreak havoc on the infidels, and instead put the retainer they had been paying their legal team to work, filing cease-and-desist gag orders and filing DMCA complaints against anyone who was spreading the video or otherwise making fun of their religion.

After the ensuing web war, which included spamming Scientology phone lines with meme-marauders and sending pizzas to churches worldwide, Anonymous solidified from the neck-beard sporting nerds at home to street protesters and pranksters worldwide. They decided on the Guy Fawkes mask later on, likening their online soldierhood to that of the Spanish martyr of old that was documented in the modernized film *V for Vendetta*.

In the past years, Anonymous has taken up arms against ISIS, international pedophile rings, just about every government in existence, and especially law enforcement. They gained legitimacy during the Occupy Movement, seen almost as a sister movement to Anonymous. They gained fame throughout the multitude of branch of “Secs” like LulzSec and AntiSec, with new ones like WolfSec and AlphabetSec still springing up to hold the flag high.

**Anonymous in Disarray: Their Greatest Enemy is Themselves**

Anonymous was created as a fluid, non-static collective. Throughout their long history, they’ve had members rise to fame and infamy, but their name speaks their statement: anonymity is the goal of every member of the group, because the collective is greater than the individual. This idea, which echoes leftist communist ideals, ensures that no single member of the collective can (should) operate with the intention of personal gain, but also leaves the membership as open as possible. Anybody who can be a member of the collective immediately is.

Why is this a problem? An open collective that places more importance on the whole than the individual, with arguably admirable goals (who can argue against people who fight ISIS and pedophiles?) should have seen a lot of success over the years. Indeed, Anonymous has fought important battles. They’ve pulled off many high-profile hacks, despite their reputation as technically inept, and have raised a lot of awareness for important causes.

The issue that Anonymous has been facing for years is that their core ideal, the collective over individual ideal, has never been followed. I like to chalk this up to basic human nature. People are greedy and are constantly striving for fame, and some may say that hackers are even more so guilty of this attitude.

The infighting that has plagued Anonymous has been brutal. Some members have found their identities leaked online, ruining their operational security and usually leading to their arrests. There have been reports that certain members of the collective have sent the identities, locations, and past actions of other Anons to known terrorists, showing a level of malice that wouldn’t be expected in a group that fights for equality, justice, and peace.

Infighting in Anonymous has turned away potential membership to the group, potentially membership of more technically adept actors that could have furthered Anonymous’ cause and reputation. It has lead to the arrest of a multitude of members, especially when taking into account the fact that many of those members were then “flipped” into government informants to catch even more members. The “drama scene” has lead members to leave the group in droves and has turned operations against themselves.

**Enemies on the Inside**

Certain observers of Anonymous, especially in recent years, have begun speculating that Anonymous has been infiltrated by those they fight against. Many have speculated that certain members of Anonymous were, themselves, pedophiles after arrests of members turned up potential evidence. Others, specifically Jester, believes the group has been infiltrated by ISIS operatives who are attempting to spread disinformation and send back information on Anonymous operations. Whether or not this is true, it is a possibility. Members of the collective aren’t screened until they attempt to join the inner circles of the group, and there is a good possibility that a portion of their membership is there as outside influence.

Anonymous’ greatest saving grace could also be its downfall. Fluid membership and “all-for-one, one-for-all” ideology has brought the masses to their flag, but with them has come enemies of every cause they stand for, those who wish to see the group fall and their operations crash and burn. The infighting only makes more enemies, only divides the indivisible, and only turns people away. This is a serious problem facing the collective, and seemingly is getting worse as time goes on.