

21st CENTURY ANARCHISM

Anarchism's major strength is its ability to adapt to changing circumstances without altering its core principles. The 21st century is the anarchist century because the core principles of anarchism are principles that can unseat the four horsemen of a modern 21st century apocalypse that has arisen because of increasing population growth, finite resources, an international economic system based on the creation of increasing profits irrespective of the human, social and environmental costs and human induced climate change.

So what is ANARCHISM?

Anarchists are people who want to live in a society without rulers – ANARCHOS – An – without. Archos – ruler. That is the core principle that drives the anarchist movement. What strategies are used to create an anarchist society (a society without rulers) and how that society will look like and function are matters that can be debated.

What is not debateable is that rulers concentrate power and wealth into their hands and use that power and wealth to put their interests before the interests of the people they rule. In order to be able to remove rulers from the equation people need to create institutional structures that devolve power and hold wealth in common. Anarchists are involved in a continuous struggle to devolve power and ensure that wealth is held in common and used for the common good.

The struggle against hierarchy (the building blocks of an unequal society) and the struggle to re-distribute wealth is a pathway that all anarchists will embark on. Whether they reach that destination determines the success or not of the anarchist movement.

The 21st century anarchist movement, unlike most of the 19th and 20th century anarchist movement, is no longer hamstrung by ideological considerations and historical precedent. Although the goal is the same – the creation of a society without rulers, the methods used to create that society are not set in concrete.

Strategies change to suit changing economic, social and political conditions. The strategies used in a dictatorship would be different to those used in a representative democracy.

SO, HOW DO WE GET FROM A - B?

We need to articulate our vision for the future. The best way I know to harvest the collective wisdom of a community is through the creation of organisations and institutions based on direct democratic principles. The people involved in a decision make that decision and elect or appoint recallable delegates to carry out those decisions. Direct Democratic institutions break down the hierarchical structures that rulers require to exercise power. Direct Democracy by itself is not enough. Rulers also exercise power by using their wealth to set the political, social and economic agenda. In order to prevent rulers using their wealth to set the agenda, wealth is held in common in an anarchist society. What you use is yours while you use it, once you no longer need or use it, property and wealth goes back into the hands of the community.

Even if power is devolved and wealth is held in common, situations can arise where one section of the community attempts to set the agenda for others in the community. In an anarchist society no one can be excluded from the decision making processes or the common wealth because of their gender, age, sexuality, race, ethnicity or religious beliefs. Their existence ensures they have the ability to participate and the right to share in the common wealth.

EASILY DISMISSED

Anarchists are normally dismissed by most people as terrorists or simple minded idealists who don't understand human nature. Both misconceptions can be dismissed easily. People find it difficult to conceive of the idea people can rule themselves. This stems from the idea humans are "tainted" with "original sin" and if left to their own devices will rape and kill each other. So they need an outside secular or religious authority to rule them. Anarchists are the only people who seem to understand you can't allow power to be concentrated in the hands of an outside authority because this gives them the ability to impose their will on millions of people. History and the world today is littered with the all too numerous examples of the atrocities that are carried out by the state and religious authorities in the name of nationalism or religious identity. Anarchists want to create a non-hierarchical society to ensure structures will never exist that allow a Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot or their modern day equivalents to impose their will on others. The idea anarchists are terrorists stems from the idea that people who are not controlled by a central authority can't be trusted to act in a rational way.

MEANS AND ENDS

Anarchists have always stated means and ends are interlinked. Terror has no role in the struggle to create an anarchist society. Terror is the weapon used by a state that has a monopoly on the use of force to maintain control. Terror is the weapon used by political movements that want to create a society whether religious based or secular where power is concentrated in the hands of a minority.

WHICH WAY

External conditions create situations where different political and social movements come to the fore. Increasing population growth, finite resources, increasing greenhouse emissions due to human activity and an economic system dominated by corporations whose primary aim is to create ever increasing profits irrespective of the human, social and environmental costs has created a climate where ideas that explore how to harness the collective wisdom of the community and the need to share the common wealth are gaining increasing traction within the communities we live and work in.

Now is the time to raise these ideas publicly and form groups and associations within society based on these ideas. Now is the time to build a society within a society based on collectives and co-operatives that can act as a viable alternative to the unsustainable way of life individuals, the communities we live and work in and the world as a whole, currently face. When (not if) the four horsemen of the 21st century apocalypse begin to have a discernible impact on us as individuals, communities and nation states people have the option of looking towards new rulers, finding solutions to these issues or they will have the option of looking at themselves and those around them to resolve problems that make the long term survival of the human race in the 21st century an overriding issue. Creating a society within a society based on anarchist principles now is the only antidote I know of, that will prevent the barbarism that will inevitably occur if we put our faith in leaders and rulers (whether secular or religious based) who want to centralise power in their hands to protect their way of life and promote their interests before the interests of the community as a whole.

THE BALL'S IN YOUR COURT

The ball's in your court. You can be a carping complaining consumer who is waiting for the next batch of rulers or leaders to show them a path to the promised land, or you can cut out the middleman and woman and become active in a growing social and political movement that has the potential to create a sustainable society based on the satisfaction of real, not manufactured human needs where everyone has the capacity to develop themselves to their fullest capacity in a physically secure environment.

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