

WHAT IS ANARCHISM?

What is Anarchism?

A social theory which regards the union of order with the absence of all direct government of man by man as the political ideal; absolute individual liberty.—*Century Dictionary*.

Who are Anarchists?

Those who accept this ideal, believing that the highest social results will be obtained through the substitution of self-control for all outward authorities, civil or moral.

What is Civil Authority?

That force which interferes with our daily actions, making and punishing criminals, commonly called Government.

How does Government make criminals?

By fostering an unjust system of distribution, wherein one man is dependent on another for his subsistence; failing to secure it, he is forced to resort to crime, for which, again, the Government punishes him.

This accounts only for thefts; what of murder?

It is hunger, or dread of deprivation, which drives most men to acts of violence.

What of such as are prompted by jealousy, hatred, or revenge?

Either they are the acts of derangement, temporary or permanent, and to be treated as such, or they are survivals of primitive instincts, which all social experience shows must be outgrown through education and the extension of individual rights; repressive legislation only makes them more savage; revenge cannot be cured by revenge.

Since Anarchists claim that crime results from economic injustice, how would the abolition of government effect economic justice?

The force which protects the owners of the great natural sources of production and means of exchange being removed, people would be free to experiment and discover what economic arrangement was best, instead of being compelled to accept the decision of the ruling majority or minority.

What economic system do Anarchists propose?

There are different schools; mainly, Socialist, Individualist, Communist, and Mutualist.

The terms Anarchist and Socialist are not, then, contradictory?

Not in the least; it is only those who confuse Socialism, which is a purely economic proposition, with the Socialist Party, which is an organisation working for the realisation of that proposition through political action, who conceive them to be contradictory.

What do Anarchist Socialists want?

That the economic programme of Socialism shall be brought about by the direct action of the people, instead of through the trickeries of politics.

What is the Individualist theory?

That a man has a right to the full amount of his product, whether earned by working alone or with the aid of others.

Is not that the present condition?

No. The present condition, through the three great monopolies of land, money, and invention, makes it impossible for any man to get what he produces. With the abolition of these, individual initiative would undertake all those great works which unreflecting persons now think only possible to Government; but every individual having the chance to employ himself, none would work for another unless he could get as much as by working singly.

Would not this right of property in one's product require government?

It would require voluntary protective association. No one would be compelled to accept such insurance if he did not want it, nor pay taxes to support it.

Who are the Communists?

Those who believe that the greatest justice will result from men's producing in common and consuming at will.

Why do they believe this better than Individualism?

Because they do not think it possible to measure the exact amount of any man's product; neither do they think it desirable to waste energy in attempting it, since there is enough and to spare for all, and no man wants more than he can use if he is always sure of that.

Do the Communists believe in protective Association?

When men produce in common, what they produce belongs to any and all who care to use it; therefore, no need of protective association.

What do the Mutualists propose?

A combination of the principle of Individualism with that of extensive co-operations of the workers. They regard the present Trade Union as the nucleus of the future producing group. The Bricklayers' Union, for instance, will undertake the work of constructing buildings; it will issue its own checks, representing so much time spent in labour, which checks will be received as money is now; similar organisations will undertake the work of their respective industries; world-wide federation of allied trades would in course of time develop. Thus the employer would be eliminated.

Do you believe these different systems could co-exist?

Yes. In a free society each individual might try his own way, or each group, however large or small. Doubtless one system might be better adapted to certain localities and temperaments than others.

Supposing a just system of distribution prevalent, would you then have Anarchy?

No. Anarchism has a spiritual as well as an economic gospel; just distribution would simply be the groundwork.

For what?

For the free development of all those powers now lying dormant within the individual soul, dwarfed or crushed by civil and moral authorities.

What do you mean by Moral Authority?

That force exercised by the clergy which pretends to settle for mankind what is right, good, and wrong, evil, commonly called religion.

Do you consider Religion evil?

Not so long as it is the free expression of individual aspiration. It becomes evil only when it organises itself into an attempt to force particular world-concepts or moral codes upon those who do not accept them. In such organised form it is the worst of evils.

You do not, then, condemn the doctrines of Christianity?

No. One of the greatest of Anarchists, Tolstoy, is also one of the greatest of Christians. Neither do we condemn Buddhism, Brahmanism, Confucianism, or any other religious doctrine, so long as it is a free expression of the individual's highest concepts. Nevertheless we hold that in perfect freedom yet higher aspirations than any of these may be evolved; and humanity is entitled to its best.

Do you believe in Love?

Yes. By love we hope to redeem the world. It is to the feeling of universal human love that Anarchism mostly appeals.

Do you believe in Marriage?

None which consists in forms or ceremonies. We believe love in itself sufficient. There is no greater pledge than love; a ceremony can add nothing to the perfection of such a union.

But who shall say when the union is perfect?

No one can judge for another; the individuals concerned must decide for themselves.

But if they be mistaken, will they not separate?

Yes. We believe that the fact that they desired to do so would be sufficient cause.

Would not this mean the disruption of the family?

A family which is held together by external force had better be disrupted; it can produce nothing but misery.

Why are some called Philosophic Anarchists?

Anarchism being a philosophy, the expression is tautological; as well say "a philosophical philosophy"; the term, however, was adopted during a former period of popular excitement by certain passive resistants who wished to distinguish themselves from those who advocated forceful resistance to invasion, and continues to be so understood.

Does Anarchism teach violence?

Anarchism is the negation of violence. By removing the causes, it would make the recurrence of acts of violence almost, and in time wholly, obsolete.

Why, then, are acts of violence committed by Anarchists?

These are individuals who argue that under present conditions they are forced to compromise their principles daily, and in such a manner as to render any protest they make ineffectual; therefore they say: "If I can make, by one compromise, an effectual protest, being willing to bear all the consequences, that is my affair. I show my disapproval of present conditions."

To which economic school do these belong?

To no one school, as there are both revolutionary and non-resistant Anarchists in each school.

Why do not the non-resistants condemn the others?

An Anarchist cannot consistently condemn any one; he can only express his disapproval of what is said or done, and try to explain its cause to others.

Anarchy.

Ever reviled, accursed, ne'er understood,
Thou art the grisly terror of our age.
"Wreck of all order," cry the multitude,
"Art thou, and war and murder's endless rage."
O, let them cry. To them that ne'er have striven
The truth that lies behind a word to find,
To them the word's right meaning was not given.
They shall continue blind among the blind.
But thou, O word, so clear, so strong, so pure,
That sayest all which I for goal have taken,
I give thee to the future!—Thine secure
When each at least unto himself shall waken.
Comes it in sunshine? In the tempest's thrill?
I cannot tell but it the earth shall see!
I am an Anarchist! Wherefore I will
Not rule, and also ruled I will not be!

—John Henry Mackay.

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