

My Kind of Anarchism

For quite some time now I have had this strong discomfort with the anarchist milieu. I believe that this discomfort stems from my strong desire to belong to a community and to be together with others who see things and value things in the same ways that I do. And on the other hand, I have the sense that the others who inhabit the anarchist social milieu are in some very important ways different from me, that they believe things and value things that in some crucial ways are at odds with where I am coming from. I find it difficult to just write these people off and forget about them because they identify with the philosophy of anarchism, which for whatever reason is a label for a philosophy that I find myself very much attached to.

So it seems to me to be important to take the time and effort to spell out exactly what it is that I do believe regarding “anarchism”. I am assuming that by spelling out what I do believe, I can clarify and set apart the difference between my “anarchism” and that which is espoused by others.

First off, I am assuming that every and all forms of “anarchism” out there are against all kinds of domination, that capitalism and the state are rejected by all forms of anarchism as being manifestations of domination, and that all anarchists yearn for a new world of sovereign people freely associating with others as equals, cooperating, helping each other out and sharing together as they see fit. Now, perhaps this brief definition of anarchism is simply too much, and too radical, for how many people would define the term, but I don't care. This is just a baseline bare minimum definition of the term that I am using to begin elaborating on what my own anarchist philosophy looks like.

Also, as is probably obvious by now, I really do not see anarchism as being a political thing. I see anarchism as being primarily a social philosophy. In other words, I see it as being a kind of philosophy that advocates for particular kinds of human social relationships and social organization. Anarchism is against politics-as-it-is, all politics of the existing social orders, because each and every one of these are based upon domination, not the respect of people's autonomy. Anarchism is a very radical philosophy because it goes straight to the roots of things, how people relate and organize their affairs together. Politics, all politics, is a relatively superficial matter, compared to the depth of an anarchist gaze.

My approach to anarchism has for a very long time now held this one quote by Gustav Landauer as being a touchstone descriptor for how I approach things:

“The State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another... We are the State and we shall continue to be the State until we have created

the institutions that form a real community.”

With this in mind, my approach to anarchism is mainly focused on what these “other relationships” will look like that would form the ideal new “real community” that is an alternative to the state and domination in general.

The primary crux for my anarchism is that coercion is not good for people. I have a strong belief that when people do things because they have a sense that it is coming from their own free choice, and **not** out of a fear of some kind of dire consequences that would befall them if they did not pursue that action, that that leaves them in a state where they are open to learning more and connecting with other people. When people do things out of coercion their minds are more distracted by the stress and pain that the coercion inflicts, making it all the more difficult to conjure up any kind of authentic curiosity that would support learning and connection with others.

I have mentioned a few times this phrase of “connecting with others”, and I feel the need to elaborate on it some here. This is actually an element that I consider to be core to my own approach to anarchism, since it is the glue that holds people together. By “connecting” I am referring to seeing the humanity in someone else, and valuing it. It involves knowing where someone is coming from, knowing who they are and what they are about, and being able to personally relate with it in some way. And, importantly, it is having a reciprocal relationship where that feeling is mutual. If this sense of connection is not present, I don’t believe that a social situation of anarchy can be real or lasting.

Another important aspect of my anarchism is that of individuals taking responsibility for their own choices and actions, and based on this being committed to continuing to develop and improve themselves in various ways. Yes, I do recognize and acknowledge the existence of social forces that impact and effect us all quite profoundly, but we can still think and make our own choices, and with that being the case, let’s choose to improve our own situations.

A commitment to having an open mind, critical thinking, and continual learning would then go hand-in-hand with that of having a commitment to ongoing personal development and self-improvement. This involves having a commitment to becoming aware of and recognizing the myriad different ways that one can become encumbered by prejudices of different kinds, get trapped in ideology-based thought-prisons, or judge people, thereby resulting in narrow one or two-dimensional perceptions of them.

And in conjunction with people taking personal responsibility for their own choices, I also see the creation and maintenance of real communities as being essential. By “community”, I mean that the people who you know and care about in your day-to-day in-person life also know and care about each other as well. This also pre-supposes that you know and care

about a substantial number of people in your day-to-day in-person life in the first place!

A crucial part of a community of people being real and lasting is that people help each other out. We all need support of some kind, and part of the kind of community environment that I would like to see is one where people are interested and able to help each other out, out of a personal authentic desire to do so, and not because of some kind of coercion or implied threat.

And in order to have mutual aid within a community be able to actually happen effectively, you need to have ongoing substantive communication, cooperation and coordination of efforts taking place. Communication break-downs need to be tended to, the quality of communication needs to be constantly elevated, and those who for whatever reason are silent or unable to speak need to be remembered and reached out to.

So, to summarize, the core underlying principles to my own approach to anarchism are these eight things:

- **Non-coercion**
- **Authentic connection between people**
- **Taking responsibility for choices**
- **Valuing ongoing self-improvement**
- **Free thinking and continual learning**
- **Real communities of people**
- **Mutual aid and mutual support**
- **Ongoing communication, cooperation and coordination**

As a consequence of people developing along the lines of these eight principles, I foresee the concept of ownership becoming de-prioritized. Expropriation and confiscation are things that I would like to see avoided, not because I am a fan of the concept of “property”, but because it involves a form coercion. And with the entry of coercion into the picture, the relationship between people is damaged, and chances are that there is a breakdown of communication between people going on as well. I do think that people’s needs can be better met the less the focus is on “who owns what?”, and the more the focus is instead on “how can we solve this problem?”. But I don’t even see people getting to the point of addressing a problem together, and valuing the needs of everyone involved, if these eight principles are not adhered to.

I have used a variety of different terms to describe my approach to anarchism in the past, from “communitarian anarchism”, to “compassionate anarchism”, to “buddhist anarchism”. Looking at where I am at now, I think the term “humanistic anarchism” could be an accurate description of it. But, ultimately, none of these labels really matters. All too often I have seen people squabble over terminology, or circle their wagons around particular labels, thereby perpetuating “us vs. them” and “my beliefs vs. their beliefs” dynamics. Also, labels often have the tendency to start out as being tools, and then to eventually become chains. All of that is totally counter to what I am wanting to achieve with all of this. And frankly, I am just tired of all of those bullshit dynamics.

So here I am, this is what I believe, this is my approach to anarchism, all laid out for you, call it what you will. What do you think?