

The Ideas of Anarchism

Anarchism is a political ideology, one that has existed in name since the mid 1800s, but with principles that have been around for much, much longer. Simply put, anarchists are against hierarchy of all forms, the resultant coercion, the state, capitalism, and private property. Instead of capitalism and the state, anarchists desire a free association of cooperative groups. Anarchists also stress the ideas of equality, autonomy, mutual aid, and solidarity.

Why be opposed to the state?

Anarchists are against all forms of government, with government being defined as having the following characteristics: 1. A "monopoly of violence" in a given territorial area; 2. This violence having a "professional," institutional nature; and 3. A hierarchical nature, centralization of power and initiative into the hands of a few. [1] The state is very good at helping the certain people exploit all the rest. It does this by using violence to protect their private property. We are taught all our lives to obey the state and its laws, but then why are they put above us? The organization of people should not be based on control, but on achieving real objectives other than the pursuit of power. Laws do not exist to protect us, but to insulate the state from the effects of the inequalities it has instituted.

Why be opposed to capitalism?

Capitalism, by its very nature, is exploitative. Think about your own job. The person who happens to own the place where you work, takes all the revenue generated by the workers, and keeps it for themselves. You are then paid less than what your work made for the company. This is known as the wage system, and it is why profit can exist. Profit, and by extension, capitalism, can only exist because *you are getting paid less than the amount that your work makes for the business*. The goal of the owner is to drive wages down as much as possible. Even starting your own business to escape, results in the very conditions you sought to avoid. Additionally, few have the option of starting a business: if people don't have the time or money to start a business of their own, then their options are work to make someone else rich or starve. A few hundred millionaires now own as much wealth as the world's poorest 2.5 billion people. [2] Where we would seek a system based on equality between all, Capitalism unavoidably concentrates wealth into the hands of the few. The point of the state is obvious: to protect the private property of the rich at all costs. It is clear that a fundamental system change has to happen. We advocate that instead of one or a few people getting all the profit from the place that you work, all people should share in the benefits of their labor. How? Well, it is up to them to decide! That is the beauty of anarchism: solutions work best when tailored to the local situation. If you're curious about how this could work read more about workplace democracy. Direct democracy is not a Utopian idea, it's common sense!

What anarchism is NOT:

Bomb throwing, chaos, or violence. The truth is, anarchism continues to be a real threat to those in power, because the vast majority of the population continues to be left with empty stomachs and empty hearts under the current system. Anarchism is depicted as a fringe force of punks who would just as likely blow up your house, as they would to say hi. The simple truth is that we are generally peaceful, civil people who are sick and tired of the inequalities that are omnipresent in society. We feel that, as a society, we can achieve a community that embraces difference, defends freedoms, and works together to ensure the basis for social coexistence. Instead of the alienation of the state, we would much rather have the order that comes with tolerance. We are not about hate and disorder, we are simply about human rights and equality.

Sure it sounds nice. But could it ever work in practice, and on a large scale?

It can and has already worked, in practice, and on a large scale. Spain, before and during the Spanish Civil War, clearly shows the success of anarchism in practice. For a period of time, workers took control of their own factories and communities worked together to realize a life without the State. Between five and seven million peasants collectivized the land, abolished money and greatly increased production. Many children had education for the first time. In urban areas, workers took over production and distribution, and all public services. Even factories employing thousands of workers were collectivized and run by the workers. The workers' standard of living greatly improved, production was made more efficient, and for the first time, free health care was given to all. Discussion of what happened at the end of the civil war requires more space than we have here. For a more in depth analysis, take a look at sources [7] and [8].

I agree with these ideas. So what should I do?

There are a lot of different actions that anarchists do. At this point in the development of the movement, one of the most important actions is community outreach. The point of community outreach is to pass out fliers to the general public, in order to inform them about the ideas of anarchism, to make the case that anarchism is a good idea, and to get them to take action themselves. The next step is for people to start joining a revolutionary union, such as the IWW or IWA. [3] The role of the revolutionary union is to fight for the rights of the workers using direct action, with the eventual goal of completely abolishing capitalism. Finally, there are other groups that organize around certain issues, and tie those back into anarchism. These include Anti-Racist Action, Big Brother Watch, Food Not Bombs, Homes Not Jails, and Anarchist Black Cross (Prison abolition). This list is by no means exhaustive. For more information about any of these action ideas, check out www.teamvictorywillwin.org. Remember, anarchism is all about direct action. If you agree with these ideas, and really want to make a change, it is going to be up to YOU to organize something! Don't be afraid to get it touch with us though, and we can help you get something started.

Glossary:

Capitalism - A socio-economic system based on private property rights, including the private ownership of resources or capital, with economic decisions made largely through the operation of a free market rather than by state control. Essentially economic hierarchy. [4]

Coercion - Use of physical or moral force to compel a person to do something, or to abstain from doing something, thereby depriving that person of the exercise of free will. [5]

Government - See "State."

Hierarchy - A body of ruling officials ranked so that every one but the topmost is subordinate to a specified one above it, essentially a pecking order. [6]

Profit - The difference between the amount of money that you make for a company, and the amount that they are willing to pay you (wages).

State - A governing body with a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force. This is used mainly to protect private property. [1]

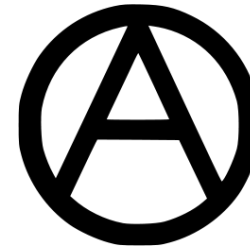
Sources

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7. http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/pam_ch2.html

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More information

www.anarchistfaq.org
www.teamvictorywillwin.org
flag.blackened.net
www.libcom.org
as101.subvert.info
Independent news
www.indymedia.org
www.infoshop.org/inews/



"If there is a State, then there is domination, and in turn, there is slavery." -Mikhail Bakunin

"Advocates of capitalism are very apt to appeal to the sacred principles of liberty, which are embodied in one maxim: The fortunate must not be restrained in the exercise of tyranny over the unfortunate" -Bertrand Russel.

"Anarchists know that a long period of education must precede any great fundamental change in society, hence they do not believe in vote begging, nor political campaigns, but rather in the development of self-thinking individuals." -Lucy Parsons

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