

Anonymous

Fundamentals of Anarchism

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WHAT IS ANTI-AUTHORITARIANISM?

1. Anarchists do not consider Mutual Aid to be “authoritarian.” Solidarity or empathy for those who are treated unfairly is considered to be a form of natural morality (see Kropotkin, *Anarchist Morality* and *Mutual Aid*).
2. Anarchists do not consider professional expertise to be “authoritarian” (see Bakunin, *Law and Authority*).
3. Health care, child care and education should be paid for by the workplace as part of the cost of production

Anarchism is not chaos, violence or an “alternative lifestyle.” We have a specific understanding of what authority is, how it leads to injustice and how we can organize society without it; based on freedom, social equality and cooperation:

Government, The State — direct democracy, elimination of parliamentary/representative government and all dictatorships, collectivization of all government services, replacement of the Welfare State with Mutual Aid associations, no taxes.

Cops, Courts — social peace should be maintained by Mutual Aid, conflicts should be resolved by creating a culture of cooperation, wrongdoing should be discouraged by giving economic opportunity to everyone and discouraging exploitation and fraud (parasites), abolition of all institutions of coercion, no cops, no judges, no lawyers, neighborhood watches chosen by lottery will bring accusers and people accused of wrongdoing before juries chosen by lottery to review all complaints and right wrongs, civil courts will be replaced by arbitration, investigations of wrongdoing will be by forensic collectives.

Laws, Prisons — current laws should be replaced with community standards against murder, violence, coercion, rape, stealing, fraud and other actions deemed socially repugnant, infractions dealing with so-called victimless “crimes” should be decriminalized, social problems should be dealt with through counseling and mutual aid, persons in prison for victimless “crimes” and economic offenses should be released, economic wrongdoing should be compensated by restitution rather than incarceration, political prisoners should be freed, prisons will be closed, persons who commit murder, rape or other violent acts against others should be treated at specialized mental health facilities until it is safe for them to return to society.

Banks, Finance — creation of Mutualist community credit unions, abolition of capitalism (no stocks or arbitrage), abolition of banks and all usury (interest), spending by debit, creation of local currencies backed by credit unions (like

travelers checks) creation of barter services, service exchanges and free commerce, no checks, no credit cards, no “unsecured” credit.

Property, Land Use — collectivization of all real property (real estate), no landlords, no rents, exclusivity of property use while you use it (but it is not a “right” which you can buy, sell or own), no inheritance (everyone has the right to whatever they can earn in a single lifetime), land development decisions (for new housing, etc.) would be a community decision, decisions affecting more than one community would be made cooperatively by the communities affected (or by negotiation or arbitration if there were a disagreement), creation of common lands for parks, community gardens and natural preserves.

Work, Production — elimination of all bosses (scheduling should be done by clerks, budgeting by accountants), collectivization of production by workplace, worker self-management (work could be organized as a Syndicalist unionoperated enterprise, collective, commune, partnership, family enterprise or self-directed enterprise), reorganization of bureaucracy into working groups (project or task oriented), preservation of professional expertise through on the job training within working groups², economic cooperation among work places.

Gender, Family — social equality for women and men, gender relationships based on free association and mutual respect without dependency or control, abolition of civil marriage and divorce, sexual freedom and self-determination, universal availability of birth control information, contraception and abortion, free health care, free child care³, compensation for child care like other work, elimination of poverty through universal employment, increase in leisure/family time and activities by shortening the work day, paid maternity/paternity leave from work.

Children, Education — children are best raised with love and attention rather than regimentation and harsh discipline, they should be introduced to learning as early as possible, their interests and creativity should be encouraged so they can develop their full potential, schooling should be in a tutorial style with small teaching groups so children can receive adequate attention, learning should be by doing rather than rote memorization, gender and ethnic biases should be eliminated from education, all education should be free³.

WHY ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN?

We are told that without governments, cops, laws, corporations, parental discipline and all the other instruments of coercion that are used to control and exploit us that society would be in chaos, that we would be terrorized by crime and that we would constantly be in fear for our lives. We are told that without strong “leaders” telling us what to do, bosses supervising our work and teachers telling us how to think that we could never solve our problems or manage our own lives. We are told that without a lot of rules, regimentation of society and churches to tell us right from wrong that we cannot be moral and know to live together with peace, freedom and social justice for all. But these things are all LIES told to us by the most privileged members of society who expect to get rich off our labor, get powerful from our votes and send us to die in their wars the next time they fight a war with each other to try to get even more wealth, power and social privilege than anyone could ever use in a lifetime. They tell us to do what we are told because they need us to OBEY in order to ACCEPT living to serve their interests, BELIEVE that we are still free and HOPE that if we work hard and follow all their rules that WE will be rewarded with wealth, comfort and social privilege one day. In a society where the richest 10% of the population owns about 90% of all business and 68% of ALL wealth, this is a fantasy.

Authority is so entrenched in our society that many people do not realize the extent to which it influences their lives. We begin being brainwashed to OBEY as soon as we are born. As a child our parents often ignore our interests and aptitudes and try to make us be just like them or accomplish something they wish they had done when they were young. They blame us for our problems and try to take credit for our accomplishments. Many of the stereotypes and prejudices people have are drilled into them by their parents. We are punished until we do what we are told. We are harassed and belittled if we show independence or creativity. When we go to school, parental authority is supplemented by the regimentation of teachers and the indoctrination of public or church education. We are taught to try to follow “leaders”, obey the government and to accept the values “leaders” think are best for us. When we get out of school we are told to obey our boss or lose our job and go hungry. We are told that voting for our masters makes us “free.” We are told to die for “our” country. Until life gets really hard, most people take this nonsense for granted and consider it “normal” and even a source of personal security.

The advocates of modern government and corporate authority want us to believe that we can't live without them, but capitalism was only invented in the

1700s and most modern nation-states didn't exist before the 1800s! For thousands of years people lived in relative peace organizing their communities democratically, cooperating economically and respecting the well-being of others and the environment. Great civilizations like the Iroquois Confederation of eastern North America, The Ibo and Yoruba of western Africa and the Celtic culture of Europe and southwest Asia (which stretched from Portugal to Ireland, Germany, the Balkans and Turkey when Romans were still living in mud huts) were organized without kings, leaders, bureaucracies, social classes or patriarchal families. Then self-serving people began to say "worship our god or die", "obey our leaders or die", and "work to make us rich or die." Organized protection rackets by gangs of thieves turned into walled forts on trade routes, cities and eventually empires, monarchies and modern nation-states. All modern nation states have been built with authority based on coercion. Capitalism is an economy based on the coercion of labor. Religion is a culture based on the coercion of individual self-esteem.

Anarchists believe that the idea of Authority is at the heart of much of the social problems, injustices and hopelessness in modern society. In order to have hope that our live can be rich and meaningful, we need to have the freedom to make our own decisions and benefit from our own efforts. In order to solve our problems, we must take care of them ourselves.

In order to have justice, we need to trust in our own inherent sense of right and wrong when we see others being hurt. Authority only guarantees freedom, justice and prosperity to those with the authority. If we want a society where everyone can have these things, then it must be democratic and equitable rather than authoritarian. But if we want a better life, we cannot wait for someone to give it to us or for another "leader" to tell us what to do, we need to take the initiative ourselves. Anarchists are spontaneous. Instead of "tell us what to do" we say "do it yourself!" Anarchists believe in Direct Action. Instead of demanding that the people running the system change, WE CHANGE THE SYSTEM OURSELVES!

Authority can only exist if the rest of us allow someone else to tell us what to do, what to think and how to live. Although those with authority use coercion to maintain power over our lives, we have something more powerful than their coercion:

That is our refusal to OBEY them, to ACCEPT their system or to BELIEVE what they tell us. But it only works IF WE WORK TOGETHER. It only works if we reject the materialism, exploitation, and bigotry of those who now have authority. It only works if we take personal responsibility for our own actions and practice Mutual Aid (we help each other when we need help, we object to injustice when we see others wronged and we work together when a job is to big for any of us alone).

The alternative to authority is cooperation. Anarchists believe that we can guarantee freedom, justice and opportunity for each of us by working together to insure it for everyone. We believe that we can create a culture of freedom and social equality to replace the current culture of violence, obedience, and exploitation. Successful Anarchist societies have existed in modern times in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and in the Ukraine during the Russian Revolution.

WHAT IS DIRECT ACTION?

This flier is based on an essay by Rob Sparrow from the Rebel Worker Group in Australia.

“Direct Action” is the distinctive contribution of Anarchists in the realm of political method. Ideally, Anarchist political activity promotes Anarchism and attempts to create an Anarchist society. It seeks to establish a society without Capitalism, the State or Patriarchy where people govern themselves democratically without domination or hierarchy. This is an activity which is inescapably revolutionary in nature and which is best carried out collectively in an organization dedicated to that purpose.

Anarchist show that their methods and ways of organizing work by practicing them. The best advertisement for Anarchism is the intelligence of the contributions of our activists and the success of our methods. Anarchists strive to provide living examples of Anarchism in action. Direct Action is one of the best possible ways of doing this.

Do-It-Yourself

Direct Action aims to achieve our goals through our own activity rather than through the actions of others. It is about people taking power for themselves. In this it is distinguished from most other forms of political action such as voting, lobbying, attempting to exert political pressure through industrial action or through the media. All of these activities are based on the falsehood that we are incapable of improving our own lives and must rely on others to achieve our goals for us. They concede our power to existing institutions which work to prevent us from acting ourselves to change the status quo. Direct Action repudiates such acceptance of the existing order and suggests that we have both the right and the power to change the world.

It demonstrates this by doing it. Examples of Direct Action include blockades, pickets, sabotage, squatting, tree spiking, lockouts, occupations, rolling strikes, slow downs, the revolutionary general strike. In the community it involves, amongst other things, establishing our own organizations such as food co-ops and community access radio and TV to provide for our social needs, blocking the freeway developments which divide and poison our communities and taking and squatting the houses that we need to live in. In the forests, Direct Action

interposes our bodies, our will and our ingenuity between wilderness and those who would destroy it and acts against the profits of the organizations which direct the exploitation of nature and against those organizations themselves. In industry and in the workplace direct action aims either to extend workers control or to directly attack the profits of the employers. Sabotage and work slow-downs are time-honored and popular techniques to deny employers the profits from their exploitation of their wage-slaves. Rolling and “wildcat” strikes are forms of open industrial struggle which strike directly at the profits of the employers.

As the examples of Direct Action in the community above suggest, there is more to Direct Action than responding to injustices or threats by the state. Direct Action is not only a method of protest but also a way of “building the future now”. Any situation where people organize to extend control over their own circumstances without recourse to capital or state constitutes direct action. “Doing it ourselves” is the essence of Direct Action and it does not matter whether what we are doing is resisting injustice or attempting to create a better world now by organizing to meet our own social needs. Direct Action of this sort, because it is self-directed rather than a response to the activities of Capital or State, offers far more opportunities for continuing action and also for success. We can define our own goals and achieve them through our own efforts. One of the most important aspects of Direct Action is the organization involved in order for it to be successful. By organizing to achieve our goals ourselves we learn valuable skills and discover that organization without hierarchy is possible. Where it succeeds, Direct Action shows that people can control their own lives – in effect, that an Anarchist society is possible. We can see here that Direct Action and Anarchist organization are in fact two sides of the same coin. When we demonstrate the success of one we demonstrate the reality of the other.

Ends and Means

Anarchists don’t ask if the ends justify the means. We believe that the means used to achieve our goals affect the ends that are ultimately achieved. Our methods and objectives are compatible. History proves that a free society cannot be built with authoritarian methods. This is why we have historically opposed terrorism and other forms of random violence, even though the capitalist media sometimes tries to label them as “Anarchy.” Anarchist politics offer people genuine hope and success in their struggle for a better world because they focus on people achieving what they desire through their own efforts. Direct Action is a crucial component of such a politics. Direct Action is also a way we demonstrate that Anarchist organization and methods are an effective means of constructive social change.

We demonstrate this by applying our efforts to the political and economic realities of the society we live in. We don't want to lead a revolution, we want to create it ourselves. We call discovering what we are capable of by doing it ourselves "capacitation" and demonstrating to others the possibilities of what can be done by what we ourselves do "propaganda by the deed."

Beyond Protest

Direct Action must be distinguished from symbolic actions. Its purpose is to exercise power and control over our own lives rather than merely voice resentment over things we don't like. Direct Action is bolting a gate rather than tying a yellow ribbon around it. This distinguishes it from actions like the "banner drops" often staged in by Greenpeace, that look militant but aren't.

These actions do not directly attack the injustices they highlight, but attempt to persuade politicians to act by playing to the media and hoping to shape public opinion. They discount the independent political and economic interests of these institutions and may put activists in the ridiculous role of begging their exploiters to support changes contrary to their interests.

Direct Action must also be distinguished from moral action. It is not *moral* protest. By moral protest I mean protest which seeks to change the behavior of an institution by challenging the morality of its conduct or demonstrating that an injustice has been done by it. Moral protest usually takes the form of a boycott of a product or refusal to participate in some institution.

Moral protests are based on the myth that corporations and governments can be reformed by persuading them to change their conduct. Anarchists realize that nothing really changes unless we change it ourselves. Direct Action has an immediate effect on the problem in question and does not rely on affecting the behavior of others. Our own action should have such an effect that we can point it out to others as an example of how they can change — and not just protest — those things which concern them.

Dealing With the Cops

The first implication of the politics of Direct Action with regards to our relations with the police is that, wherever possible, we should disregard the authority of the police. Direct Action is action which acknowledges our own power and right to exercise it. To the same extent that we recognize the authority of the police and obey their instructions we are relinquishing our own right and power to

act as we would wish to. So it is actually essential to direct action that we do not concede the right of the representatives of the state to restrict our activities. Of course, for tactical reasons, we may have to acknowledge the consequences that may occur when we ignore the law and may even have to negotiate with police in the attempt to minimize these. But it is important that, in doing so, we remember at all times that although they have the means to do so, they have no right to restrict us in our liberty. Any strategy of dealing with the police must take account of their role as a political — and ultimately a class — force. The police force exists to defend the status quo and the interests of the ruling class. Once we recognize the police force as a political institution and that its members therefore necessarily stand in a certain political relation to us then a number of things become clear. Firstly, any attempt to “win over” the police, one by one, is doomed. We can win the cooperation of the police for precisely as long as we fail to genuinely threaten the existing social order. As soon as our activities begin to threaten the interests of the state or the profits of the ruling class the police will move to disperse/arrest/beat us, as sure as night follows day. They exist to defend all that we wish to destroy. In their defense of private property and the state, the police are backed up by the armed force of the state. Behind the police lies the military who, as numerous historical examples illustrate, are ready to step in and restore “order” if the civilian population becomes too unruly.

Secondly, the fact that the police are ultimately backed by the armed force of the state determines that any attempt to resist or overcome the police through violence will ultimately fail. While the state and ruling class are secure politically and can succeed in maintaining the passivity of the majority of the population, they can defeat any attempt to threaten them through violent means. The state has more repressive force at its command than we can ever hope to muster. This is *not* a pacifist position. We have every *right* to employ force in the attempt to resist the violence of the state. Where a specific act of violence against the state will achieve a particular tactical objective, without provoking crippling repression or a disastrous political backlash, then we would be justified in committing it. But as a political *strategy*, in a non-revolutionary period, attempting to overcome the state through force is doomed. There may be tactical advantages to not antagonizing the police.

But in our care to avoid creating unnecessary trouble for ourselves we must remember that the source of the confrontation and violence which sometimes occurs around the police is the police themselves in their attempts to protect an unjust — and ultimately itself violent — social order.

Dealing With the Media

Anarchists should neither ignore the media or perform for it. Instead we should remain true to our own politics and seek to achieve our ends through our own efforts. While we do so we should welcome media attention which might spread news of our activities and so help build an Anarchist movement. When we cooperate with the media we should do so without compromising the integrity of our own politics and without distorting either ourselves or our message. We must also remember that the capitalist media represent multinational corporations with their own political agenda which often “black out” or “spin” (manipulate, distort, censor, etc.) the news to influence public opinion. Rather than relying on them to communicate our message to the people we should do it ourselves. Community papers, zines, tabling projects, free radio (micropower radio) and low watt community television broadcasting are themselves examples of Direct Action in the media.

WHAT IS FREE ASSOCIATION?

Free Association is the idea that we cannot be free as individuals without having free relationships with others, that no one person can be free unless we are all free and that for each of us to be free we must work together to insure that everyone else is free. In an Anarchist society people would cooperate with each other to achieve the following:

Complete Social Freedom Including Sexual Freedom and Reproductive Freedom: People associate because all participants want to.

Freedom of Speech, Press and Information to include all forms of communication and education.

Complete Cultural Freedom including the freedom of individual tastes, lifestyle, entertainment and other preferences.

Freedom of Movement: All people must be allowed to live where they chose, travel where they chose, shop where they chose (e.g. do business where you chose), recreate where you chose, etc.. This includes the freedom to migrate and immigrate without being restricted or discriminated upon because of your place of birth or the place of birth of your ancestors.

Complete Economic Freedom Which can only exist if all persons retain control of their labor power, enter productive relationships voluntarily, and are compensated for the full value of their productive activity: All forms of economic exploitation must be destroyed including capitalism, debt slavery, and theft. Full compensation for child rearing as a job.

Freedom to Assemble Peacefully With Other Persons for Common Purposes, Collective Organization and Joint Petition for Redress: All people must be allowed to associate freely with the groups they chose and to disassociate themselves when they chose. All people must be allowed to organize in their place of work and in their community. All people must be entitled to work together for the purpose of rendering Mutual Aid and to receive Mutual Aid when they need it.

Completely Cooperative Relationships for Production, Companionship, Reproduction, Exchange, Recreation, etc.: The elimination of all authoritarianism and coercion, non-violent conflict resolution, and intolerance of predatory, parasitic or obstructionist behavior through Mutual Aid.

Direct Democracy and Majority Rule for All Political, Economic, and Military Collective Activities (e.g. "New England Town Hall Meeting", "Syndicalist Unions/Free Soviets", "Popular Militias"), Individual Selfdetermination, and Community

Self-Determination: No Government, No Political Parties, No Leaders, No Corporations, No Police and No Church. Personal responsibility and accountability rather than coercion.

The Destruction of all Forms of Bigotry: Bigotry is intended to limit individual freedom by excluding persons or groups of persons, by creating unnatural divisions and conflicts between groups of persons and by distracting persons from the exploitations of the ruling class, their political system, and their social control mechanisms. This means that gender bias, ethnic bias, heterosexist/homosexist bias, class bias/privilege, etc. must never be tolerated. This also means the rejection of any cultural or religious values which advocate bigotry.

Personal Privacy including freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, surveillance or intrusion into your domestic or personal affairs, relationships, and activities.

A Minimum Quality of Life For Everyone including food, clothing, shelter, health care, sanitation and a healthy environment necessary for everyone to be free to live for reasons other than just survival. Education, job training, child care, transportation and work for everybody. Mutual Aid for workers who are sick or injured. Mutual Aid for those who are too young, old or infirm to work. Everyone should be able to choose when to end their life.

ANARCHISM AND FREEDOM

Anarchism is the philosophy of freedom. We believe in a society where the freedom of each person is limited only by the freedom of everyone. We are born free yet everywhere we are enslaved. This is because the idea of “freedom” in a capitalist society is confused with “Social Darwinism”; the idea that a few people should be allowed to dominate, terrorize and exploit everyone else. While this may be the fantasy of the rich, it is not true freedom. Freedom cannot be achieved by taking over the government or becoming a new ruling elite because, so long as one group of people try to place themselves above everyone else, then everyone else will still not be free.

True freedom is also not defined by ‘Civil Rights.’ “Rights” are a perversion of true freedom invented to trick us into believing that we owe our freedom to governments. In truth, we are born free and the purpose of governments is to take that freedom away in order to protect the money, property and privileges of the rich; the Ruling Class. All “Civil Rights” are is a system by which the government rations a portion of our freedom back to us (after they have stolen it in the first place) in order to create the illusion of freedom or convince us that we are freer than others who are also enslaved by the coercion of legislatures, cops, armies, courts and prisons which await those who ask why some are more free than others. The truth is that if we allow ourself to be dependent upon coercive institutions (like courts) created by the rich and coercive authorities appointed by the rich for a measure of freedom defined by THEIR interpretation of our “rights” then we are no more free than animals in a zoo whose zookeepers decide how large our cages are or how long our chains should be so that we can believe we are free, but still be under their control.

True freedom is not measured by the power or authority the rich allow us to have, but by the ability to govern ourselves. If we allow ourselves to believe that THEY give us freedom then we are giving up our freedom any time they chose to take it away or anytime they threaten to take it if we don’t do what they say.

True freedom is not measured by the money, property or consumer goods the rich allow us to have, but by controlling the wealth created by our own labor ourselves. The ability to have a credit card, a car or a big screen television is no more a measure of freedom than the ability to have a full stomach and a place to live on welfare. It does not change the fact that the rich steal the value of what we produce with our labor and only allow us a portion of it. It does not change the fact that whether we work or are on welfare we are in a coercive relationship

where our ability to eat and have a home is tied to our obedience to a boss or the government.

True freedom begins when we take responsibility for our own actions. This means that we are not willing to let other people tell us what to think or how to live. We question what we have been taught by parents and social institutions. We question the motives and agenda of politicians, bosses and the capitalist news media. We question the injustice we see in the World around us and reject the excuses for it given by people with wealth and social privilege.

PERSONAL freedom is a lifelong pursuit of understanding yourself and the World around you through self-education, personal experiences and introspection (thinking about what you have read and experienced, comparing it to things you learned before and trying to understand more).

Anarchists believe that to have PERSONAL freedom we must also have SOCIAL freedom. Most people do not live alone. We are one person in a community of people. We are one worker in a group of workers at a workplace. Our ability to have PERSONAL freedom is dependent upon our ability to cooperate with others in our community and our workplace in order to make collective decisions about things which affect everyone in the group so that we can live in ways where everyone benefits from their labor and has their interests taken into consideration and injustices are weeded out by the group. SOCIAL freedom begins when we recognize that no individual, clique or social class can have power over us or take advantage of us if everyone else refuses to obey them. We recognize that our refusal (our "Free Will") is more powerful than their coercion if we exercise it as a group. This means that instead of letting the rich trick us into competing with each other over a small portion of the freedom or wealth they steal from us, we get together and decide not to let them steal it in the first place and we all end up with more than any individual who plays their game.

SOCIAL freedom also means that we reject the ideas the rich invent to trick us into competing, so we don't work together. Anarchists believe that to be free we must replace the idea of "survival of the fittest" with the practice of Mutual Aid: "All for one and one for all" and "An injury to one is an injury to all." People have a natural feeling of compassion every time they see someone wronged because they know it could happen to them. We believe that this idea of "Solidarity" and the willingness of people to cooperate in groups for the benefit of everyone are the keys to enabling the greatest PERSONAL freedom for everyone.

WHAT IS MUTUAL AID?

“In *The Descent of Man*, [Charles Darwin] gave some powerful pages to illustrate its proper, wide sense. He pointed out how, in numberless animal societies, the struggle between separate individuals for the means of existence disappears, how struggle is replaced by co-operation, and how that substitution results in the development of intellectual and moral faculties which secure to the species the best conditions for survival.

He intimated that in such cases the fittest are not the physically strongest, nor the cunningest, but those who learn to combine so as to mutually support each other, strong and weak alike, for the welfare of the community.

‘Those communities,’ he wrote, ‘which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring’ (2nd ed., p. 163).” [Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor In Evolution*, 1902]

MUTUAL AID is the idea that the evolution of Humanity as a sentient species and the emergence of Human Civilization were the result of solidarity for the needs of our fellow community members, cooperation and mutual support to overcome our mutual obstacles, defend against our mutual adversaries and create a society in which all who cooperate will mutually benefit. Mutual Aid is the basis of the village community, the labor syndicate (Union), cooperative and collective businesses, mutualist credit unions, mutual insurance and various mutual aid societies where people volunteer to help others.

Solidarity

The idea that human evolution was shaped by unlimited selfishness and the desire to dominate and exploit others is a Capitalist lie. Modern Anthropology has disproved myths like this one and the one that primitive people were chiefly macho hunters: the truth is that people were scavengers who mostly gathered plants for food and had to rely on their wits and each other to survive.

“The small strength and speed of man, his want of natural weapons, etc. are more than counterbalanced, firstly, by his intellectual facilities; and secondly, by his social qualities, which led them to give and receive aid from his fellow man” [Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 2nd ed., pp. 63–64].

Primitive humans were under 5 feet tall at a time when most predatory animals were trice their current size. To imagine that a single person could have dominated

social groups without the aid of their fellows to survive is merely the fantasy of 19th Century aristocrats who wanted to rationalize their ideology of exploitation. Natural human social behavior is evident in primitive tribal groups where even among cannibals “weak people are usually supported; sick people are very well attended to; they are never abandoned or killed” [Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*, 1902]. Within the tribe, the rule of ‘one for all and all for one’ is the highest value because it is essential to their survival.

This value is reflected in the village society which was the predominant form of human social organization up through the Middle Ages. Modern Mutual Aid groups have their origin in the traditional village community where people with mutual interests grouped together to provide for their collective needs without imposing on the individual or family and provided for their mutual defense, support and justice. Villages were democratically run by what was called the “Folkmøte” in Scandinavia: This was the early equivalent of the New England Town Meeting where decisions were made collectively by all the members of the community. The village dwellers worked together to grow food on land that was used by all but owned by none. They stood together to defend their village against human or animal predators and any quarrel among them was considered as a community affair.

“If a quarrel ended in a fight and wounds, the man who stood by and did not interpose was treated as if he himself had inflicted the wounds” [Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*, 1902].

Cooperation

Cooperation, not competition, has been the driving force of human development and improvements in our quality of life. Most inventions throughout history have been the product of work by many people who shared their ideas and not the lone genius of Capitalist mythology. Even in the Middle Ages when scientists and doctors were burned by the Church for heresy and witchcraft, secret societies were formed to exchange and pass along knowledge. A group which is willing to work together on a project and make the successful completion or operation of the project a priority over personal differences with other members of the group is more effective than any bureaucracy provided that it is democratic and everyone shares the benefits of the work they do.

During the Middle Ages, cities grew where there was trade and groups of craftspeople formed labor associations called “Guilds” through which to trade knowledge, improve their products/skills and train new apprentices so they could become craftspeople. Guilds were formed around every skilled profession from

metalworking to shipping. At that time, all the people on a ship had equal status and shared in the benefit of a trading venture (the era of kidnaped crews being whipped into submission by tyrannical captains was a product of Capitalism). The guilds traded with others for food and other necessities and every guild member shared the benefits of what the guilds produced. Guilds established funds to pay for the loss of a home by their members, care for the ill or to take care of the family of a guild member who died. Within the guild, all persons were equals in their mutual relations who agreed to aid each other and settle their disputes through “judges” elected by all of them. Guilds in the same cities cooperated with each other to provide for the mutual defense of the City and each guild often had its own militia which was a unit in the City’s defense force.

The Renaissance and the explosion of knowledge, invention and creative arts which characterized it was a product of the guild system where workers owned and managed their own work places and cooperated with each other.

Capitalists have always tried to prevent working people from cooperating because they know that it would enable us to get rid of them and create an equitable society. In the Middle Ages, bands of gangsters were anointed as “kings” by the Church in exchange for their promising to help the Church get rich off the people they would “rule.” The gangsters eventually stole the common land farmed by villagers and gave it to their supporters who became wealthy aristocrats by forcing people to pay rent to live on what used to be their own land. The aristocrats were jealous of the wealth and freedom of the guilds and persuaded the kings to make guilds illegal and let them steal the property of the guilds. They eventually became so obscenely wealthy that they had money they could never spend. The Church supported the rich by calling rebellion against the king a “mortal sin” punishable by death. Kings gave exclusive trading monopolies to their friends who then shared the profit with other aristocrats by selling part of the profit (the shares were called “stock” or “capital”) or by renting the money from other aristocrats through a bank (the rent was called “usury” or “interest”). Later, during the Industrial “Revolution” these practices were used to build factories. Since the land and crafts which people had used to support themselves were stolen by the rich, people were forced to work for the “Capitalists” for almost nothing or starve. The “Capitalists” created governments which made it possible for them to kill or imprison anyone who objected to being exploited or tried to organize their fellow workers. Workers have been fighting to regain their freedom and the full value of their own labor ever since they were first stolen.

Equality

Anarchist Morality is the morality found in nature. The original human ideas about morality were based on watching animals and are simply that you should “do to others what you would have them do to you in the same circumstances” [Kropotkin, *Anarchist Morality*, 1892]. We don’t need 10 Commandments to tell us right from wrong. We are bothered when we see others wronged because it disturbs our natural feelings of empathy: because we know how it would feel if it happened to us. We have a natural desire for equality in mutual relations. Therefore, an injury to one is an injury to all because each time one of us is wronged, we are all threatened.

The great sources of moral depravity in modern society are Capitalism, religion and government because they create and maintain a system of inequality through which people are robbed of their freedom and the fruits of their labor.

Capitalism robs us and government and religion rationalize it through laws and religious codes which pervert natural morality by equating it with subservience, obedience and humility. By ridding ourselves of Capitalism, religion and government we can regain the natural morality which they try to distort. We have a right to dispossess our exploiters because we would expect the same to be done to us if we tried to take advantage of others.

“It is in the ardent revolutionist to whom the joys of art, of science, even of family life, seem bitter, so long as they cannot be shared by all, and who works despite misery and persecution for the regeneration of the world” [Kropotkin, *Anarchist Morality*, 1892].

Anarchist Morality

Anarchists don’t believe that people are naturally good or evil, but that we are born free to choose. We believe our behavior is not influenced by supernatural forces, but only by ourselves and, thus, we alone are responsible for our actions. We do not believe that moral behavior can be enforced by coercion or religion, but only by the desire of the individual to respect the freedom of others rather than exploit them for their personal benefit. This is why coercion doesn’t stop violence, stealing or other exploitation and unfair treatment of people. Social peace and moral conduct in the community can only be assured by an agreement among the members of the community that participation in the community requires a respect for others and that the community will confront anyone who doesn’t voluntarily respect others (e.g. who wrongs another) in the community and, if

necessary, remove them from the community in order to protect the freedom and safety of everybody else. Anarchists believe in Free Association which is also the freedom to disassociate. They believe that the Freedom of the individual should only be limited by the freedom of others: this means that "Freedom" does not include the freedom to exploit others. This also means that the freedom of the individual is maintained by the willingness of others to defend it by coming to the aid of anyone who is wronged and restoring to that person what was taken from them. Those who insist on exploiting others, or whose wrongs cannot be made right, are enemies of freedom and we chose to disassociate with them by removing them from our society.

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