anarchy 101

edited by dot matrix

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edited by Dot Matrix
with help from participants at anarchy101.org

Anarchy 101

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Questions

In the following pages you will meet

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Anarchy is many things to different people: a vision, a plan, a conversation, a process. It is my view (consistent with a whole raft of contemporary anarchists, from Alfredo M. Bonanno to Voltairine de Cleyre* and beyond) that anarchy is best understood, and is most helpful, as a tension, a question, a rejection. This text operates from that premise.

This book is composed of questions, answers, and comments (sometimes lightly edited) taken from a website called anarchy101.org, in which various anarchists answer questions posed by themselves and others. This variety of voices (the answers and comments disagree with each other as often as agree) is integral to any anarchist project that I want to be a part of. There are many more questions there than could reasonably fit into a book, so go, read, ask, and argue.

We welcome your engagement with these ideas, and look forward to hearing your voice in the future.

✳ *for notes on most people mentioned in the text, see page 152*

How do people here feel about the use of this site's questions and answers in a book?

I think that much of what has been explored on this website would be a welcome counter-perspective to the similar publication of the *Anarchist FAQ*, which has never addressed perspectives beyond those of the author(s) in a really honest and balanced way. There have been some very thoughtful things posted here, and it would be cool to see them put into some sort of printed collection, which, in my opinion, is easier to digest for beginners, as it is presented in a more linear fashion.

One of the particular strengths of using this sort of site as a jumping off place is that many different perspectives might be represented. Though this leads me to wonder who determines which answers are deemed suitable for print, and what the process or criteria for that would be.

Other issues I could see coming up would be particular posters not wanting their answers included in book form, or not wanting to have them be attributed to them in print, though it doesn't make much sense to be concerned about that if you've created a profile for this site, which is far easier to come across at random than a book.

Maybe a few of the regular posters have expressed thoughts that might lead them to wanting to defend their intellectual property, but fuck that.

Ingrate is right that it might be useful to have a book that addresses perspectives that *AFAQ* does not, and I think that there have been some pretty good/interesting questions and answers on this site.

asr

My favorite aspect of this site is that there are usually several answers to each question and this, I think, is part of what makes it superior to *AFAQ*. I suppose that could be replicated in a book but on the face of it it seems like something the internet is pretty well suited for: I read the answers really differently than I would if they were in a book simply because of my awareness that anyone can contest everything that's being said, and whatever we say will have just as much weight as the original claims. Even if you read a book really critically and take notes and write response papers and stuff, it's not the same thing.

Another thing is that I don't write that carefully here, and I think that is true for most people. I wouldn't really feel comfortable seeing anything I've written here in a book because I don't feel the prose is very good. One way around this

might be to steal ideas but not use anyone's exact phrasings?

I think a book of info from here using the format of *Anarchy Works* (based on q&a under section headers such as "decisions" or "economy") could do well with a good editor who attempted to include diverse perspectives, but it would make a really unorthodox and perhaps incoherent book. It would have an advantage in diversity and a disadvantage in the consistency. I'm fine with that though.

Most of my posts are meant as starting places for a larger collection of more completed writings but feel free to use whatever you want.

Extremely Brief History (including some names that you can research if so inclined)

Anarchism was initially coined as a term by Proudhon. It became more defined and serious after Bakunin left the First International Working Men's Association because of disagreements on (among other things) whether the dictatorship of the proletariat (a worker-controlled state) would wither away (Marx's claim), or be just another tactic for people to maintain a hierarchy.

Classical anarchists—Mikael Bakunin, Pyotr Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Voltairine de Cleyre, etc—tended to be pro-science (since they were rebelling against domination by the christian church). They also tended to be pro-communism (communism was the goal of revolution, and would be a utopic time when workers would have power and determine their own production, when there would be no bosses, when people would be taken care of regardless of how much money they had). The dif-

ference between anarchists and communists of this era was primarily that a) anarchists did not believe that economics was the only way that people were influenced (anarchists have almost always looked at psychology, culture, education, etc, as ways that we are socialized and coerced—not just work), b) that anarchists did not believe in creating a state to get rid of states. (The anarchist perspective on states-in-formation has been validated by the history of communists killing former anarchist allies, including in Kronstadt and in the Spanish Civil War.)

Contemporary with Marx and Bakunin there was also Max Stirner, who never called himself an anarchist but who has been claimed by an anarchist tendency because his polemic (badly translated into English as *The Ego and Its Own*) rejects the idea that any of us should sacrifice ourselves to anything. He held that causes (like Liberty, Freedom, even Anarchy) are "spooks" (ie abstractions that only serve to alienate us from our own lives and selves). Some of the most inspira-

tional anarchists were heavily influenced by egoism, including Renzo Novatore and Alfredo Bonanno. Anarchists influenced by Nietzsche and/or Stirner (egoists, post-left anarchists, and post-anarchists are the three main tendencies so influenced) reject the idea that workers are the group that will create a revolution, that work (as it is currently understood, ie as tasks that you get paid for, but with no immediate benefit for your life or your friends' lives) would even continue to exist in the world we want, or that revolution as a discrete event is something that we can, or want to, aim for.

More recently, the Situationists, a radical group based in the art scene in the 60s, particularly in Paris, created a new wave of more critical, contemporary anarchist thinking; a wave that is continued today in groups like Tiqqun in France and by unnamed window-smashers and newspaper-box placement engineers everywhere.

Questions

Why are there so many different definitions of anarchy?

There is no single foundational voice for anarchist thought (and some of the most influential thinkers said some apparently conflicting things, like Bakunin), so there is a lot of flexibility left for people to find and focus on the person, or the ideas, that most appeal to them. This is aided by the ethic that anarchists promote people finding their own answers, so that decentralization and a million different trajectories are both desirable and inevitable.

This leads to people calling themselves anarchists who disagree intensely (and sometimes widely) with each other, and to an inherent weakness of the label "anarchist" (since calling one's self that doesn't mean that anyone can make assumptions about what one thinks); this makes the label not as pernicious as other labels (which in general act to hide differences as much or more than to reveal similarities).

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What are the main threads of anarchist thinking?

What do they disagree with each other about?
What do they agree on?

Here's how I break down what I consider the main trends in an Intro to Anarchism talk I do.

Anarchist Communism

Anarchist communism proposes that the freest form of social organisation would be a society composed of self-managing communes with collective use of the means of production, organised democratically and using consensus decision-making, and related to other communes through federation. In anarchist communism there would be no money but everyone would have free access to the resources and surplus of the commune. Anarchist communism is thus said to operate on a gift economy.

Collectivism

Collectivist anarchism is similar to anarchist communism, except for the fact that in collectivism workers would be compensated for their work on the basis of the amount of time they contributed to production, rather than goods being distributed "according to need" as in anarcho-communism. Some collectivist anarchists do not oppose the use of currency. Some support workers being paid based on the amount of

time they contributed to production. These salaries would be used to purchase commodities in a communal market.

Anarcho-syndicalism

Syndicalism focuses on radical trade unions as a potential force for revolutionary social change, seeking to replace capitalism and the state with a new society that is democratically self-managed by the workers. Important principles include workers' solidarity, direct action (such as general strikes and workplace recuperations) and workers' self-management. Syndicalism is sometimes seen as simply a specific strategic focus within communist or collectivist anarchism as opposed to a distinct type of anarchism in itself.

Insurrectionary Anarchism

On the other hand, Insurrectionary Anarchism opposes formal organizations such as labor unions and federations that are based on a political programme and periodic congresses. Instead, insurrectionary anarchists support informal organization and small affinity group-based organization. Insurrectionary anarchists put value in attack, permanent class conflict, and a refusal to negotiate or compromise with class enemies.

Contemporary insurrectionary anarchism most often inherits the views and tactics of anti-organizationalist anarcho-communism.

Anarcha-feminism

Anarcha-feminism is a form of anarchism that synthesizes radical feminism and anarchism and views patriarchy (male domination over women) as one of the (or the) primary dominations. Anarcha-feminism was inspired in the late 19th century by the writings of early feminist anarchists such as Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre. Anarcha-feminists, like other radical feminists, criticize and advocate the abolition of traditional conceptions of family, education and gender roles and believe that the feminist struggle against sexism and patriarchy is an essential component of the anarchist struggle. Susan Brown put it: "as anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist".

Green Anarchism

Green anarchism (or eco-anarchism) is a school of thought within anarchism that puts an emphasis on environmental issues. Green anarchists often criticize the main currents of anarchism for their focus and debates about politics and economics instead of a focus on ecosystems.

Anarcho-primitivism

Anarcho-primitivism is an anarchist critique of the origins and progress of civilization. According to anarcho-primitivism, the shift from hunter-gatherer

to agricultural subsistence gave rise to social stratification, coercion, and alienation. Anarcho-primitivists advocate a return to non-civilized ways of life through deindustrialisation, abolition of the division of labour or specialization, and abandonment of large-scale organization technologies. There are other non-anarchist forms of primitivism, and not all primitivists point to the same phenomenon as the source of modern, civilized problems.

Primitivism is seem as extreme by some anarchists, but it does provide a useful counterbalance to the cheerful Industrial Revolution optimism expressed by the late 19th and early 20th Century anarchists like Peter Kropotkin that technology and technological progress are inherently liberatory and should be pursued by anarchists in a post-revolutionary society.

Post-structuralist Anarchism/Post-anarchism

The prefix "post-" does not mean 'after' here, but refers to the challenging, and disruption, of assumptions within frameworks that emerged during the Enlightenment era. This means a basic rejection of some of the essentialist or reductionist notions of traditional anarchism. It argues that capitalism and the state are not the only sources of domination in the time in which we live, and that new approaches need to be developed to combat the network-type structures of domination that characterize late modernity.

Synthesism/Anarchism without Adjectives/ Type 3 Anarchism

Anarchism without adjectives is an attitude that tolerates the coexistence of different anarchist schools. It emphasizes harmony between various anarchist factions and attempts to unite them around their shared anti-authoritarian beliefs. Rudolf Rocker said that the different types of anarchism presented "only different methods of economy, the practical possibilities of which have yet to be tested, and that the first objective is to secure the personal and social freedom of men no matter upon which economics basis this is to be accomplished."

It is important to note that a large number of self-defined anarchists might use more than one of these labels to describe themselves depending on what they were doing or what kinds of group structures they find themselves operating in: some anarchists prefer durable, structured groups where members commit to certain ideological and tactical principles; others prefer more flexible, small-scale affinity groups that come and go as needed. Often, members of these latter groups express concerns about how formal organisation can tend towards bureaucracy and the perpetuation of the life of the group for its own sake. There are a number of other types of so-called anarchism that are problematic. Perhaps the worst of

these is anarcho-capitalism—an oxy-moronic view stemming from the belief expressed by some, that personal freedom entails being free to compete in a capitalist-type market.

> *and* *individualist anarchism:* the idea that the individual is the real base for all decisions (although society tries to hide that fact), and that society (as understood through law, education, morality, religion, ideology, etc) has either little use or no use (except as a hindrance to the desires of individuals). Individualists de-emphasize the importance of revolution (as a single event that radically changes everything for the better), since revolutions tend to just install new leaders, and recommend slow, experientially based change instead. This covers wide territory, and many individualists disagree with each other.
>
> Also, post-left anarchy and post-anarchy have real similarities, since both are updating classical anarchist thinking using the work of philosophers like Stirner, Nietzsche, the Frankfurt School, etc.

Is there an anarchist definition of class?

I have broken this down by different ideas on this question among anarchists, since they are many.

1. Many anarchists accept Marx's analysis of the classes into which society is separated (even if they argue that class composition has shifted since then) as being based on relations to the means of production; they accept the argument for the proletariat as revolutionary subject, and so on. This seems to be the predominant definition, but only when one looks at the most official anarchists (who are actually a minority of anarchists).

2. Many anarchists accept the sociological definition of class, even if they also accept the Marxist definition. This definition of class is the stance of most of the government (its institutions, economists, the educational system, etc). It is the idea of stratification on the basis of relative income, completely ignoring the relations to means of production (which according to Marxists are the basis for the common class interests of people who earn vastly different incomes, and antagonisms between individuals who earn relatively similar incomes). This idea of class is problematic to most Marxists and many anarchists because it turns the proletariat against itself and

produces a false understanding of the way capitalism functions. But for better or worse many anarchists are very influenced by this definition of class.

3. There are some new and interesting definitions or interpretations of class (the developers of these being mostly more Marxist than anarchist):

* *Jacques Camatte, coming from a Marxist background, argues that the class distinction is diffused in late capitalism through the total domestication of humans and the establishment of a capitalist human community. This does not mean there are not classes, but their conflict is pacified and their relations are shifted. The relevant conflict (if any) comes to be between humans and capital or individuals and their own domestication, rather than between proletariat and bourgeoisie.*

* *The Invisible Committee has said something similar to Camatte but different. One way they put it is the conflict is now between those who refuse work and those who want to work.*

* *The proletariat defined as the dispossessed. This is the original definition of the term and it is there in Marx but there's a shift in significance from the industrial proletariat (which in Marx's context was the position most former peasants dispossessed of their land found themselves in) to more accurately reflect the context in "post-industrial" societ-*

ies where surplus populations have become much larger since technological progress gradually displaces the need for human labor.

4. Many anarchists accept the Marxist definition of class but not the centrality of its importance.

5. Some anarchists are not revolutionaries. Shocking I know, but definitely true.

In sum, anarchists are too diverse in economic thought to be pigeonholed in this, and for the most part have not developed economic theory independent of Marxism, even if they feel free (a very common tendency for anarchists) to adapt, reject, intersect, play with, or diminish the importance of what they've inherited from the old man. Could any anarchist definition of class be developed that escapes entirely from Marxism (especially as this, whatever faults it may have, is based on real situations that persist today even if in different forms)? I doubt it—except, of course, in the very course of the abolition of the class society that Marx set himself to describing. To actually realize this abolition in practice so that new relations can flourish is, of course, a worthwhile task which generations of anarchists have striven for—much more so, I would argue, than Marxists as a whole.

All else being equal, isn't violence inherently antithetical to anarchy?

Generally things aren't equal but if they were... Doesn't violence by one person against an equal imply power–over them and thus a basic kind of hierarchical relationship?

Violence is a pretty loaded word. The violence of me punching you in the nose is different from the violence of dropping a bomb on a village or starving an entire category of humans. One of those violences is not antithetical to anarchy. The other clearly is. The family of ideas and activities implied by the term "violence" makes it unusable during most conversations that anarchists would want to have about a better world, or about anarchist ideas.

Regarding the violence of punching each other in the nose, the instinct to do so is a pretty strong one. Perhaps even a fundamental one. If (or since) that is the case then violence is part of being a person. The desire for violence, the belief that "something" is solved with interpersonal violence, is probably part of the human project. If violence is human AND the desire to live without coercion and "power over" is human then the only thing that is antithetical to humans is humans. Which is probably a fair assessment of our current condition.

One last note. *bolo'bolo* has a nice section about

conflict in a different world that may be worth quoting:

yaka: Every ibu (individual) can challenge any other ibu or a larger community to a duel, according to those rules.

It may be possible to agree to terms by which conflict is human scale and, perhaps, includes consensual violence. Scale is a huge factor in these questions.

How do anarchists define violence?

Violence is physical (sometimes emotional) pain inflicted on a living being (or beings).

Property destruction is usually not considered violence.

Some people see a grey area when property destruction is committed against people who are poor (more poor than usual?), As this could be considered bad for people's health (poverty is the biggest health risk, as we all know).

This definition (violence is only against living beings) is ok as far as it goes, but to me it seems to

have humanist roots, which i disagree with. But perhaps that is the beginning of another question.

Some anarchists define what anarchists (and other militants) do as self defense, vs the violence of our daily lives inflicted by the state and capitalism.

Where do anarchists place scientists in society?

It occurred to me that scientists don't fit well into the proletarian or bourgeoisie classes—because they don't own the means of production. Furthermore scientists don't really produce anything except information, so are they part of the service sector? I suppose what I am asking is: since scientists take highly technical equipment and turn it into data and theories, how do you envision scientists and scientific communities working in an anarchist society.

If I understand the main thrust of your question, you want to know how anarchist class

enk

analysis categorizes scientists. There isn't a single answer. Many anarchists would take a marxian class analysis, in which scientists would probably be considered petit-bourgeois. However, anarchists are often critical of many aspects of marxist theory, including its class analysis. Your example of scientists is one example that in many cases there are economic classes that exist today that do not easily fit into the bourgeois-proletariat model.

Instead of relying on an understanding of class that is a century and a half-old, many anarchists analyze different economic classes in terms of how they help to reproduce the state *and* capital. Scientific pursuits are usually funded by the institutions we hate such as militaries or pharmaceutical companies, and as such serve the interests of state and capital. Some anarchists, especially animal liberationists, directly intervene against scientific activity.

I will concede that it is possible that activities we call science could exist in hypothetical anarchist societies. Some anarchists have conjectured what science might be like in an anarchist society. One conception is that scientists would cease to exist as a distinct class as scientific knowledge and equipment become the domain of all people. Kropotkin was a biologist, and a lot of contemporary anarchist ideas about science originate with him. However, contemporary an-

archists are often far more critical of science than our 19th century forbears. I fall into this camp. I hope that contemporary anarchists who are "pro-science" at least take these critical perspectives into account.

What about technology?

Some of the answers to the question on scientists is also appropriate here.

Some anarchists believe that technology is theoretically neutral, and that appropriate societies will develop appropriate technology. this definition of technology is basically no different from that for tools (things that people use to solve problems).

Other people, including many green anarchists (and all primitivists) see technology as one of the ways of formulating the problems that technology is then supposed to solve… ie there is a deeper philosophical challenge to the culture, a reciprocity between things and processes and people…

(That said, i am obviously biased towards the latter position. so perhaps someone who is not will also have a go at answering this.)

What is wrong with the concept of rights?

Do rights always and everywhere flow from the state? Don't some rights (ideally) protect one from the state? Human rights as opposed to legal rights say? Isn't it OK to have some basic standards for our treatment of one another and can't that be totally independent of the concept of the state? And, finally, can't new rights take political/social space away from the state and capital? For example wouldn't the concept of housing as a basic human right take some space away from the idea that property rights should be primary and form the foundation of the social order?

Can the concept of desire replace the concept of rights? What are the implications of this? If it doesn't replace this concept what are some of the consequences of eliminating a discourse of rights? How does one talk about the importance of people's access to basic resources or the importance of eliminating torture (for example) outside of this discourse.

Rights always come from the state. The idea that rights should be written into law was developed when people were so pissed about getting stepped on and ruled over by sovereign powers that the governments had to do something. So they made a tremendous shift into a system of politics called liberalism (not the same as liberalism as in liberal vs. conservative or liberal vs. maoist) in which

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the law recognizes the rights of citizens. These laws serve to not only convince citizens that they aren't going to be stepped on as hard but also to ensure that people will appeal for recognition of their rights to the state or for a change in the rights written in law, rather than revolt when they have grievances.

It is a remarkably successful system, in which revolt now tends to happen only when the system is clearly fucking people over and clearly not going to change itself. Even then, revolt can be settled by implementing some larger systematic change or having a revolutionary government take over.

Anarchists do not want protection from the state. Or, to put it another way, a truly anarchist life guarantees that one will not be promised protection by the state, and instead punished by it. The state offers protection to (certain normal, decent, law-abiding, good, productive, etc) citizens in exchange for their preservation, reproduction, and reformation of the status quo.

An alternative understanding would be that rights are first and foremost inherent to our being human, and only secondly is this 'real' human essence recognized by the state. I would reject this because no one can point to the existence of these essential rights except in the writings of law (whether international or national). There isn't an inherent human essence, or if there

is it would be a highly paradoxical, enigmatic "thing". To appeal (to the state) for the establishment of greater rights does not "take away space" from the state. It would seem that only revolt can actually wrench spaces from state control, but even then, state-forms manage to creep in through the back door (the implementation of self-management among the insurgents).

As for alternative discourse, I don't see the need for one. For anyone to actually achieve the essence of what you are talking about—to live free of the domination of state and capital in their lives—they would have to live fighting against domination and not appeal to it to recognize the importance of their needs or how cruel torture is. In other words, they would have to become a non-subject. And only subjects can have rights.

Anarchy vs. Anarchism?

Is there a difference? If so, what's the difference? Can some-one adhere to anarchy but not anarchism, and vice versa?

Very simply, "anarchy" is descriptive of a human being, or a group of humans, who live without hierarchy (social control & power). A way of life most conducive to choices on behalf of life itself. Beyond that, I don't believe it could really be said to have any crystalline character to what it is or could be.

Anarchism is a distinct array of political ideas, ideolo-gies, literature, and just generally intellectual or prac-tical pursuits composed by a diverse milieu, as well as tradition, of people who oppose hierarchy *on prin-ciple* and have largely given themselves the task of expounding, illustrating, as well as demonstrating the values (namely anarchy) that result from those prin-ciples. Anarchism exists in a world where it is truly unwelcome and this divorces anarchism from even the horizon of anything like a way of life it envisions itself as belonging to. And so anarchism is also definitely a conceit which often betrays itself as such.

In the interest of relating the site's content back to itself I'll refer to another answer given to a similar question:

"Anarchism is a political philosophy that aspires to a

world without the State and without exchange relations [relations dominated by the market and economic value]. It is both the negative idea that there is a laundry list of ideas, practices, and values in our current society to be against and the positive idea that what is most "us" about us (as living creatures) should be free to pursue its own ends without coercion or constraint.

Anarchism is also a variable. It means many different things to different people. This open nature serves as a counter-point to ideas that are connected to specific thinkers or traditions in that, while there is a tradition, and there are important thinkers, there is also a lot of room for *you* to write your own page to the story. To apply the variable to your own life.

Anarchism is also a constraint. For many, if not most, anarchists there is a central concept that the ends do -not- justify the means, or put more gently, that an anarchist practice must embed the values and ideas of a future anarchist society. This means that anarchists are often broken into parts. One part acts against the constraints of this world. The other part constrains themselves by an ethical ruler the calibration of which is in a foreign unit."

How do you respond to people who think that Somalian society is "anarchy"?

The problem is that technically they are correct; Somalia has been without a functioning government and state for over a decade.

One response to that observation is that there are no anarchists in Somalia (at least none that we've heard about), and that the state there was deliberately destroyed not by anarchists, but by the US military, and the US military is neither a humanitarian nor a progressive outfit.

Anarchists and other anti-state radicals would have destroyed the Somali state in order to liberate the Somalis from government, all the while encouraging Somalis to remember how to go about organizing themselves to fulfill their own needs outside the realm of capitalism and statecraft.

The destruction of government in a situation where class domination still exists means the nakedly oppressive rule of the most powerful class without any pretense to legitimate authority (like parliamentary democracy or something similarly goofy): in other words "warlords" and "pirates." The destruction of governments and states needs to include the destruction of all institutionalized hierarchies (class-based, gender-based, ethnicity-based, etc)—other-

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wise all you get is the brutal chaos seen in Somalia, parts of Haiti, parts of Afghanistan...

What are the advantages of anarchy for a society over any form of government?

Governments are all about representation—they claim to work in the name of, and to the benefit of, the people they govern. Aside from the majority of the time when that is a lie (ie when   the government is motivated by corruption, incompetence, conflicting agendas, etc), even in the best case scenarios, what representation does is to deny and prohibit people's agency, our willingness and capacity to act for ourselves, based on our own understanding of what is the right thing to do, and when, and to or with whom, etc.
The situation in Louisiana with Hurricane Katrina is a classic case in point. Police and military did not act in the interest of the hurricane survivors, and tried to stop people from helping each other.

Why does capitalism rely on the State?

Because, being based an an accumulation of capital (ie wealth) into the hands of a few people at the expense of the rest, it requires the accumulation of power into the hands of a few people operating through a system of institutions of domination in order to protect the accumulation of wealth. This system of institutions of domination is what constitutes the state, and without it, the accumulation of capital necessary to capitalism would be implausible, if not impossible, simply because people wouldn't be that likely to put up with it.

How can private property be abolished without any authority to abolish it with?

One simple answer: private property cannot be maintained without authority to maintain it, because people would immediately appropriate what they need, and the force of law, police, etc

would not be there to stop them. It is through these forms of state power that owners are currently able to combat activities such as theft, squatting/trespassing, etc, thereby keeping these activities relatively in check, ie maintaining their property.

Of course there are privately-owned security forces, police, armies, prisons, etc. "Anarcho"-capitalists feel entitled to call themselves such because they don't consider these to be forms of government. (They also have a funny definition of capitalism.) To my mind these examples just demonstrate a different form of governmental power in which it is more transparent that the rich have hired mercenaries (a condition somewhat obscured by the liberal form of government).

Private property itself functions as a form of authority in that there is an authority held over individuals by the sanctity of property. In this approach, one might view the forms taken by society to enforce property as a social/material actuation of this ideological system. This helps explain the existence of the moral systems in which people believe it is wrong to infringe on property rights and so on—what we experience is not simply a world full of private property that we cannot access because it is protected by armed guards (as some anarchists portray it). This is true, but it is also a world in which most people truly believe in the existing system and in a whole lot

of unquestioned abstractions which they hold to be irreproachable, and without these beliefs the armed guards would be nothing.

As for how private property can be abolished: The 1st paragraph might make it seems as if the abolition of the state would necessarily lead to the abolition of private property through appropriation. However, just as anarchists reject the idea of using authoritarian measures to abolish private property, we also reject the idea that what we want is *simply* a matter of abolishing the government, that "everything else" will follow from there. Anarchists are, after all, opposed to all forms of authority, and generally do not believe in confronting them in separation from one another. Most anarchists would probably agree that private property can be abolished through the insurrection of self-actualized individuals and collectivities that organize without authority between each other nor between themselves and any higher powers (state, god, property, etc) to free their lives from the systems that have dominated them. This effort of making our lives our own (of appropriating them) is from a certain viewpoint the abolition of private property, although it may be much more as well. It may involve a lot of willpower, but by no means requires authority—in fact, I'd argue that authority as I define it can only be a fetter to this effort.

What does Nietzsche have to do with anarchism?

I have seen anarchists talk about Nietzsche, and there seems to be a new fad of anarcho-nihlism. Yet Nietzsche himself spoke quite negatively about anarchists, and many of his ideas seem quite counter to anarchism (as practiced in the US). So what does Nietzsche's nihilism have in common with anarchism, and what does he have to offer anarchist practice?

First: Nietzsche and nihilism… Nietzsche's positions on nihilism were complex, and it could be argued that he was a nihilist, or at least aimed to be one.

Nietzsche saw nihilism as the most extreme form of pessimism, something that comes from weariness and an alienation from values. When one can recognize the existing value systems as meaningless and empty, and not replace it with anything, they become nihilistic. He saw nihilism as both positive and negative, as "…one of the greatest crises, a moment of the deepest self-reflection of humanity. Whether man recovers from it, whether he becomes master of this crisis, is a question of his strength!"

I think that it is helpful to first point out the two different types of nihilism you find in his works, passive nihilism and active nihilism. The passive nihilist is the one who could not recover from this crisis. It is a state in which a person, having recognized that

all external values are empty, with no true authority, begins to find their own internal values meaningless, giving up their own authority. With all sense of authority gone one gives in to the spirit of hopelessness and fatalism, ridding themselves of all responsibility. They withdraw from the world, give up.

But it is possible (Nietzsche argues that it is entirely desirable) that this recognition of external value systems as meaningless can give way to a sense of rebelliousness and strength. This active nihilist seeks to destroy any and all remaining traces of an empty value system. The strength of one's will is tested by whether or not it can recognize all value systems as empty and meaningless, yet admit that these lies arise out of the ego and serve a purpose; whether one can recognize that value is necessary for life while denying the existence of any universal truth.

Nietzsche saw this nihilism as a means to achieving an end, not an end in and of itself. It is simply one step in the revaluation of values. Nihilism is necessary to destroy what exists now in order to create a place in which the ego/the will can truly take power and assert itself fully.

As anarchists we are fighting to rid ourselves of the existing value systems (the capitalist values of "money above all", the Christian values of "self-sacrifice, and god above all", etc), and many of us already feel

that alienation from these values. What we can take from his active nihilism is the deconstructive nature that gives way to construction, a destruction that strengthens and empowers. The realization that we need not only destroy what exists, but transcend it. Nietzsche calls anarchists (and Christians) out on their apparent inability to do this: "There is a perfect likeness between Christian and anarchist: their object, their instinct, points only toward destruction.... both are decadents; both are incapable of any act that is not disintegrating, poisonous, degenerating, blood sucking; both have an instinct of mortal hatred of everything that stands up, and is great, and has durability, and promises life a future." However, I don't think that this is permanent.

Second: What anarchists can learn from Nietzsche's rejection of slave morality.

Anarchists are some of the strongest adherents to the slave morality; Nietzsche even said so outright. Our whole outlook on life, the way in which we function within this world is based upon reaction, resentment. We view people/events/etc through the eye of "good vs evil". We look for that which is "evil" (capitalism, police, etc) and define anything that isn't that as "good". We do not spend much time focusing on that which is "good", but are obsessed with the "evil", we revolve our ideals/projects/lives around it. How is the

US anarchist idea of "evil" much different than Christian sin or devil; how different is the anarchists' end of capitalism from the Christian apocalypse, anarchist ideals from heaven? We have become the perfect (pitiful) disciples of our own slave morality.

And while Nietzsche argues that all morality is something to be destroyed, if anarchists are going to have a morality we would have something to learn from the master morality. Maybe we would get somewhere constructive with our ideas if we began focusing on what was "good" for us, what bettered us, our projects, our aims is certainly more productive that focusing on what is not our enemies, labeling all that is opposed to our enemies as "good", spending our time dissecting "evil", learning about "evil" in order to learn what is not evil, to better understand how we can be not "evil". But we could strive to go beyond morality entirely...

I think that Nietzsche's critiques of anarchism can be taken as constructive criticism, and can be learned from. I do not know much about anarcho-nihilism, but I hope that it does not fall into the pit of passivity.

> I appreciate most of this response, KD, but this here got my goat:
> *Anarchists are some of the strongest ad-*
> *herents to the slave morality, Nietzsche even said*

so outright. Our whole outlook on life, the way in which we function within this world is based upon reaction, resentment. We view people/events/etc through the eye of "good vs evil".

Wow. first of all, you sound like you are speaking for (all) anarchists. Then, as part of that, you state that (all) anarchists see things through a moralistic lens of 'good vs evil'. And I thought morals were a concept placed above oneself, which one must (or at least should) defer to. The very antithesis of what anarchy means to me.

Maybe I misunderstood something.

> You're right, I make some sweeping gen- **kd**
> eralizations in that answer. I did lump all
> anarchists into that category.
>
> I know that many individual anarchists actively do, or aim to, see the world through a lens free of such morality. I find this to be totally desirable and I appreciate that you are among those.
>
> However, 'anarchism' as both an 'ism' and a culture does have a morality, and a strong one at that.

Are there any critiques of capital that emphasize the individual?

It would be nice to have more familiarity with such critiques to be able to easily dispense with anti-capitalism = collectivism arguments.

European individualist anarchism tends to be highly influenced by semi-aristocratic libertarian thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Stirner. One of the most important causes that those thinkers are for is individual authenticity and sincerity. So this is why for example Nietzsche has been influential in something like the marxist Frankfurt School.

The Frankfurt School might base some of its economics in marxism (mainly the critique of the commodity form) but it is not hard to find in it highly individualistic citations relevant to our consumer society such as this:

> *The man with leisure has to accept what the culture manufacturers offer him. Kant's formalism still expected a contribution from the individual, who was thought to relate the varied experiences of the senses to fundamental concepts; but industry robs the individual of his function. Its prime service to the customer is to do his shcematizing*

> *for him...There is nothing left for the consumer to classify.*
>
> Adorno and Horkheimer.
> The dialectic of the enlightenment.

And another:

> *In the culture industry the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standarization of the means of production. He is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned.*   [ibid]

My thought is that as commercialism advances, the mediocrity and the homogenizing grows. Even in small non-capitalist markets such as artisan markets one has the constraint on personality and real emotions that entails having to sell in order to make enough for survival. The famous phrase "the customer is allways right" shows this. Now as we enter the capitalist market space the prospective employee has to sell herself/himself, dress a certain way in order to sell an image. At the top of all this we have the marketing technologues who have to learn some form of psychology in order to learn the art of selling things no matter if they like something or agree with something as long as the pay is good.

As far as anarchism specifically a good essay on these themes is "The Soul of Man in Socialism" by

Oscar Wilde. In it he puts forward this kind of view:

> *With the abolition of private property, then, we shall have true, beautiful, healthy Individualism. Nobody will waste his life in accumulating things, and the symbols for things. One will live. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all.*

Italian Individualist insurrectionist Renzo Novatore admired Wilde highly and so went as far as to put him in his personal list of great individuals:

> *Individualism is its own end. Minds atrophied by (Herbert) Spencer's positivism still go on believing that they are individualists without noticing that their venerated teacher is the ultimate anti-individualist, since he is nothing more than a radical monist, and, as such, the passionate lover of unity and the sworn enemy of particularity...But not because he has understood the anti-collectivist, anti-social singularities capable of higher activities of the spirit, of emotion and of heroic and uninhibited strength. He hates the state, but does not penetrate or understand the mysterious, aristocratic, vagabond, rebel individual!*
> *And from this point of view, I don't know*

> *why that flabby charlatan, that failed an-*
> *thropologist, bloated more and more with*
> *the sociology of Darwin, Comte, Spencer*
> *and Marx, who has spread filth over the*
> *giants of Art and Thought like Nietzsche,*
> *Stirner, Ibsen, Wilde, Zola, Huysman, Ver-*
> *laine, Mallarmé, etc., that charlatan called*
> *Max Nordau; I repeat, I cannot explain to*
> *myself why he hasn't also been called an*
> *Individualist... since, like Spencer, Nordau*
> *also fights the state.*

So it is clear there are strong reasons why individual-
ists have been againts markets and of course their
more totalitarian form, capitalism. I think also the
Situationist International delved in an important way
in all of this. In a book of Michel Onfray called "La
sculpture de soi: la morale esthétique" (the sculpture
of oneself) briefly in some part he finds a relationship
with some important aspects of Stirner philosophy
with what the Situationist International spoke about.

When (if ever) is coercion an appropriate choice for an anarchist?

In an ideal world, persuasion and discussion would settle all things, but my ideal world has no room for ten hour consensus meeting more than maybe once per lifetime. Lump that with the fact that my ideal world is one of many, and they don't all fit together like a nice jigsaw puzzle of anarchyland.

If we are assuming that the dirty grit of the real world in the here and now will be present in whatever other realities we create (meaning that they are non–utopic), where does coercion come in to play? At what point does it cross the line in to domination?

I'm not sure that I wouldn't put discussion outside of the category of coercion. Depends on the situation.

dot

The line between persuasion and coercion is a lot murkier than it seems to be, once one starts questioning things like why some people's skill sets are more highly valued than others (talking over fist-fighting, for example). I have seen plenty of verbal arguments finished where one person was just more stubborn than the other, not that either had been convinced (or convincing)...

To me, as a working premise, domination is a question of scale and reification. If one person always argues circles around me without taking my con-

cerns into account and I don't want to or can't beat them up, then I will just try to avoid them, or have someone else deal with them. If I cannot do that because there is a whole apparatus in place (like the police, to be simplistic), then I think that can be called domination, especially if the apparatus is always composed of the same people, or the same kind of people (whatever "kind" might mean in a given situation).

Edit: to be clearer—I think 10 hour meetings are absolutely coercive. You have to continue talking to people in a specific format (meeting procedures) in order to make decisions that impact your life? Or risk having things come up that effect you without having any input? No.

Does anarchy mean that I can't try to coerce people or only that they're free to walk away if I do?

Anarchy means you are welcome to try to coerce people, if that is what you choose to do. It also means those people are welcome to walk

ing

away without paying you any mind, or, should you be insistent in your attempts to coerce, to punch you in the throat and then go on their way.

It might be unpopular to try to openly coerce others into acting against their will, but that doesn't mean that people will suddenly all stop doing so, or that there will be some law prohibiting coercion. Rather, if we believe the anthropologists, coercion would be countered with shaming about such behavior through things like mild needling and teasing, sarcasm, etc.

To whit, coercion would likely be countered with coercion. Problem? No, not necessarily. The issue is one of power. Anarchy is a delicate balance of societal needs and individual wants, and of individual needs and societal wants. Ideally things would be settled by persuasion as opposed to coercion, but that is talking about ideals, which hold very little when dealing in real lives and desires.

Perhaps as a counter argument, I would ask, why attempt to coerce as opposed to persuade? There are times where both are appropriate, in my mind, but I would much rather create a new question than authoritatively circumscribe that exploration.

coercion

Why are anarchists against hierarchy?

Why exactly is hierarchy bad?

To the extent that hierarchy is bad (there is a question of semantics here—see below), it's because it encourages (or forces) people into situations where they feel (or are) not responsible for their own lives and actions. The military is full of extreme examples of people doing things that ruin the rest of their lives because they were ordered to (not just by their commanding officer, but by an entire social system that a) tells them they should be ordered, and b) forces them into situations like the military to be able to survive).

Some people don't put the issue in hierarchy, but in domination, and argue that some amount of hierarchy is not a problem, as long as it's not institutionalized... Like, it's ok if people pay more attention to you when regarding something that you're known to be good at. The problem, for example, comes when you get to start making people do things.

I think the valid critique that people bring to this question is that of relationship, and the idea that we are all in some kind of hierarchical relationship all the time (a la Foucault), that power flows between people all the time, and that to resist hierarchy is to resist relationships... So the issue becomes one of context and

degree, rather than simply a binary one.

If I may, I would alter your question to read: Why is hierarchy considered to be detrimental to the positive principles of anarchism like mutual aid, direct action, and voluntary cooperation? With a simple understanding of what those principles are and what they look like, the question almost answers itself.

law

I would wholeheartedly agree with dot that it's a question of the institutionalization of hierarchy rather than hierarchy itself that is the problem, so a better way of discussing this issue is to call the problem domination—or if you're feeling philosophical, call it *Herrschaft*, because all the really heavy philosophical shit sounds especially heavy in German.

hierarchy

I imagine a "hierarchy" in a simplified sense as a pyramid where each individual exists as a block in the structure: the closer your block's position to the top, the less pressure you feel upon yourself and the more pressure you put on others. The pressure symbolizes authority. So this highly unequal distribution of force predictably breeds institutionalized privilege, envy, and competition for dominance, at bare minimum because of a want to escape the pressure. It seems like the privilege and envy,

alc

pain and fear, keep hierarchical institutions reproducing (as well as of course indoctrination, propaganda, denial, eradication of alternatives, addiction, etc, but those complicate the metaphor). At the same time, the pyramidal structure contains everyone in it, top to bottom, and this containment exerts pressure as well on everyone.

Now, beyond just intentions, and the way that power corrupts, we can emphasize the consequences of structures of hierarchical control, how they create incentives toward exploitation and obstacles toward accountability, and how such systems by definition entail finite positions of superior privilege and inferior classes held in subordination. Power hierarchies mean that those most allowed to change the status quo have the most investment in preserving it—their power, prestige, profit, etc. rely upon the disempowered not taking back their usurped initiative. Oftentimes even the mildest managerialism snowballs away from accountability and toward authoritarianism through "emergency" justifications that never roll back.

Systems that allow for and emphasize the role of hierarchical power have totalitarian tendencies. They have pyramidal structures, stacked ranks, centralized power, vertical organization. Their officials give commands supported by threats. This creates a delicate stability through a shared fear of repression.

In this spirit, their decision-making tends to utilize massive restriction and coercion, representation, assimilation, and manipulation by force or by fraud. They develop impersonal bureaucracy, standardization, and conformity. But other and contrary types of relations and organizing exist, such as collaborative self-determination between peers, the kind that anarchists propose.

Power hierarchies undermine communication. Hagbard's Law shows that in a truly pyramidal structure, where authority figures create order through threats, subordinates tend to tell their superiors merely what the superiors want to hear. This filtering multiplies to the degree of verticality, by each level of mediation in that structure. Those at the top therefore lose connection from the reality below them. The (mis)information the authorities receive appeals to their confirmation bias (the things they want to hear), resulting in misguided intentions cloaked in truth, shielded by mistaken confidence, and armed with monopoly, allowing for no opposition. And so, because of the one-way decision-making and the filtered awareness, if those at the top of the pyramid actually made a deliberate attempt to represent the subordinates, they would tend toward a misrepresentation made invisible to themselves.

If people possess the critical thinking and charac-

ter assessment skills to recognize in an authority the ways to lead competent, benevolent lives, why must we have to delegate this capacity outside of ourselves? Why do we need them to run our lives if we can tell how our lives should be run? And however will the disempowered find freedom, if in each instance where authoritarians act on behalf of the disempowered, to shape or shield or crush them, the will of the disempowered continually atrophies from lack of exercise? How else will the disempowered find freedom, if not in seizing the direction of their own lives, the very act that the authoritarians deny them? Stratification of power only exacerbates the predicament. We alone experience the peculiar circumstances of our situation. We alone bear the history of our aspirations and sorrows, our passions and eccentricities, our capacities and limitations. Our lived experience grants us more qualification at determining our path than any speculating manager could ever dream of. Further empowered by collaboration with one's peers, people can experience authentic freedom, and not the sad farce of begging those in power for mercy.

People may voluntarily seek for themselves a leader to guide them, but when they deny others the ability to live autonomously, it results in nothing but tyranny, no matter how many smily faces the tyranny hides

behind. Those of us who by conscience refuse systems of hierarchical power will not voluntarily choose to opt-in and cannot opt-out without severe punishment. Those in power promise us the world but by design they must keep our lives out of our own hands, and regardless of whether or not they make decisions I would endorse—which they don't—I find the method irreconcilable with my conscience and my aspirations. And that is the inequality and the abusiveness of the "power" I refer to, that is the mechanics intrinsic to hierarchal order.

What makes someone an anarchist?

If anarchists disagree with each other so much, how do you tell who is one, and who isn't?

Rejection of capitalism and the state (among other things - but the core points are being against political and economic hierarchies).
As long as there's agreement on those two points, there's anarchism.

Some of those other things to consider are work and civilization. **frz**

Yep! And opposition to forms of, ah, "social domination" I guess you could say—institutional and individual racism, sexism, heterosexism, et cetera... **rby**
But I think these things come as very slightly secondary to capitalism and the state. If an anarchist happens to be kind of a sexist douche, they wouldn't necessarily be called "not an anarchist" but maybe "not an anarchist I would like to be around". On the other hand, if someone were to defend the necessity or desirability of some level of capitalism or statehood, then people would probably be pretty quick to say that that person is not an anarchist at all.

The following test is remarkably accurate: **ank**
1. Does the person in question consider him or herself to be an anarchist?
2. If the person in question encounters another randomly-selected anarchist, is the latter likely to want to attack the former if they have a fairly comprehen-

sive knowledge of their ideas and actions?
If the answers are "yes" to 1 and "no" to 2, the person in question is an anarchist. Otherwise, they are not.

What's the general attitude anarchists have of neighborhood/ community watch organizations?

In my experience, neighborhood watch programs are really nothing more than narcs, off-duty police, superiority-complex-ridden people that try to be police, and then the occasional person who just wants to make sure no one is being harmed. It's this last group of people that give me hope for watches, and I think community watches can fit nicely with anarchism; it's volunteer, there are different watchers every night (or week or whatever), and no one has authority over others. The Highway Helpers in Iowa and other states are

45

Don't forget—a neighborhood might need a fire watch, a medical watch, a kiddy watch… a garden watch in freezing weather if folks are away… there are a lot of negative connotations because of the way it gets used. That doesn't keep us from using it for constructive purposes… Old folk hasn't been seen in a few days? Did s/he fall down and get hurt? **bla**

I mean, as of right now, the term "neighborhood watch" carries a lot of baggage— usually that of property owners, middle-class professionals, and small entrepreneurs banding together to keep certain elements out of their neighborhood. This usually translates to harassing poor **rby**

people, young people, and people of color (and especially combinations of the three).

But the organizational structure is plenty anarchistic *in theory*, sure. It's non-hierarchical and based on mutual aid. The problem is the context in which it occurs.

To clarify, when I say that "the organizational structure is plenty anarchistic", I mean it in the sense that you could use a similar organizational structure for wildly different things, such as the ones illustrated in Asker's comment—CopWatch, community defense committees, emergency response networks, etc.

The Neighborhood Watch, as it exists today, is obviously totally incompatible with any kind of anarchist society or organizing, but that much should be obvious since they're basically amateur cops.

To offer an alternative answer:

I can't really imagine how a neighborhood watch could ever be anything but a threat to us, much less a helpful aspect of an 'anarchist society.' It seems to me that even if the form a neighborhood watch took were totally inclusive, participatory, and whatever, that wouldn't matter. There are plenty of organizations that work like that, (rotary clubs, alcoholics anonymous, even some workplaces) but I would never think to link those organizations to

the anarchist project. In each case their purpose is opposed to mine or at least unrelated.

As far as I can tell, the purpose of a neighborhood watch is surveillance: they try to make sure that any crime that occurs in a certain area is observed, so that it will be easier for the police to deal with it. The assumption is that the neighborhood watch somehow has the ability to determine what behaviors are appropriate within a certain area (a side note: what the fuck is a neighborhood?).

In a situation where there are police available, people who do this are straight up snitches. In a situation without police, I guess they would simply be nosy assholes. I certainly can't think of any stateless group I have read about where people thought that one of their biggest problems is that people are committing crimes without being observed.

To complicate this, I can think of some situations where we might want to organize in a *somewhat* analogous way, given the reality that right now we live in a world with lots of enemies. For instance, copwatch, neighborhood defense committees, barricades—things that might help us keep police out of places...

Are anarchists egalitarians?

I read in an anarchist 101 type pamphlet that anarchists are egalitarians who seek the creation (in a long term and immediate sense) of egalitarian social relationships and equality between people. And yet in other places, I have read critiques of "equality" as an abstracting, limiting, and quantifying view of humanity tied to liberalism and capitalism. I understand anarchism to be a critique of capitalism and liberalism.

Egalitarianism and equality are not necessarily the same things in the way your are bringing them up. Egalitarianism as anarchists use it normally refers to social relations lacking coercive or rigidly hierarchical structures.

Often times when anarchists critique concepts of equality, they are referring to legal definitions of equality—affirmative action programs, state controlled redistribution of the wealth, and so forth. Often times equality as used in contemporary north american politics is either a code word for further state control or else is so detached of any real meaning (pay attention, if you can stomach it, to how campaigning politicians discuss equality for examples).

The critique of equality also extends to ideas that we should all have exactly the same social standing, which is both impossible and not really desirable. We are not all equal, but perhaps we can aim to live in ways where we don't dominate each other.

I would just like to add to ingrate's answer **dot** that while we could operate on the understanding that the anarchists who promote "egalitarian relationships" and "equality" are just using the words in a good way (usually under the rationale that they want to be able to speak to people who don't think about the nuances that ingrate explains), it is also reasonable to be suspicious of people who ignore the problems of words and concepts that are appealing in a repressive society, and to consider those people demagogues.

I think that perhaps the most important thing that anarchists do is to encourage a deep questioning of the things that people take for granted, *especially* things that people think of positively, like equality, love, freedom, etc.

People who play on those assumptions are usually trying to manipulate people, even/especially for "their own good."

I understand egalitarianism as either **alc**
(a) no one has a privilege that everyone else doesn't also have,

(b) everyone has direct access to what they need,

(c) everyone has direct input in decisions that affect them,

(d) diversity exists without power hierarchies and ex-

ploitation of labor.

Anthropologists distinguish between egalitarian societies, ranked societies, and class-based societies, and I find these distinctions useful. I don't like the term "equality" because to me it can too easily become a vehicle for authoritarian conformity.

Two texts I find useful here are "Egalitarian Societies" by James Woodburn, and "How Hunter-gatherers Maintained Their Egalitarian Ways" by Peter Gray, both available online.

The wikipedia entry for "egalitarianism" mentions one definition as "a social philosophy advocating the removal of economic inequalities among people or the decentralization of power", so we can see obvious parallels to anarchism.

What do anarchists mean by "equality"?

Usually when I hear people utter this term or see it on banners I understand it to mean equality of legal rights. This struggle is reformist by anarchist standards, as we oppose the state's laws, equal or not. Also, is this what the Circle E symbol is supposed to mean?

There are two broadly divergent tendencies in anarchist understandings of equality. In the first perspective associated with class struggle anarchism, equality is the utopian fantasy end-state that results from the glorious revolution. Without equality, revolution has no utopian dream to pursue, no raison d'etre. When the state and capital are banished to history all people will magically be equal in the absence of political and economic hierarchies and oppressions. We will thrive on the fantastic bounty that utopian dreams bestow upon us.

For other anarchists the insistence on equality is a deplorable belief in the weakness of humans, the drive to level everything and everyone to protect us from ourselves and the world, to hedge against risk. It is an abstraction that will occupy the vacant seat of the state, ensuring freedom from harms. It is an abandonment and a betrayal of our greatest abilities and dreams. It is settling for safety and repetition in the place of our passions, our greatness, our indomitable spirits, and a real and dangerous world. Equality is the exaltation of the herd where everyone stands on the same ground and where no one strays far from a dull and unexceptional pack.

What's the deal with feminism and anarchy?

What's the correlation between the two? I've heard some a-feminists say all anarchists are (or should be) feminists. Is patriarchy really that prevalent or that big of a problem? Feminism just seems like a whiny way of saying women need to be treated equally, yet differently and even better than men.

First—this question seems to be trolling, both in its language and in its content. But since this topic hasn't been fleshed out here much, I will continue on the premise of good faith. This answer is not going to be a tome, so it doesn't go into sufficient detail about the complexities around gender vs sex, etc...

a. Patriarchy is in fact that big of a problem. Women (and women-identified people, which includes tons of people, including entirely straight men in certain contexts) are still attacked as women, paid significantly less then men for the same type of work, devalued in many levels of society (politics, etc), ignored, trivialized, etc.

That is just on the bare surface level. If you consider patriarchy to be the thing that keeps us locked in a gender binary, which many feminists (and anarchists) do, then the fact that most of us don't get to have the kinds of relationships that we want, or be the people we want to be, regardless of our gender/

sex, is based on patriarchy.

b. There are at least as many kinds of feminists as there are of anarchists (probably more).

c. Since on one level feminists are saying that the standard way of doing things is a problem because of inherited and recreated hierarchies that don't allow people our full expression, then yes, feminism and anarchy can be seen as intimately related. On the other hand, some feminists just want more women in government, so those feminists have nothing in common with anarchists.

d. Calling feminists whiny makes me want to hit you in the face.

e. While identity politics (the idea that a particular identity is a fundamental issue that is worth organizing around—and can *be* organized around) has a lot of problems and weaknesses, it is one of the easiest ways to (start to) look at many of the inequities of the system we live in. Many people get to that stage and make a home there, replicating power trips that mirror (as in reverse-image) the dynamics in the larger society. Those people are particularly prone to contradictions in what they are asking for (treat me the same *and* treat me differently). But sometimes what appears to be a contradiction is actually someone taking into account the different contexts of women and men. For example, what self defense looks like

for women vs what it looks like for men can be significantly different, since women and men are mostly socialized with diametrically opposed understandings of physical violence.

"if you consider patriarchy to be the thing that keeps us locked in gender binary..."
I see most feminist responses to patriarchy as absolutely perpetuating the "gender" binary, just as patriarchy does. Some might see that as inherently wrapped up in the bogeyman of patriarchy, where everything that "results" from patriarchy is somehow explainable (or even justifiable) as such. I see that perspective as a far-too-easy avoidance of the complexities of power dynamics in every relationship.

This raises a few related questions in my head. Are patriarchy and feminism, by definition, manifestations of binary thinking?

Is feminism merely a response to patriarchy? Or is it a separately existing concept/ideology, that would/could exist even without patriarchy? One that is not really about gender, or race, or class, ... Or perhaps is the same concept/ideology?

One final thought on the original question. Patriarchy is, at some level, an institution (at least it is seen that way by many). Any anarchist I care to

hang with is against all institutions (which are inherently controlling and homogenizing). A feminist who is against patriarchy but not against other institutions (work/capitalism, government; these seem to be the contexts within which patriarchal behavior is measured, at least on the broad scale), is really no different from the communist who is against one institution (capitalism) but not the rest (including, but not limited to, the state, industrialism, etc). Just my 2c.

> *"I see most* feminist responses to patriarchy as absolutely perpetuating the "gender" binary"
>
> Sure. and most anarchists maintain fucked up patterns of behavior that contradict what anarchy is too. Not trying to make an exact correlation or anything, and I hang with anarchists not feminists for exactly the reasons that you mention, but it is true that very few people push the things that they believe in, in the directions that seem appropriate (and/or obvious) to me.

What are some anarchist critiques of humanism?

1. Humanism facilitates ecological collapse.
Belief in the right of human supremacy over all other species (whether explicitly for domination or under the guise of stewardship) has brought us to the brink of an ecological collapse that will lead to a world of polluted wastelands and destroy most species on Earth, including the human species. Divorcing ourselves from values of aliveness, wildness, and regeneration has achieved disastrous consequences for the majority of the human species as well as all other species on Earth and all known habitats.

2. Humanism furthers alienation.
Belief in human separation from "nature" has forced us into a roles that foster neuroses and madness; an alienated existence inflicts increasing psychological and spiritual harm to we who live and more and more in a sterile, deadened, mechanical, symbolic world of control.

3. Humanism believes in speciesist Dominion.
The social construct of property arises from a humanist perspective that treats other species and landbases only as utilitarian to certain humans rather than possessing even the most rudimentary levels of intrinsic worth (spirituality), self-ownership (philosophy), consideration for ecological contribution (functionalism),

or belief that they have no superior or subordinate value (nihilism/egoism).

4. Humanism rationalizes abuse.

To do this humanists arbitrarily elevate some measure (eg intellect, rationality, tool use) or content (eg soul, nervous system) to justify authoritarian behavior toward anyone classified as external. Such criteria change to rationalize the desire for authoritarian behavior as desired. Humanism makes excuses and rationalizations for human behaviors toward other species (slavery, extermination) that humanists would never concede to other entities (e.g. aliens or machines) with greater of even the agreed-upon measures or contents. It's an identity defense system, not a moral truth.

5. Humanism speaks the Myth of Progress.

Humanists almost always believe in the Myth of Progress, the belief that the state of humanity is always positively improving socially or technologically in a straight, forward, unidirectional line toward utopia, or at least claim this pattern has occured so far with the development of the Neolithic Revolution. Humanists believe that no other species does this, that humans are the subject and consciousness of the cosmos, and therefore everyone and everything else is an resource to exploit.

6. Humanism acts as the modern religious authority.

Humanism replaces God at the throne of authority with a particular and unquestioned image of the human species (the rational, productive man), and creates a new clerical class of scientists, technicians, bureaucrats, and others that mediate and divvy out *Progress*.

7. Humanism has racist, colonialist mythology and history.

Humanism has constructed myths of an external *environment* and demonizes a concept of *nature* that it perceives as hostile to human aims.

Humanism therefore has easily accommodated racism, as it is anti-*nature* and therefore to some extent anti-any-ethnicity-that-resembles-*nature*, such as *savages*, *witches*, *barbarians*, *cavemen*, *Indians*, *Negroes*, and supported those who embody a struggle against *nature*, such as *pilgrims*, *pioneers*, *mountain men*, Victorian-era masculine hetero males, Western scientists, who just happened to also be the colonizers.

8. Humanism hates wildness.

Humanists usually love the features of urban society that biotically cleanse landscapes to replace them with monuments to the greatness of Man and and testaments to the glory of Industry, artifacts of repression.

9. Humanism hates aliveness.

Humanists usually posses an intense attachment

to mass society and technophilia and drawdown of non-renewables, and false notions that "Everything is natural" or "That which is natural is subordinate", and "Technology is neutral". On a spectrum of (a) all life-forms and landbases have value, to (b) only humans and their settlements and artifacts and symbols have value, to (c) only industrial technology has value, humanists are a lot closer to (c) than they'd like to admit, and have justified or rationalized the eradication or subjugation of "backward" peoples and entire species or habitats for increasing technical complexity (see: Marxists, transhumanists). For the most part, humanists today can more easily come to terms with having no more traditional indigenous people on Earth, no more migratory songbirds on Earth, no more old growth forests on Earth, than having no more computers on Earth.

10. Humanism inherits ignorance & arrogance.
Humanist rhetoricians therefore often just cloak colonialism and dominion, taking them for granted or applauding them without giving room to radical critiques of their origins, histories, and trajectories, and in fact suppressing dissidents historically.

11. Humanism acts as another concept of sacrifice for control.

> Stirner: *How is it with mankind, whose cause we are to make our own? Is its cause that*

> *of another, and does mankind serve a higher cause? No, mankind looks only at itself, mankind will promote the interests of mankind only, mankind is its own cause. That it may develop, it causes nations and individuals to wear themselves out in its service, and, when they have accomplished what mankind needs, it throws them on the dung-heap of history in gratitude.*

12. Humanism has a cold heart.

Some anarchists have trouble confining our opposition to slavery and extermination to just 1 in 8,700,000 species, during a mass extinction no less.

humanism

Stance on egoism (rational/ethical) vs. altruism?

Do you think altruism is possible? If it's not, and everything everybody does revolves around self-interest (i.e. what they will get out of it), then why not choose Ayn Rand's Objectivism (I fucking hate it and her with a burning passion) and laissez-faire capitalism (equally hated)? As according to egoist thought, it's unethical/immoral to put others before the self. The way it is argued seems to make it impossible to disprove or even deny. Thoughts on this?

Your question isn't taking into an account other egoisms that exist, especially Stirner's egoism, which is quite different that Rand's. You are right to say that Rand's stance was that it is unethical/immoral to be altruistic or do anything altruistic, but ethics and morality would be of no concern to Stirner in deciding what sort of action to take. So Stirner's stance would be that one could do something altruistic if they wanted to, or they could do something non-altruistic instead, it all comes down to what that individual decides to do and this decision is made with no consideration of what is considered "good" or "bad", "Moral" or "immoral", "ethical" or "unethical", etc.

Let's leave aside philosophy for a moment and go to the behaviour of animals and humans. Science have shown that animals and humans both engage in war and collaborate. Peter Kropotkin in his book "Mutual Aid: A factor of Evolution" showed that the not so visible side of success in species survival is collaboration inside the species against others or in mere self-survival.

Egoism can be said to be the direct logical linguistic opposite of altruism yet like every binary operation it is not that simple. Max Stirner himself said: "Who, then, is "self-sacrificing?"[Literally, "sacrificing"; the German word has not the prefix "self."] In the full sense, surely, he who ventures everything else for one thing, one object, one will, one passion. Is not the lover self-sacrificing who forsakes father and mother, endures all dangers and privations, to reach his goal? Or the ambitious man, who offers up all his desires, wishes, and satisfactions to the single passion, or the avaricious man who denies himself everything to gather treasures, or the pleasure-seeker, etc.? He is ruled by a passion to which he brings the rest as sacrifices.

And are these self-sacrificing people perchance not selfish, not egoist? As they have only one ruling passion, so they provide for only one satisfaction, but for this the more strenuously, they are wholly absorbed in

it. Their entire activity is egoistic, but it is a one-sided, unopened, narrow egoism; it is possessedness."

So one can be egoistic and also be altruistic at the same time if this things outside me is of my love or desire. It is clear "egoism" and "self interest" is involved here but of course it is also altruistic. And so for example gift economies (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gift_economy) could be superficially identified and mostly altruistic relationships but this is not exactly the case. Anarchist antropologist David Graeber when speaking about french antropologist Marcel Mauss says:

> Instead, what anthropologists were discovering were societies where economic life was based on utterly different principles, and most objects moved back and forth as gifts and almost everything we would call 'economic' behavior was based on a pretense of pure generosity and a refusal to calculate exactly who had given what to whom. Such 'gift economies' could on occasion become highly competitive, but when they did it was in exactly the opposite way from our own: Instead of vying to see who could accumulate the most, the winners were the ones who managed to give the most away. In some notorious cases, such as the Kwakiutl of British Columbia, this could lead to dramatic contests of liberality,

where ambitious chiefs would try to outdo one another by distributing thousands of silver bracelets, Hudson Bay blankets or Singer sewing machines, and even by destroying wealth sinking famous heirlooms in the ocean, or setting huge piles of wealth on fire and daring their rivals to do the same...In gift economies, Mauss argued, exchanges do not have the impersonal qualities of the capitalist marketplace: In fact, even when objects of great value change hands, what really matters is the relations between the people; exchange is about creating friendships, or working out rivalries, or obligations, and only incidentally about moving around valuable goods. As a result everything becomes personally charged, even property: In gift economies, the most famous objects of wealth heirloom necklaces, weapons, feather cloaks always seem to develop personalities of their own.

David Graeber. "Give It Away"

So gift economies include motivations that don´t appear out of something similar to "christian love" but of other "egoistic" tendencies such as the desire of prestige and recognition as well as keeping good relations with those who can help me in the future. Hakim Bey thus establishes this bridge in this way:

egoism/altruism

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The essence of the party: face-to-face, a group of humans synergize their efforts to realize mutual desires, whether for good food and cheer, dance, conversation, the arts of life; perhaps even for erotic pleasure, or to create a communal artwork, or to attain the very transport of bliss—in short, a 'union of egoists' (as Stirner put it) in its simplest form—or else, in Kropotkin's terms, a basic biological drive to 'mutual aid.' (Here we should also mention Bataille's 'economy of excess' and his theory of potlatch culture.)

So a union of egoists is a form of mutual aid. Mutual Aid is not the same as "christian love". Mutual aid is something done in the self-interest of both sides.

I am not satisfied with the paradoxical assumptions of subjectivity that support the concept of altruism. But, I am also not satisfied with a constrained concept of subjectivity/self/ego/"I" (from now on just "ego"). This is all tied up in the way that I understand subjectivity to begin with. That what we recognize as the ego is an expression of complicated cognitive processes which make it possible for the boundaries of ego to fluctuate: that the ego is capable of identifying with, appropriating, connecting, or otherwise expanding to include other

nbs

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minds, bodies, objects, and images. From the studies in developmental psychology that I've read, it appears that the ego shrinks through development as theory of mind develops, as a sense of self recedes from an undifferentiated identification with all that is perceived. And from other studies of subjectivity the ego appears capable of redefining its boundaries to various extents: whether as a transcendental experience, a psychotic break, consummate love (sometimes), empathy, and/or less powerful experiences of identification with others.

So, if the ego is more of this sort of concept, then egoism is also less bound. If my sense of self can expand to include you (or at the very least, my self-image and the image of you are intricately bound up with each other), then my behavior is no longer towards you... but towards myself. At the same time, if my sense of self doesn't expand to include you and I regard you as an other, I would enter into a self-other relationship and be more or less considerate. I could reason that my self-interests include the happiness of those around me and wind up with an 'enlightened self-interest' or I could reason that it's better to be calloused towards the conditions of others and wind up with a ethic like Ayn Rand's.

If the ego is fairly amorphous and an ethics rooted in a static ego is embraced, is that being true to the

ego? Even worse, if the ego is the expression of more fundamental psychological patterns that use it for their unknown fulfillment... is it really the ego that can be the grounds for an ethics? What if ego and environment are so intricately entangled that it would make more sense to comprehend them as shades of a common experience and not actually separate beings?

Why not choose Ayn Rand's Objectivism? Who the fuck wants to live in a world filled with miserable people?

Why put others before the self? Interdependence... my existence depends upon some others to such an extent that there is no clean cut in our reciprocal relations.

Is altruism possible? Only to the extent that it in-cludes the ego, even if that inclusion is through some sort of identification.

Is there a "social" and "anti-social" anarchism? What are the distinctions?

What are the main ideas, texts, groups that embody these anarchism(s)? Is there a middle ground between the two?

I think social anarchism has to be seen as a position putting forward a social organization alternative to the current societal forms. And so it gives a collective answer and it is associated with anarcho-syndicalism, bakuninist collectivism and anarcho-communism. As far as "anti-social" anarchism, that has not been an important term within anarchist discourse although I have read it in insurrectionist and individualist texts but it wasn´t a central term where I read it.

A false dichotomy in a sense. Even egoist anarchists address society and other people so it is not a "Robinson Crusoe" dream and there have been many individualists who have participated in anarchist trade unions and large Anarchist Federations such as francophone Federation Anarchiste and spanish and italian FAIs.

On the other hand Murray Bookchin wrote a book called *Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm,* which accused everything that didn´t go along with his particular view of "social anarchism" as being "bourgeois". The word "social

anarchism" was proposed by the more marxist like anarchists who wanted to establish an important difference between their "class struggle", platformist and economicistic approach and the more "lifestyle" and/or humanistic approach of individualist anarchists such as Emile Armand or the outlaw "violent" frame of mind of the illegalists and propaganda by the deed insurrectionists. Because of this Sebastien Faure and Voline proposed pluralistic and anarchism without adjectives "synthesis anarchism" as an organizational alternative in which anarcho-communists, anarcho-syndicalists, and individualist anarchists could collaborate and fit in. It seems to me synthesis anarchism in a way to go beyond the bad effects of the dichotomy "social" and "individualist" and so large pluralistic synthesis federations exist until today in mediterranean countries but also anti-organizationalist insurrectionalists and individualists and on the other hand cuasi-marxist platformist organizations.

I think philosophically the best middle ground that I have read is that of Emma Goldman. She was an admirer of both Nietzsche and Stirner and also an anarcho-communist. I think that can be called "egoist communism" and these anarchists from San Francisco wrote a whole lengthy book: *The Right To Be Greedy: Theses on The Practical Necessity of Demanding Everything* by For Ourselves.

Bontemps was a French individualist anarchist who wrote on a concept central to him, "social individualism", but I don't think anything by him has yet been translated. He was a humanistic individualist and so social individualism most likely has to do with the individualist side of humanism but also with the "altruistic" side of humanism which advocates friendship and empathy towards others while retaining individual autonomy and freedom of association with those more like oneself.

In the end the problem here is the vagueness of the words "social" and "anti-social". "Anti-social" sounds interesting in a romantic or poetic sense but for conceptual clarity it is too unclear. The word "social" can make one think both of "society" and of "socializing". "Society" can be a local society, a society of a country or state. Globalization propagandists even talk of "global society". On the other hand "socializing" can mean talking with just one person and so misanthropics or egoists by just talking with another similar type of person are already socializing.

Joseph Dejacque, one of the first individuals to create in theory and in practice the split that would form between the anarchists and the state socialists/communists, wrote "Let's make war on society" in the early 1800s. While he

attacked statists and even the anarchist Proudhon on the basis of questions of personal liberty, he saw the ideal environment for individual freedom being a communist society.

Max Stirner, who decried the (humanist) communist cause because it puts the greater good of society in the place of God's cause as the dominant ideology, an ideology opposed to individual freedom and insurrection, was involved in forming a milk cooperative. Interestingly enough, this was the only project he is known for aside from his writing.

Renzo Novatore, possibly the most extremely anti-social anarchist I can think of who wrote much, at one point declared to his anarcho-communist comrades that he would fight alongside them in the destruction of the existing society, and that when they established their new communist society he would fight to destroy that one as well.

The current social vs. anti-social debate in anarchism is in many ways reminiscent of and refers to this history, while at the same time it is unique. The consciously anti-social tendency is probably strongest among insurgents in Chile, where one can see that phrase as well as related terms openly embraced in text after text. Or one could point to various individuals influenced by Ted Kaczynski's theory and practice, which is highly anti-social and is centrally

about a critique of modern society and particularly leftism (and is significantly different from individualist anarchism, operating on a different plane). But perhaps the most intense episode in this debate happened recently in the wake of the Marfin Bank firebombing in Athens, Greece on May 5, 2010 (in which three workers died from a fire started by anarchists during massive demonstrations). While I'm not familiar with all of the debate since it occurred in Greek and little has been translated to English, it seems that many anarchists blamed the deaths on what they described as anti-social elements in the milieu. These elements were defined in terms that will probably sound familiar to many of us: abandoning much of the anarchist tradition, they rejected the idea of the revolutionary potential of the masses and rather than placing sole blame upon the bourgeois class, chose instead to direct their critique at the leaders as well as the masses whose submission gives the leaders their power. They also rejected the ideology of the oppressed's liberation from their oppression through their position as the oppressed and its social movements (reminiscent here of Nietzsche among others). This contempt for the workers, some argued, led a few anarchists to not be concerned about whether their actions would cause the death of bank workers.

social/antisocial

I will go out on a limb and say that I don't buy this attempt to establish a firm connection between anti-social ideas and the actions of the arsonists, especially when the anarchists making this argument clearly have a double agenda: to distance themselves from the arsonists to clear their own feelings of guilt while promoting their own ideology of social revolution in hopes of doing away with a plague that they were by all accounts already very interested in stomping out or at least controlling. (During the December 2008 insurrection, insurrectionary anarchists who had set plenty a fire in their day were trying to direct the younger, more wild insurgents to not burn certain buildings such as local businesses.) For the most part, it doesn't seem that any of the anarchists in the "anti-social tendency" in Greece (it's unclear to me, by the way, whether the anti-socials chose this term to explain their differences with the social revolutionaries or whether some chose to embrace the term that the social revolutionaries threw at them) acted very differently in practice from insurrectionary anarchists, at least not to the point of attacking anyone who is not a cop, politician, boss, etc. But I've heard it claimed that a couple of actions distinguish themselves, so I will examine them. The first was an action by a little-known group who hijacked a commuter train, forced everyone off it, and set it on

fire. Their communique pointed out that the workers'
daily activity is what reproduces the system they are
against, and that this action was to deny the workers
their daily commute. No one was hurt, and it seems
by all accounts an exemplary action, with even the
social anarchists only objecting to their rhetoric and
not to the action itself. The other was an action of
the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire, who placed a bomb
in an area where the ruling party leader was giving
a speech during the campaign season. The commu-
nique declares that their hatred and contempt was
not only for the politician but also for the masses
who went to hear him speak. However, their inten-
tion was not to hurt anyone, and they called in a
bomb threat to force the evacuation of the area and
prevent the speech from taking place. The area was
evacuated and no one was hurt. Compare these with
Mario Buda's bombing of Wall Street...

I think it was easier in the 1800s into the early 1900s
to have faith in the movements of the oppressed
to liberate themselves from their oppression. 1968
was another glimpse of possibility. One might argue
that the recent wave of social movements should put
the debate to rest again (it reached its peak before
the Arab Spring, in a time of unprecedented social
peace), since social revolution seems like a real pos-
sibility. But a different way of looking at it is that all

social/antisocial

the social revolutions of the past have ended in everyone going back to work for the continuation of the capitalist society in which we find ourselves today; that we should have no faith in this wave, which is steadily showing itself to accomplish not anarchy but only new democratic regimes and other forms of recuperation; and that the very form of social revolution is a form we should reject in favor of anti-social insurrection. Drawing on Stirner or Novatore here we might reach the conclusion that the seed always planted in the heart of the social revolution, which caused new arrangements to be formed, which led to the communist dictatorships in Russia and China and elsewhere; the reason why the workers went back to work at the end of May 1968 was the insurgents' adherence to a higher cause and their need to act as a mass rather than embarking on the more dangerous path of an egoist, iconoclastic insurrection.

For the most part, anarchism has taken a middle ground on one interpretation of this question. That is: anarchists are of course against the existing society, so we are anti-social, but most anarchists believe in creating a new anarchist society, so they are also social. This is the 1st layer of the middle ground, and it doesn't interest me. The 2nd layer arises from the debate between the individualist anarchists (especially as inspired by Stirner) who are not interested

in a new society, and the anarcho-communists, who are. In this, there is another middle ground which includes the Galleanists, the whole insurrectionary anarchist approach, and some outliers such as Voltairine de Cleyre. I've discussed this in the past. This middle ground is interesting to me. But I think the way in which it understands itself as a middle ground is a problem. Why? Because although it is illuminated by the understanding of the intimate link between individual freedom and social liberation, and this link cannot be understood as mutual, nevertheless it has always been the case historically and presently that the cause of social liberation has been wielded as a tool to push the individual back into line, on a daily level and during insurrection. It is for this reason that I will say that I am on the side of the anti-social when I see these come into conflict. Because individual insurrection and social insurrection can mutually feed each other, but without individual insurrection, social insurrection could not be, since it is the insurrection of many individuals together, not as a mass, but as individuals on a common trajectory. And when the "common cause" of these individuals rears its head— the liberation of the people, of the masses, of the proletariat, of the class, of the nation, etc—it does so to squash insurrection and turn it into the new (or old) social order.

social/antisocial

I am against social anarchism, not because I do not agree with the premise that the individual's freedom is most possible in a world where all are free, but rather because social anarchism is a force that uses the argument "one cannot be free while another is in chains" to turn around and say to the rebels "how dare you try to be free while another is in chains?!" As if one needed the approval of the masses in order to embark on a process of liberation, as if what we need is more guilt! It is a pathetic way to try to smooth out one's own insecurities about being wedded to one's social position. Rather than seeing another's rebellion as a fuel to one's own, the social anarchist protests, "But I am oppressed and so many others are oppressed, so you must be oppressed with us! You must be part of our fighting of our oppression together!"

There is not enough insurrection in the world. Each encounter I have with an insurgent blows some air into my own fire. Platitudes and pandering, attempts to help me, the insistence that only by serving others can I make the world a better place: these are some of the wet blankets tossed on top of the heaving mass that this world throws on my flame. Focus on insurrection. This does not mean swimming along with the masses. But it does not mean you will be alone.

Yes, there is pro-social and anti-social anarchism. You can see the pro-social in the whiny liberal-anarchist "build a movement," support 'the community,' make-friends-with-your-neighbors tendencies. These tendencies often see the role of anarchism as supporting The Social and keeping it functioning in a way very similar to how it is functioning now.

Pro-social tendencies exist in other political movements in more paradoxical ways, but most posi-anarchists just have bad ideas about how revolution happens and often criticize or shit talk riots, revolts, and rebellions for not having an explicit pro-social characteristic or articulation. They also downplay or distance themselves from forms of revolutionary violence such as kidnapping bosses or murdering racist union bosses and coworkers.

Most posi-anarchists are not explicit about whether their position is chosen strategically for the rev., morally, or in an effort to protect their own comfort.

Anti-social anarchists do not concern themselves with the continued functioning of the social. We see all interruptions of society as immediately connected to interruptions of capitalism. Anti-social anarchists are not concerned with preserving the reigning moral order that permeates and gives cohesion to the social order. Revolutionary acts will be feared and hat-

ed by all reasonable members of society, and that is no discouragement. We see society as a thing with an inside and an outside, a center and a periphery, and we want the periphery to come crashing down on the center to make its order and function impossible. We want society as such to be destroyed and we want the world after to be completely unrecognizable from this one.

Fire to the Prisons and *Vengeance* are both anti-social texts, *Vengeance* is anarchist, and *FttP* is pro-anarchist. Everything Bash Back! ever wrote was anti-social as are most insurrectionary texts, including the contemporary insurrectionary trans feminism current that is basically the only inspiring contemporary anarchist writing.

I'll let the pro-social people define themselves somewhere away from my petty, bitter, shit talking.

> *I think labeling FttP*, BB!, and *Vengeance* as anti-social horribly confuses things. BB! and *FttP* have had quite a few people with different ideas write under their umbrellas. *Vengeance*'s conception of anarchism is 110% class-based, and is ENTIRELY about "build a movement, support the community, make friends with your neighbors"; it is one of the most social anarchist publications I've ever encountered.

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The only way in which these could all be called anti-social is that they're opposed to the existing class society, but this is true of all anarchists, making it completely useless as a distinction. This is why the social vs. anti-social debate has to be about what one thinks of society not only as it exists but as it might ideally exist (communist/anarchist society), and whether one's (revolutionary) means and ends are social in nature.

Also the recent insurrectionary transfeminist writings, mainly seemingly based on the argument constructing a revolutionary class of people on the basis of their bodies being unable to produce children, are some of the least inspiring I've encountered in my entire life.

social/antisocial

What happens when anarchists fundamentally disagree?

Depending on the circumstances, anarchists express disagreement or dissent by:

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- separation by time ("taking turns")
- separation by space ("voting with the feet")
- decision by game of luck
- withdrawing participation
- withholding support
- ad hoc discussion
- formal debate
- arbitration by mutually agreed upon 3rd parties
- arbitration by community assembly
- arbitration by ad hoc peer council
- immediate recall of delegated roles or tasks
- disruption/heckling
- ridicule/mockery
- attacking reputation
- disruption/obstruction
- shunning
- consensual duels
- feuding & pranks
- banishment
- property destruction
- combat

What is wrong with independent journalists in the eyes of anarchists?

I have noticed that both T and S are getting heat from an-archists lately about live streaming protests. They are freely and openly documenting the events that are happening, and I see this as a good thing when compared to the main stream media. Can you educate me on the issues that anarchists have with live streamers such as T and S?

By the way, I created this logo and I think it aptly portrays one of the most helpful roles that live streamers have to play at protests. They keep the powers that be responsible for their actions.

The logo almost answers the question.

a. Recording people's actions is more likely to be useful to our enemies than it is to us, wheth-er for the purposes of surveillance, criminal charges, making it more confusing who is doing what (how does one tell an "independent journalist" from a cor-porate one?), etc.

b. Recording people's actions is part of making ac-tions spectacular (reifying them, making them ab-stract and separate from people's lives).

c. The idea that these recordings are helpful in some kind of "protecting ourselves" or "growing our num-bers" way relies on the extremely limited notion that more information is what is required to make people free or active, or that the State cares very much when

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it is recorded doing hei-
nous things. As an example,
while it is true that having
an Iraqi-war vet—who was
tailor-made to be a posterboy
(white, slight of build, un-
threatening looking, etc)—
be attacked on national tv did
galvanize people, it is entirely open to question how
relevant that galvanizing was. And that was pretty
much the best possible scenario for public response...
This c. response basically loops back to a. (insufficient
good for the bad involved).
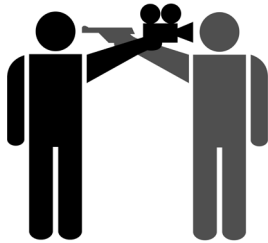
Every individual has their own unique bi-
ases. This is as true of journalists as anyone
else. Often with indy journalists these per-
spectives fall in line with some massified political
consciousness. There are quite a few liberal-cum-
socialist, grassroots-y journalists for whom the legiti-
macy of the state never comes into question. Their
coverage of events can easily collapse some vast
and unbounded events and movements into digest-
ible, non-threating activism. For a really great exam-
ple compare the diversity of views of Egyptians and
Tunisians from a year ago to the reformist framing
used by "alternative" media. According to Democ-

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racy Now! as much as Fox News, the movement was pro-democracy rather than the more obvious conclusion that it was at base anti-Mubarak/Ben Ali. Surely the movement bureaucrats and democracy activists were there in the first days, but they were not necessarily representative of the movement as a whole. We must remain aware that indy journalists *may* be doing the state's work; recuperating radical actions by imposing narratives in which such events are channeled into benign reformism.

I think it is helpful to distinguish the amateur, "citizen" (ew) journalists from professional, "independent" journalists. "Citizen" journalists can be quite a bit wider in their perspectives than those for whom it is a job. Their biases might also be a lot more obvious. Maybe there's still some indy journalists out there perpetuating the charade of objectivity. This should an unforgivable sin of journalism by now. The ones most insistent about objectivity are usually the ones with the biggest ax to grind.

journalists

> *This is a* better way to talk about what I touched on with "how can you tell who is independent", but to be clear, I'm not any more interested in non-professional journalists than in paid ones. Mostly, intentions are irrelevant to the harm caused.

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How can I be an effective leader (in a non-hierarchical, anti–authoritarian sense)?

As an additional question, does anybody know whether there's been any writing done on the subject? If so, links?

Obviously, we as anarchists oppose leadership in the form of authority and hierarchies. However, I've read some things remarking on the organic emergence of "leaders" in anarchist groups, in the form of people who are the most experienced, the most confident, and/or the most capable of taking action. I've also seen proposed something akin to "if you must take the role of a leader, do so only for as long as it takes to share your knowledge and experience with those around you". A leader who encourages others to knock her off her pedestal, so to speak.

Basically, what I've run into is that a large portion of my friends are either into anarchism or consider themselves anarchists (after being exposed to it, through hanging around me), but don't have the knowledge/experience/initiative to be confident in working on projects. I really want to share what I've got, but honestly I don't have a lot of experience with "leadership" and instilling confidence and inspiring action. Maybe this is something totally out of my hands and it's just a matter of waiting for them to find their own initiative and desire to act, but I really feel like what I've done thus far is equivalent to saying, "Here's what anarchism is—if you agree with it, cool. We should do something about it." And that doesn't seem like enough.

Time for an epic response; thanks for giving me an incentive to write it out.

Concepts:

A. Guide: a leader who persuades by example and suggestion, based on experience or informed speculation (expressed as such). Practices voluntary relationships. Legitimate.

B. Master: a leader who manipulates through duress or deceit, based on experience or misinformed speculation (often concealed). Practices coercive relationships. Illegitimate.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

In my opinion, legitimate leadership requires at least 13 conditions:

1. **Active Choice**
followers actively and voluntarily decide their roles with informed consent, constantly re-evaluate

2. **Anarchistic Skepticism**
the burden of justification rests on guides rather than followers

3. **Contextual Merit**
guides proficient in a specific context

4. **Egalitarian Integrity**
absence of force and fraud in interactions

5. **Egalitarian Purpose**
no compensation requested beyond effort expended or direct need; guides and followers live

in the same material conditions

6. **Empowering Trajectory**
concrete processes for empowering followers, sharing information or materials, rotating roles, decentralizing agency, and rendering further guidance unnecessary

7. **Finite Duration**
guidance duration directly linked to mutually-agreed upon goal(s)

8. **Immediate Recall**
the followers' ability to immediately revoke status of guide(s)

9. **Radical Accountability**
guides redress force, fraud, failure

10. **Radical Transparency**
honest and empowering explanations of guides' logic and aims

11. **Responsible Teaching**
guides want responsibility to followers rather than power over them

12. **Social Leveling**
the followers thwart guides' senses of entitlement, arrogance, & contempt

13. **Stakeholder Accessibility**
the inclusion of all parties deserving agency, based on expressed or implied need

* * *

Gently, she grasps her tender lover's unpracticed cheek. They brush faces, touch lips. She guides with her affection, encouraging learning in the most compassionate of ways. As their intimacy grows, they reach a balance together, her inexperienced partner becomes a competent lover. And even with all of her practice, she could not help but have her own learning stimulated. Now they walk their path hand-in-hand; neither guides, neither follows.

He remembers his early youth, when his elders taught him to walk in the forest and gather his nourishment. He remembers their confidence, his apprehension, as he first stepped into the bush, nervous, with them. But now he often walks under the pale light of the moon, fetching the acorns, with only his memories keeping him company. Soon he will teach his little ones to become sons of the oaks, the cycle starting afresh.

* * *

Leadership would emerge naturally among the members of a society, very much as it does among children, and confine itself to taking initiatives only when individual ones are impractical. The followers should be the ones to decide whom they will follow and should be free to change leaders as suits their convenience. In a continuum culture like that of the Yequana, the functioning of leaders is minimal and it is possible for any individual to decide not to act on the leader's decision if he prefers...

–Jean Liedloff, *The Continuum Concept*

* * *

Immunization to Authoritarianism

If we want to live without rulers, we need empowerment to immunize us from the threat of authoritarian relationships and defeat the potential pitfalls of leadership.. In order for that to happen, we need to understand the psychology of perception and prejudice, creativity, intelligence, learning, logic and fallacies, intuition, critical thinking, argumentation, problem-solving, planning, systems analysis, and risk management. Those of us who know these things (such as myself) would do well to act as guides and share our knowledge. So here goes:

psychology
(self-actualization processes; cognitive biases; psychological heuristics)
prejudice
(cognitive, affective, and behavioral prejudices)
creativity
(imagination; inspiration; intuition)
increasing intelligence
("seek novelty; challenge yourself; think creatively; do things the hard way; network")
increasing learning
(working memory; attention)
logic
(formal vs informal; inductive vs deductive)
reason
(logic) vs intuition (instincts, associations)

logical fallacies
(search: "Critical Thinking as an Anarchist Weapon")
awareness of disinformation techniques
critical thinking
as "the process of purposeful, self-regulatory judgment, which uses reasoned consideration to evidence, context, conceptualizations, methods, and criteria."
critical thinking components
(skepticism; logic; clarity; credibility; accuracy; precision; relevance; depth; breadth; significance; fairness)
critical thinking requirements
"falsifiability, logic, comprehensiveness, honesty, replicability, sufficiency"
"humility, integrity, courage, autonomy"
"follow through, open-mindedness, foresight, attention, inquisitiveness, thoroughness, fair-mindedness"
willingness to criticize oneself
"Critical thinking clarifies goals, examines assumptions, discerns hidden values, evaluates evidence, accomplishes actions, and assesses conclusions."
argument mapping
(contentions, premises, co-premises, objections, rebuttals, lemmas)
problem-solving (techniques & methodologies; brainstorming; collaboration; networking)
lateral thinking (idea-generating tools; altering fo-

leadership

cus; selection; application)

planning principles (PsyBlog goal hacks: stop fantasizing; start committing; start starting; visualize process not outcome; avoid the what-the-hell-effect; sidestep procrastination; shifting task-or-goal focus; reject robotic behavior; focus on the aim not the goal; know when to stop; if-then plans; verbalization & visualization of processes; contrast positive fantasy/indulging with negative reality/dwelling)

planning methodologies (STOP, OODA loops; SWOT analysis; PDCA cycles; flow charts)

working backwards (goal; strategy; tactics; timeframes; deadlines; review)

systems analysis (complexity; emergence; fragility/resilience; systempunkts; schwerpunkts)

risk management (risks; threats; vulnerability; mitigation)

TL;DR–Skeptical of Guides, Hostile to Masters, Deliberate as Fuck, Destroy Power Through Collective Self-Empowerment, Tell Everyone.

Two more things...

One text that was interesting to me (despite her reputation) was Starhawk's book on group dynamics and structure (*Truth or Dare*). It encouraged me to think about the different roles that people play, how they can be played well, and how many (all?) of

dot

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them have a place in a happy group.

Which leads to the point that being a leader (good or bad) requires participation from the group. To some extent we all are at the mercy of our friends and context (ie part of the problem with how we view leaders is the idea that "a good leader can overcome things on their own"). I have been in many a group that defused a power play, made a comment into a joke (or refused a joke and made it into a comment), etc without even noticing what was happening. When the topic of leaders arises, the context that the individual operates within is not given enough credit for what happens.

The example given by the question seems to be one of commitment, that people are afraid or unwilling to act (which can be for a number of different reasons), and I think that sometimes leaders are merely the people who are willing to do something even if it means they might be wrong (or be seen as wrong).

leadership

How do anarchists feel about worker-owned businesses?

When I say "worker-owned businesses", I'm talking along the lines of workers democratically and collectively owning, making decisions for, and obviously working the business in a non-hierarchical manner. I've seen a lot of anarchist-friendly printing shops and book stores run this way, along with bakeries, bicycle shops, and even some small restaurants.

Hardass answer: this anarchist feels no way at all about worker-owned businesses. There are some businesses and fields that are more fun to work in. There are some businesses that teach skills that are more useful in the rest of my life. There are some businesses (or jobs) that introduce me to people whom I am more likely to enjoy.

But none of that has anything to do with anarchy or capitalism... only with reform.

Not so hardass answer: being able to live our lives more the way we want to (time off to fuck shit up, connecting with people who become good parts of our lives, enough money to work short hours, etc) is a good thing, and may help make changing the world more do-able.

Back to hardass: or it might not.

And the reality of these kinds of more-pleasurable jobs tends to be that they pay less money and require

more time, more commitment, and more energy... vs working a job that one doesn't care about and can hence exploit fully.

Are anarchists by definition anti–authoritarian?

If there is a broad anti–authoritarian political tendency are anarchists, by definition, a part of it?

Conceptually, if we start from the notion that authoritarians value authority, order, and/or rule over freedom, that authoritarians value obedience over autonomy, then anarchists are anti-authoritarian by definition, no matter if the authoritarian manifested is a person, policy, or practice.

It is easy to point to something that tramples the wills of people and oppose it. But opposing the bad guy, the boss, the dictator is easy and not very deep. If this is the extent of the analysis of authoritarianism, that it picks off particular people or programs, but leaves intact the structures that they plug into then this easy type of anti-authoritarian stance is below the anarchist bar.

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What is the difference between "revolution" and "insurrection"?

Stirner wrote:

Revolution and insurrection must not be looked upon as synonymous. The former consists in an overturning of conditions, of the established condition or status, the State or society, and is accordingly a political or social act; the latter has indeed for its unavoidable consequence a transformation of circumstances, yet does not start from it but from men's discontent with themselves, is not an armed rising, but a rising of individuals, a getting up, without regard to the arrangements that spring from it. The Revolution aimed at new arrangements; insurrection leads us no longer to let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and sets no glittering hopes on "institutions." It is not a fight against the established, since, if it prospers, the established collapses of itself; it is only a working forth of me out of the established. If I leave the established, it is dead and passes into decay. Now, as my object is not the overthrow of an established order but my elevation above it, my purpose

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> and deed are not a political or social but (as
> directed toward myself and my ownness
> alone) an egoistic purpose and deed.

I write: Insurrection does not have to mean the uprising of a single ego, it can be the simultaneous uprising of many individuals together. It differs from revolution, however, in that it is simply uprising. Revolution may "follow" an insurrection in reestablishing a new order. Most revolutionaries would say that an insurrection is necessary to the process, but is not all of the process.

In the Marxist sense, revolution is the total overthrow of an economic-political system and its replacement with another one—the most accessible example being the bourgeois revolution which overthrew feudalism and produced capitalism. So from a Marxist perspective we have no examples of a full proletarian revolution (yet), only various proletarian insurrections (the Paris Commune, etc), which have been put down, or coopted for example by the Bolsheviks.

Others would say that the problem isn't that "we haven't gone far enough" to full revolution through insurrection, but that we are on the side of insurrection itself because that is where anarchy or communism "live," while revolution is itself a cooptation of insurrection (see Stirner).

What is insurrectionary anarchism?

These days every time I encounter "insurrectionary anarchism" it just seems like plain anarchism to me. Nothing sticks out about it that would make this taxonomy appropriate. Maybe its effects have really become that ubiquitous?

There is a pretty good thread about this question, from 1/2011 on anarchistnews.org. It starts out with a long statement about what insurrectionary anarchy is against (capitalism, government, cultural standards like the nuclear family, <and all their representations> which is where the interpretation comes in, of course), and how the poster(s) cannot say what they are for unless you are working with them (this seems fairly representative, the point being that what one is *for* cannot be spoken of without being co-opted/misunderstood)... Here is a good bit:

> IA mostly responds to the context of an organized left in power and armed struggle in Italy in the late 70s and 80s. As it is a theoretical and strategic response to this context, the FAI or other tendencies and anarchists before this could not be considered "insurrectionary anarchist.

(So, this draws a distinction between insurrectionary tactics, which are old, and "insurrectionary anarchist" which starts at a specific time & place).

This thread also makes clear that i@ has more in common with illegalism than with other kinds of anarchist thought, and that there is a conflict between it and anarcho-syndicalism. To me this is where current rhetoric muddies the waters, since groups like modesto anarcho claim both labels.

Insurrectionary anarchism is distinguished from "plain anarchism" on questions of approach more so than on what one is for and against.

ank

insurrectionary anarchism

IA is thus associated with the critique of formal organization, practices of informal organization, attack, permanent conflict, illegalism, and other matters that are primarily practical rather than ideological.

But beneath this thrust are two clear ideas—one dealing with time and another with relationships—that are both refusals of mediation. Firstly, IA is characterized by the rejection of a future revolution (waiting for it or making progress toward it); instead, insurrection is seen as something to be immediately practiced. Secondly, IA rejects the bodies that mediate the spaces between individuals and organizes them in mass revolutionary activity.

The distinction was first expressed by Stirner, whose ideas have been enormously influential to all of the well-known insurrectionary anarchists:

Revolution and insurrection must not be looked upon as synonymous. The former consists in an overturning of conditions, of the established condition or status, the State or society, and is accordingly a political or social act; the latter has indeed for its unavoidable consequence a transformation of circumstances, yet does not start from it but from men's discontent with themselves, is not an armed rising, but a rising of individuals, a getting up, without regard to the arrangements that spring from it. The Revolution aimed at new arrangements; insurrection leads us no longer to let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and sets no glittering hopes on "institutions." It is not a fight against the established, since, if it prospers, the established collapses of itself; it is only a working forth of me out of the established. If I leave the established, it is dead and passes into decay. Now, as my object is not the overthrow of an established order but my elevation above it, my purpose and deed are not a political or social but (as directed toward myself and my ownness alone) an egoistic purpose and deed.

Is class struggle anarchy different from insurrectionary anarchy?

How? If they're not different, then why are they called different things?

Different analysis, different tactics, different approaches. But the problem is that those who rail against "insurrectionary" anarchists almost always use a strawman argument. The insurrectionary anarchists I know do not ignore, dismiss, or otherwise disregard a class analysis of capitalism and the state. Those who refer to themselves as "class struggle" anarchists are almost always using that terminology as a short-cut way of describing their strategies and tactics. More specifically it appears that they do not reject labor unions as locations for revolutionary intervention, whereas most other anarchists (and not just the crazed insurrectionaries) do. Perhaps the main distinction is manifest around the organizational question; class struggle anarchists tend to favor formal membership-based cadre organizations, while insurrectionary anarchists reject them in favor of networks and informal ones.

law

What is social war?

I see social war as a reaction to the focus on class war by certain significant portions of political people. Class war tends to emphasize rigid distinctions between classes that don't make sense anymore (if they ever did), and a marxist/economic analysis that doesn't address many other causes and effects of hierarchy. So social war emphasizes both that we are all participants in this war (instead of just the working class-as-revolutionary-agent), and that we are at war with society, and that society is at war with itself.
That definitely leads to an amorphousness that communists especially (it seems) don't like to deal with, but to me seems appropriate to the blurry lines and shifting ground that we deal with all the time.

Rejecting the logic of social peace, we instead assert a different rationale: social war. Social war is our way of articulating the conflict of class war, but beyond the limitations of class. Rather than a working class seeking to affirm ourselves in our endless conflict with capital, we desire instead to abolish the class relation and all other relations that reproduce this social order. Social war is the discrete and ongoing struggle that runs through and negotiates our lived experience. As agents of

chaos, we seek to expose this struggle, to make it overt. The issue is not violence or non-violence. What's at issue in these forays against capital is rather the social peace and its negation. To quote a comrade here in Oakland:

Windows are shattered when we do nothing, so of course windows will be shattered when we do something; blood is shed when we do nothing, so of course blood will be shed when we do something.

Social war is this process of doing something. It is our concerted effort to rupture the ever-present deadliness of the social peace.

Occupy Everything

social war

sab

social war: The narrative of "class struggle" developed beyond class to include the complexities and multiplicities of all social relations. Social war is conflict within all hierarchical social relations.

Social war means society against the state.

The above is from a few sources, and I think is a lot more on target than what dot eludes to. The whole "war on society" bit is totally strange to me. More like most of society against a tiny elite that control state and capital.

Just to clarify—while there is a **dot** piece of the "most of society against a tiny elite" that makes sense (having a defined enemy is one important perspective), ONLY paying attention to that ignores that we are all part of the society that we are fighting. Power/hierarchy/authoritarianism doesn't just exist in some external form, in some easily identified other (the tiny elite); it is in all of us. it is We™ (also known as The Masses) who continue to accept the fucked up situation we are in, We who have not risen up and cast off the chains. The only way to make sense of that passivity (as far as I can tell) is to understand that we are all implicated, even the people who seem to have the most to gain from a revolution. Society, for lack of a better word.

Liberal or Conservative?

I am trying to understand the differences between left vs right wing politics. Anarchism is left but from what I read, left wing is more liberal while right wing is conservative. Also, it seems that Liberals promote more government and also advocate discrimination.

So, why is Anarchism considered left and of the two, is it more liberal or conservative by nature? I'm new to politics in general and would love any answers. To me, liberal and conservative are just words that keep getting changed along with America's society, but I'm wondering how, specifically, Anarchism falls towards the left, which is marked more "Liberal". Any help would be awesome!

I used to believe anarchists were right-wing for this very reason, and therefore looked upon them the same as I do neo-cons.

http://www.politicalcompass.org/index

This pretty nifty site rejects the one-axis "Left-to-Right" political spectrum in favor of a two-axis kind of chart. The X-axis is the 'economic' spectrum, with collectivism/communism on the left and neo-liberalism/free-market libertarianism on the right. On the Y-axis, the top is authoritarianism/fascism and the bottom is libertarianism/anarchism. Obviously it's not perfect,

but I think it's a hell of a lot better than the usual narrow depiction of the spectrum.

Some people (probably most people) consider anarchists to be part of the left be-**dot** cause anarchists have frequently (especially historically) called themselves "anarcho-communists" (referring to the desire for communism - a state-free society, without the interim stages usually insisted on by people who call themselves just "communists"). Communists and anarchists are both considered to be part of the left because of a focus on how the state and context influences individuals. Ironically, conservatives usually focus more on individual will power and responsibility (which, in a society that is set up to be unequal, absolves institutions of responsibility...).
But there is definitely a significant segment of anarchists who call themselves neither right nor left.

Okay, but Anarchism is liberal in that **ast** it promotes Socialism but Conservative in its anti-state tendencies? Just seems to be so many contradictions with this.
Also, being that Conservatives are for more individuality, would Anarcho-individualism be considered right wing? From what I read, both

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Social and Individual Anarchism are opposed to capitalism, making it more left wing?

Anarchists are not promoting socialism as socialism is currently understood. That is, socialism is now associated (like communism) with the states that have called themselves socialist and communist, and anarchists don't promote states or transitions that go through states.

It's clearer to say that anarchism is neither liberal nor conservative, since both liberalism and conservatism are labels for groups of people (as well as labels for collections of ideas), with which anarchists usually have little in common. All anarchists are against capitalism, it is one of the fundamentals of anarchism. (People who call themselves anarcho-capitalists are basically playing word games.) And yes, anarcho-individualism has been attacked by leftists as being right-wing in its effects if not in intention.

We are against capitalism, but that does not make us left-wing. Most people on the left wouldn't say that they're against capitalism at all, just that they want a kinder, gentler capitalism.

The word "liberal" is related to the word "liberty" and was originally used to mean generous or unrestrained. In modern political parlance, it has come to mean many things, but it usually implies progressivism; the promotion of change. The word "conservative" comes from the word "conserve" and suggests maintenance and preservation. This word too has been bastardized, bent for propagandistic purposes, but it still implies reverence for the old ways. Thus, liberal politicians advocate reform and development while conservative ones call for a return to traditional values.

In the sense that anarchists reject so-called traditional values, and in the sense that they agitate for a *new* society that is radically different from the norm, they are leftists. Further, many people today consider marxist movements to be a product of the left and capitalist protractors a part of the right. So, since many anarchists are socialists, communists, etc; anarchy—especially European anarchy—is often placed within the leftist milieu.

What is post-left anarchism?

Post-left anarchy has developed thought in 6 main areas:

1. The Left

   critiquing the Left as nebulous, anachronistic, distracting, a failure, and at key points a counterproductive force historically ("the left-wing of capital")

   critiquing Leftist activists for political careerism, celebrity culture, self-righteousness, privileged vanguardism, and martyrdom

   critiquing the tendency of Leftists to insulate themselves in academia, scenes, and cliques while also attempting to opportunistically manage struggles

2. Ideology

   a Stirner-esque critique of dogma and ideological thinking as a distinct phenomenon in favor of "critical self-theory" at individual and communal levels

3. Morality

   a moral nihilist critique of morality/reified values/ moralism

4. Organizationalism

   critiquing permanent, formal, mass, mediated, rigid, growth-focused modes of organization in favor of temporary, informal, direct, spontaneous, intimate forms of relation

   critiquing Leftist organizational patterns' tendencies toward managerialism, reductionism, profes-

sionalism, substitutionism, and ideology

critiquing the tendencies of unions and Leftist organizations to mimic political parties, acting as racketeers/mediators, with cadre-based hierarchies of theoretician & militant or intellectual & grunt, defailting toward institutionalization, and ritualizing a meeting-voting-recruiting-marching pattern

5. Identity Politics

critiquing identity politics insofar as it preserves victimization-enabled identities and social roles (i.e. affirming rather than negating gender, class, etc.) and inflicts guilt-induced paralysis, amongst others

critiquing single-issue campaigns or orientations

6. Values

moving beyond anarchISM as a static historical praxis into anarchY as a living praxis

focussing on daily life and the intersectionality thereof rather than dialectics / totalizing narratives (except anarcho-primitivists tend toward epistemology)

emphasizing personal autonomy and a rejection of work (as forced labor, alienated labor, workplace-centricity)

critiquing Enlightenment notions of Cartesian dualities, rationalism, humanism, democracy, utopia, etc.

critiquing industrial notions of mass society, production, productivity, efficiency, "Progress", technophilia, civilization (esp. in anti-civilization tendencies)

Who do post–Leftists organize or take action with?

I know that post–Leftists are not anarcho–capitalists, so obviously right wingers are out of the question. But most people who are not Republicans or Libertarians are either liberals who vote for the Democrats, or are some variety of Leftists (Socialists, Communists, etc).

Seems there is a very limited pool of people post–Leftists can work with if they refuse to work with Leftists. Surely they don't organize with apathetic or apolitical people only?

It would depend on the situation. I am sure others will have much to say about this, much of it that will conflict with me, but my take is that post-left anarchists organize on a temporary basis with those they have affinity with in order to achieve particular goals.

I don't mean such a broad answer as a cop-out, but rather to distinguish between the traditional leftist model of organizing (building institutions, fronts, and infrastructure with the goal of furthering "the revolution"), and that of the pl@ perspective (finding affinities that work for a period, and letting those go when they don't). It isn't a matter of never working with people who identify with the left, but of always remaining apart from the left, of refusing to be assimilated in to a mass for the good of the movement. Which tends to piss off lefties.

No post-left anarchist I know categorically refuses to work with Leftists, we just prefer to not operate in the modes we associate with the Left. Maybe some of us disassociate with everyone who identifies as Left or Right, but I doubt that exists as a common pattern.

I talk with open-minded people, and deconstruct the ideologies of close-minded people. I associate with green anarchists, luddites, & zero-work advocates & productive play promoters, family, friends, people who engage in direct action, solidarity unionists, un-employed people, students, domestic and migrant laborers, festival goers, event attendees, strangers, travelers, youth, onlookers...I can find at least some common ground for interaction with most anarchists and point out my own overlaps with people who do not call themselves anarchists, enough to find res-onance with them. I volunteer with youth and that gives me an opportunity to engage in an introductory discussion about different perspectives.

As a pl@ I differ in theory, orientation, & strategy from the Left, but people who identify with the Left do not necessarily automatically refuse my preferred methods of association (impermanent, direct, spon-taneous, intimate, mostly but not always informal) nor embody the celebrity managerialism I loathe. Even if someone endorses bureaucratic unions or political

parties that usually doesn't prevent them from relating outside of those. I typically "organize" with people to the extent that we share an affinity, mostly initiated by me interjecting something critical of the status quo, leading to a search for shared experiences (eg disliking having a boss, feeling powerless), and common values (eg self-determination, partnership), refining a mutual critique to our situation, and finally culminating in some sort of proposition for action followed by review.

> TL;DR: Post-left anarchists I know tend to organize with whomever it makes sense to do so with at the time for as long as it makes sense, and involve ourselves in intentional explorations of affinity that allow for divergence, conflict, and disassociation.

According to post–leftists, what defines the left?

a. old and rigid forms of organization
b. specialization of roles, both within organiza-

tions and between radicals and the masses™

c. representation

d. ideological thinking

e. categorization of (or perpetuating the categorization of) people into state-sponsored identities (gender, skin color, religion, etc)

f. valorization of work

I agree with dot, but I think some basics need to be examined even before her list.

The Left is usually considered by most (sympathetic) commentators to have something to do with a criticism of (the worst excesses of) capitalism—naturally depending on how we understand capitalism. The Left is often therefore equated with a generic Socialism. We have to acknowledge that Socialism is internally incoherent enough to be able to accommodate such diverse ideas as Maoism, right-wing (anti-Marxist, anti-revolutionary) Social Democracy, revolutionary (or reformist) Marxism, the left wing of the Democratic Party (Kucinich), and some types of anarchism (NEFAC, syndicalists, pro-democracy folks like Milstein). What they all share is a desire to use and/or take over most of the functions of the state in ways that ameliorate those aforementioned excesses. In this way they remain within the authoritarian system common to all other forms of tinkering

with institutions of hierarchy and domination.

The reason post-left @s dislike Leftist categories and strategies is that we (if I may speak for others for the moment) find those categories and strategies to be historical failures; we judge them failures not just because stupid people were doing them, but because of the inherent philosophical problems with them. So a rigid organizational form like a political party (point a) is a problem not because of its particular program or platform or internal decision-making process, but because it is organized as a supposedly representative body (point c) that requires a division of labor (point b).

Ideological thinking (point d) is a problem because it uses backwards logic. Ideologists begin from solutions or answers and only later formulate questions — that just by coincidence happen to point precisely to those solutions or answers. The questions are only questions in a technical sense because they being with Why What Where Who Which When How, but they have the (desired/expected) answers imbedded in them. Most Leftist questions are How statements rather than Why questions. In this way they remain in line with all other forms of authoritarian or hierarchical methods of so-called discussion.

Because most forms of Leftism begin as a reaction to the ugly aspects of capitalism, they all share strat-

egies for curtailing its excesses. One way to begin that process is to valorize not just work (point f) but workers *as* workers, as those whose labor and effort produces the wealth that is expropriated (by providing workers with a wage lower than the value of the goods and services their labor goes to produce) by those who own the means of production (whether capitalists or the state). Whether workers are conceived of as the Revolutionary Subject of History or just poor slobs who don't get enough pay and/or benefits, they are elevated as the primary object (or agent) of salvation.

All leftist strategies are predicated on a redistribution of wealth, which means that they all wish to maintain methods of calibrating value in labor, in commodities, and in exchange. This is economy, and along with retooled mechanisms of statecraft (whether enshrined as government or the voluntarism so beloved of NGOs), certainly is a decent way of understanding the primary problems associated with Leftism.

It has been pointed out by the left-anarchist critics of post-left @ that these are basic anarchist criticisms of capitalism and the state and authoritarianism in general. Fair enough; not many post-left @s trumpet their analyses as particularly new or ground-breaking. But one of the neglected points of post-left @ is that we are critics of *false opposition* to capitalism and the

state. Where Leftists (and many left anarchists fall into this category) want to improve the lives of workers, post-left @s wish to abolish work (as a coercive and separate sphere of useful endeavor); where Leftists wish to expropriate the means of production to turn them to social use rather than as generators of profit, post-left @s wish to abolish economy, and at the very least facilitate a large-scale discussion of which technologies to maintain while destroying the ones that most folks don't want or need; where Leftists want to develop or extend protections or compensations for categories of people who have been historically oppressed, post-left @s wish to abolish the ideology of victimization (point e).

Naturally there a ton of questions that arise from this brief overview, but that's as it should be. For me the most interesting aspect of identifying with post-left @ is that we actually yearn for more questions than answers; with any luck, that's also a way of steering clear of ideology.

post-left

Are *actual* anarchists socialists?

To get to the heart of your question: depends how you define/understand "socialism" (and "anarchism" for that matter). If socialism is characterized by a generic opposition to capitalism, then sure, anarchists are socialists. If socialism means that the state controls the production and distribution of goods and services, then no, anarchists are not socialists. If socialism means that people who have no direct access to or control of the means of survival without working or getting economic support from the state will get to have that access and control, then sure, anarchists are socialists. If socialism means that hierarchical institutions that foster a division of labor will continue under the control and direction of the best and brightest, then no, anarchists are not socialists.

As is the case with many of the questions being posed, there are at least two or three more questions that need to be asked before a proper answer is attempted, let alone agreed upon.

How do anarchists
define "identity politics"?

I define identity politics mostly negatively—ie, I think that most people who use identity to mean something, tend to drastically simplify and over-generalize what it means in a person's (and/or a people's) life (whatever "it" might be—usually race, class, sex, sexual preference, physical ability, etc). So I get very wary when people talk about identity. Also I think people talk about identity (or use identity-coded language) as a way to identify themselves and each other as belonging to a particular group (we are the people who use these words and by doing so indicate that we care about the following things in the correct manner...)

That said, I do think that socially created/understood markers do mean something. I do think that being poor, rich, paraplegic, queer, able-bodied, brown-haired, balding (etc) means *some*thing. I just don't think that people know what it means, or have figured out a good way to think about what it means, much less to talk about what it means.

Answers to this question will be determined by what anarchists mean by "politics" which is a weighty question unto itself. Some answers to that have been attempted on this site. To

focus on the identity portion of the term:

Like dot, I tend to use the phrase as shorthand for certain unfavorable approaches. These approaches tend to focus on a particular identity group to the (near) exclusion of other subjects for analysis, theory, and practice. The epitome of identity political analysis views a specific form of oppression as the main oppression from which all others stem. It then becomes hard to arrive at coherent analysis of other forms of oppression. Even much of economic analysis can turn into identity politics in the form of fetishization of workers.

Of course, identity is important. First of all because it is socially enforced. Second because it is often internalized. For the foreseeable future people will continue to distinguish themselves based on all sorts of identity components, and our social experience will thus be informed by vast categories of wildly diverse individuals. There is useful information to be gleaned from the theorization about different identity groups to which people assign themselves or are assigned by others. There are tens of thousands of years of history based on identity concepts like Woman or Slave or Deviant. Even if it is desirable to move away from using such stock categories for the individuals that compose society, these concepts are highly embedded in the culture and are therefore

important touchstones in any good analysis.

It is when we submit to essentialist thinking about these groups that we limit the potential for our own identity-creation. For my whole life I have taken it for granted that because I have certain sex characteristics, I am a man. Everyone I have ever encountered has treated me like a man (or boy), and yet there has always been some nagging doubt. It is only recently that I am able to express that, though I am easily categorizable biologically, that I have no affinity to any gender identity. Though I now understand this, I am still stuck in a society that wants to pigeon-hole me in the male gender. This is just as disconcerting coming from leftist feminists as from aggressive men.

So as an alternative to the extremes of identity politics and attempted identity-blindness I try to understand peoples' own self-identity constructions.

To clarify a bit, I find that identity discourse is often interesting and worthwhile. As an example; I know a twin who has developed their own unique discourse about the prejudices and stereotypes of "singlets" toward "multiples". They have actually been asked such things as "How do you know which one you are?"! It's the subsumation of all other discourses about oppressive behavior to one particular identity discourse that I would disdainfully call "identity politics".

What is consensus and how is its use opposed to hierarchy?

Consensus means full agreement reached between all persons within a group or set. The term is used by anarchists as well as many others to refer to internal decision-making processes in which full agreement is required in decisions that (significantly) affect others in the group or are made in the name of the whole group.

Generally it is understood that individuals and affinities always have the power to act autonomously, and that consensus is needed only to claim the approval of a larger body or make decisions that affect others in the body. Unfortunately, however, consensus practice often finds individuals and affinities acting subservient to the larger group and unnecessarily requesting approval for insignificant decisions or for decisions that would better be done autonomously. Individuals also often forget that if they want something to happen they may have to do it themselves. (A group cannot do anything unless individuals within it take initiative).

A common argument for why using consensus process opposes hierarchy is something resembling: "It allows us to make decisions in the process of fighting against systems of hierarchy while also not making those decisions hierarchically."

But the word "hierarchy" originally refers not to au-

thorities having power of decision-making, but rather to spiritual beings holding a sacred power (of closeness to God). This meaning was transposed to the Catholic hierarchy (made up of persons supposedly having sacred power), and this transposition gave hierarchy an embodied and systematic force. Following this, it could be argued that hierarchy originates in the power that ideas have when held above us as sacred, and that this power can take on a social and material form. (This would be too long of a divergence to go into depth on here, but you could refer to Max Stirner for more on the topic.) Perhaps, then, the issues I described above concerning consensus, such as the inability of the individual or affinity to feel able to act autonomously from the consensus-making group, are related to a kind of hierarchy in which the sacredness of consensus can have a power over the will of each individual who's part of the whole.

Others will point to issues of social status, identity politics, etc as "the hidden hierarchies within consensus." These claims may be true but often the approach seeks to reduce everyone to a lowest common denominator, equality, in which everyone is inoffensive, and walking on the eggshells of their so-called privileges, which certainly is no way to live freely much less constitute a force to destroy the immense institutional structures of hierarchy that are this society.

consensus

Why don't anarchists vote?

An anarchist has a larger view of the world than its political systems and politicians allow for. We must keep ahold of that perspective and it is not a simple task; we are constantly bombarded with the simplistic messages and world views conveyed by commercialism and politics. To effectively vote, one must engage with the dynamics and arguments that are being voted upon and this will necessarily narrow one's perspective. It is not that the act of voting in a vacuum is bad or destructive, in fact it just doesn't matter. But engaging in the liberal/conservative banter renders one relatively thoughtless.

There have been many arguments made against voting that deserve to be listed: here are three...

1. We don't believe in representation. Even direct democracy is only one possibility (and an overly-valorized one) among many ways to resolve conflict or make decisions in a group, and is based on competition instead of on finding the best option.

2. The act of voting in the current system does nothing but validate false choices and confirm our own powerlessness over a system that is corrupt at its core.

3. Since the system itself is the problem, even in the case of the pure soul who might somehow find

themselves in a position of power (as if the process of getting into office itself is not one of compromise and power-brokering), this person will be forced to work the system or never get anything done.

Inevitably, campaign promises that sound lovely will either not happen, or will happen in ways that lead to worse results.

The word "voting", since it includes both electoral politics and signifying one's preference for a certain resolution, seems rather vague. Etymologically it comes from "a vow to do something", even more vague.

Reasons I wouldn't vote (mostly in elections):

Futility. Trying to elect a ruler in any system competent enough to gain a monopoly probably would not fundamentally challenge that system.

Distraction. I would not desire to empower an elite at the expense of everyday people. Empowering one sector of a population at the expense of everyone else would only at best distract me from actualizing anarchic relationships or demolishing hierarchical ones. Example: guerilla gardening, Food Not Bombs, and Black Panther food distribution offer useful examples of autonomy from the welfare state.

Insufficiency. I can understand, and feel for, people voting in elections out of a perspective of self-

voting

preservation, or against their own enslavement. For example, a womyn trying to elect a politician who opposes the criminalization of abortion, or a man trying to elect a politician that opposes military conscription. At the same time, bandaids do not cure diseases, and shuffling a deck or changing the deck's players does not change the cards.

Competition. Representative democracy/aristocracy institutionalizes competing factions, with all of the pitfalls of politics in place.

Bureaucracy. Mass organizations tend towards sluggishness, and other hindrances.

More futility. Even if I voted for someone to introduce systemic instability in furtherance of revolutionary conditions, that one vote would still count as much as a drop in an ocean with today's population sizes and the notion of "one person, one vote".

Incompatibility. Representation relies on reduction and substitution, and always diminishes the represented. By necessity political representation filters out aspects and experiences, especially when politics removes representatives from the community/context they *supposedly* represent.

Inconsistency. I would not willingly compromise certain convictions, namely, anti-authoritarianism. So when would I vote? If it seemed effective, empowering, sufficient, non-oppressive, non-exploit-

ative, direct, compatible, and consistent with my principles, I would. I would vote to abolish a law if I felt my single vote had a chance of changing the outcome. I would probably also vote under duress. And I vote in consensus decisions, formally and informally, quite often.

Is the academy a good place for anarchists?

I was just listening to a philosophy professor talk about fear (mostly in the context of fear as a tool of politicians) and he mentioned that while one would think that universities are a place where fear is less of an issue, professors (he included himself) were some of the most timid people he's ever spent time with. (He went on to say that the academy is a place where people are always

watching, always competing, and always threatened by what can be taken away—or not given in the first place.) Professors are people who have shown that they are willing to abide by the rules set up to contain and restrict creativity (to color inside the lines).

The academy is like politics in the sense that people who are anarchists or anarchist-friendly are frequently tempted to combine their anarchist ideas with getting a job, or working within the system.

But the academy is a deeply hierarchical and authoritarian system, one that is designed to co-opt new ideas and integrate them into first the academy and then the larger society (capitalism runs on edgy new things to sell to people who are dissatisfied, and sustains itself partly by integrating new behaviors and ideas instead of resisting them).

Universities operate as a) screens to winnow out uncontrollables, b) training camps for acceptable thinking, c) think tanks for corporations and statists (think about the vast amount of information that exists in all those theses and projects and who actually uses that information).

I have no problem with people who view school as a job. I know one professor with politics I trust (who just got laid off, btw), who views it as exactly that.

My issue is when anarchists or students-interested-in-anarchy extol the virtues of academia as the

job to have, as a valuable organizing position, as a way to make change. And with how anarchists/ students-interested-in-anarchy (regardless of their motivations and the purity of their desires) both feed information into the system that is against us (to the extent that anarchy informs their studies), and frequently use the anarchist scene as fodder for their professional lives.

How have the Situationists influenced contemporary anarchism?

The Situationist International, especially **a** thesis 91-94 of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, formulated the clearest anarchist critique of anarchism in the 1960s. This critique represents for many anarchists (specifically anarchists who have since declared anarchism to be distinct from

the leftist heritage of Communism, Social Democracy, and State Socialism) the beginning of a new era for anarchist thinking and practice.

The inspiration for this thinking can be seen in the critique of work & the left (Bob Black & *Anarchy: a Journal of Desire Armed*), an ongoing dialogue with anarchists and so-called post-situationists since the 1970s, and the cultural influence that the SI had vis-a-vis punk rock and bohemian counter-culture ever since. Here is a summary of the critique of anarchists in Debord's *SoS*.

1) Bakunin critiqued Marx for declaring that a stateless society must pass through a "dictatorship of the proletariat" while in practice participating in a conspiratorial group that acted outside, and above, the First International.

This is addressed in modern anarchist practice by a demand for transparency in all aspects of organizational issues and an attempt to have anarchist practice be indistinguishable from anarchist goals.

2) The ideology of pure freedom (Debord's term for anarchist political philosophy), flattens the difficulties of political struggles *in reality* while demanding the all-encompassing goal of the total negation of the current order. Both mystical and doctrinaire, anarchists have remained emblematic of the soul of struggle and its impossibility.

This critique is ignored or addressed by different anarchist tendencies in different ways. The most clear engagement of it is the Italian anarchist analysis from the 1970s that has resulted in the simple practice of Insurrectionary Anarchism.

3) Consensus and unanimity in anarchist practice (especially in the Spain Revolution) has been a strategic failure. This critique has been contested by anarchist practice and success in non-revolutionary moments like the anti-globalization movement, alcoholics anonymous, and the Occupy movement. The critique of anarchists as "specialists of freedom" still rings true.

4) Anarchists believe that revolution is immanent. It is possible at any time and does not require a particular historical process to unfold. This faith means that there is not anarchist clarity around how to extend partial victories. This critique still holds true and can be seen as recently as the Occupy Movement.

I'm concerned about how we'll help those of us who need long term care, like disabled people or the mentally ill.

One argument is that people will have more time, energy, and capacity to care for other people because they will not be subsumed by capitalist concerns (making enough money to survive themselves), and will be aware of their own capacity to care for other people (instead of thinking that they are not skilled enough, or not allowed to, take care of people).

Another argument is that there will be fewer instances of disability and mental illness because the human world will make more sense.

Another argument is that it's not awesome now, so changes are unlikely to make things worse, even if they don't make them tons better.

Would an anarchist bookstore clerk call the cops if the bookstore was being robbed at gunpoint?

Imagine you are working at an anarchist bookstore. You are seated at the till. You are old and weak, and believe that your ideology is some sort of shield. A young man in a ski mask walks in and pulls out an semi automatic handgun. The man asks for the money in the till, and all the money that you have in your pockets. The man beats you senseless. The man takes the money and runs away.

Would you call the police to report the robbery? Would you participate in the robbery investigation?

If a suspect was captured and the prosecutor filed a complaint against the suspect would you attend the preliminary examination to testify? Would you testify at the trial? Would you subject yourself to the court-power of the subpoena?

The answer is either completely obvious, or unknowable (well, actually both).

The straight answer to your question is no, the anarchist would not call the cops, nor participate in the legal investigation in any way, because the *anarchist* part is pretty straightforward.

The actual answer is that anarchists live in the world, and have multiple motivations (frequently conflicting) as does every other group (and individual). So the clerk part could potentially outweigh the anarchist

part, or the scared person part could potentially out-
weigh the anarchist part, at least in that moment, or
for this situation.

The question assumes not only that the clerk is frail
(hence presumably unable to fight back—although
there is nothing to keep such a person from having
weapons of her own), and that the clerk does not
know the robber, and that the clerk is alone (without
social resources to do something about the robber).
These are all fair assumptions given the reality of life
today, but deserve also to be called into question,
since all of those pieces of the question are ones
that anarchists want to do something about, not just
the part about what happens when someone hurts
someone else.

How could people in an anarchist society be protected from violence, aggression, and abuse?

*Clearly the police and other government agencies perform
functions that are directly linked to the maintenance of the
political status quo. On this basis, they must be challenged.
However, the majority of us would feel compelled to call the*

Calling the police does not not always bring about "protection". Protection vs liberty and freedom from authority, may be more closely linked then we are otherwise lead to believe. It could be that perhaps these "need" no reconciliation whatsoever.

str

Many people—not just anarchists—do not call the police when they are threatened. The protection the police (claim to) offer is pretty specific and extremely limited.

dot

The fact that some people still don't think they have any other recourse has as much to do with the fact that police are seen to be the only legitimate users-of-force in this society, as it does with actually protecting ourselves. Police, for a variety of reasons (not all of them even in their control), also tend to escalate conflicts rather than actually resolve anything. One of the basics of anarchist thought is direct action, which means that we handle things ourselves. Handling things can mean a wide variety of things, from violence to mediation (or all of the above), and could include various numbers of people (ie - "us" is contextual).

crime

What would we do about violent people who are already in prison?

I know we can help teach the next generation and all that stuff but what do we do about the rapists and murderers who are already in jail? If we were to topple the state tomorrow all those people do not just disappear.

Who is we? What is violence? How are you picturing the state getting toppled? Surely these are all crucial parts of the question?

I can't figure out how your question makes sense outside of a classic revolutionary scenario (suddenly we[tm] have the power to decide how to punish bad people, but they're still defined as bad by the same constructs that some of us are fighting against).

Put another way, the people who have the violence done against them (and their friends and family) would presumably be the people who would decide what to do—and maybe this would include the friends and family of the person who done wrong, and maybe the wrong-doer as well, depending on the situation.

Or maybe, no one would decide anything. Maybe people would just move away, like they do now, and/or get ostracized by some folks and not by others...

I expect there would be a lot of different ways to deal with messed up behavior, and all of them would work in some ways and not work in others.

It sounds like you're assuming a lot of things would stay the same—like society-as-a-group-of-people-who-are-fundamentally-estranged-from-each-other and who-have-and-use-the-power-to-control-other-people's-lives.

I reject that.

We open up the prisons and start over with everyone. Some fucked up shit will happen, no doubt. But the revolution (whatever that means) is not about not-having-fucked-up-shit-happen. It's about changing the range, the level, the scope of the fucked up shit that happens.

> *I love the* way dot says it. "we open up the prisons and start over with everyone" but in my opinion those who disagree with anarchy will probably start a group—similar to police—who would "get rid" of the criminals. not because they would be paid in any way but because they feel it's important to "get rid of" the criminals. **mta**

prison

> *One of the* many frustrating aspects of the judicial system, for me, is the acceptance of the idea that we can't decide what is right or wrong for ourselves; that someone we have no con- **kd**

nection to, who knows nothing of us or our situation, is allowed to decide whether or not we have been wronged by another and then make a decision about the fate of that person. Is it so crazy to think that we could empower ourselves to take back that authority in our own lives and communities?

Example (not the best, but there really never is a perfect example). If someone breaks into my home, I don't desire to call a stranger (the police) to make them whisk the person off, so that another stranger (the judge/jury) can decided whether or not they were really in my home and whether or not that was okay. I should be able to confront them at that moment, in that place. In the time it would take to call the police, one could instead call friends and neighbors if they felt they needed someone else involved.

When you get into more serious matters, like instances of sexual assault or murder, things will always be tricky. But the current "justice" system has proven that it is ineffective at both identifying the correct perpetrator, and stopping them from doing something again (except in cases of lifelong imprisonment/death). Whose to say that the people directly involved couldn't do a better job or finding out who did it and finding a correct solution. And, while I do recognize the problematic aspects of "vigilante justice", I personally find no fault in physically confronting someone

who has harmed you or telling them that they must leave town. But there is also room for talking through things, understanding a situation, learning from our mistakes, and moving on in ways deemed appropriate by those directly involved.

And we must recognize the cause of most crime. Personally, I don't beleive that people are born murderers or rapists. Society, the conditions of their lives (especially as children), and a variety of other factors affect what decisions people make. So, we must take a look at the causes of violence in the first place. The disempowerment that comes from economic, racial, class based, etc oppression that may cause someone to lash out and seek power over another. The obsession with power that this society tries to force-feed us that causes those with power to desire more at any cost. The message that empowerment or power over are both power—and therefore interchangeable, equal, and necessary to our well-being.

prison

I apologize if this sounds vague or intangible, but the abolition of prisons is far more complicated than the simple destruction of a few walls. We could rid ourselves of prisons tomorrow, but we would find that people would simply replace them. Same goes for police; we could kill all cops, but new cops, even if under a different name, would pop up everywhere As long as there is a need for such institutions, they

will continue to exist. We need to change the way we view ourselves, each other, our communities, our relations, etc. We must rid ourselves of a need for prisons.

First and foremost we need to empower ourselves, our friends, our communities, to take back that control, to recognize that we don't need the mediation of strangers to decide what is good or bad, right or wrong for us.

Finally:

The question itself is mildly absurd. The prison system isn't something that can be done away with overnight. As long as we have system where there are "criminals" there will be jails, so that question kinda puts the cart before the horse.

Secondly, we shouldn't do anything to/with them. What options do we have? It would be ridiculous to re-incarcerate them in an "anarchist prison", put them through "accountability processes" or exile them from communities they aren't a part of. I would argue that we simply let them be. Most people in jail just want to get out and get on with their lives. Those who continue to cause harm will be dealt with by those it relates to, but I would speculate that this would be a small minority of cases.

How would an anarchist society deal with crimes like rape or serial murder?

I'm personally an anarcho-syndicalist; but, this is something that perplexes me often. I don't see how a mutualistic society could intern people, without state backing.

And you hardly want private police, like the *cough* anarcho-capitalists.

There are so many clarifying questions/ objections required by your casual statement... For an anarchist to use a term like "crime" is automatically a problem; such a concept is meaningless in a context where deviant (non-normative) behavior is dealt with by the affected individuals making up a community/commune/affinity group (or whatever other meaningful level of social organization you like). That's commonly called Direct Action. "Crime" is a legal category, requiring an institutionalized system of allegedly neutral conflict resolution to take the place of what the statists see as their purview alone: retaliation, retribution, vengeance (the pretense to rehabilitation should be, by now, completely discredited). This usually takes the form of arrest, trial, and incarceration. In short, punishment for behaving outside the parameters decided by those who run the State. By taking the response to deviance out of the

hands of those directly affected, the legal authorities are merely delegitimizing (and making it a crime!) the autonomy and cohesion of any meaningful level of social organization.

What would happen in an anarchist society to deal with rape and murder would probably look a lot like what happens in other non-statist cultures when someone does something particularly nasty: the survivor, the family and friends decide how to proceed, whether it's one or more of the following. Public shaming or beating; concern coupled with compassion and care; expulsion; execution—and a million other possibilities in between. All options are on the table, unlike what happens in statist cultures, where the authorities decide the punishment in a sham neutrality for the good of "the people."

possible reading list (in no order)

Anarchy Alive! – Uri Gordon
An examination of contested issues between and among anarchists. The questions of Violence, Power, Technology, and Nationalism are each given their own chapters.

Anarchy Works – Peter Gelderloos
A cross-cultural examination of how anarchist principles have worked, whether the practitioners called themselves anarchists or not.

Recipes for Disaster – CrimethInc.
Big and small, legal and il-, 62 recipes that run the gamut from dumpster-diving to banner drops, open relationships to locking down streets, monkeywrenching to coalition building.

Anarchy after Leftism – Bob Black
Black's response to Murray Bookchin's *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*. Black accuses Bookchin of being a closeted authoritarian, city-statist and Marxist with a penchant for high tech and the Athenian polis. Black defends what he calls heterodox or post-leftist anarchism, a kind of anti-work, individualist, and moderately primitivist form of anarchism.

The Anarchist Tension – Alfredo M. Bonanno
One of the most influential (along with *Armed Joy* and *At Daggers Drawn*) of the insurrectionary writings. Challenges anarchists to resist dogma and easy answers.

anything written by Fredy Perlman (*Against (His)Story, Against Leviathan* would be a good start)
To be healthy and sane we need to be grounded in a more direct relationship with nature and with other people in comprehensible, face-to-face communities. Leviathanic civilization destroys these basic relationships -- hence the pathology of the modern era. This book covers all this. It's deep, it's allegorical, it's like nothing you've ever read before.

bolo'bolo – p.m.
A sketch of how a future anarchist society could work, the only utopia with enough diversity to deserve the name *anarchist*.

Society of the Spectacle – Guy Debord
One of the main texts of the Situationists, explaining (in aphorisms) the concept of the Spectacle as the defining impetus of western culture, one that is, through consumption, continually searching for meaning.

some people/groups mentioned

Bonanno, Alfredo M.
(1937-) A main theorist of contemporary insurrectionary anarchism who wrote essays such as *Armed Joy* (for which he was imprisoned for 18 months by the Italian government), *The Anarchist Tension* and others; an editor of *Anarchismo Editions* and many other publications, only some of which have been translated into English. He has been involved in the anarchist movement for over thirty years.

Bakunin, Mikhail
(1814–1876) A well-known Russian revolutionary and philosopher, theorist of collectivist anarchism. He has also often been called the father of anarchist theory in general. Despite (or because of) criminal status, Bakunin gained great influence with the youth in Russia and all of Europe. He was involved in the insurrection in Lyon, which foreshadowed the Paris Commune.
In 1868, Bakunin joined the International Working Men's Association, a federation of trade union organizations with sections in most European countries. The 1872 Hague Congress was dominated by a struggle between Marx and his followers who argued for parliamentary electoral participation and a faction around Bakunin who opposed it. Bakunin's faction lost the vote, and he was eventually expelled for maintaining a secret organisation within the international. The anarchists insisted the congress was rigged, and so held their own conference of the

International in Switzerland. From 1870 to 1876, he wrote much of his seminal work such as *Statism and Anarchy* and *God and the State*.

Camatte, Jacques

A French writer, once a Marxist theoretician and member of the International Communist Party. After collecting and publishing a great amount of historical documents from left communist currents, and analysing the most recently discovered writings of Marx, in the early 70s Camatte abandoned the Marxist perspective. He decided instead that capitalism had succeeded in shaping humanity to its profit, and that every kind of "revolution" was thus impossible; that the working class was nothing more than an aspect of capital, unable to supersede its situation; that any future revolutionary movement would basically consist of a struggle between humanity and capital itself, rather than between classes; and that capital has become totalitarian in structure, leaving nowhere and no-one outside its domesticating influence. This pessimism about revolutionary perspective is accompanied by the idea that we can "leave the world" and live closer to nature, and stop harming children and distorting their naturally sane spirit.

Dupont, Monsieur & Frère

Monsieur Dupont is a duo of ex-activist communists in the UK, who wrote *Nihilist Communism*, in which they posit the irrelevance of most of the agitational activities of people who want foundational political and social change, partly

because these "pro-revolutionaries" are inculcated by the same society that they are challenging, and partly because dramatic social change, if it comes at all (which it is likely not to), will only come from "the essential proletariat", which are the workers who control things that the system absolutely relies on (power, transportation, etc).

Frère Dupont, author of *species being*, is one of the two.

Berkman, Alexander

(1870–1936) an anarchist known for his political activism and writing, a leading member of the anarchist movement in the early 20th century.

Soon after his arrival in New York City, Berkman became an anarchist through his involvement with groups that had formed to campaign to free the men convicted of the 1886 Haymarket bombing. He came under the influence of Johann Most, the best-known anarchist in the United States, and an advocate of propaganda of the deed—*attentat*, or violence carried out to encourage the masses to revolt.

He attempted to assassinate businessman Henry Clay Frick as an act of propaganda of the deed. Frick survived the attempt on his life, and Berkman served 14 years in prison. His experience in prison was the basis for his first book, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*.

Berkman voiced his opposition to the Soviet use of violence and the repression of independent voices in his 1925 book, *The Bolshevik Myth*.

While living in France, Berkman continued his work in support of the anarchist movement, producing the classic exposition of anarchist principles, *Now and After: The*

ABC of Communist Anarchism. Suffering from ill health, Berkman committed suicide in 1936.

de Cleyre, Voltairine
(1866–1912) A prolific American anarchist writer and speaker, she opposed the state, marriage, and the domination of religion in sexuality and women's lives. She began her activist career in the freethought movement.
Her political perspective shifted throughout her life, eventually leading her to become an outspoken proponent of "anarchism without adjectives."
For several years she associated primarily with the American individualist anarchist milieu. Eventually, however, she rejected individualism.
"Socialism and Communism both demand a degree of joint effort and administration which would beget more regulation than is wholly consistent with ideal Anarchism; Individualism and Mutualism, resting upon property, involve a development of the private policeman not at all compatible with my notion of freedom." Instead, she became one of the most prominent advocates of anarchism without adjectives. In The Making of an Anarchist, she wrote, "I no longer label myself otherwise than as 'Anarchist' simply".

Debord, Guy
(1931–1994) A French Marxist theorist, writer, filmmaker, member of the Letterist International, founder of a Letterist faction, and founding member of the Situationist International (SI). He was also briefly a member of So-

cialisme ou Barbarie (a French-based radical libertarian socialist group of the post-World War II period).

Debord joined the Letterist International when he was 19. A schism birthed several factions of Letterists, one of which was decidedly led by Debord. In the 1960s, Debord led the Situationist International group, which influenced the Paris Uprising of 1968. Some consider his book *The Society of the Spectacle* to be a catalyst for the uprising.

FAI

The Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI, Iberian Anarchist Federation) is a Spanish organization of anarchist (anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist-communist) militants inside the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) anarcho-syndicalist union. It is often abbreviated as CNT-FAI because of the close relationship between the two organizations. The FAI publishes the periodical *Tierra y Libertad*.

It was founded in Valencia in 1927 to campaign for keeping the CNT on an anarchist path. It viewed the CNT as having become a mediator between labour and capital, rather than representative of the working class.

Goldman, Emma

(1869 –1940) An anarchist known for her political activism, writing, and speeches, she played a pivotal role in the development of anarchist political philosophy in North America and Europe in the first half of the 20th century.

Attracted to anarchism after the Haymarket affair, she became a writer and a renowned lecturer on anarchist

philosophy, women's rights, and social issues, attracting crowds of thousands. In 1906, Goldman founded the anarchist journal *Mother Earth*.

Her writing and lectures spanned a wide variety of issues, including prisons, atheism, freedom of speech, militarism, capitalism, marriage, free love, homosexuality, and appreciation of Nietzsche. Although she distanced herself from first-wave feminism and its efforts toward women's suffrage, she developed new ways of incorporating gender politics into anarchism.

After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, she traveled to Spain to support the anarchist revolution there. She died in Toronto on May 14, 1940, aged 70.

The Invisible Committee

An anonymous group of French intellectuals named as the authors of *The Coming Insurrection*, a call to arms along the lines of the Situationists.

Kropotkin, Pyotr

(1842–1921) A Russian prince, zoologist, evolutionary theorist, philosopher, scientist, pacifist, revolutionary, economist, activist, geographer, writer, and one of the world's foremost anarcho-communists.

Kropotkin advocated a communist society free from central government and based on voluntary associations between workers. He wrote many books, pamphlets and articles, the most prominent being *The Conquest of Bread and Fields, Factories and Workshops*, and his principal

scientific offering, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. He also contributed the article on anarchism to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* Eleventh Edition.

Mutual Aid provided an alternative view on human survival to the claims of interpersonal competition and natural hierarchy proffered at the time by some "social Darwinists". He argued "that it was an evolutionary emphasis on cooperation instead of competition in the Darwinian sense that made for the success of species, including the human."

Nietzsche, Freidrich

(1844–1900) was a German philosopher, poet, cultural critic and classical philologist. He wrote critical texts on religion, morality, contemporary culture, philosophy and science, displaying a fondness for metaphor, irony and aphorism.

Nietzsche's influence remains substantial within and beyond philosophy, notably in existentialism, nihilism, and postmodernism. His style and radical questioning of the value and objectivity of truth have resulted in much commentary and interpretation, mostly in the continental tradition. His key ideas include the death of God, the Übermensch, the eternal recurrence, the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy, perspectivism, and the will to power. Central to his philosophy is the idea of "life-affirmation", which involves an honest questioning of all doctrines that drain life's expansive energies, however socially prevalent and radical those views might be.

some significant people/groups

Novatore, Renzo

The pen name of Abele Rizieri Ferrari (1890–1922), Italian individualist anarchist, illegalist, and anti-fascist poet, philosopher, and militant, now mostly known for his book (posthumously published), *Toward the Creative Nothing* (Verso il nulla creatore).

He discovered Errico Malatesta, Peter Kropotkin, Henrik Ibsen and Friedrich Nietzsche, and especially Max Stirner. From 1908 on he embraced individualist anarchism. In 1910, he was charged with the burning of a local church and spent three months in prison, but his participation in the fire was never proved. A year later, he went on the lam because the police wanted him for theft and robbery.

As the Great War approached he deserted his regiment on April 26, 1918 and was sentenced to death by a military tribunal. He left his village and fled, propagating the desertion from the Army and the armed uprising against the state. By the early 1920s Italy was about to be taken over by Fascism. He decided to go underground and in 1922 he joined the gang of the famous robber of anarchist inspiration: Sante Pollastro, and was killed in a shoot-out.

Perlman, Fredy

(1934–1985) was an author, publisher and activist. His most popular work, the book *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*, details the rise of state domination with a retelling of history through the Hobbesian metaphor of the Leviathan. The book remains a major source of inspiration for anti-civilisation perspectives in contemporary an-

archism. His work both as an author and publisher has been very influential on modern anarchist thought.

Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph
(1809–865) was a French politician, mutualist philosopher, economist, and socialist. He was a member of the French Parliament, and he was the first person to call himself an "anarchist". He is considered among the most influential theorists and organisers of anarchism. After the events of 1848 he began to call himself a federalist.

Tiqqun
The name of a French philosophical journal, founded in 1999 with an aim to "recreate the conditions of another community." It was created by various writers and dissolved in 2001 following the attacks of September 11, 2001.
Tiqqun is also, more generally, the name of the philosophical concept which stems from these texts, and is often used in a broad sense to name the many publications containing the journal's texts, in order to designate "a point of spirit from which these writings come."

Situationists
The Situationist International (SI) was an internationalist group of revolutionaries based mainly in Europe. It was founded in 1957 and reached its peak of influence in the general strike of May 1968 in France.
With ideas rooted in Marxism and the 20th century European artistic avant-gardes, they advocated experiences

of life alternative to those allowed by advanced capitalism, for the fulfillment of human desires. They suggested and experimented with the construction of "situations," which were environments favorable for the fulfillment of such desires. Their theoretical work peaked with the highly influential book *Society of the Spectacle*. The SI was dissolved in 1972.

the Frankfurt School

A school of neo-Marxist interdisciplinary social theory, initially consisting of dissident Marxists who believed that some of Marx's followers parroted a narrow selection of Marx's ideas, usually in defense of orthodox Communist parties. Many of the Frankfurt School theorists believed that traditional Marxist theory could not adequately explain the turbulent and unexpected development of capitalist societies in the 20th century. Critical of both capitalism and Soviet socialism, their writings pointed to the possibility of an alternative path to social development.

How do people here feel about the use of this site's questions and answers in a book?

My favorite aspect of this site is that there are usually several answers to each question and this, I think, is part of what makes it superior to *AFAQ*. I suppose that could be replicated in a book but on the face of it it seems like something the internet is pretty well suited for: I read the answers really differently than I would if they were in a book simply because of my awareness that anyone can contest everything that's being said, and whatever we say will have just as much weight as the original claims. Even if you read a book really critically and take notes and write response papers and stuff, it's not the same thing.

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