Ben D.

What Is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a social philosophy which says that every individual has the right to make decisions for her or himself about things that affect her or him. Consequently, it is also a social philosophy which opposes every intrusion of the principle of authority into relations between people.

Anarchists oppose the principle of authority — the principle of command-and-obey, of leaders and led, or of masters and slaves — because they see people's capacity to control the course of their own life as the precondition for realising their humanity — their "selves" or "who they are", in everyday language. Anarchists believe that people for whom this capacity is denied (by some other person, for instance) are simply slaves, since they are executing the will of some other individual, not their own.

The ability of every individual to utilise their inborn capacities for critical, logical and rational thought is the foundation of their self-awareness. It is simply the idea that "I think, therefore I am". Those who do not think do not live in the proper sense, although they might walk, talk, eat, drink, breathe, go to the toilet, as well as a million other things. This is because it is possible to be physically alive as well as spiritually dead at the same time. To live means to participate in life, means to have some impact on the surrounding environment.

Anarchists believe that no individual has the right to issue orders to another. We are all capable of rational thought; we should therefore all be capable of getting things done through collective decison-making processes, rather than through social systems where someone orders and someone obeys.

Anarchists extent the above principle to its logical conclusions, and therefore favour the abolition of those social insitiutions founded on the principle of authority: capitalism and the state. Capitalism is the system whereby some monoplise social wealth, thus impoverishing the majority and making them dependant on them for survival. Capitalism is also the system whereby the majority of people are exploited by the rich be being paid less in wages than the true value of their labour — a fact disguised by the wages system. There is therefore two classes in society: the producing class, or the workers, who survive by undertaking physical or mental labour in return for wages, and the parasite class, the rich, or the capitalists, who survive by exploiting human labour. The State, meaning the sum total of the police, the law courts, etc and **not**

society, is the system whereby the right of the capitalists to monopolise social wealth (the social wealth that should be owned collectively and managed equally by all) is consecrated in law. Respect for the law being maintained by means of state violence, through the police the army, and so on, the state thus becomes a mechanism of social control, a mechanism for oppression the people for the benefit of the rich.

In a nutshell, Anarchists view the state as a institionalised, coordinated, systematic apparatus of terrorism, directed against those who threaten the social privileges of the rich and powerful. Any good that the state does, such as protecting society against mad people, is only done in order to retain a monopoly over authority.

In the place of capitalism and the state, anarchists desire a social system that would ensure social freedom and material equality. They believe that such a system would be based on the principle of free or voluntary association and on the principle of "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs". Instead of being forced to work through need, people would be able to work where they chose or where they were needed, participating in decicion-making processes and free of domination and exploitation by their employer. Alternatively, they would be able to work for themselves as individualists, so long as they didn't hire workers to exploit.

Anarchists call the system by which they would have society organised Direct Democracy, meaning self-management of the various parts of the social organism by those involved. More precisely, anarchists would have society organised through a dual system of federated communes and federated industrial unions. Workers in each industry would undertake production on the basis of worker self-management, coordinating production in the interests of the community through industrially-organised unions, within which decision-making power flowed from the bottom up. Decisions would be made by general assemblies of workers within the individual workplaces, and coordination between different workplaces would be carried out by mandated, recallable delegates. Rather than the government of people, society would be based around the administration of things. There would be no need of police, because class divisions in society would disappear with the abolition of private property, and so any rational need to compete against other human beings.