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Why I Am Leaving Anarchism

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I have decided to leave anarchism, not as my technical political orientation, but as my claimed one. Regardless of my technical place within the anarchist tradition, the word, especially among North American, insurrectionary, and synthesist anarchists, invokes a set of predisposed attitudes and questions that I am not interested in.

My biggest problem with anarchism is its historical baggage, which disallows anyone within it to make a clean break and establish a totally new movement. This would not be a problem if a totally new movement were not called for, of course, but I believe that it is. Furthermore, movements with long traditions tend to acquire older and more experienced individuals, which, in the history of revolutions, have usually done more against revolutionary efforts than for them. That is not to say that nothing can be learned from the older and more experienced, only that the proclivity of the young to run into a wall of sharp daggers is often what enables revolution.

This historical baggage brings with it preconceived notions of an ideology within the minds of potential recruits or sympathizers. Students at my university, for example, often scoff at the very idea of anarchy. This was not a particular problem for me until very recently, but as someone who believes a completely new effort ought to be made, I would like to start with as little baggage as possible, or at least baggage I'd be proud of and want to talk about.

Apart from the historical baggage, anarchism in its present form is a problem. I rarely ever hear a good analysis of industrial society come from the mouth of an anarchist, and if I begin a conversation on the topic, "capitalism" is eventually mentioned, as though it were the root of the problems I attribute to industrialization. But I firmly believe that communism is just as bad as capitalism, and that, should communism or mutualism or some other economic system become more efficient than capitalism, technological society will adopt it in capitalism's place. In fact, technological society tends toward socialism, and most technocratic elites include the idea of "postscarcity" in their utopian visions. Therefore, the problem is not capitalism, but the industrial system itself.

To less focused anarchists, capitalism is only one of many problems, the others including things such as homophobia, patriarchy, racism, and so on. These issues are, like capitalism, issues that aren't

issues that have to do with technological society. (Racism and slavery have some to do with technological society, but not within a victimization framework.) This indicates that most anarchists are not, in fact, against technological society. Indeed, this seems to be the case. Most anarchists seem to be against "domination," which, while it does manifest itself in the context of technological society, encapsulates a far broader program that is both unfeasible and, at times, ridiculous. For example, eradicating racism is unfeasible except in the context of a technological society; and eradicating gender or the family is ridiculous.

Anarchists also position themselves against hierarchy, a position I never regarded too seriously, except when I was an angsty high-school freshman. Of course I am against "big hierarchy" since I am against the dependence of wild life on the industrial system, but hierarchy in families or tribal relationships are fine for the most part.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, since this is the crux of my politics, anarchists outside of the green anarchist tradition almost never talk about wild nature, and when they do it is usually only in reference to animal rights, which is, like the issue of prison abolition and police brutality, framing a technological issue within a victimization paradigm (anarchists would call it a liberation paradigm, but these are two sides of the same coin).

I want to focus on wild nature as something that should be free, something all life should be a part of. Wild nature is something to be regarded as sacred and, should industrial society fall, wild nature will again be the defining force of human life and organization. Therefore, it can without question be given as an alternative to industrial society—but anarchists don't like to talk about alternatives. Irrationally afraid of prescription, they deny the very simple and undeniable reality that nature's influence is going to be the alternative to technology's influence, whether they want it or not. I agree with the anarchists that we cannot go beyond this point; I wouldn't be able to prescribe ways of life for every small society that would exist after the technological society. But just as technological society is a general paradigm under which there is much variation, wild nature is only a general answer to the question, "What is the alternative?"

These differences are important. If an anarchist is against capitalism or "domination," then they are ultimately fighting for a different future than I am. Why on earth would I work with them? Of course, there is always some level of overlap and occasionally there are times when working together can be beneficial (for example, an anti-capitalist anarchist group could work with an anti-industrial group on some action against a biotechnology company), but as far as formal organization goes, it makes no sense for a person concerned mostly or only with gender issues to get involved with a group explicitly organized around anti-industrial ideals.

In an effort to distinguish myself from anarchism, I have adopted the label "luddite." That word has a history I am proud of or at least want to talk about, it asks questions about industry and technology rather than hierarchy and domination, and it induces a curious rather than dismissive response from those not familiar with its politics. All this is not to say that I don't technically belong to the anarchist tradition. Insofar as anarchism means the breaking down of society into smaller groups, I am an anarchist. But because of its social connotations, I'm going to let that label go.