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ATUBES

Embracing the Antinomies

From C4SS by Shawn P. Wilbur

This piece is the twelfth essay in the June C4SS Mutual Exchange Symposium: “Anarchy and Democracy.” It is written partially in reply to this contribution by Gabriel Amadej.

It should be clear that one of the key conflicts in these debates about anarchy and democracy is a struggle over the nature of anarchism. And it is probably safe to say that nearly all anarchists wrestle with the difficulties of defining that term. Part of the difficulty is that anarchism is simultaneously a kind of system and a matter of tradition. It is at once a political—or anti-political—ideology, a social-scientific approach, and a body of practices that have emerged within—and sometimes against—a particular set of social movements. It is no surprise, then, when our discussions of anarchist theory and practice oscillate between, on the one hand, attempts to show logical consistency between given practices and established principles and, on the other, appeals to the practices of certain pioneers.

When anarchist thought is vital, we should expect the two aspects to work together, since ideally anarchism should never become either simply a theoretical construction or a matter of merely copying past practices. At its best, anarchist thought uses elements of tradition to increase freedom in the present, while new contexts in the present cast new light on the insights of the past. But we should probably be honest and admit that we do not always know quite how to achieve that mix.

Looking back over this exchange, it seems to me Gabriel Amadej’s short contribution “The Regime of Liberty” is a good example of how to at least begin to achieve that balance—and one that works with a particularly difficult body of thought. The attempt to propose a market anarchism “in the spirit of Proudhon” is provocative—I assume intentionally so, given familiar arguments about the place of “the market” in Proudhon’s thought—and the claim that he “held his ground and asserted the principles of anarchy” in late works such as *The Principle of Federation* simply ups the ante, given the tendency to treat those works as some kind of departure from the spirit of works like *What is Property?*

As one of those who has pretty consistently advised caution in linking Proudhon and market anarchism, I want to explain a few of the reasons for my reticence in that regard, and also talk a bit about the difficulties involved with attaching Proudhon, and especially his mature works, to any of our projects, but then I would like to briefly explore how we might move at least a few more steps down a path at least similar to the one Amadej has indicated. “*Sancta sanctis*,” wrote Proudhon in *The Theory of Property*. “Everything becomes just for the just man; everything can be justified between the just.” And let’s take that as a challenge that it is up to us to determine whether “the market” can find its place among the key institutions of an anarchist society.

First, however, we have to confront the fact that, as Amadej puts it, “Oppression comes in all forms. Any exercise of liberty can, in certain conditions, succumb to tyranny.” Let’s underline the possibility that “all forms” really means ALL forms, including some that we might consider anarchic. There’s nothing very unorthodox in this possibility. After all, we have figures like Bakunin claiming that even science—a true understanding of the world—would have to be rejected should it be coupled with the ability to command. And we have the fact, which so many people have found so perplexing, that Proudhon and Bakunin never stopped describing disorder and even tyranny with that same word, anarchy, that they used to describe non-governmental society.

Read more: <https://tinyurl.com/y7pbf3u4>

Anarchists Failed Philando Castile and They Have Failed Black Americans

From Gods and Radicals by Dr. Bones

When I put two rituals in my book to hex the police some people said I had gone too far. I had to talk with a team of editors about possible re-writes, had to discuss plans about what we'd do when the FBI eventually got a hold of it. I worried then. Now, with the dash cam footage released in the recent murder of Philando Castile I wish I would have wrote 40 more. An armed gang who exists only to protect the wealthy and kill people of color is running rampant and Anarchists are woefully unable to do anything about it. This needs to change immediately.

I'm not talking about more protests. I'm not talking about writing your congressman or maybe heading down to the next city council meeting to have a strong word with your mayor. I'm not talking about getting ready for another Black Bloc downtown.

None of that has stopped the killings of Philando Castile, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Mike Brown, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, and Amadou Diallo. Evangelical Christians can literally create healthcare systems outside of State control and the best Anarchists can come up with is cardboard signs and hash tags.

If your politics can only function in "radical spaces" they are worthless. If they can't keep people alive they are garbage.

The other night I came home to find my wife quivering in fear and shaking with rage after watching the dashcam footage of an innocent man killed in front of his family. It was Philando's video. It is a video so shocking, so unbelievably clear in guilt, that even conservative magazines had to admit it was all but damning.

"Yanez asked for Castile's license. Castile told him that he had a gun, and the officer – rather than asking for his carry permit, or asking where the gun was, or asking to see Castile's hands – just says, 'Don't reach for it then.' At that point, Castile is operating under two commands. Get his license, and don't reach for his gun. As Castile reaches for his license (following the officer's orders), and he assures him that he's not reaching for the gun (also following the officer's orders).

He died anyway."

In America you can execute a black man in front of his child for a broken taillight and reasonably expect a jury to let you off the hook. What are "radicals" concerned about?

Motherfuckin' burritos.

My wife is mixed. In between people talking about how much they love her hair there is a morose and unspeakable acknowledgement that she might be considered dark enough to die. I worry for her when I'm not around. If she runs into a cop will her curls mark her for death? Her nose? Will he do a mental checklist, perhaps match her skin tone to a chart that ranges from "mental illness" to "dangerous?" She spoke last night of friends she knew, family members, all as if they had just been diagnosed with cancer.

You hope they make it but you know somewhere that it's only a matter of time until somebody bites the bullet.

The laptop she owned sat on the other side of the room, practically thrown after arguing with person after person who told her how "cops have a hard job" and as such are right to "fear for their lives."

What do they have to fear? Certainly nothing from Anarchists. Hell, they've got everything right where they want it.

She has to hide her radical idea that black people shouldn't be executed on a whim from co-workers and customers, lest she offend them; her sheer existence is an inflammatory opinion. We had to drive by discolored American flags yesterday with disgusting blue lines running right through the middle, a silent but all too clear acknowledgement that for some people the police could do no wrong. That some people deserved to die. She has to see that everyday. She has to stare into the faces of people who will not give a single fuck if seven hollow-point rounds rip through her chest and steal that wonderful soul away from this Earth.

Those same flags would fly, those same people would ask what drugs were in her system, those same people would cheer and buy cakes for cops if anyone dared so much as said a bad word about them.

Read more: <https://tinyurl.com/ycnnn248>

Your Freedom Is My Freedom: The Premise Of Anarchism

From Human Iterations by William Gillis

Sometimes words are just words — interchangeable and discardable — but sometimes a word belies a knot in our thought, tightly wound and tensely connected. “Anarchy” is one such word.

Centuries ago the English peasantry rose up to overthrow the king and radically remake society. The vanguard of this revolution, the levellers and the diggers, sought to demolish the feudal hierarchy, to revise property and the division of land. In their revolt they were joined by opportunists who sought the overthrow of the king to assert their own power. Naturally these factions clashed. It was in this civil war that the word “anarchy” was leveraged to great effect. Those with the audacity to explicitly oppose anyone ruling over anyone were characterized as desiring “anarchy,” and when this happened the idealistic rebels were forced to backpeddle, to stumble and prevaricate on a trap built into their very language.

The word “anarchy” originates in the Greek word “an-archia” (“without rulership”). Over the last couple millennia it has grown two simultaneous associations: 1) the absence of domination and constraint and 2) a war of competing would-be-rulers. The latter redefinition inspired by the constant conflict between princes and small lords that it was felt had gripped Europe during the Middle Ages in the absence of a single ruler. While the first definition is clearly the better fit to the word’s etymology the latter signified something more properly akin to “spas-archy” or *fractured* domination than the absence of domination. But in practice these two definitions grew to be lumped together as the same thing, functionally serving as an orwellianism. Like a more condensed version of the phrase “freedom is slavery” the invocation of “anarchy” thus served to write out of our language the ability to speak of a world that wasn’t characterized by domination. To desire the end of domination was thus transmuted into merely desiring a different, more decentralized, configuration of domination.

This perspective mirrors that of our rulers and would-be-rulers who cannot conceive of anything besides rule-or-be-ruled. It’s the fascistic or authoritarian perspective in which there exists nothing besides the game of power. If rulership is all there is — if it is inescapable — then the “without rulership” of “an-archy” signifies a senseless and incoherent concept, and the word should, in the authoritarian mind, be reassigned to more productively characterize a less centralized set of power relations.

This reframing of anarchy in terms of centralization rather than domination is an obvious trick because decentralized expressions of rulership or interpersonal domination can clearly be quite severe. Parental abuse of children, partner abuse, sexual violence, community ostracization, and many other informal power dynamics of social capital are often far more visceral and constraining in many people’s actual lives than war, taxes, and police repression. Exploitation at the hand of the thief or bandit, the mugger or rapist, the brigand and minor warlord, is hardly any different than at the hand of a cop or bureaucrat.

Centralization and decentralization each have their own efficiencies and inefficiencies when it comes to domination and constraint. Centralization allows one to take advantage of certain economies of scale, but decentralization can allow more intimate and attentive abuse. It makes little sense to quibble over whether the decentralization of the Rwandan genocide made it more efficient at horror than Third Reich. Decentralization may be a necessary condition of liberation, but it alone is hardly sufficient — the real issue is domination itself.

Similarly, domination can be quite sharply constraining even without a clearly defined hierarchy. Two people can chain each other down, sometimes without either ever getting an advantage. Indeed we often interact in ways that are mutually oppressive. More complex or balanced dynamics of domination that defy description in terms of a simple hierarchy do not necessarily diminish the domination at play.

For those of us who seek the abolition of such dynamics altogether, who strive in the direction of a world entirely without domination, without rulership over one another, it is impossible to avoid a contest over the definition of anarchy. Language channels and focuses our thoughts; a definition determines what can be expressed succinctly and what presumptions we will gravitate towards. So it was like a thunderclap when in the nineteenth century someone finally declared that “Anarchy is order, government is civil war” and a movement promptly grew like wildfire.

Read more: <https://tinyurl.com/yc6cs2md>

Interview with Grace from Jeremy Hammond support

From June 11th

In this interview for the June 11th International Day of Solidarity with Marius Mason and All Long-Term Anarchist Prisoners, we talked to Grace from Jeremy Hammond support.

Jeremy Hammond is a long-time anarchist and hacker who is serving 10 years in prison for leaking information about Strategic Forecasting, Inc. (Stratfor), a private intelligence firm engaged in spying at the behest of corporations and governments. Jeremy was arrested in March 2012, and has remained vocal and defiant behind bars.

We talked about Jeremy's case, repression Jeremy has faced for his defiant attitude, the potential for solidarity between the hacker and anti-prison worlds, long-term support for prisoners, the generalization of prisoner support amongst anarchists, Lauri Love, and the specific nature of supporting anarchist prisoners.

JUNE 11TH: Can you start by telling us about yourself and your experience with prison and prisoner support?

GRACE: Sure. My name is Grace North. I've been heading up the Jeremy Hammond committee since 2013. Before that I had really no formal experience in prison support. I had participated in it tangentially through other activist work that I did, but before that I had never really done any formal prison support. When Jeremy asked me to do it I said, "Sure!" not really realizing what I was getting myself into. All of my experience with prison support has really been learning as I go along. I joke with people that my strategy is to just bumble along and hope I don't mess things up too badly. It seems to be going okay so far.

J11: Can you speak to the importance of prisoner solidarity as part of the anarchist project and other liberation struggles, in specific to the necessity of long term prisoner support?

G: Absolutely. I feel that prisoner support, especially for us anarchists, is inextricably tied with our values as anarchists. One of our core principles is the principle of solidarity, especially solidarity with the oppressed, and honestly prisoners are some of the most oppressed and the most marginalized people in this country, especially because most of the prison population is made up of black and brown people. If we as anarchists are not engaging in all areas of solidarity, we really have no business calling ourselves anarchists in the first place because anarchy is all about solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized. I think it's hugely important for us to engage in this and so often it is a little bit overlooked.

We do a really good job in the beginning where there's all this hype and energy, but sustaining that energy can be a hard in any activist project. For long term prisoners, we need to especially keep that going because prison is so brutally dehumanizing that the longer you're there the more it wears on you, the more it does its best to grind you down. We need to be especially supporting long term prisoners.

J11: Can you tell us more about Jeremy, his case, and what he's up to now?

G: Sure. Jeremy is a lifelong activist. He's being doing activism pretty much his entire life. He was part of a hacking group. They were known as LulzSec, later known as AntiSec. AntiSec was sort of an offshoot of LulzSec. In the beginning, it was hacking just for a little bit of mayhem. Later, especially with Jeremy's hacks, it became more political. Jeremy tied in his politics as an anarchist with his hacking. He hacked Stratfor. He hacked several police and law enforcement related groups and organizations. Unbeknownst to him, unfortunately, one of the other members of the group, Hector Monsegur, had been arrested several months prior on identity-theft-related charges and agreed to turn state's witness. So, all this time he was being watched by the FBI. Hector Monsegur helped the FBI connect the dots and lead them to Jeremy. Jeremy was then arrested in March of 2012.

read more: <https://tinyurl.com/yabws3ml>

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