

After the Revolution

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Introduction

The following is the script of the video I published on my channel Anark. If you would like to watch that video, it is here: <https://youtu.be/sMoTWFZjoYA>

Minor edits have been made to the script to instead refer to itself as an essay instead of a video. Other than this, the content has remained the same and may be seen as a copy of the video, in text form, that can be distributed wholly in place of the video.

Given that this is one of the older videos on the channel, there are parts of this script that I would clarify or detail in greater depth if I were to write it now. A finer point would have been put on the meaning of certain terms: communalism or democratic confederalism, for example. I would have also likely referenced this to other projects and compared and contrasted its relation to historical anarchist suggestions. However, I think the work may benefit from this lack of long-windedness. It is quite a bit more readable because I have avoided jargon and dense theoretical expansion.

For this reason, some anarchists who read this will naturally object to the usage of certain words within this piece: democracy, constitution, civil rights, and so on... However, one should read this work understanding that it is a sort of plain language presentation of anarchist solutions, foregoing most of the special terminology utilized by anarchists to describe their ideas. For this reason, though one might find that there are technical differences between these stand-in terms and those that anarchists use, I ask that you read it thinking of how this terminology fits much better with the common words used by the average person. This is one of the few works offered on the channel with this goal and thus I ask you to keep it in mind while you read.

If one were to orient this work within the milieu of ideas that I have set out since this piece, they could see this as an example of what I might call an “anarchistic society.” It is not a representation of anarchy, nor anarcho-communism. It is a sort of transition system that might exist after a revolutionary rupture and during a period where anarchists are weathering global sabotage, but which retains some of the birthmarks of the previous system.

Regardless, I hope this rough outline of an anarchistic society offers food for thought for those who wish to imagine a different world.

Solidarity forever.

Preface

In my previous essays I’ve expressed a concern I have that the left seems to spend too much time engaged in deconstruction and not enough time on ideological construction and education. It’s almost like we think we’re in an era where it’s no longer necessary to create new theory or to outline new principles of struggle based upon present conditions. Because of this, I argue, we run the risk of creating a movement based upon distress and aimlessness instead of hope and liberation.

For this reason, I want to use this essay to outline a world that we might all cooperate to strive for. I won’t claim this world to be uniquely of my own mind. This solution is based upon the principles of anarcho-syndicalism and has great similarities to the Communalism of Murray Bookchin and, therefore, the Democratic Confederalism of Abdullah Ocalan. There are thus numerous examples where these principles have been instituted to great success and this

essay represents a sort of synthesis of these ideas and a central location for how they might be implemented. I also don't want to give the impression that I am reductively tied to the creation of the exact structures I will lay out here. If a structure is built which balances the principles of decentralism, minimization of coercion, and robust protection of the masses, I am quite open to any suggestions. Instead, I view the aim of this essay as the creation of a rough sketch of a future society that I believe best balances the principles I have presented on this channel against real world difficulties.

Although the topics we're going to cover here will get pretty complex, I'll do my best, as we proceed, to summarize the ideas in a way that will inspire confidence that they could coherently manage a complex society. After all, we want to maintain the gains that humanity has made through the Industrial and Digital Era, while not trampling the environment or disempowering the great mass of laborers which animate all progress and that is no small task.

So let's have a discussion about what comes after the revolution.

Goals

As we begin, I want to address a few pressing concerns which I feel we are obligated to answer over the course of this essay if we believe this society will function.

1. How will we institute democracy while avoiding gridlock and manage the inherent logistical problems of direct participation?
2. How will a society that attempts to avoid coercion be able to stop the resurgence of reactionary forces?
3. How will this society respond to environmental needs in a way that makes it superior to capitalism?
4. How will we safeguard the rights of minorities when majorities decide what is implemented?

I hope to offer coherent and enduring answers to each of these, although I won't claim to have solved all of these issues completely. These are not trivial problems and it is likely that any society will struggle with them to some degree. But let us begin.

In my last essay, I laid out a framework which made an analogy which compared the processes of social change and revolution with the scientific field called complex systems analysis, which concerns itself with feedback cycles and their behaviors. We will continue now with that metaphor, focusing upon two other concepts that occur in complex systems.

The first of these concepts is called the edge of chaos. This phenomena takes place when a feedback cycle crosses a particular boundary and goes from being predictable to completely unpredictable. Upon first blush, when applied to politics, this may sound like it is the naive critique of anarchism; but quite the contrary, the analogy to political chaos is primitivism. Primitivism, seeking to recreate the conditions of humanity's existence in the state of nature, offers no resistance to would-be tyrants, turning humans into atomized and defenseless subjects.

But, interestingly, scientific inspection shows that systems which are allowed to reach harmony naturally tend to lie just upon the edge of chaos. This tendency is the second of the two

concepts that we're interested in, called "self-organizing criticality." Anarchist structures, stopping short of primitivism and advocating a mutual social code to maintain a communal defense against the power hoarders, exemplify self-organizing criticality.

How that social code is enforced is far from a settled affair, however. After all, historical anarchists have tended to object to the concept of building an ideal society on a formal agreement. The constitution, representing to the anarchists a sort of authoritarian document which is both unnecessary and oppressive, has been rejected quite widely. Yet in practice, every sustained and wide scale anarchist inspired society has had one anyway. Why?

Perhaps a biological metaphor will help us think more clearly about this. In immunology, there is a popular conception that viruses can be thought of like keys and the immune system like a series of locks. If the locks are coded appropriately to their environment, the viruses won't be able to open them. However, over time, viruses evolve and therefore develop the correct keys to open those locks. The immune system, in response, has to code new locks that will be unable to be opened by the new keys. But, crucially, the immune system can't configure itself with the locks to every possible key at the same time. Thus, in doing so, the new locks are now susceptible to one of the old keys.

This is the same reason why constitutions are used. Over time, many, many people will be cycled through our system and, eventually, at least a few of those people will have an ill intent to concentrate power. If we don't create some formal mechanism to respond to those corrupt actors, we may find our future society co-opted by authoritarian parasites. And, certainly, if this constitution is built wrong, it can serve to be a tool of oppression. Just as someone who has an auto-immune disease is often more hurt than helped by their body's immune response. But we can't sanction the idea that all social and political interactions will spontaneously organize toward stability with zero institutions or formal social contracts, just as we can't expect a body without an immune system to properly fight off bacterial predators.

Every system will contain a flaw, just as every immune system can only maintain a limited set of locks. This is why our constitution must aim to simultaneously seal away the risk of the tyrants, while also paying heed to the risk of primitivism. This is the political equivalent of balancing upon the edge of chaos. So...we'll break with the anarchist orthodoxy and advocate a constitution here, even if it's one that is constantly in flux. Let's list some of the features that might be in it:

1. A democratic confederalist structure with temporary and revocable delegates at every level.
2. Civil rights protections, including: freedom from discrimination, freedom of expression, freedom of travel, the right to democratic access, and others, to be expanded by democratic mandate.
3. The guarantee of all basic needs; food, water, shelter, healthcare, transportation, communication, and others, as society sees fit.
4. The establishment of a market of federated workers councils which produce and distribute all products not outlined as basic necessities, held accountable through regulation by citizen bodies.
5. The mechanisms by which the constitution can be edited by the people.

Like the concerns presented at the beginning of this section, I will try to describe how some of these principles are actualized in our theoretical society as we proceed. Although, naturally, I will have to leave out a great deal in order for us to accommodate such an enormous topic within the amount of time available, I will try as best I can to touch on the most important subjects so that a framework might arise in the mind of the reader.

First, let it be said, although the individual is a member of a greater collective in this theoretical society, we wish to avoid “collectivizing” them and therefore diminishing their unique capacities and desires. And, although the individual’s rights are held sacrosanct, we also don’t want them to be alienated from their fellow humans by ruthless expectations of complete self-sustenance. Instead, what we attempt here is a synthesis of the principles of individual autonomy and collective responsibility. In every place where an individual is affected by the actions of some power structure, that individual is given a democratic body where they may vest control over that power structure and therefore maintain a sort of radical accountability. These structures will be called the Workplace, the Community, the Municipality, the Region, and the Collective. Every individual is a member of each and their cumulative consent determines the direction of each.

These entities, built to balance the needs of the individual and the needs of the collective, therefore reject the tenets of representative democracy, which has proven only to be a tool of class control, and instead codify a modified direct democracy. This means that, when legislation is made, it is crafted, edited, and enacted by the people. And if individuals see fit to elect some person to carry out a task, they elect a temporary delegate who can be recalled whenever the individuals choose. Delegates therefore do not “govern” nor do they “manage,” they carry out a mandate that was given to them by a democratic body. Power in this society, is therefore only durable if it comes along with continuous consent.

Yet...we won’t claim we’ve eliminated coercion. After all, the theorists of history were not wrong to say that in a majoritarian democracy, the interests of the many overwrite the interests of the few. Whether the minority is 49% or 1%, they are tyrannized by those who have succeeded in democratic mandate. But the best way to fix this problem is not to jettison democracy. In any system, some group of people will make the decisions for society and thus a similar sort of tyranny will arise. In other systems it is just that a minority tyrannizes, accelerating the concentration of power. Thus, if the problem is the tyranny of the majority, the solution is to create as large a majority as possible, so we can gain the highest consensus possible.

With this idea in mind, let me offer a voting system that I think is a healthy balance between majoritarianism and full consensus. Where voting is said to take place in this theoretical society, let us imagine, in all occasions to come, that it will function in the following way:

Proposal Process

First, a resolution is presented by an individual in the democratic body. Following this, there is a discussion period about the resolution. After this discussion has concluded, the voters all place their first votes as a temperature check and the results are tallied. If the first vote comes to a 90% majority, the measure is passed and planning will begin.

If not, those who voted against the measure are asked to qualify their concerns into deal-breakers or non-deal-breakers. Those who have said that their grievances are not deal-breakers

put their complaints into one of several categories and each category of complaint elects a delegate to plead their case.

After these delegates have each plead their case, voters are asked to weigh in on their agreement with the grievance and those with the grievance offer amendments that, if instituted, would garner their support. These friendly amendments are then voted on and a temperature check is taken to re-assess the status of consensus. If majority has now reached 90%, the motion is passed and planning will begin.

If not, those who said that their grievance was a complete deal-breaker are asked to categorize their complaints and elect delegates to plead their case. Voters are then asked to weigh in on their agreement with these grievances and more amendments are gathered. If, after all amendments have been passed, turned down, or sustained, the majority has now reached 2/3, the motion is passed and planning will begin.

After passage, the minority enters into a contention process during the planning phase of the resolution, such that they might still have some recourse before the resolution is fully implemented. If, during this contention phase, the majority drops below 50%, the resolution is tabled or dismissed.

However, if the minority can't reach a simple majority during planning and implementation, the resolution is carried forward. The body now elects a delegate or numerous delegates to carry out the implementation of the measure under the strict mandate of what was contained in it.

Now that this very particular aspect has been laid out, let's expand our scope. We will now walk through a series of descriptions of each of the governing bodies in this society, all of which are democratically managed by the populace within them. These different groupings will all contribute an important aspect of cooperative management to the citizens, checking one another when they step out of line, and serving to safeguard the needs of differing cultures and regions.

Individual

The first governing body is the individual. In this society, the individual's right to bodily autonomy is held sacrosanct. And, insofar as their actions involve only themselves and place no other person under coercion, they may do as they please. This would mean the complete legalization of all drugs, the sanctioning of sport fighting, the acceptance of both suicide and assisted suicide as implied civil rights, and the legalization of sex work, even though we may desire to create systems to ameliorate negative repercussions for any number of these.

By contraposition, however: when the individual makes decisions that affect others, they are accountable for those outcomes, whether they are making those decisions as an individual or part of another democratic body. This effectively abolishes the justification for capitalism from first principle, given that private ownership of workplaces affects other people against their will, and therefore functions on coercion and violates individual autonomy. This also extends to the topic of property rights: individuals may own personal belongings, but they may not own anything which is communally operated. They may do what they will with their own bodies, but when their own self-treatment affects others, they are held accountable.

Workplace

This leads us now to the Workplace. Like all other entities in this society, workplaces would function through consensus. Here, the voting body would be the workers at each workplace and those workers would directly and democratically manage their own affairs. If any higher level management or coordination was needed in carrying this out, the workers could delegate people to those positions, able to be recalled at their discretion at any time.

In this aspect alone, we would reduce a great deal of the toxic behavior seen in capitalist workplaces. It is not to say that this new version of the workplace is free from any incentive to act badly. It is simply to say, it is less likely to do so. Instead of managers functioning as enforcers for the class interests of the capitalists, they would be co-equal laborers. Businesses, now managed completely by the laborers would also be much more responsive to the concerns of those in the workplace, both as laborers and as citizens of the world. Externalities, such as environmental damage, would no longer be hidden from the workers behind opaque hierarchies, but would instead be transparently available, compelling the workers to act responsibly.

The workplace, in this society, would no longer be a place that seeks to domineer the laborers, but would instead function on their constant direction, now a sort of civic body that is woven into a democratic tapestry.

Community

The next grouping we will discuss is what we call the Community. Although named in a traditional sense, it takes on a technical meaning in this system. Here, every person would only belong to one Community, decided by the separation of the total landmass into non-overlapping geographical areas. Communities should be separated into some consistent number of people, perhaps 150 (as per Dunbar's Number), so that each Community is given equal power and is simultaneously small enough that face-to-face democracy can still be carried out. Nonetheless, whatever number is chosen, these communities should never grow so large that the people within them can't meet and make decisions easily.

These Communities would then create and pass legislation that applies to their shared surroundings, while simultaneously functioning as the primary democratic bodies that operate at the very top of the structure. Although the Community will participate in all of the larger groupings, there are a few particular tasks they will need to fulfill.

First, the Community is the level at which the lowest tier of the justice system would exist and by which all laws and enumerated measures for reparation or rehabilitation not explicitly present in the constitution, would be outlined. The fundamental ethos of the justice system in this society would be that justice means "repairing the wrongs that have been done and preventing further ones from being committed." Punitive justice, caring nothing for reparation or rehabilitation, functioning only on fear, would therefore not be permitted. All violators of the common law should be treated as if they are fundamentally capable of being rehabilitated. Further, because "repairing wrongs" is part of the very foundations of justice, reparation for the victim should always be a primary concern.

A society such as this should avoid the creation of mandatory minimum sentences and worship of previous rulings. These Community Justice Councils should decide for themselves what the

process of rehabilitation and reparation would look like. Permanent separation of citizens from society would therefore be extremely rare and would only occur in situations where that person is an active threat to their community and have to be separated in order to maintain the safety of others.

This sequestering of citizens, not viewed as punishment for the sake of punishment, would also therefore avoid placing violators in oppressive and traumatic jail systems. Instead, sequestered citizens would live in Rehabilitation Communities which function democratically just the same as regular Communities, but they would have to be monitored and required to undergo rehabilitative measures. Once the Community Justice Council assesses that these sequestered citizens are rehabilitated, they would then be released back into the general population, although not forced to do so if they wish to stay.

But what if the community comes under threat? As we have conceded, there will be those who choose to use coercion, both in the interpersonal sense and political sense, in any society. Some measures for social self-defense, beyond the primitivist notion of atomized individuals with firearms, must be instituted if there is to be a coordinated response to wide scale attack. For this reason, I suggest that each Community would have its own Community Militia, consisting of all members of that Community, although not compelling all of those members to actively participate if they did not want to. Given that this Community Militia would not be given any greater right to coerce the populace than the call to self-defense, they could not arrest citizens for anything short of an active risk to the Community. Community Militias are defensive, non-active military units; flexible and able to confederate, just as all other bodies in this society, based upon the scale of the threat that is involved.

Municipality

From here, the next largest deliberative body would be called the Municipality. This body, comprised of several Communities and Workplace Councils, would necessarily represent something akin to a city or county.

The Municipality, now covering a more significant territory and containing many Workplaces and Communities, is the first level at which most economic and environmental concerns would arise. The people in a Municipality, joined by their shared location, would naturally be closest to any negative environmental and economic effects of society's various Workplaces. If their local river was polluted or the price of their goods was unreasonable, they would collectively experience that problem. That would make them best oriented to attend to that problem, although they may desire to seek expertise in solving it.

But, given that some Municipalities could be quite large, this is also the scale at which face to face democracy would become somewhat difficult. For this reason, we will introduce a mechanic that will be used in all groupings from here on. In this schema, we won't only seek the consensus of individuals within each Community, we will seek the unity consensus of all pertinent groupings affected by the decision at hand.

So, for example: if a resolution were presented at the level of the Municipality, it would have to also be presented as a resolution to every individual Community within that Municipality and each would have to reach their own Community Verdict. Only by combining these Community Verdicts together at the level of the Municipality could it then be determined whether the measure

passed or not. This process holds true for any grouping to come, requiring that entity to receive Community Verdicts in order to pass their measure.

Region

The next grouping we will discuss is called the Region. Each Region is a combination of numerous Municipalities, incorporating the needs of all of the Workers' Councils and Communities contained within. The Region, now comprised of such a wide variety of different people and competing needs, would probably be the stage for an enormous number of disputes, a last stop of deliberation before any issue is determined to require the Collective Body. The Region comes along with its own particular environmental and economic considerations, now seeing a bigger picture than that of the Municipalities. This means that many of the concerns of the Region will be more sweeping versions of the concerns of the Municipalities.

This is especially important, given that power structures have a tendency to externalize their problems. For example: what would happen if a Municipality made a decision that was in the interest of their local ecology or environment, but that decision negatively affected people elsewhere? Well, although the desired outcome would be that these two Municipalities would mediate a mutual agreement, this will not always be possible. In that particular occasion, the Region would then find itself making determinations about their dispute and would, in this process, determine how the Regional environment should be maintained, how the economy should be stabilized, and what the solutions to those issues will look like. It is therefore, in many ways, a body that is meant to settle the disagreements or short-sighted decisions made by the Municipalities.

Collective

That leads us finally to a body called the Collective. This is the largest deliberative body and would represent everyone in this autonomous leftist society. This body is very, very important, as the verdicts that would be issued at this level would be meant to represent the fundamental rights of every person and thing in existence. It would find itself frequently making determinations about the macroeconomic arrangements of the society, the amendment and clarification of the constitution, the creation and sustenance of social programs, and the management of collectivized industries. Wherein there is some right made explicit in the constitution, this is the level at which a mechanism to deliver it would be made. Collectivized, non-market entities for the production and distribution of food, water, clothing, shelter, healthcare, education, access to information, transportation and all other amenities not considered luxuries, would be outlined and instituted by delegate councils.

When there is a dispute that takes place that can't be resolved by the Regional bodies, this Collective body is where it would ultimately arrive. Often, these concerns will be able to be addressed through mediation or collective proposal, but sometimes they will address issues which are quite foundational and require a reformulation of the constitution. Through the direct proposal and direction of the masses, any of the stipulations written in the Collective Constitution could therefore be changed or expanded. In this way, we hope that society never becomes shackled to a founding document, but instead continually reforms it based upon their values and moves forward within the scope of their mutual agreement.

Conclusion

With this, we conclude our summary of the democratic bodies that would comprise this system. We have endeavored to balance the needs of the individual and the needs of the collective, and to grant exceptional autonomy, while never granting the right to tyranny. As I have said before, I don't claim that this is exactly the society that we will create, nor that every aspect is perfect. What I have presented in this essay is a relatively detailed sketch of how anarchist principles might be used to create a socialist economic model with robust democratic recourse.

Ideally, what we have built here is a system under which the people can simply will the next revolution by mandate, rather than having to struggle through violence and insurrection. After all, there are fixes for all of the problems this society has left unsolved, when they see fit to institute them: market abolition, currency abolition, and distribution based upon need by communal and uncoerced management would all be desirable, if they could be put in place coherently.

After all, we don't mean to suggest here that a full communist economic arrangement is not desirable. We suggest this society as a sort of training ground to teach the masses how to manage themselves, how to cooperate on various scales, and how to reorganize our social arrangements such that there is no longer even a conception that capital should tyrannize.

This society is a seed which...if planted in fertile soil...might create a new political paradigm, capable of perpetual revolution and yet still be prepared to fight bitterly to defend the gains it has made. We offer the people of this future society a way that they might choose the time, place, and condition for all future abolitions of unchecked power, untrammelled by dictators and centralized bureaucracies, able to protect themselves from the reactionary element without having to sacrifice their principles. A society truly based in solidarity and respect, yet not naive. A new society of the unbroken, never to be held in chains again.

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