

More queer anarchy

A Bisexual Feminist Perspective

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The most interesting connection between queerness and anarchy is the breakdown of categories and hierarchies. The whole notion of breaking people into two distinctly defined groups, whether on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, etc., seems to lead inexorably to hierarchy and all the problems of authoritarianism that come with it. When I think of queer anarchism, I think of breaking down the strict boundaries constructed between the categories of sexuality. So, I guess I think of bisexuality, omnisexuality, pansexuality as being more “anarchist” than strict homosexuality or heterosexuality.

Looking at things on a long-term, more idealistic basis, I’d like to see us be able to smash gender and sexuality boundaries. I think some gays and lesbians reify traditional notions of gender and sexuality (albeit with the “good/bad” value judgments reversed). I also think some parts of the feminist movement do this as well, when they talk about the “inherent nature” of men and women.

I’ve been thinking about gender a lot lately. I really like some of what the radical faeries have to offer in terms of expanding and subverting traditional notions of gender. I think much of the transgender community does this too, although again, there are some that seem to want to uphold traditional roles. To me, bisexuality is very much related to how we conceive of gender. Are we bisexual because we love two genders, or because we reject the traditional notion of gender duality? Personally, I think this varies among bisexuals). Both “bi”sexual and “trans”gender implies that there are only two. There really don’t seem to be very good terms in our language to express the notion of transcending the binary, of looking at gender and orientation as a spectrum, a feature that can be fluid.

I look at anarchism in a very broad sense. It’s not just getting rid of the authority of the state, bosses, corporations, etc., but also overcoming our internal and societal restrictions about what it means to be a woman, man, gay person, or heterosexual. The fact that different cultures and different eras have had different notions of sexuality leads me to believe that it is not an essential and unchanging feature, but rather something that is strongly affected by the society in which we live. In our homophobic society, a relatively small proportion of the population is non-heterosexual, but what would be true in a society without limitations? Some gay rights proponents claim that homosexuality is an inherent, probably biological feature that applies to a constant 10% or so of the population, but I don’t agree. I think that in a society where everyone was free to love who they pleased, many more people would love people of both genders.

While it is far from perfect, I have been generally pleased with how anarchists have dealt with issues of sexuality and gender, especially compared with many of the Marxist/communist groups who consider homosexuality to be a bourgeois aberration or, at best, something trivial that can be dealt with “after the revolution.” Anarchists have historically seen sexuality, family, and relationships as important matters that need to be discussed along with economics, imperialism, etc. This was even true among the “free love” anarchists of the nineteenth century, though their views on non-heterosexuality seem rather conservative.

Why is it, I wonder, that so many anarchists seem to be bisexual? There seem to be more bisexuals in anarchist groups than in radical, political groups in general. In some milieus, a definite majority are bi (unfortunately, it

does not seem to be the case that there are that many anarchists within the organized bi movement—I think a lot of us are turned off by the emphasis on leadership, expertise, traditional organizational forms, and emphasis on mainstream politics).

Is there something about the philosophy of anarchism that makes it especially appealing to bisexuals? Or do people embrace anarchism as a way of life have impetus to identify as bi? I feel my bisexuality is in many ways an outgrowth of my anarchism, although I know many others who adopted radical politics in part because of their experiences as queers (I discuss this in my article in *Bi Any Other Name* (available from FE books)).

Does it have to do with the notion of anarchism as a philosophy that opposes order/structure? It does seem to me that some anarchists feel they should be bisexual, and that anything else is just discriminatory and buying into the dictates of society. I do know several anarchists who identify as bi even though they are sexually attracted to only men or women. While I'm really happy that people embrace the idea of smashing social rules and categories, I don't want people to feel they must call themselves bi in order to be correct. I think all sexualities are equally valid as long as they are well-considered, freely chosen, and non-oppressive of others.

I think that issues of gender and sexuality are something that everyone has an interest in confronting. I dislike when groups consign gender issues to women, sexuality issues to queers, etc. And I think much of the gay movement encourages this, and sees sexuality as something that heterosexuals have no right to discuss. I'd like to see anarchists of all sexualities work together for sexual liberation (both the freedom to love who we choose, and the freedom from restricted notions of sexuality and gender).

There is nothing about being homo- or bisexual that makes one freedom-loving. Likewise, heterosexuality does not make one conservative or oppressive (though the institution of mandatory heterosexuality certainly is). My radical politics are a more central feature of who I am than my sexuality is—that is, I feel more at home with heterosexual anarchists than I do with political conservative homo- and bisexuals.

I was really pleased that the anarchist contingent at the March On Washington was so sexually diverse. While the immediate need to stop oppression based on gender and sexuality is most salient for queers and women, since we have been most obviously harmed, I believe that people of all genders and sexualities will benefit from expanded conceptions of gender and sexuality, and should all be regarded as potential allies in making those changes. I think the work I've seen that shows men how sexism harms them too is valuable, and has had some success. I've seen less work that aims to show heterosexuals how homophobia and heterosexism harms them and limits their options. Most gay rights arguments focus on saying that heterosexuals should accept queers because it's the right thing to do (and it is!) rather than showing them how heterosexism is limiting for everyone.

As Adrienne Rich said, no woman can truly and freely choose to love men unless the option of loving women is available as well.

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