

From Red Anarchism to Green Anarchy

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From its Eat the Rich Gang incarnation in the 1970s, *Fifth Estate* has been an unparalleled source of new ideas. Thinkers like Fredy Perlman, Jacques Ellul, and Jacques Camatte were introduced and moved anti-authoritarian perspectives forward very significantly.

I was happy to be a part of an exciting opening, as many of us pondered the limitations and defeat of the 1960s. Foundational critiques of technology and civilization emerged.

Since those days, the anarchist milieu has slowly incorporated insights that update the goal of anarchy. It is no longer widely accepted that mass production—which is the base of mass society—is a given, a desirable thing. Industrialization, once accepted by nearly all anarchists, has caused the systematic destruction of the natural world, the current environmental crisis, and the end of community.

The Left, including classical anarchism (which certainly considered itself socialist, part of the left), is more and more seen not only as irrelevant, but as part of the problem.

One can say that the Left has failed. But it's more accurate to point out that it never tried. The Left has embraced every component of this dying world. Not only its ruinous massification, but that which drives the disaster, including domestication (of animals, plants and ourselves) and civilization (every one of which has failed). Underlying these primary institutions is division of labor or specialization, the development of which brings hierarchy, loss of autonomy, and alienation.

The early Karl Marx decried division of labor as antithetical to a liberated society. He later reversed himself, embracing industrial life, which depends upon the division of labor. The anarchists followed suit.

On a basic level, the Left has been the loyal opposition of the dominant order. Anarchism in its traditional orientation has faded away historically in large part because it never broke fundamentally with the mainsprings of unfreedom. How radically interesting or inspiring could it be to call for self-management of oppressive institutions, including the most basic ones.

However, there always seem to be new iterations of the Left. The marxist-leninist sects have faded away, thankfully, but now various reformist groupings are in evidence. The current super-loathesome U.S. government valorizes anything that is anti-Trump among those who fashion themselves as The Resistance.

This is seen in the recent rise of the Democratic Socialists of America that some pose as an alternative, but which remains committed to all the basic institutions of civilization. The giddy, fawning popularity of U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, so well known that after only a few months in office she is recognized, FDR-like, by her initials, has liberals and leftists hoping she represents an opening to socialism. But what she and Bernie Sanders advocate was a century ago labeled “sewer socialism,” government reforms that while somewhat helpful, do nothing fundamentally to challenge capitalism or the nation state, let alone civilization.

But anarchists have been slow to move away from the Left; inertia is an apparently persistent obstacle. It's fair to say that “post-Left” has become a common identification among anarchists; yet the term is rather flabby or vague. In a “post” almost everything (postmodern, etc.) culture, few are anti-Left, which would mean something, and which is the necessary basis for liberatory politics.

Decidedly fewer anarchy types explicitly identify with or defend the Left, especially among youth. And, fewer defend civilization. “Anti-civ” is a common component of ideas, like “post-Left.” It is ascendant in part because the global totality seems to be self-destructing, as has every civilization heretofore. There is a crisis at every level, in every sphere, whose roots are much deeper than capitalism.

But “anti-civ,” like “post-Left,” can be flabby or vague. Partly because these are dark, unexciting times, energy and imagination are somewhat wanting for all of us. Currents like egoism and nihilism, not surprisingly, are to be seen in anti-authoritarian circles—and elsewhere. Mainly aspects of retreat in an epoch of defeat.

Anti-civilization approaches—as seen in such publications as *Species Traitor*, *Green Anarchy*, *Black & Green Review*, and now, *Wild Resistance*, have aimed at theory and practice that explicitly, in-depth oppose civilization. They aim at de-domestication and rewilding, and explore insights toward decolonization, for example. There is a deep respect for the land and for the indigenous dimension.

The way forward is one that explicitly breaks with the Left, including classical anarchism.

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