

Being forced to do anything, with anyone

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So anarchy's all about doing whatever the hell we want, right?

Before answering that, let me go on a bulky tangent about why group projects suck.

A general problem amongst group projects (i.e why they suck) tends to be with people. Modern white collar work ethic tells us to be flexible with people and work in groups of whatever stature, in order to maintain/expand efficiency. Inaccuracies aside, essentially we are supposed to be nice and gel work with anyone as a team. This is made big by team building, "making friends" policies and whatever the fuck the HR and Faculty wants to foster the ideal work environment. In cases it works well and mutual bonds develop, and in the other there's lingering resentment over being forced to interact in social situations and dealing with toxic and unsavory individuals, from asshole bosses to dipshit co-workers and classmates.

Thus, the idea is that we should work with anyone at any time and (practically) have to deal with somebody else's bullshit by recommendation of the head honcho. Of course, a typical person nowadays would say "well, that's not bullshit." But if the price of survival is persistent frustration over restrictive superiors and horrible people, shouldn't we consider how impractical and nonsensical it is on hindsight?

There's this old facebook meme that was lying around back in the early 10's. It was a visual comparison of what a boss is and what a leader is. The meme describes a boss as someone, well, bossing over his subordinates, being a general asshole and acting like he holds their lives in their hands (well, in practice it kinda is). A leader is described as someone who acts with his subordinates, works with them as a team and guides them in their job.

The general definition of Anarchism (as per Chomsky) is the "abolition of all unjust hierarchy" (though this is a very shallow definition but useful enough to this piece's context—we'll get to that in following essays). The idea that one should be above the other (i.e power) is absolute bullshit and really someone has to deal with that. In this piece's context, the idea of "leaders > bosses" is a particular aspect that ties into anarchy—coordination trumps direction. Toxic and bossy individuals within work groups exercise their power over people (this may sound bullshit but bear with me here) by being assholes over everyone else.

Yes, in an intrapersonal sense, basic Anarchism shits on the idea that you have to work with people that can be absolute pieces of garbage that needs to be kicked in the genitals for good measure. Anarchists, are in a sense, Consistent Individualists who believe that no person should be above another, and that things can get done working together without someone trying to talk over anyone. And that people who try to do so should—and ideally, shall—get their groins smashed with a bat.

Anarchist ideals of "leaderlessness" or "masterlessness" are tied to the value of cooperating together, collaborating together, and scratching each other's backs. If everyone in the team's really into it, understands each other, has a stake into it, even if they aren't exactly on the same page, they'd wing it. In terms of the organization, the leader(s) becomes not an imperious figure but a coordinating actor, working as a leg of this association of individuals (to be honest, anyone or everyone in that group can be that kind of person).

This dynamic of forced participation in productive activity (ie. working with anyone) ties also with forced participation in all other activity.

I had a Law professor who's really pissed at the way our department teaches kids. He even finds it odd that our course has a subject like this (hint: we make ads), so he uses the subject instead to teach us how to learn—"if you don't know it, The way he's expresses that in our class—requiring us to read the required book and express what we recalled in our own words—is where I depart from that.

There's nothing particularly wrong about knowing how to learn, but as a person who learned how to do things as how I do now by myself (like writing this long of an essay), we're kinda being forced to learn. I learned more reading for myself without having to fear my grades being in danger. Similarly, groups I worked with for shits and giggles (mostly nerd stuff) have been more fruitful and ran its course as it should've.

Free association is a word that tends to be thrown out in discussions about anarchy, sometimes amongst more Libertarian and Individualist circles. It's the freedom to choose whoever and wherever you want to be a part of and whoever you want to work with. You don't have to join if you don't want to, and you sure as hell might ignore someone you dislike. Mace them if they keep on coming to you or something. I don't know.

I initially said association because essentially, collective work (like all productive activity), to the anarchist is ideally a voluntary act. Wiktionary talks of the root verb associate having two relevant meanings: joining with another or others with equal status, and following/accompanying another. In this context, the productive association is an activity of equals. It's an open companionship where it may last at any time at any pace. It's a bunch of energetic initiatives working together out of common interest.

This idea of productive activity in Anarchy is like a fun and actually continuing D&D session. It's a voluntary social act where people with their own voices collaborate together to create an open ended story (the GM simply serves to set the tone and general framework). I could say that the session analogy is very much true of all activity in anarchy, but I'm getting too ahead of myself here.

There's this one person I talked with who mentioned that anarchy is actually happening all the time, in small places and little exchanges. In-jokes and funny conversations with friends at a dinner party. Two people collaborating to make a work of art. Impromptu musical duets. Wikipedia in a good mood. Agreeing to do things for each other, trading card games, meetups of online communities, mutual gratitude, and the list goes on.

So anarchy's all about doing whatever the hell we want, yes, but only while also respecting the agency of others. It can be as productive as it is destructive. We can do things and make things out of our own volition and pace, we can work with people as we please, and essentially we forge mutually beneficial and wholesome relationships.

Because why the fuck would you even want to work with shit people?

Recommended Reading:

Your Freedom is My Freedom: The Premise of Anarchism by William Gillis

Anarchism as a Theory of Organization by Colin Ward (available on the anarchistlibrary.org)

Are you an Anarchist? The Answer Might Surprise You by David Graeber (available on the anarchistlibrary.org)

Organization Theory: A Libertarian Perspective by Kevin Carson

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