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Henry Seymour
The Two Anarchisms
1894

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This is a short text that presents two of the many facets of anarchism, the mutualistic and the communistic. Given the fact that the main feature of anarchy is the voluntary choice of personal and social organization, these two forms of anarchism should be both acceptable as long as they are practiced freely and voluntarily by those who believe in one or the other of them, without any imposition that would not be consonant with the conception and practice of anarchy.

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> Anarchist are divided into MUTUALISTS, who hope to bring about their economic results by Banks of Exchange and a free currency; and COMMUNISTS, whose motto is: "From every man according to his capacity, to every man according to his needs."
>
> *Hazell's Annual Encyclopaedia*, 1886

There are two Anarchisms. That is to say, there are two schools of Anarchism.

One is communistic, the other mutualistic.

One is emotional, the other is philosophic. One is utopian, the other practical.

One is dogmatic, the other rational.

One is destructive, the other constructive. One is revolutionary, the other evolutionary.

One relies on the logic of force, the other on the force of logic.

One believes the State to be the cause of the economic status of the people. The other that the economic status of the people is the result of their economic ignorance.

Both agree that the State engenders evils of its own, and that the present administration of justice is a sham.

One would destroy the State at once, the other believes that other evils of equal magnitude would result from such a proceeding.

One regards Anarchism as a condition capable of immediate realization, the other regards it as an ideal towards which humanity is unconsciously tending, but which can only be permanently attained through a succession of economic and moral developments in harmony with it and operating along the lines of least resistance.

One seeks to replace State authority by the direct control of the "community," the other objects equally to State authority and mob rule. Both have one object - the greatest possible liberty and independence.

One would permit everybody to work when, where, and how they pleased, and consume all they required from a common stock; the other objects to the exploitation of industrious labor through idleness, and of talent through incompetence.

One believes that everybody would cheerfully labor under communistic conditions, the other has no faith in shirking being got rid of by conditions which render it easier.

Both believe in Equality.

One believes in an equality of Comforts, the other believes in an equality of Rights, which guarantees to each the opportunity to be equally comfortable.

One regards Property as the fundamental cause of poverty and artificial inequality, the other insists that it is Monopoly which is the cause thereof.

One would abolish Property, the other would make Property possible.

One desires to expropriate everybody, the other desires to make the producers the proprietors.

One says: "The product to the community, and to each according to his needs." The other says: "The product to the producer and to each according to his deeds."

One regards Competition as an evil, the other regards it as the mainspring of progress.

One believes that the abolition of Competition would make social improvement possible, the other that it would produce social stagnation.

The first would suppress economic laws, the other would give them free play by removing the legislative restrictions which derange their true development and consequently produce such abnormal manifestations.

One says that Competition keeps down wages to the cost of the laborer's subsistence, the other says that wages are kept down to this level through the monopoly by the privileged class of the right to represent wealth by money.

One denies the possibility of accurately measuring the value of each producer's contribution to production, the other affirms the simplicity of doing so by the adoption of a true measure and representative instrument of exchange.

One declares money to be the source of all evil, the other declares evil to have manifold sources. One attributes the existence of gluts and poverty to the money system per se, the other attributes it to a privileged money system.

One would abolish money altogether, the other would introduce a free currency based on all VALUES, instead of giving Specie an arbitrary, seignorial prerogative over other commodities equally valuable.

One thinks that this system would eventually become as bad as its predecessor, the other knows it would immediately abolish interest, and tend to continuously lower, and finally eliminate rent.

One would declare civil war and confiscate existing wealth as well as the means of production, the other would peaceably set in motion Banks of Exchange through which credit could be

organized and mutual exchange effected, enabling everybody to start work at once, and gradually, but surely, removing the impediments on future production without confiscating anything.

One would make the *family* the basis of the social structure, the other would make Equity the basis.

Both believe in free-love.

One favors irresponsible promiscuity in the sexual relation (inasmuch as the community is responsible for the rearing of offspring), the other favors free contract, giving both parties equal liberties and enforcing mutual responsibilities.

One would therefore destroy marriage and the family; the other would consolidate them.

One would get rid of the burden of taxation by having no government at all, the other by means of a free government (the functions of which would be limited to a mere preservation of equal rights) supported exclusively by the criminals on whose account it were requisite.

One believes that the abolition of the State and the consequent free access to the means of living would immediately reduce crime to a minimum, the other believes that a large number of offences would be touched by this means, but that it is through stirpiculture alone that crime may be completely eradicated, and with it the necessity of the State.

I have said that there are two schools of Anarchism; I beg leave to add that there is only one logical and consistent school, which will ultimately prevail.