

Anarchism Harriet Bergman

Every New Year's Eve, the Dutch anarchist scene gathers to celebrate the upcoming year at a detention center. Detention Center Schiphol, near Amsterdam Airport, is the place where 'illegal' refugees are kept before they are deported back to the country they've fled. The people on the other side of the wall not only hear new year's wishes in several languages, and music to dance to, but also slogans like "No borders, no nations, stop deportations" and "tout le monde déteste la police." The anarchists demand the abolition of the prison system and scream at the top of their lungs to communicate their dislike of borders and the nation-state. The new year ritual, however, is more than a symbolic protest, it is an act of solidarity and a way of interacting with, and caring for, each other right now.

Marx's name justified some of the most horrific regimes because it takes time and strong leaders to bring the perfect communist socialist society into existence. But also in the rare cases when fighting for communism didn't result in an authoritarian leader taking over, the primacy of one specific struggle – class struggle – over others has caused many movements to neglect important hierarchies and power relations within the group and society at large. Most anarchists agree with large parts of the problem analysis developed by Marxists: capitalism is a problem because it exploits workers. We should strive to eliminate the division of labor, and the unjust

valuation of capital in respect to labor, rather than leading a life dictated by capital. Anarcho-capitalists aside – who aren't considered anarchists by the other currents of anarchism anyway – anarchists of all kinds share a large part of the Marxist analysis. Bakunin and Marx agreed on a lot of things, but fell out over the question of how to accomplish the society in which those problems were not present. "Freedom without socialism is privilege and injustice, but socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality", wrote Bakunin. Marx gave an analysis of the problems with capitalism, but how to proceed was less clear, as underlined by the results of the different attempts of implementing Marx's thought in different countries. As Peter Hudis reminds us, Marx did not mention the state in the first chapter of volume 1 of *Das Kapital*, nor does it come up in the discussions on a post-capitalist society in Friedrich Engels' third volume (2012, 175). At Marx's 200th birthday we've seen attempts to, in Marx's name, establish communism, and the result of the so-called 'end of history' under global capitalism. What we're left with is freedom without socialism: there is privilege and injustice, but we are afraid to act because of socialism's history of slavery and brutality.

The term 'state illusion' refers to the idea that a radical transformation of society is best accomplished through winning state power. Anarchist Gustav Landauer wrote that "The State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of behavior; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another" (2010, 214). We thus don't have to win over state power – where possible we can already start behaving differently today.

The term anarchism comes from the Greek prefix 'an' and the verb 'archein.' It means no beginning, no leadership, no rule: no government. Besides 'no government,' it can also mean 'no beginning': we can start right now, we don't have to wait for any radical revolution or overthrow of government before we start battling privilege and injustice and creating a more just world. When we look for an answer to the problems we are facing today – be it climate destruction, racism, sexism, or increased inequality and poverty – it seems clear that focusing on winning state power is just as ineffective as waiting for government intervention by those already

in power. We have to act now and do whatever we can, rather than wait for the revolution.

Anarchists cannot provide a blueprint of what the world should look like. Change should be tried through experimenting. And people should experiment for themselves – no central committee can implement anarchism from above, and no revolutionaries can force the abstinence of government and centralization upon people. If we want to see what the value of Marxism is, we can look at its economic theories and problem analyses. For solutions, we have to experiment, look, prefigure and try on our own. There is no blueprint for utopia. Ana Cecilia Dinerstein argues that in autonomous organizing, value is confronted with hope (2015, 211). Autonomous organizing, in which the anarchist principles of nonhierarchical, anti-capitalist, horizontal organizing are applied, prefigures what a post-revolutionary society should look like, but also already brings it into being right now. Ignoring the walls that divide the refugees from the privileged citizens, singing and dancing, wishing each other a happy new year: it is a first prefiguration, an act of solidarity, an attempt at creating the society we want to see. The anarchist emphasis on doing what is possible now, their way of organizing and interacting, is providing the blueprint for the society that is to come without falling into the trap of the state illusion.

References

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Animals

Eva Meijer

Nonhuman animals are not often considered a factor of importance in Marxist thought, and insights from Marxist thought are not often considered to be relevant to animal studies (Cochrane 2010). Marx himself did not write about nonhuman animals in much detail and saw humans as distinct from all other animals. Even though he had read Darwin (Benton 1993), who famously argued that differences between humans and other animals are of degree and not kind, and recognized the capacities of nonhuman animals to produce, as well as the animal nature of humans (Cochrane 2010), he saw humans as special animals and his theory is anthropocentric in different ways. His historical account for example focuses solely on human history and teleology, not recognizing animal agency or the importance of nonhuman animal- (or interspecies-) labor in capitalism. He also explicitly addresses the human capacity for transcending their animal nature, in contrast to other animals (*ibid.*). The focus is on human liberation, and the idea of justice for nonhuman animals seems irrelevant from this perspective.

However, as several authors have pointed out (Benton 2003, Noske 1989, Painter 2016, Perlo 2002), Marxist concepts can shed light on specific characteristics of the position of nonhuman animals in capitalist societies, and a focus on nonhuman animals can bring to light dimensions of capitalism that are otherwise obscured. I