



**ANARCHY 74**

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**HOW REALISTIC IS ANARCHISM?**



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# Anarchism as a realist alternative

IAN VINE

IN THIS ESSAY I HOPE in part to draw together lines of thought which are to be found in a variety of ANARCHY articles from the past few years, but which are in marked contrast to the views of some other contributors who appear to hold what I shall call the *simplistic viewpoint*. I shall begin by expounding briefly those doctrines which I call *simplist*, then I shall criticise these before turning finally to an exposition of what I hopefully call the *realist alternative*: a more flexible approach to the realisation of a libertarian society, but one for which I hope the beginnings of an immediate programme can be specified, in contrast to the all-too-familiar armchair philosophising or ineffectual, unplanned protest which besets social movements such as ours. I shall be particularly concerned with the need to adapt libertarian ideas to our changing world. This is therefore an attempt to initiate a dialogue in which the basic grounds on which anarchism's theory and practice are founded are re-examined critically.

## THE SIMPLIST VIEWPOINT

In discussing what I call the *simplist viewpoint* I shall be obliged to give examples, and I shall make particular reference to recent statements by Francis Ellingham and Tony Gibson. This is partly because their contributions have been a major incentive to the writing of this essay, partly because they have the courage to make explicit statements in print whereas others only imply their *simplist* beliefs. I hope therefore that they will both forgive my frequent references to them, and not regard these as attempted character-assassinations.

Francis Ellingham appears to maintain two apparently opposite theses, both of which I regard as *simplist*. One, explicitly stated in a



recent reply to earlier criticism, is that "anarchism primarily requires, not the reformation of social institutions, but a radical transformation in the mind of the individual" (p. 26).<sup>1</sup> But he also maintains<sup>1,2</sup> that "society" *per se* is such a menace to individual freedom that in the sense he uses the word we should abolish it completely, for it makes anarchism impossible. Man has fallen from Eden because he has allowed social institutions to grow to the point where they "condition" him and dominate both thought and action. In general those who believe that the anarchic state is to be obtained only by a personal triumph of the individual will tend to fall into the Individualist camp, those who believe it requires only an overthrow of existing capitalist institutions tend to be in the Syndicalist camp, though clearly Francis Ellingham fits neatly into neither. Although one blames the individual and one blames the existing institutions of society, there are parallels. Both condemn our present way of living out of hand. Both believe in a *single* main obstacle to anarchism, the removal of which will readily yield an anarchic existence. Both believe that below the surface man is fundamentally good and free and happy, given that existing restrictions, internal or external, are removed. They also believe that these restraints *can* be removed, almost in their entirety, leaving no man in a more powerful or privileged position than any other.

These extremes are perhaps the poles of "classical" anarchism, whatever that may mean. Certainly they tend to be frozen into dogmas, and this is a major characteristic of simplism. The simplist is an extremist, his thought is rigid and he makes his conception of anarchism something of a religion. Those who question whether his version of anarchism is practical, whether it may require change because of developments unforeseen by its originator, is dismissed as a heretic, to be villified or banished into the class named "reactionaries". Even in a number of superficially updated anarchists, who profess to tolerate criticism of classical utopian or Individualist viewpoints, there is an underlying simplist mythology. The myth is the belief in a possible return to a supposedly perfect primitive existence, where man lived unhampered by institutions of "society", "the state", and so on, in an unrestricted and "natural" condition. I shall discuss this idea later, but for now it is at least as well to remember that this view, simplist because it is so categorical and simplified, is itself "reactionary" in the literal sense of the term.

Another mainstay of simplism is its belief in sudden revolution in which capitalism is destroyed *in toto*, whereupon society magically and rapidly reorganises itself, either without social institutions at all, individuals reverting to a primitive pre-social state with nothing more than loose and transient associations, or with large-scale anarchic organisations based on equality and mutual consent. The simplist element in this kind of revolutionary thought is that people can suddenly change their whole outlook and practice by a single stroke. Reform of existing institutions is out of the question, going "into the system" with the

intention of changing it gradually in a more libertarian direction is *necessarily* corrupting, advocating piecemeal change is *necessarily* "selling out". The extreme simplist will even argue that we must make things *worse* in order that the revolution can be accelerated. I hope to show later how the dichotomy of words between reform and revolution encourages such ideas.

Given that revolution, whether within oneself or in the outside world, is the only answer, how is this to be achieved? The simplist again usually goes to extremes: either by any and every means available, which will include violence and bloodshed, and if it is to be effective probably all the other tools of the opposition, i.e. torture, intimidation, and the slaughter of non-combatants; or by unconditional non-violence. But this specification of combat techniques is not enough: where is the actual revolutionary programme of means? How do we proceed today? Such questions receive no answer save for a few vague generalisations, which is not surprising for simplistic belief in sudden revolution is visionary, apocalyptic; it just happens, like the Second Coming.

Both the violent and non-violent revolutionary simplist are, however, agreed on other points. Even the violent simplist will condemn all violence existing before the revolution, attributing it to the reactionary, evil motives of the manipulators of present society. And he will condemn all post-revolutionary violence too, unless presumably it is used in defence of the revolution. The non-violent simplist will condemn *all* pre- and post-revolutionary violence, whoever commits it and in whatever cause. I should make it plain that I am using the word "violence" here in the simplist sense, viz. anything which restricts an individual's liberty, whether or not physically painful or lethal. Thus it encompasses imprisonment of criminals, hospitalisation of the mentally sick (why not the physically sick as well?), subordination to a social rule chosen by others, as well as punitive child-rearing, exploitation of one person by another, and so on. Tony Gibson has argued that "The rational ideal of a society is not to outlaw deviant behaviour but to tolerate it" (p. 330).<sup>3</sup> This is an ambiguous statement: of course we would want to work towards a society libertarian enough to tolerate most behaviour at present regarded as deviant, but Tony Gibson goes much further. In the context of his article and a subsequent reply to criticism,<sup>4</sup> it becomes apparent that his assertion is based on a belief that no one has the right to say what is or isn't anti-social and that laws are nothing but "a curious and amoral resultant of the struggle for power among all elites" (p. 86).<sup>4</sup> Thus an anarchist can *never* justify any attempt to adjust a deviant person to the society he lives in, even presumably if he goes around lopping off heads or injecting poison into his own veins. The simplist is opposed to *any* forcible restraint of the dangerous or ill, irrespective of the social consequences. Francis Ellingham's articles make the same point, as do other contributors to ANARCHY from time to time. Peter Ford, in his discussion of "liber-



tarian psychiatry",<sup>5</sup> clearly has a more complex view with regard to mental hospitals, but I suspect that underlying his attack on the existing mental health services is a similar attitude.

The essence of the simplist view on such matters is that it goes beyond the obvious point that an anarchist should try to *work towards* the abolition of violence/forcible restraint and interference in people's lives, and comes down categorically for the *immediate* abolition of these. The other side of this simplist coin is to deny that anyone raising doubts as to the practicability of such a rapid change can be an anarchist at all. Thus to Tony Gibson I become a mere "well-intentioned liberal" (p. 85).<sup>4</sup> Albert Meltzer recently mounted an exceptionally frantic attack on his helpless target, "liberal reform", raising as one of his weapons the claim that the "abolition (of capital punishment) has not taken us nearer to the revolutionary policy of abolition of prisons, but further from it!" (p. 8).<sup>6</sup> He did not give us any details of his "revolutionary policy", though.

In other ways too the simplist goes to extremes. In criticism of an article I wrote on marijuana and other drugs<sup>7</sup> both Tony Gibson<sup>8</sup> and Dave Cunliffe<sup>9</sup> used arguments implying that no anarchist could seriously entertain reservations over free access to narcotics, and apparently making no distinction between relatively harmless drugs like marijuana and genuinely dangerous ones like heroin. Note that the point at issue is not whether we should educate people in self-control (including ourselves) to the point where we hope external controls become superfluous, but whether we should condemn *all* external restraints right now. The simplist assumes that given the just-around-the-corner free society, everyone will suddenly become responsible enough to be fully self-governing, but even if we don't, no one has any right to interfere. This non-interventionism is apparently to be practised even in existing circumstances, thus the libertarian must stand by and watch others do things badly. We can criticise all the present institutions of control, but we can never, as anarchists, do anything to improve them in a positive way. This argument suggests that we should even be opposed to the schools for delinquents, the "milieu-therapy" hospitals, of the more libertarian psychiatrists. After all, they still impose some restrictions on the inmates' freedom!

Similar attitudes in favour of "absolute" freedom and against *any* restraint are advocated in other areas by the simplists. (I suspect I am being most unjust to equate simplism with "classical" anarchism in many of these areas.) In both education and child-rearing we can find the simplist viewpoint advocated by some anarchists: there should be *no* discipline of any kind, *no* restriction of the child's spontaneous behaviour. Since this again is not a long-term ideal but an immediate demand, it is perhaps pertinent to ask whether any anarchists exist who could in fact carry out such a programme, particularly with their own children? Another aspect of simplist thinking is in attitudes to sex

and the family. The latter is often scorned as an institution, as being outdated and intrinsically reactionary (perhaps in a few years' time, Israelis on some of the communistic Kibbutzim will be saying the same about child-rearing by a group nurse?). It is assumed that an immediate change to a system without ties is a practical possibility and even that it is undesirable to limit one's love-making to a single partner at a single time, this being a habit of an acquisitive society which restricts one's freedom of action unnecessarily. It is assumed that a society like our Western one is capable of a sudden change to relationships with nothing but the most ephemeral of ties, with mutual freedom from obligation, mutual freedom to exchange partners as frequently and casually as desired.

One final example of the simplistic viewpoint will be discussed here, though there are others. I am referring to the simplist's rejection of "scientific progress" and technology. An example of anarchists' distrust of both of these is given by Maurice Goldman in an issue of *ANARCHY* devoted to this subject,<sup>10</sup> but many appear to go much further. I believe that anarchists' distrust of science is particularly important to us, partly because it is one of the commonest facets of simplism, but in turn because of its widespread ramifications in the shaping of anarchist propaganda and theory. It is also one of the most potent factors in engendering opposition to anarchist ideas among the more educated sections of our population. Complete rejection of technology, and through this a distrust of science *per se*, was fairly understandable during the 19th century, with the horrors of the sweat-shops and the mines in the early Industrial Revolution. Even now, nuclear weapons, germ warfare preparations and the like, justify considerable reservations. But the fact that science and technology can be and frequently are misused does not in itself justify unqualified rejection. The extreme simplist view on science is shown by the back-to-the-land Individualist, progressing from the tenable proposition that science has done more harm than good so far, to the conclusion that we must return to a pre-scientific, pre-technological existence to make anarchism a reality. In particular the simplist seems to hate the psychologist, the sociologist, the psychiatrist, as people who use science to pronounce on what people should or shouldn't do, and who try to interfere in the social organisation of men. It would be unfair to quote Francis Ellingham and Tony Gibson again, because the view is so common amongst contributors to *ANARCHY* and to *FREEDOM*.

It will be clear from the above discussion that one can sum up the simplistic viewpoint as: "Total Freedom Today". It dogmatically asserts that this is both possible and desirable, without any transition, the vast amount of evidence from social scientists notwithstanding. Control of no kind is to be permitted, human spontaneity will suffice to realise utopia immediately following the revolution. The overthrow of existing institutions, customs, "bourgeois" principles, is all that need actively be sought. Simplism has a naively optimistic belief in



"basic human goodness", ready to emerge unscathed as soon as authoritarian restraints are removed.

At various times during my few years acquaintance with the anarchist movement, I have accepted all the tenets of simplism. Still it is immensely attractive, enabling one to opt out from everything one doesn't like, feel no responsibility for those things which restrict freedom in the slightest way. The belief that there will be no limits on behaviour in the coming utopia, save the extremes of one's own desires, excuses one from making imperfect attempts to improve our existing social set-up, from following any of the existing mores, from restraint except where there is a risk of personal injury. Come the revolution all will be changed overnight; the problems of the world are that simple!

### THE PROBLEMS OF SIMPLISM

My characterisation of simplism may seem repetitive and unfair, particularly to those writers I have quoted. I do not wish to saddle any of them with the full gamut of simplist views, for in fact people aren't simplists or non-simplists. This assumption would in itself be a simplist error. Simplism as I mean it is a conceptual tendency which affects us all to varying degrees at various times. Perhaps its basic characteristic is that of oversimplifying issues and as a result making dichotomous categorical judgements in areas where objectively we can only have hunches because there is insufficient evidence. There is also a strong characteristic of distorting facts to suit theories. What would the simplist say if faced with scientific evidence that man is basically violent, selfish, and lacking in conscience beneath his veneer of social "conditioning"? He would deny it. I am not claiming such evidence is established, but it remains a possibility, and a realist must be prepared to modify his ideas should it ever be proved. Simplist dogmatism and related characteristics tend to form a distinct syndrome which T. W. Adorno *et al*<sup>11</sup> labelled the "authoritarian personality" on the basis of their vast researches. These researches have not been immune from criticism, and in the last resort the simplist can of course reject all findings of psychology, but it is as well to remember that when we indulge in simplistic thinking we are probably behaving in a way which is remarkably similar to the way in which the Hitlers and the Lenins have thought in the past.

I do not intend to criticise the simplist viewpoint in all its details, for this would be impossible in a short essay, but I shall attempt to question its most general characteristics, and to provide a few illustrative examples. The principle objection the simplist must meet is the challenge of realism. I contend that the belief in apocalyptic revolution is essentially a religious myth. Without asking for a detailed blueprint of a libertarian society we can at least demand some account of how the revolution might occur, what steps are being taken towards this end. We are all agreed that society requires vast changes, large enough to be regarded as revolutionary changes. But whether such changes are

achieved by *revolution* depends on the time-span of changes. Also, there is a great danger that the revolutionary will assume, perhaps only half-consciously, that when there has been a revolution all can return to stasis. I suggest that we will *always* see revolutionary changes as a future ideal, to be worked towards; that stasis is the ultimate degeneration. I think that a little of value can be extracted from Freud's strange theory of the "death-instinct", and it is that cessation of change is in effect cessation of life. Therefore our basic goal must be continuing evolution. All the "classical" anarchist ideals must be borne in mind, even if they do at present seem utopian, but these should not prevent us from making piecemeal changes right now. The argument for piecemeal "social engineering" has been stated too conservatively by Karl Popper in his work *The Open Society and its Enemies*,<sup>12</sup> but it is probably the best we can hope for in view of the "social inertia" inherent in any society composed of organic entities. Therefore what simplists scornfully call "reform" can be seen as *evolution*. Man is perhaps the only organism on this planet capable of controlling his *own* evolution. Therefore he can choose to accelerate it or decelerate it, perhaps even abolish it. What is revolution and what is reform? They are extremes on a scale of rate of evolution, so there is no true dichotomy. The simplist expects and wants a sudden revolution, he is understandably impatient, and he often correctly realises that reform militates *against* sudden revolution. But revolution is a panic measure, it derives from situations which are humanly *intolerable*. It is also undiscerning, as the history of revolutions shows. The hungry and oppressed will clutch at any straw.

But we are now near to exposing the revolutionary myth, for the sudden revolution requires, if it is not to be oppressed and quelled by forces of the existing power elite, considerable organisation, considerable centralisation. In short: a revolutionary elite. Apart from Popper many writers have exposed the myth of revolution in detail. A rather different but equally impressive treatment is to be found in Albert Camus' book *The Rebel*.<sup>13</sup> Without the revolutionary elite a rebellion is likely, according to the examples history provides, to be beaten down once the forces of reaction have a chance to gather themselves. Of course, if the revolution occurred throughout the world at the same time this might not occur, as Trotsky saw, but no such simultaneous revolution is at present remotely feasible. In practice one cannot fight efficiently in a libertarian fashion, one's army's actions would be too slow and divisive if mutual agreement was always required. Durruti was an autocrat once a man volunteered to join him, and probably had to be. If one accepts even the beginnings of such an elite the revolution changes things in ways often very different from the aims of its original supporters. Fidel Castro has recently admitted, in a surprisingly frank and intensive interview in *Playboy*,<sup>14</sup> the extent to which he found himself forced to take measures at variance with his long-term aims of Cuban liberation. I am sure he is sincere in his regret at this, and sadder for the discovery that in the circumstances of having to choose



between free criticism of the regime and maintaining his economic gains for the Cuban peasants he was forced to choose the latter.

If the revolution should, by some chance, succeed without an elite which would rapidly become a new ruling class, there is still the problem of how, given today's attitudes and habits, we should avoid chaos. Let us assume first that our technological apparatus, our industries, were destroyed with the revolution. It would then be a question of whether we could live at all in a primitive economy, and even if we did, whether this could run along libertarian lines. It is true that there are some positive examples: peasant communities in Spain appeared to do this successfully during the 1930s. But then they had been living in roughly this way for generations, almost isolated from the machinery of the Spanish state. There are primitive tribes in various parts of the world which live in a roughly libertarian way, but they too have not only generations but centuries of tradition behind them. In fact there are other tribes who live as primitively, but extremely barbarously: freedom from the state does not mean anarchism. John Pilgrim in a recent ANARCHY article on stateless societies did much to demolish the myth of the anarchic "natural man".<sup>15</sup> A whole complex of factors appear to determine the forms of primitive life, and the ideal conditions for primitive anarchism may be very hard to create. The existence of some small anarchic groups does prove one thing: that libertarian societies are not physically impossible, and this is an important plank in the anarchist argument. But it in no way proves that those of us raised in the very different conditions of capitalist society are ready to change so much over a short period of time. Even those few, presumably exceptional, individuals who have rejected our society and tried to form anarchist communities have only given us an example by their failure.

But what if technology should not be destroyed, but a successful revolution should be Syndicalist in nature, taking over existing industrial enterprises and distribution systems and attempting to run them by workers' control, having abolished only the capitalists themselves, the armed forces, the police, the church, and government? If this should take place now, the result, I predict, would be an absolute disaster. The "workers" are simply not ready to take over everything at one fell swoop. Some of my justification for this prediction can be found in two recent articles, one by John Pilgrim again,<sup>16</sup> and one by Martin Wardon,<sup>17</sup> both of which should go a long way to dispel the mistaken belief in salvation by "the working class". All this one admits with great sorrow and reluctance, but it is true. The prevailing anti-libertarian attitudes and habits which capitalism in particular has fostered will take several generations at best to disappear, always assuming that the change begins right now. Admittedly there have been groups of workers who, in general strikes in France and Italy, have made very brave efforts to practise syndicalism, but they have never achieved more than temporary success. And one must not forget that modern

factories are so large, run with such a measure of back orders and often such large reserves of raw materials that their own momentum will make them run without managers, etc., for at least a short period. The long-term test of the "take-over" theory of revolution has never been made, for external forces have always pre-empted it. To judge from current reports it is not even possible for a group of workers to run a small factory like Rowen Engineering successfully.

The final alternative, that of some Individualists, is to achieve a purely personal revolution and opt out from present society without trying to change it, having presumably decided that the great mass of people are too far gone to be worth worrying about. The asocial anarchist, like Francis Ellingham, who attacks those with some concern for society at large as "socialised anarchists", is to my mind acting beyond reason himself. He believes that anarchism means living "absolutely freely, naturally and spontaneously", and being an individual "who neither governs, nor is governed by others; and who is not governed by himself . . ." (p. 160).<sup>2</sup> The "anarchist milieu" in which such individuals live I would dearly love to see! If he envisages such a "milieu" (not a society) as being possible now, then his beliefs as to the flexibility of the human mind are quite remarkable. He claims that "once an individual realises how enslaved he is by fear and the craving for security, he is *ipso facto* (his italics) released from class-antagonism, status-seeking, power-mania, and all the other authoritarian and divisive psychological compulsions" (p. 26).<sup>1</sup> I do not know of a scrap of psychological evidence to support such a notion. Awareness of one's faults and obsessions is not enough to abolish them. Behaviour and attitude changes also require the presence of a sufficiently attractive and practical alternative. There are really three stages: (a) dissatisfaction with one's existing condition, (b) seeing a way of change with rewards of sufficient attractiveness to motivate change, (c) discarding the old attitudes or habits and actually receiving reward from practice of the new ones. Since most of our attitudes and habits are in fact rewarding to us, if only in subtle ways, the difficulties in eradicating them are often considerable. Some may be virtually unchangeable by the age of, say, five years. It is true, as Francis Ellingham claims, that man *can* "become aware of his own conditioning, and so . . . transcend it" (p. 26),<sup>1</sup> but where this refers to basic personality traits, etc., such a process is long and slow and requires exactly the right conditions. Any realistic approach to a libertarian way of thought and action must accept this and admit gradualism. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that changing ourselves and changing society can only proceed hand in hand. Neither can be done independently or suddenly.

I hope that the issues discussed above make the objections to other facets of the simplistic viewpoint fairly obvious, and I will leave the reader to fill in the details. I would also like to think that those who will feel obliged to disagree violently with my assessment of simplism will realise that my attack is on grounds of its immediate non-



practicality, and that any defence of simplism requires to show that it *is* practical, not that I am a bourgeois liberal reformist!

### THE REALIST ALTERNATIVE

It is gratifying that some writers in ANARCHY are prepared to come to terms with the practical problems and realise that many anarchist ends will only be achieved in full, if at all, in the distant future. Compromise is dangerous, but sometimes unavoidable. Jeff Robinson, writing on "Anarchism and practicability"<sup>18</sup> seemed prepared to admit that some centralisation, even voting, must be accepted for the present, albeit in rather different forms from those practised under existing governments. He is also reluctant to deny that "mentally sick, violent people should be restrained" (p. 250),<sup>19</sup> even in a society with some pretensions towards anarchism. Such admissions seem necessary in view of known facts about human behaviour. To deny these is to distort or deny scientific findings. To be realistic about what can be achieved in the near future, given our presently prevailing attitudes and habits, is to be scientific. At least one great anarchist thinker, namely Kropotkin, was a major scientist, and I am sure that the enduring value of his ideas is largely due to his scientific approach. And although Kropotkin did not ignore future ideals, his writings are full of practicable possibilities for the present. There is no lack of suggestions as to what can be done right now. This emphasis seems thoroughly well-placed. What we must produce and disseminate is a programme for making society *more* libertarian in both thought and practice, not an unattainable utopian blueprint.

Of course, we must say *something* of the libertarian view of long-term progress and the nature of a future society. An important dimension on which any society can be placed is the technological one. It is so important because technology affects production of the goods which satisfy basic human needs, and the satisfaction of these needs in turn has considerable influence on social structure, and thus on individual personality. The society anarchists are to work for could be either more technological or less technological. A less technological society, where production of food, fuel, clothing, transport and other basic requirements is done more by manual methods than is the case today, has a major drawback. This is very simply that, short of a major international war, the results and subsequent remedies for which are incalculable, the world population will continue growing. And already we are unable to feed it. It is true that vast amounts of food go to waste, but these are insignificant compared with future needs. Even given immediate universal introduction of contraception, many will die of starvation for years to come. Therefore, even were it possible to return to a more primitive production economy, it would amount to mass murder to do so.

Therefore I see no alternative than to embrace a more technological system, which in effect means automation. Many anarchists are

apparently opposed to automation on principle, presumably because of short-sightedness, prejudice, and more serious reasons. It is true that automation must work on a large scale, implying centralisation of control in certain forms. To this degree "classical" forms of anarchism will never be realised. It is also true that at present scientific and technological "progress" seems to do more harm than good, that automation is used to make already monolithic industrial monopolies even larger and more powerful. This I do not see as inevitable. Certainly the ideal of *absolute* freedom in all areas of human activity is incompatible with automation, but then absolute freedom is a myth anyway, even perhaps a contradiction in terms. In any real civilisation man must accept some constraints or perish. In a planet the size of ours, with its limited resources and large population, no man can be self-sufficient in everything. Any Individualist who regards himself as utterly self-sufficient is simply unaware of the extent to which he depends on others. To the extent to which we need others they also need us, and from this simple basis obligations arise. And all obligations are themselves constraints.

But constraint *per se* is not necessarily inimicable to anarchism. Constraints can be freely accepted, in which case they are no burden. The constraints implied by automation need not prove unpleasant or harmful; they need have little effect on freedom in interpersonal relations just because automated plant is relatively independent of people. If we take steps to ensure that automation is used for the right ends and in the right way, it can go a long way towards satisfying our basic needs for sustenance, warmth, communications, etc., leaving us free to spend much more time in enjoyable personal activities, in fact *freeing us* from the tyranny of "work" in the normal sense. And it is misleading to emphasise too much the monolithic aspects of automation. The diversity of small interlocking systems, which as W. Grey Walter pointed out in a discussion of cybernetics<sup>10</sup> is essential to a healthy and adaptable system of any kind, is still possible with automation. In an article titled "Automation—Anarchism—the Future",<sup>21</sup> Colin Johnson gave some excellent pointers as to how an anarchist society could utilise automation, suggesting an optimum economic unit of three to six million people as a production-consumption unit. In any given geographical region such units would interact where common effort was required, and even within a given unit there would be many areas of considerable diversity. Decentralisation and automation are in no way incompatible, and as James Gillespie noted in his ANARCHY essay on workers' control,<sup>22</sup> there would still be many unautomated enterprises in any community. The organisation of the automated society would require mechanisms of control, but as John McEwan pointed out in another discussion of cybernetics<sup>23</sup> there is no need for cybernetic control to be *coercive*. Control can be organic, a resultant of self-organising subsystem influences. Much more research into cybernetics is required before we know how to construct a society without industrial and governmental control of the kind we are accustomed to, which can



avoid current capitalist problems and ensure a reasonable living for all, yet also retain a large measure of individual influence in its mechanics. There is however much reason for optimism when this is envisaged as a long-term end, and there are some pointers to presently possible steps.

The other significant contribution to a practicable but free future society which science and technology can make is in the realm of ecology. This was so well discussed by Lewis Herber<sup>24</sup> and D. M. C. MacEwan<sup>25</sup> in a recent issue of *ANARCHY* that there is little I can add except that the findings of the ecologists are such a clear example of the constructive possibilities of scientific research that I find it hard to credit opposition to a scientific approach to the organisation of society and human resources. The ecological principle of diversity dovetails neatly with the cybernetic principle of diversity. Lewis Herber concludes that ecological principles make some of our libertarian programmes "not only desirable, but . . . also necessary. They belong not only to the great visions of man's future but they now constitute the preconditions for survival" (p. 328).<sup>24</sup> Both ecological and cybernetic thinking reinforce anarchist ideals, but even more, they show immediate steps which can be taken, and which stand some chance of being accepted by non-anarchists because they can be shown to be objectively necessary. Therefore modern technology is "ripe with the promise of a truly liberated society", it is for ourselves to "reveal its promise in *humanistic* terms" (p. 339).<sup>24</sup> We thus find the justification of Kropotkin's advocacy of decentralised industrial technology (see John Ellerby's "Fields, factories and workshops tomorrow",<sup>26</sup> in the findings of more recent scientists. His writings also revealed an advanced grasp of the principles of ecology, and of factors in social organisation which modern psychological and sociological research are currently rediscovering. I suspect that anarchists themselves may be in part responsible for the lack of attention and influence of Kropotkin's writings, since by overstating them they have made them seem absurd to pragmatical scientists and others. For instance John Hewetson claimed that from works such as *Mutual Aid*<sup>27</sup> "It becomes apparent therefore that natural man, unhampered by social institutions and inequality, is neither savage nor quarrelsome, but lives in harmony and freedom with his fellows" (p. 265).<sup>28</sup> I have already referred to John Pilgrim's attack on the myth of the "natural man", and in fact Kropotkin himself expressly stated that he was showing only one aspect of the social life of man and animals in his book, the less laudable aspects having already been adequately covered by others. But for all that they are only a part of the story, his ideas have received much subsequent confirmation. (Some results are most exciting, for instance recent work has brought into question the concept of the "dominance hierarchy" in animals by showing that the clear hierarchy found among apes in zoos may not be found in the wild (e.g.<sup>29</sup>), being an artefact of close confinement.)

There are a number of major obstacles to realising the sort of society which can be seen as practicable. Apart from those vested

interests who would be rendered redundant by the changes suggested, apart from the forces of conservatism and ignorance, there is the vast problem of solving the question of the underdeveloped countries and their role in our reorganisation. At present much "primary produce" utilised by Western industry comes from the poor countries. Clearly a complete equalisation of primary production throughout the world is impossible, if only because of the unequal distribution of raw materials. It is unfortunate that many of the primary producers have chosen to emulate the developed world in starting large-scale secondary production industries. A few, such as Cuba, resist this trend, and sensibly.<sup>14</sup> Efficient exchange of primary goods and secondary goods can, at the price of the measure of central control already admitted to be compatible with libertarian organisation, obviate the need for complete self-sufficiency of a region or unit. The exact means of achieving equity are as yet unclear, but again there is reason for optimism.

### IMMEDIATE STEPS: THE ANARCHIST INITIATIVE

Given the above outlines, what can we ourselves do today? If instant revolution is as impractical as I have claimed, how can we speed and mould our evolution in libertarian directions? Two regions of immediate emphasis emerge: education and research. Both are recognised as immediate and major goals under our existing system. This may make the simplist shy away from them due to a strong belief in guilt-by-association, but I believe that both are areas where anarchists can make major contributions which will achieve far more than the wishful thinking and futile screams for revolution of the simplist. Given a favourable climate we can exploit it to the full, at the price of getting our fingers somewhat soiled by going along with "the system" to a degree. The middle class is relatively "sold" on freer education; schools with a debt to Neill's "Summerhill" flourish. Michael Duane's failure is only apparent; in fact he has taken the first momentous steps towards importing libertarian methods into the state schools. If this is "selling-out" then I admire it. Therefore it is important that more and more libertarians go into the state schools to consolidate the gain. They will have the slow, uphill struggle indicated in *ANARCHY* 71 (the issue on Education),<sup>30</sup> but it will be worth it.

I include in "education" the prison service and approved schools. Simplists notwithstanding, I maintain that these institutions cannot be eliminated overnight by anyone. The biggest obstacle to their reform is not the authorities in these institutions, but the warders, special teachers, and the like. Anyone who has met some of these gentlemen will bear this out. Governors, when challenged for their barbarous methods, sometimes complain that they are in favour of more libertarian methods, but with the staff available to them these are impossible. It is possible to make major improvements in such establishments, but it requires patience and persuasiveness. Kingswood approved school, near Bristol, is a Home Office showpiece where experiments are tried.



They appointed a resident psychologist who, in a few years, has introduced Homer Lane-Neill methods which we should only applaud, and largely converted the staff to his beliefs, making the place much more humane and *positively valuable* to the boys. It is no use pretending that all such schools are redundant and retributive. Many of the boys at Kingswood are there not so much for their "crimes" as because their home backgrounds are intolerable. A measure of the school's success is shown by the delightful story of those boys who, just before they are due for release, go out and commit some minor crime. When asked why they did it the reply is: "We like it here, we don't want to leave!"

The elimination of such schools, even of prisons, is dependent on changing not only the minds of the authorities, but also public opinion (and this is generally far more reactionary than the authorities). Even more important, it is dependent on viable alternatives. It will be a long time before "social control" (see John Ellerby's article<sup>31</sup>) can fully oust them. I have emphasised technical and organisational elements in a possible free society, and said little about what we can hope to achieve as social beings and individuals, but clearly the standard anarchist descriptions and ideals indicate the direction in which we would wish to move, whether or not we ever achieve perfection. The emphasis on spontaneity, co-operation, self- rather than external-control, these can be promoted by self-determination to a degree, but far more reliably and effectively by appropriate child-rearing practices. This is an aspect of the "social conditioning" that Francis Ellingham detests<sup>1</sup> which I regard as very fortunate. He would regard such conscious attempts to affect one's children as an imposition, an interference. Presumably he has some ideal of "spontaneous" rearing. But such spontaneity can be pure selfishness, and the effects of thoughtless child-rearing are by now well-known, since the publication of John Bowlby's findings for the World Health Organisation.<sup>32</sup> An informative discussion of "social learning" from different models is given in a recent book by A. Bandura and R. H. Walters,<sup>33</sup> which again confirms many libertarian beliefs by experimental studies. However, it is as well to remember that if we are considering a change in society as a whole, several generations at least will be required before a libertarian orientation is the norm.

Even in the distant future, we will still not reach perfection however, and however tolerant we become of inevitable aberrant individuals we shall never eliminate all external controls, controllers, and corrective institutions. If this is heresy then I would like evidence to show my scepticism misplaced. Given that social conditions can be changed to make most present "crimes" meaningless, given that "crime" itself is a legal artefact, it still remains, as I argued in ANARCHY 59<sup>34</sup> in criticism of an article by Tony Gibson,<sup>3</sup> that some provision, however unpunitive in intent, must be made for those who endanger other people's safety and freedom. My critics have not yet explained how this can be avoided, even if it is "do-gooder" and an interference in the life of another.

A similar analysis applies to mental hospitals. There is much wrong with them at present; they need enormous reorganisation in terms of both outlook and treatment, as well as administration, but *something* must be done with the obviously sick. At present society patently will *not* tolerate them (assuming they *want* only to be tolerated and not cured), so until it will, and until social conditions leading to such illnesses are themselves cured, something must be done for those who suffer. And again it is more the reactionary attitudes of poor staff which make them the frightening places they are, than it is the fault of the authorities and psychiatrists. So again there is a need for those who want to *do* something, instead of just talking, to enter the mental hospitals as psychiatrists, psychologists, and nurses.

The other main area which I have indicated as an anarchist wedge is scientific research. Scientific research on a vast scale is being carried out in industrial problems, armaments, space research and the like, while the productive areas cry out for talent. The main reason is of course financial, but this should not debar anarchists, who are presumably less acquisitive than most, less interested in the rat-race. Research into methods of helping the anti-social and sick person, research into social processes and human personality, research into social applications of cybernetics, research into the disciplines clustering round ecology, all these are desperately needed areas where a libertarian approach and understanding might result in the full potential of scientific findings being realised. If science and technology are at present largely destructive, life-hampering, this is because too few libertarians are prepared to enter "the system", even on this basis. Those who condemn "reformists" like myself might remember that within one's own scientific circle one is often regarded as an outright revolutionary. Despite this there are many findings reported in the scientific journals which lend weight to libertarian arguments, and with sufficient anarchists to realise, extend, and apply their implications, the face of science might look very different than it does to most anarchists today.

It is futile to condemn the sociologist, the psychiatrist, the psychologist as bourgeois liberal "do-gooders", encroaching upon freedoms and manipulating people. People are manipulated already whether they know it or not; not one of us is entirely his own master. The ideal of equal competence and influence in all fields is unlikely to occur, for the current trend towards specialisation and expertise is inevitable as more becomes known about so many things, and the expert must always have some authority in his own field. This may be regrettable but is a simple fact dependent on man's limited capacity for information. But the dangers of specialisation are greatly reduced if education for freedom and libertarian child-rearing become widespread, for these should produce in opposition to the trend a more independent and freethinking populace who will be less easily led. The expert will have to make out a better case for his recommendations than he often needs to today, also he will be less able to pretend to be an expert in fields outside his



own. Also there is a reverse side of the trend to specialisation which we can applaud. Although the specialist becomes a more exclusive judge in his own field, his area of competence becomes smaller concurrently. Thus there is diversification of professional authority, and the interlocking network of specialist opinions required to solve any question becomes larger. Where so many elements enter the decision process cybernetic principles begin to apply, and the resultant, as the best possible compromise, is most likely to be best for all.

## CONCLUSION

In this essay I have tried to cover so many elements in the organisation of society that the treatment, even in an essay of this length, has been unforgivably sketchy and incomplete. If anything this has made the change to a more libertarian society seem easier than is in fact the case. But I have attempted to begin an exposition showing the complexity of the anarchist dilemma, which I hope will be taken up and criticised by others. My prime aim has been to get away from apocalyptic revolutionary thinking dominated by outdated and utopian ideas. Readers are referred to the articles and books cited for a much more detailed analysis of some of the problems and ideas.

An emphasis on practicality should not be taken as a rejection of revolutionary changes, but of revolutionary methods. Revolution should also be distinguished from rebellion, as it was by Camus.<sup>18</sup> Rebellion must be a permanent feature of anarchist thought and action, but rebellion is not at variance with making small changes *today* which are themselves preconditions for wider changes. Rebellion can be consistent with encouraging *some* trends in existing society, and often this encouragement can only be effective from within. To stand outside and criticise everything may keep oneself "pure", but is not itself helping any revolution. Positive alternatives which can capture the imagination of the existing populace must be proposed and fought for. Society and individual people can only, as I have already argued, change hand-in-hand, thus an eclectic, piecemeal approach is unavoidable. But given this, anarchism can cease to be a myth and be an evolving reality. Not that we should ever be *satisfied* with his reality: its deficiencies should always be noted as points for further evolution. But simplism will achieve nothing, and will therefore be satisfied with nothing.

## POSTSCRIPT

This essay was written before ANARCHY 72 appeared, with criticisms of John Pilgrim's article: *Salvation by the Working Class: An Outmoded Myth?* In the limited space available here, I can only make brief reference to these criticisms. As the Editor commented himself, readers should consult the original article again before accepting them.

It is hard to disentangle much sense from Albert Meltzer's misleading metaphors, distorted hyperbole, and hysterical scorn, but what does emerge fits well into my category of simplistic thinking, and I looked in vain for any practicable suggestions for immediate action towards

a free society. Vincent Johnson obviously believes that he and the "working class" have a monopoly of anarchism, but is so busy being rude that he fails to tell us why John Pilgrim is wrong. I have qualified sympathy with the other critics, who at least have important points to make and argue rationally, but I don't think their corrections destroy John's basic point: that being no better than anyone else, the "working class" are *not* our predestined saviours or the anarchist vanguard. And in case readers should take Tony Woodiwiss and Frank Pearce's criticisms of the Adorno studies on the "authoritarian personality" as disproving my own argument, I would point out that my assertion that dogmatism and oversimplification are common authoritarian characteristics is not affected by the criticisms to any serious degree, though perhaps it would have been better had I related simplism to "closed-mindedness" (see M. Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind*, Basic Books, 1960).

The comments in ANARCHY 72 on the Ecology issue are also relevant to my essay. Jeff Robinson correctly points out some deficiencies of Lewis Herber's article, but these don't detract from its importance. I agree wholeheartedly with Alan Albon's favourable assessment and admission of the need for "industrialised" agriculture, though this does not of course imply unqualified approval of all present methods of "factory farming".

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# Anarchism, the workers, and social revolution

## 1: ARTHUR ULOTH

I WONDER WHETHER THE EDITOR of ANARCHY is not perhaps a bit tired of the topic of "The Workers" and all the rest of it. It has already taken up a good deal of space in issues 68 and 72, and I have my doubts about joining in, but it does seem to me that a certain confusion is developing, and it would be worth trying to clarify things a little.

There are several points of view here: —

(1) The old-style or mainstream anarchist, whether anarcho-communist or anarcho-syndicalist, who hopes to see a social revolution of the proletariat, urban and rural, perhaps violent, perhaps non-violent.

(2) The "sociological" type of anarchist, who hopes to be able to cause society to evolve piecemeal in the direction of anarchy by means of free schools, adventure playgrounds, communities, and so on.

(3) The philosophical individualist, who is more concerned with developing his personal life, and obtaining as much freedom for himself and those around him in the world as it is. He does not look to the future much, being concerned with the present.

(4) The "bloody-minded" individualist. He is the sort of man who might conceivably say things like "the workers only want beer and bingo". He is only concerned to shock people by saying things he knows they will dislike. Everybody tends to behave like this sometimes. He makes a point of doing it all the time.

Albert Meltzer seems to confuse (2), (3) and (4) all together.\* To me the important thing is not what the Christian Socialists or Karl Marx may or may not have said. Let us keep as close as we can to the facts of history and common experience.

I have been in and around the anarchist movement since the autumn of 1948. The movement has always been classless, in the sense that it draws its membership from all classes, who mix freely without concern for anybody's origin. The numbers of middle-class, lower middle-class and working-class anarchists have always been roughly equal. However, most anarchists when they come into the movement tend to drift away from industry into jobs which give them more personal freedom. Very often they become small-scale business people, in order to be self-employed. This would make them lower middle-class, or petit bourgeois. Marx was quite right to call us a petit bourgeois movement, but so what?

I am myself of middle-class origin, but at the moment work as a hospital porter. Other anarchists do similar eccentric or off-beat jobs.

For many years I have gone around speaking to groups of all kinds on the subject of anarchism. Probably I am not very convincing as a speaker (I have given it up now). In the course of my wanderings I encountered members of all classes. They all said the same thing, "Anarchism would be wonderful but it would never work in real life." Grey-suited professional gentlemen, horny-handed sons of toil, students with flowing scarves, old age pensioners, Afro-Asians, pacifists, everyone had the same thing to say. I have never met any strong revolutionary feeling among the people, regardless of social class, sex or race. From this I can only conclude that the workers are neither more revolutionary nor less than the middle or any other class. People who want to change society in a libertarian direction come from all classes, but they form a very small minority of the population as a whole.

What does history show us? A depressing picture indeed. The

\*I consider Albert Meltzer and Arthur Moyses to belong to anarchist type (1). John Pilgrim, and ANARCHY itself I think belong to type (2). I feel myself to belong to (3), with a toe-hold in (2). The Papal Schweitzer-Garde belong to (4). Laurens Otter belongs to himself. I hope I have now made everything clear.



lowest social class, whether slaves, serfs or factory workers, has never once made a successful revolution. The revolution has always been defeated, either because the rulers have had a better organisation or because leaders have arisen from the masses and formed a new ruling class (often these leaders are really middle-class or educated people who begin by throwing their lot in with the revolution and later take it over).

Of course it's silly to say "beer and bingo". One might as well say of the middle class "all they want is power and status", which would be equally untrue. To me it seems clear that freedom is something which a minority wants very much, a slightly larger minority want quite a bit, and a very large majority are quite glad to have but are not prepared to fight for. (And a fairly large minority have a real fear of it.)

These groups don't have much connection with social class.

By all means let us support the struggle for better conditions, better conditions for factory workers, for children, for women, for teenagers, for Arthur Uloth, for everybody except tyrants, and bullies, and fat men with top hats and watch chains, and the Kent County Council. Social reforms are always worth having. More freedom is always worth having. But to see it all in terms of a class struggle seems to me to be imposing an abstract scheme on a reality which is far more complex.

It is a pathetic fallacy to imagine that workers have power because they are at the point of production. True, they do have a certain amount, but to read many anarchist writers you would think that the strike was an omnipotent weapon, whereas many strikes have been lost.

If workers go on strike, they not only harm their employers, they also cut themselves off from their own supplies, because they are not earning any money. In the short term it may be to the advantage of the employer to give in, but in the case when it is in his interest to prolong the struggle he usually wins, because his resources are much greater. He has money saved, whereas the worker usually has not, or not much.

If the workers took over the means of production and began to run them for themselves, the situation would be different, but this very rarely happens, and does not go on for long when it does, the reason being that the majority of workers, as of middle-class and all other people, like freedom a bit, but don't really want to go "too far".

This does not mean that the workers are no good, or that the middle class are no good, or that large masses of people should be subjected to wholesale abuse. It simply means that freedom is a minority interest, and a free society, if it is to be brought about, will probably not come from mobilising large masses of the population, but from people dropping out from conventional society and gradually building up their own society in its place.

## 2: 'This correspondence is now closed'

MARTIN WARDON

THERE WERE TWO MAIN IDEAS running through the articles by John Pilgrim and myself in ANARCHY 68. The first was that the authoritarian and capitalist mentalities are at least as widespread among the working class as among other classes. In the seventeen pages of attacks on our articles in ANARCHY 72 I find no refutation of this point. On the contrary, I find wide agreement such as Albert Meltzer's "the capitalist mentality of the workers—was in the anarchist primer" or Arthur Moyse's "we of the working class do not possess more than our fair share of the vices and virtues of the human race" or Tony Woodiwiss and Frank Pearce's "we would suggest that authoritarian traits are pretty evenly spread throughout the population" or Vincent Johnson's "no anarchist who is a worker would suggest that our class is yet anarchist or revolutionary".

As our critics are in such agreement with our first argument why then do they castigate us in such bitter tones, why the jibes about "Conservatives", "too far to the right for the Liberal Party", "mind-destroying junk", etc.? Why do they saddle us with views we never expressed and do not hold such as Arthur Meltzer does with his "One is entitled to protest when the workers are accused of materialism and self-seeking when such accusations apply to every single class"? It was *we* who stated that they apply to every single class, where **WHERE** did we suggest or say that they are a monopoly of workers? Why are we accused of making contradictory interpretations of Tristram Shandy's statistics in ANARCHY 12 when I was clearly using them to show that anarchists *taken as a whole* come from all classes and John was clearly using them to show that *young* anarchists come largely, if not wholly, from the middle class? Why am I accused of advocating that people adopt "Christian Socialist moral values" because of my statement that "if there is to be anarchy there must *first* be a widespread change of values"? Surely "change of values" when advocated in



ANARCHY means the rejecting of authoritarian values and the adopting of libertarian ones? What is "Christian" about that? And surely, Mr. Meltzer, while workers may need only the "necessary (technical) skills" to run their own factories, don't they need something *more* than these skills in order to *want* to run their own factories?

Having asked these questions, I will now answer them and there is only one answer. In our critic's eyes the crime of John Pilgrim and myself is not that we believe that the workers have their fair share of love of power, and greed, and bigotry and intolerance. Our critics agree with us that they do. Our unforgivable sin is that we go on to state the logical conclusion that *as the workers are as prone to authoritarianism, etc., as any other class, then it is obviously futile to regard them as the SPECIAL means of spreading anarchism and attaining anarchy*—as page 4 of FREEDOM regards them, as *Direct Action* regards them, as *Solidarity* regards them. This is what Albert Meltzer and Arthur Moysé and the rest cannot bear. For once you admit that there is no reason why the workers will be the instrument of salvation, then bang go the cherished illusions and favourite emotions of a hundred years.

And neither John Pilgrim nor myself nor anyone else has stated or believes that any other *class* will be the instrument for the spread of anarchism. John believes that libertarianism will (or can) spread by means of the social sciences which is broadly the line taken by ANARCHY. I believe it will (or can) spread through discontented and self-aware individuals (of any class) which is the line taken by *Minus One*. Others believe that youth (from any or all classes) is the section of the community most potentially receptive to anarchism which is the line taken by *Heatwave*.

Our critics cannot refute our arguments so they fall back on abuse, irrelevance and distortion. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary I consider the case made out by John Pilgrim and myself in ANARCHY 68 as proved.

## Is there a libertarian psychiatry?

1: VINCENT INGRAMS

PETER FORD'S ARTICLE on the Existential Analysts was both welcome and stimulating. However, there were several points which cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. In fact I suspect that the Existential Analysts' basic credo is something of an overstatement of a relatively small grain of truth. I shall attempt to justify this suspicion. But first, two disclaimers: I am not in any way disparaging their methods of treatment when I dispute their theorising, nor am I questioning their goals and motives. Both of these may be admirable without their theories being correct or even scientifically intelligible. My quarrel with Peter Ford's article and with the Existential Analysts' approach is on primarily scientific grounds. I hope, doubtless in vain, that this will forestall the cries of "reactionary" from some over-dogmatic anarchists. I will accept correction by scientific facts, but not by prejudice and dogma.

A theory can only stand serious consideration if it has been tested under appropriate conditions in such a way as to rule out other interpretations, by factual findings which are objective and repeatable. It then becomes part of the body of scientific knowledge. To dispute this is to reject science (and Kropotkin?) and rationality. It is therefore unfortunate that Laing and Cooper ally themselves with the existentialist tradition, and particularly with Sartre. Sartre's theories are moral and philosophical, dealing with subjective experience. They are couched in highly abstract, and often debatable terms, with little clear empirical reference. They are thus ill-suited to describe facts about the observable world, to be "objective" scientific theories. When Sartre makes psychiatric statements they are therefore unsupported, since they derive from philosophical rather than psychological theories.

Peter Ford's quote from Sartre (*Being and Nothingness*, pp. 471-5), in which he claims "I can decide to cure myself of stuttering", and



goes on to assert that if "merely technical" methods are used to cure an hysterical paralysis the "infirmity" will be displaced and will subsequently reappear as some other symptom, shows Sartre's lack of qualification for objective statements. It is more than doubtful whether any stammerer has ever cured his symptom by merely *deciding* to: where is Sartre's empirical evidence? One of the main elements in many illnesses is lack of "will-power", this is one reason why external help must in fact be sought. Many psychiatrists would assert that being told to "pull himself together" commonly made a patient *worse*. Evidence for displacement of hysterical symptoms is equally dubious: it sometimes occurs, but by no means invariably. It is very rare, when conditioning therapies (which exclusively treat symptoms) are used (see Eysenck and Rachman: *Causes and Cures of Neuroses*, Wolpe: *Behaviour Therapy*). It is true that a symptom may be only the tip of the iceberg, but removing the distressing symptom may in itself so relieve the mind of the patient that the mere fact of a return to normal social life may complete the cure.

Apart from Laing's tendency to try to reach psychiatric conclusions by philosophical, moral, or political arguments, he is also guilty of considerable misuse of language—in addition to his use of so many non-empirical terms. His statement (*The Divided Self*) that "In the context of our present madness that we call normality, sanity, freedom, all our frames of reference are ambiguous and equivocal" can be taken as overstatement, but to claim also that the "normal" person in our present world is "a half-crazed creature, more or less adjusted to a mad world" is more than misleading. The implication that the "mentally ill" are more sane than we are is simply false. It is indisputable that definitions of "normality" and "mental health" are extremely difficult, and that frequently they are couched in terms of conformism and political quietism. But it is equally true that *whatever* definitions one chooses, the great majority of in- and out-patients of psychiatric units are *not* healthy in any meaningful sense. It is deplorable that some persons are classified as mentally ill on the basis of nonconformism or political views, as Peter Ford asserts, but this does not affect the issue. Perhaps society does need scapegoats, and thus derives satisfaction from incarcerating criminals and lunatics, but these are not the *only* reasons for the practices. One need only watch or talk to neurotics or psychotics to realise that most are severely disturbed in thought, behaviour or emotion. Most are unhappy, most want to be helped in reorientating themselves. It may be true that many need familial or medical coercion to seek treatment, but this is largely because of the unfavourable image of "madness" and the mental hospital, not because they don't feel in need of help. Radical changes in our conceptions of mental illness are required, and Laing's and Cooper's challenges must contribute to these. But they do not have a monopoly of truth, nor of successful therapy.

The point I hope to have made is that, without much more evidence

than the Existential Analysts have given, it is simply not possible to deny that mental illness exists. Sociological and political facts about our present international sickness may well be *responsible* for the conditions under which some persons succumb to various psychiatric illnesses, but it certainly doesn't follow from this that in his way the neurotic or psychotic somehow sees the facts more realistically than we do, and is thus not ill at all. If society changed overnight to an anarchist paradise the great majority of mentally ill persons would be equally maladjusted to it as to present conditions. It is not *just* that their behaviour is socially troublesome: irrationality of a persistent kind is maladaptive to both themselves and to *any* social system; and, like it or not, we must inevitably live in *some* social system, whether anarchic or totalitarian.

Laing and Cooper also seem to claim that schizophrenia in particular does not exist. If this is true, it is not because it is a pseudo-disease, but because it is a generic term made to cover many different conditions with little in common to each. Even in traditional psychiatry, simple, catatonic, hebephrenic, and paranoid schizophrenia are distinguished as separate syndromes, and in recent advances even these diagnostic subdivisions are being replaced by more subtle ones (see e.g. Foulds' *Personality and Personal Illness*). Much more research is required to separate the different disorders which are grouped together under the heading of "schizophrenia", and to separate the causes and cures appropriate to each. Some mental illnesses almost certainly are basically hereditary, some due to poor upbringing, some to brain damage at birth or subsequently. It is Laing himself who is guilty of making schizophrenia a pseudo-disease if he attempts to outline a single standard sequence typical of "schizophrenia". The clinical biography which Peter Ford quotes from Laing is not necessarily typical. Analysts in general, whether Existential, Freudian, Kleinian or whatever, are too fond of quoting a few case histories which they can interpret as providing perfect examples of their own particular position, and ignoring the many that do not. Generalisation from a few cases proves nothing. Only the scientific treatment of large samples, using appropriate objective techniques of recording and interpretation, can give results with any claim to supporting a universal theory. Undoubtedly the good psychiatrist must have sufficient empathy with his patient to be able to "make sense" of the patient's "madness", and this may give valuable hints for treatment. But these are only hints, and require suitable scientific substantiation before attaining any general explanatory significance. One paper in the *BMA Journal* does not alone establish his method or theory, especially if the theory is not couched in terms sufficiently clearly defined in terms of observable, objective consequence to relate it unequivocally to *any* set of observed results. Peter Ford's dismissal of Farrell's criticisms is simply too peremptory at this point.

The "Anti-Hospital" may well work for many patients, but such experimental units almost invariably take on only specially selected



patients, who, not surprisingly, do well in them. The real test only comes when a randomly selected sample of patients is used, and then results are rarely so impressive. The reason for this is that treatment must be moulded to immediate needs of particular patients, and whatever changes in diagnosis and classification of mental illness one might make, it is most unlikely that any one treatment will be best for all forms of illness or all patients. The success of the "Anti-Hospital" does not in any way prove that all other forms of treatment are outdated, reactionary, or violent. The "Anti-Hospital" appears to work because it minimises authority and the patient-doctor division. This may not be the true reason for its success. Probably its major factor is that of all successful treatments: communication to the patients that despite their illness they are valued as individuals with rights and responsibilities and personalities of their own. Laing prefers to call it "Love". Mental patients are frequently people for whom previously *no one* has cared. This factor is then important. But the specific libertarian quality of the Existential Analysts' treatments is unlikely to be ideal for *all* patients at the time they first encounter a psychiatrist, just as the specific qualities of other treatments are probably ideal only for a limited number of patients.

I have heard Laing say that when he takes on a patient for individual therapy he makes no more promises than to be available to the patient at a certain time and place for regular consultation, or rather, conversation. He gives no encouragements. Many patients are not prepared for this. They seek reassurances that he will not give, and so discontinue treatment. These patients presumably go to other psychiatrists who provide a more paternal environment, and are more suitable to these patients' immediate needs. Not everyone raised in a totalitarian system can stand on their own feet at the drop of a hat. Therefore facilities for gradual progression to self-knowledge and independence are surely required. Laing does not provide these, and to that degree aren't his methods only *part* of what is required? There is no evidence yet that "Anti-Hospital" methods are a universal panacea for psychiatric problems, enabling other methods to be instantly dispensed with. In any case, such evidence could only come from controlled empirical tests, not from philosophical or even moral considerations: something which to the best of my knowledge has not yet been attempted.

I have criticised Laing, and Peter Ford's apparently unconditional acceptance of the Existential Analysts' position at some length. This is not because I think it is worthless, but because I think it is valuable. But being in essence of value it must be careful not to overstate itself and so give the genuinely reactionary critics a foothold for dismissing it; it must therefore be exposed to the severest critical standards by its sympathisers. Otherwise it will become shrouded and stifled by dogmatic claims both for and against.

## 2. GEOFFREY BARFOOT

HAVING ARRIVED at an anarchist position before making contact with the anarchist movement or its publications, I have since often been somewhat depressed when reading anarchist literature. Now that an article has been published about a subject of which I have a little knowledge, I should like to make a few comments. I am referring to Peter Ford's article, "Libertarian Psychiatry".

Although I am a potter and therefore hardly an expert in psychiatry, I have been able, during the last four years, to establish a pottery section in the occupational therapy department of the local mental hospital. I have also spent about nine months in the training school and on the wards, and have of course constant contact with patients, nurses and psychiatrists. With this background what strikes me most about Peter Ford's article is his concentration on schizophrenia. This appears to be based on two statements; "schizophrenia is the most common diagnosis" and "this diagnosis is applied to two out of three patients in British mental hospitals". This is so contrary to my own experience that I decided to find out what statistics are available. The answer I got from the medical secretary was that the hospital had not been asked for figures of patients by diagnosis for the last ten years and no such figures are kept. As this is a mental hospital of the usual type within the N.H.S., it must be concluded that no general statistics about diagnosis are available. On what then did the Swiss psychiatrist base his estimate?

In the absence of figures I did a little statistical work of my own. It was based on 305 patients attending our department during the last year or so, the diagnoses being made by six different doctors. The results were as follows:

Schizophrenia—57;

Depression—145;

Other—103.

Among the Other are included Epilepsy, Anxiety, Personality Disorder, Hysteria and Alcoholism. The Schizophrenic diagnosis is usually qualified by words such as Paranoid, Hebephrenic, Simple, Paraphrenic or Catatonic, and the Depressive by Manic, Reactive, Endogenous or Neurotic.

Of course no general conclusions can be drawn from these figures based on so small and particular a sample. I do think, however, they cast some doubt on the statements made in the article about schizophrenic diagnosis, which appear to be no more than a wild guess.

It is my own guess that the largest single group of patients now being admitted to mental hospitals is of those diagnosed as depressive. If this were to be correct, a very different picture of psychiatry would



be presented, for while what is said about schizophrenia may hold true (at least in part), it certainly doesn't hold true of depression.

This is not to say that the work of Drs. Cooper and Laing is of no value, though I am not impressed by existential analysis. I do think, however, that a certain amount of scepticism in assessing the therapeutic claims they make is wise. Any man engaged in carving himself a congenial niche in a huge authoritarian organisation like the N.H.S. (like myself in a small way) indulges in special pleading and sets up Aunt Sallies to knock down. I can agree with a lot said about schizophrenia in the article, but then so would a great many other people, authoritarian and otherwise, and I can see only a marginal significance for anarchists. It is generally admitted, for example, that the social situation of a patient often makes the difference as to whether he is admitted to hospital or not. Even a Conservative Government passed legislation designed to keep as many as possible in the community. I don't think many people would deny that it is often a toss up whether somebody goes to prison or a mental hospital. There is a good deal of interchange between prison and mental hospital populations and this is acknowledged to the extent of the local prison asking our department for help in the treatment of prisoners. The arbitrary single word diagnosis also appears to be declining and patients are mostly described by symptoms which do not fit into any single category. Incidentally, "the needs of the hospital census regulations" may apply in America, but not in this country.

On the other hand I cannot agree with the statement that only a small number of patients enter hospital willingly. It may be true that most patients would rather not be in hospital if there were a better alternative, but many would rather be inside than out in a pretty harsh society. In this sense mental hospitals often function literally as asylums. Certainly many depressives are willing to try any sort of treatment in order to relieve their misery. Very little is known of the causes of depression and there is probably little profit in discussing whether they have any significance for anarchists, but I am certain that any treatment which relieves the symptoms of depression, whether or not it effects a cure, whether it takes place in or out of hospital, is to be applauded.

This is not meant to be a general defence of psychiatry; it is intended to show that Drs. Cooper and Laing have been doing a certain amount of shadow boxing, at least as they are presented in the article. Of course there are many unpleasant authoritarian aspects of psychiatry (living as we do in an authoritarian society it would be surprising if there were not) but I am dubious of the claim that the work of Drs. Cooper and Laing upholds a form of anarchy or is of particular relevance for anarchists.

I come now to the reason why I find this article, among others, depressing. Peter Ford seems to me to accept this work as relevant because of a tendency which runs as a general current through much anarchist literature and which I can only describe as naive idealism. I do not use these words in a pejorative sense, they are intended as a literal description. This current shows itself particularly in the references to Sartre. Now Sartre, as I understand it, is an idealist philosopher, that is in the tradition that descends from Plato to Descartes and on through Hegel, Nietzsche and so on. I need hardly add that this tradition has provided authoritarians from Alexander to Hitler and Stalin with their philosophic justification. Sartre was, and still is as far as I know, a marxist and a communist. The distinguishing mark of an idealist philosopher is that at some point his philosophy requires the acceptance of an *a priori* concept that cannot have empirical proof. For instance the meaningless statement "man is free by ontological necessity". Accept one *a priori* concept and there is no logical reason why one should not accept another. Why not accept the ontological necessity of God, who, it may be remembered, has called us all to that station in life in which we find ourselves?

I came to anarchism through a rejection of idealism; specifically through a rejection of *a priori* philosophies and in general through a sceptical attitude to religious, moral and even pragmatic justifications of authority. I don't like authority and I can't accept any justification of it, but I don't want to elevate this into a philosophy. I should have thought that the safest ground for anarchists lay in the rejection of all philosophy, except perhaps that which consists solely in an analysis of language. Judging by their literature, anarchists seem to have a fear of being thought negative. Why? Is this one of the seven deadly sins of anarchism? The correct answer to those who say that authority is necessary is—prove it, and to those who ask what would be put in its place, the answer is—nothing.

Obviously the subjects both of psychiatry and philosophy require considerably more space than I have given them here but I set out only to comment on Peter Ford's article not to write one of my own. If the Editors publish this comment, I hope it may lead to discussion and perhaps subsequent amplification.

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## COMMENTS ON ANARCHY 71: EDUCATION

IN DEALING WITH VARIOUS ASPECTS of authoritarianism in schools, John Thurston and John Webb have performed a very useful demolition service. Both agree that the entire social milieu is responsible for relationships within the school and that wherever this is particularly unsatisfactory it will have been aggravated by serious discrepancies between theory and reality. John Webb uncovers the mutual hostility born of fear, resentment and nervous exhaustion, which must inevitably arise when



experiments in this field began. If he were the sort of person who was upset by this sort of thing, he would be purple in the face by now. What he has learned from Neill he has told the world. From me, his contemporary, he had nothing to learn.

*Bromley, Kent*

W. DAVID WILLS

#### ANTHONY WEAVER COMMENTS:

CERTAINLY OTTO SHAW had founded Red Hill School before he and David Wills met, and before the Q Camp at Hawkspur, of which the latter became camp chief, was started in 1936.

It would indeed be fascinating however, if it were established that the sophisticated development of the system of shared responsibility at Red Hill, to which I referred, has taken place uninfluenced by the lucid expositions in Wills' books.

Meanwhile readers of ANARCHY may like to know that an enlarged edition of *Q Camp*—an experiment in group living with maladjusted and anti-social young men—was published, in December 1966, by the newly founded Planned Environment Therapy Trust (68 pp., 5/-; obtainable from the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency, 8 Bourdon Street, London, W.1).

The original version, published in 1943, was written by the half-dozen people most closely associated in running the Hawkspur Camp. They were Arthur Barron, T. C. Bodsworth, Dr. Marjorie Franklin, Dr. Norman Glaister, Hermann Mannheim, C. K. Rutter and David Wills. Together they described the workings of a place which practised a form of inmate participation or shared responsibility.

Dissimilarly, the George Junior Republic in USA, and Homer Lane's Little Commonwealth, of course were co-educational, which Hawkspur was not, and included "taxation" and a "poor law" for the benefit of those who did not want to work.

At what may be described as further antecedents to Hawkspur, the North Sea Camp Borstal and at the Californian Forestry Camp (and the Israeli Kibbutzim) members and staff for a considerable time lived in tents: whereas Makarenko established the Gorki Colony in five dilapidated brick barracks, and later on managed to take possession of an unoccupied estate.

One of the earlier Annual Reports of Q states that the work at Hawkspur was held up because there simply was not the money with which to buy materials for construction, thus resembling "the idiotic poverty" of the early days of Makarenko. Mannheim comments in this booklet that "primitive conditions may not only strengthen the bonds of affection between members and staff, but also may go a long way to satisfy the need for punishment on the part of the individual and of society—with the proviso that complete absence of amenities is in itself no guarantee of success".

A merit of this re-publication is that it follows up 56 of the Hawkspur men of whom one at least is now a grandfather.

*Bristol*

ANTHONY WEAVER

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