

Leftism Does Not Exist

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“I think the question is not about ‘communists’ and ‘individualists’, but rather about anarchists and non-anarchists.”

— Errico Malatesta (1924)

“I don’t want and I don’t grant solidarity, because I am convinced that it is a new chain, and because I believe with Ibsen that the one who is most alone is strongest.”

— Renzo Novatore (1920)

“Amicus meus, inimicus inimici mei.”

— some absolute fucking moron who’s been proved wrong by history time and time again

we’ve all seen that bullshit political compass. we’ve also all seen the claims from some unoriginal Stirnerite drones that “Leftism is a spook”, but that analysis doesn’t cut deep enough. Stirner’s “spooks” are abstract ideas, social constructs that influence human behavior, but have no real existence outside the imagination of the people in their thrall, but leftism does not even have that. spooks, at least, exist in the minds of their slaves; The State exists in the minds of the patriots, God lives in the imaginations of the faithful, and The System™ is brought to life in the actions of those who make it up, but there is no collective conception of Leftism for self-styled “leftists” to believe in, and there likely never has been.

to be clear, The Right doesn’t exist any more than The Left does—that much should be obvious, since one side of a spectrum will be defined as the antithesis of the other, and if one side doesn’t exist, neither can its opposite—but i chose to focus primarily on “leftism” here because of the term’s central position in many debates among anarchists and others, but my refutation of the concept of leftism would be more accurately seen as an opposition to the notion of directional left/right politics in general. unfortunately, discussions of leftism always seem to focus on whether a particular ideology fits within the Leftist framework, never whether such a framework exists at all.

“Anarchists are having an identity crisis. Are they still, or are they only, the left wing of the left wing? Or are they something more or even something else?”

— Bob Black (2009)

this urge to distance anarchism, or liberalism, or any other supposedly left-leaning ideology from the official trademarked Left aims too low in its critique.

of course the *word* “Leftism” exists, that much is self-evident, but the word is an empty signifier. a *signifier* without a *signified*. the purpose of language is to communicate, and words are defined collectively, because without a general consensus on the meaning of a word, the word communicates nothing, and therefore has no meaning. that’s the problem with “leftism”. the word has never had a clear shared definition. “the left” can only be defined in relation to other floating signifiers, like “socialism”.

“Socialism! That is an unfortunate word altogether...What does socialism really mean? If people have something to eat and their pleasures, then they have their socialism.”

— Adolf Hitler (quoted by Henry A. Turner, 1985)

The “Socialism” Problem

“No sign makes sense on its own but only in relation to other signs. Both signifier and signified are purely relational entities. This notion can be hard to understand since we may feel that an individual word such as ‘tree’ does have some meaning for us, but Saussure’s argument is that its meaning depends on its relation to other words within the system (such as ‘bush’).”

— Daniel Chandler (2001)

Leftism could be said to be any system with socialist tendencies, but then our task is to uncover what “socialism” is, and that word is equally hollow. marxists, egoists, syndicalists, nazis, and liberals have all used the word “socialist” for their politics, talking about drastically different, and mutually exclusive systems and movements. Leftism’s connection to “Socialism” does nothing to illuminate any distinct quality of The Left.

unlike easily defined terms like “anarchism”, and words with clear origins like “marxism” and “fascism”, “socialism” is a word that came into use organically, without a particular movement or manifesto famously introducing the term, or an obvious etymology tying it to a singular clear meaning (the way “anarchy” is derived from two Greek words literally translating to “without ruler”, for instance). and people use the word “socialism” to mean everything from workers’ collective empowerment and solidarity, to totalitarian nationalism, to progressive liberalism or a welfare state.

the contradictory definitions of “socialism” are likely best illustrated by the fact that Max Stirner had to go out of his way, in *Stirner’s Critics*, to explain that the way he was using the word in previous works was entirely different from how many readers interpreted it, stating that his egoism was “not against socialists, but against sacred socialists”. this distinction between “socialism” and “sacred socialism” was necessary, because when Stirner argued against what he called socialism, he envisioned Marxian tendencies in which “socialists” upheld the Community or the Proletarian Class, or the State above themselves, but his critiques confused some readers who had a much more anarchic or egoistic interpretation of “socialism” more akin to Stirner’s own concept of a “union of egoists”.

these different conceptions of socialism—as illustrated by Stirner’s philosophy being both socialist and anti-socialist—went on to form the foundations of not only distinct and oppositional, but entirely antithetical and mutually exclusive philosophies, movements, systems, and organizations, from the CCCP to the CNT (for example), which share precisely nothing in common.

Dictionaries

“When you ask for definitions, it matters a lot who you’re asking.”

— MatPat (2020)

extensive experimentation on the part of myself and collaborators has shown that expressing the meaninglessness of the word “leftism” on social media will almost certainly and immediately lead to multiple users (the same ones who will sarcastically post this essay on facebook with *New Developments in Horseshoe Theory* tagged as the headline) condescendingly linking to (or

posting screenshots of) both the google definition, and the wikipedia entry for the word (or related entries, like “The Left” and “Leftist politics”), as if the thought to look the word up simply hadn’t occurred to the person challenging the existence of a definition. so those reference sites seem like an appropriate place to start in our attempt to define the concept.

google defines leftism as “the political views or policies of the left”, and “the left” as “a group or party favoring liberal, socialist, or radical views.” i’ve already addressed the problem with defining leftism through its connection to socialism, but the inclusion of liberalism and “radical views”, which includes anything contrary to the status quo, only exacerbates the issue. google’s “definition” does nothing to define the word.

according to Wikipedia (at the time this essay is being written), “*Left-wing politics supports social equality and egalitarianism, often in opposition to social hierarchy.*”...but that’s just anarchism...not to mention the redundancy of claiming that leftism “often” opposes hierarchy, after stating that its aim is equality, which means a lack of hierarchy. obviously no one thinks “leftism” is synonymous with “anarchism”, otherwise we’d just use the term “anarchism”, and marxists, liberals, and any other authoritarians would be automatically excluded from The Left, as they are from this definition of it (since neither marxists nor liberals “support social equality and egalitarianism”). so we need to look elsewhere if we hope to find a usable definition of leftism.

note: when i say “marxism” in this essay, i’m talking about authoritarian marxist ideologies, from the Manifesto to maoism to national bolshevism, not post-marxist ideologies like autonomism and communization theory. since the primary point of contention between marxists and anarchists has always been the topic of the seizure or destruction of state power, broadly speaking, i would sooner group non-authoritarian marxist positions in with anarchism than marxism, tho this is sure to irritate many readers, and i don’t want to imply that i’m equating post-marxism to anarchism; there is simply a greater gap between classical marxism and something like communization, than between communization theory and anarchism.

as we saw above, leftism is associated with liberalism commonly enough that google includes liberal ideology in its definition of The Left (despite very loud and persistent objections from many marxists and anarchists). it’s well known that the definition of “liberal” has changed drastically over time, flipping to the opposite position, in regards to mainstream American politics, but precisely when this change took place is a bit fuzzy. some time between the turn of the 20th century and the 1920s, the major American political parties had fully swapped places after a gradual process of each party amending particular positions one after the other (each trying to appeal to the other’s voting demographic), ultimately resulting in the Electoral Parties of Theseus running America.

the complete reversal of American “liberal” and “conservative” positions in the early 1900s makes the fact that Mussolini associated “liberalism” (note: he didn’t specify *American* liberalism, just *liberalism*) with the left in the 1930s particularly interesting, since he must have been either basing his idea of liberalism on a relatively new phenomenon in America, ignoring the much more extensive contradictory history of the term in the States and elsewhere, or—more likely—he was invoking a more global sense of liberalism, which conflicts with the notion of American liberalism leaning left and conservatism leaning right, since classical liberalism is more akin to American conservatism. that contradiction, however, is in line with Mussolini’s comments, defining “the right” as the collectivist position, juxtaposed against “liberalism”, which he linked to individualism.

“Granted that the 19th century was the century of socialism, liberalism, democracy, this does not mean that the 20th century must also be the century of socialism, liberalism, democracy. Political doctrines pass; nations remain. We are free to believe that this is the century of authority, a century tending to the ‘right’, a Fascist century. If the 19th century were the century of the individual (liberalism implies individualism) we are free to believe that this is the ‘collective’ century, and therefore the century of the State.”

— Benito Mussolini (1932)

it’s almost hard to believe he used the word “socialism” to mean the antithesis of collectivism, but that just further illuminates the meaninglessness of that word. Mussolini seemed to associate free market capitalism with the left, and what modern Americans think of as “liberalism” with the right. as idiosyncratic as that may seem, he may have come to associate individualist ideologies with the left due to Marx’s comments on individuality.

“In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.”

— Karl Marx (1848)

but if the right is collectivist, what the hell are libertarians and objectivists? was Herbert Hoover a leftist due to his “rugged individualism”? is QAnon the modern face of collectivism? and where is the individualism in the politics of Nicolás Maduro or Kim Jong-un? how does individualism flourish under a marxist regime with control over the media, land and resources, production and distribution of goods? if everyone grows up watching the same state-sanctioned TV, listening to the same songs and news on the state-controlled radio, with access to the same limited products from the state-regulated shops, generally experiencing life as part of the same hegemonic culture cultivated by the state, and working similar hours at state-mandated jobs...where does individuality come into play? not to mention the requisite state-approved sexual orientation in many countries associated with the Left—perhaps a holdover from Marx’s own explicit homophobia.

State Capitalism

“My purpose is to compare Communism with its application in Soviet Russia, but on closer examination I find it an impossible task. As a matter of fact, there is no Communism in the U.S.S.R. Not a single Communist principle, not a single item of its teaching is being applied by the Communist party there.

To some this statement may appear as entirely false; others may think it vastly exaggerated. Yet I feel sure that an objective examination of conditions in present-day Russia will convince the unprejudiced reader that I speak with entire truth.”

— Emma Goldman (1935)

Goldman wrote an excellent essay—There is No Communism in Russia—contrasting the Soviet system to communism, and arguing that what Lenin established and Stalin maintained was not

communism at all, but *state capitalism*. marxists often argue that Stalin was not a true marxist, but an opportunist who used a twisted interpretation of marxism to manipulate the masses and take power for himself. the problem with that argument is that much of what Stalin did, for which he's criticized today, comes directly from Marx's own writings.

"The Stalinist machines spent decades producing a version of 'Marxism' that met their own institutional needs. The theory of international working class revolution was rewritten to meet the needs of nationalist politicians, tyrannical factory managers and military generals.

[...] Turning on their erstwhile allies, they launched a violent campaign to take charge of the Russian economy. Destroying traditional peasant life, assuming total control over agricultural and factory production and wiping out all political opposition, Stalin's group transformed themselves into unchallenged rulers of a totalitarian system.

[...] Now 'Stalinism' meant something else: a particular way to organise the exploitation and oppression of the working class, with a one-party state in total control of the economic system, ruling through a combination of terroristic intimidation and 'Marxist' ideology."

— Daniel Taylor writing for Redflag (2019)

"We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production."

— Karl Marx (1848)

what Stalin did is precisely what Marx called for. marxism demanded a totalitarian state in full control of the political and economic spheres from its outset. as Goldman and others have pointed out, this isn't the abolition of capitalism, it's the seizure of capital from entrepreneurs and corporations by the state, reorganizing the economic system from *market capitalism* to *state capitalism*.

Leftism as Fascism

*"Fascism is the other face of socialism.
Both of them are bodies without minds."*

— Renzo Novatore (1924)

marxism is atheistic proto-fascism. to some this statement may appear as entirely false; others may think it vastly exaggerated. yet i feel sure that an objective examination of the policies and practices prescribed by Marx and Engels will convince the unprejudiced reader that i speak with entire truth.

“Russia must be placed first among the new totalitarian states. It was the first to adopt the new state principle. It went furthest in its application. It was the first to establish a constitutional dictatorship, together with the political and administrative terror system which goes with it. Adopting all the features of the total state, it thus became the model for those other countries which were forced to do away with the democratic state system and to change to dictatorial rule. Russia was the example for fascism.”

— Otto Rühle (1939)

people are already rolling their eyes at this essay, regarding it as another round of *Everything I Don't Like is Fascism*, and i will agree that marxism can't be said to include every item on every checklist that any theorist has put forward to outline their interpretation of the defining features of fascism—a notoriously vague concept—but, with the exception of religious propaganda, it also can't be reasonably argued that marxism lacks the primary tenets of fascism that appear on each of the aforementioned lists, from militarism to glorification of the state and its ideology, to total state control of resources and media, to the cult of personality, and so on. but most importantly, marxist regimes behave in the same ways as fascist dictatorships, and the people they govern suffer in similar ways.

“The Stalinists do not hesitate to kill any of those who do not blindly accept Stalin as a second Christ. One of the refugees who came over with me from Spain was a member of the O.G.P.U. in Spain, which, by the way, is controlled by Russia. Every volunteer in the Communist International Brigade is considered a potential enemy of Stalin. He is checked and double-checked, every damn one. If he utters a word other than commy phrases he is taken ‘for a ride.’”

— Bill Wood (1937)

side note #2: as i'm editing this essay, i just received a series of messages, from a Venezuelan friend, about Maduro's thugs rounding up any dissidents there.

ironically, fascists claim to oppose “reds” and “socialists”, while waving red flags representing what they call “national socialism”. of course, every self-styled socialist will be quick to point out that the fact that Hitler used socialist terminology and symbolism doesn't mean he was a socialist, or that fascism is a form of socialism (similarly to how Marx's use of communist terminology does not make him a communist), but in practice, fascism is remarkably similar to the political and economic system Marx and Engels proposed, and the rhetoric and propaganda used by Marx and Hitler, respectively, was—in some cases—strikingly similar.

“All my life I have been a ‘have-not.’ At home I was a ‘have-not.’ I regard myself as belonging to them and have always fought exclusively for them. I defended them and,

therefore, I stand before the world as their representative. I shall never recognize the claim of the others to that which they have taken by force. Under no circumstances can I acknowledge this claim with regard to that which has been taken from us.

[...] One might think, perhaps, that at least in England itself every person must have his share of these riches. By no means! In that country class distinction is the crassest imaginable. There is poverty—incredible poverty—on the one side, and equally incredible wealth on the other. They have not solved a single problem. The workmen of that country, which possesses more than one sixth of the globe and of the world's natural resources dwell in misery, and the masses of the people are poorly clad. In a country which ought to have more than enough bread and every sort of fruit, we find millions of the lower classes who have not even enough to fill their stomachs, and go about hungry.

[...] Just as the tension existing between rich and poor within a country must be compensated for either by reason or often if reason fails, by force, so in the life of a nation one cannot claim everything and leave nothing to others.”

— Adolf Hitler (1940)

“Money is the jealous god of Israel, in face of which no other god may exist....The god of the Jews has become secularized and has become the god of the world. The bill of exchange is the real god of the Jew. His god is only an illusory bill of exchange.”

— Karl Marx (1843)

in The Manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx and Engels advocate the formation of a centralized authoritarian state—dictatorship—which would own all land, resources, and means of production, and would hold absolute political and economic power. further, they insisted at the outset that this dictatorship must not tolerate any form of dissent, and must maintain control of all media, as well as every other aspect of life, from transportation to legislation.

marxists claim that their philosophy is aimed at granting workers direct control over the means of production, and enabling them to enjoy the full value of their labor, but the policies prescribed in the Manifesto make it clear that this assertion is a blatant lie. step 4 on Marx's 10-step program for establishing dictatorship calls for the “*confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels*”, meaning of course that all anarchists and (other) egoists (who Marx especially hated, saying that egoism “must be punished as a crime”) would have their property stolen by the state, but also anyone who disagrees with the Party leader, and anyone who has to go back to France to take care of their sick grandmother, has forfeited their claim to ownership of any belongings, in the eyes of the marxists. let's keep in mind that this recommendation comes from the same chapter in which Marx and Engels had already discussed the difference between personal and private property, and referred to capital as another form of property, so what they're saying here is that anyone who opposes the Party's stance on anything, and anyone leaving the country for any reason must be stripped of all belongings, including money.

what this proclamation—that emigrants and rebels are to be stripped of property—really means is that Marx sees all products and means of production not as property not of the workers, but of the state. they can't take it with them when they leave because it doesn't belong to them; it was

produced in Germany by German factories, using German resources, so it's property of Germania, not of the laborer who worked to produce it. the same is true of the capital representing the labor of the worker; the abstraction of their labor does not belong to them, according to Marx, it belongs to the state. no matter how loudly marxists scream into the void that marxism is an anti-nationalist position, it gets harder and harder to deny its nationalistic tendencies the closer you look at it.

the next two items on the Manifesto's 10-step strategy ("*Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly*", and "*Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State*") simply hammer home the fact that marxism is aimed at creating state capitalism through the establishment of a totalitarian state, rather than actually doing away with the privatization of resources and establishing worker control of workspaces.

item 8 on the same list is especially disturbing in its call for "*equal liability of all to work*", particularly since the same chapter states that sex work would be abolished in a marxist system. this means that "work" in step 8 refers to "entering the workforce", i.e. working a Party-approved job. you want to live in a cabin you built and grow your own food? *fuck you, get a job.* want to find your own way to support yourself in a marxist economy? *eat shit, libcuck; everyone has to work—and it's only **real work** if the Party sanctions it.* it's easy to see how the implementation of gulags naturally followed from the application of Marx's ideas in Russia.

at this point, marxists—and even many anarchists—may take exception to me focusing exclusively on Marx's worst writings (not true; i haven't quoted *The German Ideology* at all!) and the fact that i'm totally ignoring all 3.5 volumes of *Kapital*. in addition to the undeniable fact that Marx's earlier works were especially horrendous, this is because the *Manifesto* is arguably his most influential text, despite being one of his worst, and it's still being cited by marxist dictators to this day, like Nicolás Maduro, who read aloud from it and discussed the book's "importance" in a public statement in February 2021. marxism today still utilizes the strategy layed out in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, even after we've seen time and time again that this praxis leads to a system more in line with fascism than communism.

while fascists aren't known for their economic theories—in fact many scholars include a *lack* of economic plans in their defining features of fascism—we do have one example of a self-identified fascist economy existing outside of wartime; Francoist Spain. ignoring fascist Spain's infamously expansive illegal black market, Franco's autarkic state-controlled economy was hardly different from the state-dominated economy marxism generally leads to, exemplified perfectly by Venezuela today.

despite the clear animosity between authoritarians who call themselves marxists and those who call themselves fascists, the systems they advocate are strikingly similar. of course fascism (when self-identified as such) is the most universally reviled political system of the past several centuries due primarily to the nazis' genocidal practices...and at least marxism can't be linked to anything as gruesome as the Holocaust...unless of course you take into account the Holodomor, the Killing Fields in Cambodia, literally everything the NazBols hope to accomplish, etc...

both Marx and Hitler built nominally "socialist" movements—which would be more accurately described as state capitalist movements—on an antisemitic foundation, scapegoating Jews, and then extending their racism to a disdain for the upper classes, preaching anticapitalist rhetoric, while doing nothing to actually combat private ownership of resources and the means of production. other than their differing stances on religion, the only real difference between fascism and

marxism is the stated end-goals of each philosophy. marxism claims that totalitarian dictatorship is one step on the road to the true goal—a stateless classless society—whereas fascism identifies totalitarian dictatorship itself as the ultimate goal. regardless of the professed goals of marxists, the result of their philosophy is nearly identical to that of the fascists.

“Whether party ‘communists’ like it or not, the fact remains that the state order and rule in Russia are indistinguishable from those in Italy and Germany. Essentially they are alike. One may speak of a red, black, or brown ‘soviet state,’ as well as of red, black, or brown fascism. Though certain ideological differences exist between these countries, ideology is never of primary importance. Ideologies, furthermore, are changeable and such changes do not necessarily reflect the character and the functions of the state apparatus.”

— Otto Rühle (1939)

“There are naive people who believe that at least some features of Communism have been introduced into the lives of the Russian people. I wish it were true, for that would be a hopeful sign, a promise of potential development along that line. But the truth is that in no phase of Soviet life, no more in the social than in individual relations, has there ever been any attempt to apply Communist principles in any shape or form. As I have pointed out before, the very suggestion of free, voluntary Communism is taboo in Russia and is regarded as counter-revolutionary and high treason against the infallible Stalin and the holy ‘Communist’ Party.”

— Emma Goldman (1935)

of all the bad predictions Marx and Engels made, the idea that the State would “wither away” was undoubtedly and (now) demonstrably the most ludicrous. the absurdity of this idea was called out by anyone with at least a half-functioning brain who considered it for even a moment at the time, and disturbingly, even after multiple regimes disproved the “withering away” fantasy, the idea is still being spread.

“This fiction of a pseudo-representative government serves to conceal the domination of the masses by a handful of privileged elite; an elite elected by hordes of people who are rounded up and do not know for whom or for what they vote. Upon this artificial and abstract expression of what they falsely imagine to be the will of the people and of which the real living people have not the least idea, they construct both the theory of statism as well as the theory of so-called revolutionary dictatorship.

The differences between revolutionary dictatorship and statism are superficial. Fundamentally they both represent the same principle of minority rule over the majority in the name of the alleged ‘stupidity’ of the latter and the alleged ‘intelligence’ of the former. Therefore they are both equally reactionary since both directly and inevitably must preserve and perpetuate the political and economic privileges of the ruling minority and the political and economic subjugation of the masses of the people.

Now it is clear why the dictatorial revolutionists, who aim to overthrow the existing powers and social structures in order to erect upon their ruins their own dictatorships,

never were or will be the enemies of government, but, to the contrary, always will be the most ardent promoters of the government idea. They are the enemies only of contemporary governments, because they wish to replace them. They are the enemies of the present governmental structure, because it excludes the possibility of their dictatorship. At the same time they are the most devoted friends of governmental power. For if the revolution destroyed this power by actually freeing the masses, it would deprive this pseudo-revolutionary minority of any hope to harness the masses in order to make them the beneficiaries of their own government policy.

[...] These elected representatives, say the Marxists, will be dedicated and learned socialists. The expressions 'learned socialist,' 'scientific socialism,' etc., which continuously appear in the speeches and writings of the followers of Lassalle and Marx, prove that the pseudo-People's State will be nothing but a despotic control of the populace by a new and not at all numerous aristocracy of real and pseudo-scientists. The 'uneducated' people will be totally relieved of the cares of administration, and will be treated as a regimented herd. A beautiful liberation, indeed!"

— Mikhail Bakunin (1873)

"The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state is not 'abolished', it withers away."

— Friedrich Engels (1878)

Marx and Engels were just the South Park Underwear Gnomes of theory.

PHASE 1: USE STATE APPARATUS TO CENTRALIZE THE OWNERSHIP OF LAND, RESOURCES AND MEANS OF PRODUCTION, THE MANAGEMENT OF DISTRIBUTION, TRANSPORTATION, AND MEDIA, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS IN THE HANDS OF A TOTALITARIAN STATE THAT TOLERATES NO DISSENT

PHASE 2: ?

PHASE 3: STATELESS CLASSLESS SOCIETY

anarchism is the struggle for a stateless, classless, egalitarian society. fascism is the struggle for a totalitarian nationalist dictatorship. marxism is the belief that fascism will magically give way to anarchy on its own.

Leftism as Progressivism

the word "leftist" is often used interchangeably with "progressive". progressivism, however, is just a fancy way of saying *liberalism*.

"In politics, left refers to people and groups that have liberal views."

— dictionary.com

the marxists and anarchists huddled under the Leftist banner are likely screaming at me by now that liberals are not true leftists, but there are two clear problems with this claim. first, a lot of what's commonly considered "leftist" today is undeniably liberal; identity politics, advocacy for religious freedom, support for politicians who call themselves "socialist", etc. all of these tendencies are widely regarded as leftist, and are distinctly liberal, and entirely antithetical to at least anarchism, and generally marxism as well.

my aim here is not to write a polemic against identity, religion, and electoral politics—those analyses exist already, and will continue to be produced, elsewhere—but to show the constant unavoidable friction between liberals and other supposed members of the the mythical Left, due to the different milieus' contrasting positions in regards to these topics.

Identity

"In my experience as a 'marginalized voice' I've seen identity politics used by activists as a tool of social control aimed at anyone who fits the identity criteria of 'oppressor'. The traditional power-struggle for equality has turned into an olympic sport for social leverage, inverting the same social hierarchy that should have been destroyed in the first place."

— Flower Bomb (2020)

from *Bædan* to *Against Gender, Against Society*, to *Bash Back!* fliers stating "my preferred pronouns are negation", anarchists and marxists have circulated tons of analyses of identity and identity politics, their harmful nature, and our opposition to them, in contrast to the way liberals tend to glorify identity, but some of the most direct commentary on this friction comes in the *Identity Crisis* portion of Tegan Eanelli's essay, *Bash Back! is Dead; Bash Back Forever!*;

"One side takes identity as a given and a precondition that must shape our organizing and struggle, the other locates identity as the enemy itself."

as a point of clarification, it should be noted that the two "sides" referenced in Eanelli's quote are not regarded as liberals and anarchists within that statement; rather, this comment specifically refers to conflict "between militants or insurrectionists who differed in regard to the question of identity", after "certain circles within *Bash Back!* had thoroughly rid themselves of liberal-pacifist tendencies"...however, i would assert that the identity politics in question are a product of the sort of liberal influences *Bash Back!* as a group had been struggling to free itself of, regardless of whether the *other* political views of any given identitarian were *also* liberal.

liberals see identity, in its various forms, as a desirable, liberatory badge to be worn proudly, as well as an effective tool to be used for dismantling oppression. identity, to liberals, is something to be not only willingly adopted, but celebrated—sanctified—as one of the holy sacraments of Progressive Democratic Politics, and a commonality around which movements must be centered. they believe that people who are grouped (willingly or not) into the same identity categories will inevitably share similar experiences to one another, meaning any person's position on a spectrum of Privileged™ to Oppressed™ can be easily located by adding together the quantities of privilege and oppression allotted them by each identity category with which the person is associated, and

tallying the results. this assumed commonality (the privileges and oppressions each supposed member of each identity group is assumed to share) is generally viewed by liberals as the ideal basis for organizing.

Poe's Law makes it difficult, if not impossible, to determine which of them are satirical, and which are earnest, but the internet is rife with questionnaires and quizzes, toolkits for determining one's supposed level of privilege, mathematically...the most famous being Peggy McIntosh's laughably absurd piece, "*White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*" from 1988. i wouldn't argue that there are no ways in which white people are often privileged over others in modern society—white people generally won't have to worry about being raided or arrested by I.C.E. in the U.S., for instance—but Peggy chooses to focus primarily on class privileges (despite the whole point of the piece being Peggy's supposed goal of illuminating privileges that AREN'T a product of class) with a secondary focus on ridiculous minor issues like magazine covers mostly featuring white models, and even "privileges" that just make Peggy herself seem racist, like her insinuation that it's a privilege to be able to choose to be in the company of one's own race. (to be clear, white models were certainly privileged at the time that checklist was written, since they had more work opportunities than other models, but to insinuate that their presence on billboards and in commercials significantly benefited other white people in their day-to-day lives is just stupid.)

these thinkpieces, buzzfeed quizzes, etc. have done nothing but further solidify the notion of identity into rigid categories which are used to judge a person's overall level of influence within any given system, and in some cases determine "what side they're on". the primary effect of this tendency is the empowerment of politicians who can lean on any membership in an Oppressed Identity Group™ that they may be able to claim, like Obama "representing Black people" while carpet-bombing the Middle East, or Ruth Bader Ginsberg acting as "Women's champion", while endorsing destructive gas pipelines and intensifying the threat of the prison industrial complex by supporting stronger sentences for violating parole, each of them gaining popular support due to their identity (and assumed commonality with other members of their perceived identity group), despite their actual policies and actions.

anarchists and marxists, on the other hand, often see identity as a microcosm of the State; roles that are affixed to us, to which we're socialized to conform, and which we're brainwashed into reproducing. we recognize identity politics as inherently abstract, and removed from real lived experience (by presenting a generalized approximation of the average experience of the collectivity of individuals who share any given identity as if every member of each group has lived the same life, rather than acknowledging the unquantifiable variances in people's unique experiences), and as an extension of the oppression identity represents.

"The work of many decolonial feminists has been influential in demonstrating the ways that western gender categories were violently forced onto indigenous societies [sic], and how this required a complete linguistic and discursive shift. Colonialism produced new gender categories, and with them new violent means of reinforcing a certain set of gendered norms. The visual and cultural aspects of masculinity and femininity have changed over the centuries. There is no static gender.

[...] The liberal feminist is not aware of the ways power creates gender, and thus clings to gender as a means of legitimizing themselves in the eyes of power. They rely on trying

to use various systems of knowledge (genetic sciences, metaphysical claims about the soul, kantian ontology) in order to prove to power they can operate within it.”

— Alyson Escalante (2015)

“Here, I examine the extent to which racism by intent produces structural consequences in the social milieu. Such a focus reveals that the idea and conception of whiteness derives from the dynamics of racism by intent, a type of racism that is founded upon custom and tradition, but shatters against social scientific principles.

[...] It is now well accepted by social scientists, that the notions of ‘race’ and whiteness, in their social significance, are guided not so much by any biological foundation as by the social meanings that are ascribed to them. That is, they depend on the social definition their situation is accorded. Uncovering or deconstructing the social construction of ‘race’ and whiteness begins with a definition of the situation or context in which these ideas tend to define social interaction patterns.

[...] Thus, we find that the concept ‘race’ is based on socially constructed, but socially, and certainly scientifically, outmoded beliefs about the inherent superiority and inferiority of groups based on racial distinctions.”

— Teresa J. Guess (2006)

“Indeed, Europeans prior to the late 1600s did not use the label, black, to refer to any race of people, Africans included. Only after the racialization of slavery by around 1680 did whiteness and blackness come to represent racial categories.”

— Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg (2006)

recognizing that gender/sex can't exist without sexism, nor race without racism, and that the assumption of commonality along identity lines provides the ruling classes more opportunities to manipulate those they govern, and obfuscates any real potential commonalities, by replacing analysis of experience and personal politics with abstractions, the only possible anarchistic position in regards to identity is pure negation, working toward the abolition of fixed categorical identity, while also acknowledging the ways people are oppressed in the present world as a consequence of the identities by which they're categorized, and combatting those oppressions directly. understanding identity as a product of identity-based oppression (rather than the other way around), identity itself must be recognized as not only nonsensical, but as a framework of oppression.

“We come together to fight for a reality where identities such as ‘man,’ ‘woman,’ and ‘trans’ are logical impossibilities.”

— anonymous writers identified only as “Anarcha Feminists” (2010)

liberals loudly—deafeningly—champion Identity in its various forms (whether it's by marketing the next Marvel movie as boasting a Diverse cast, or drawing unearned attention to a Disney character whose flamboyant outfit apparently signifies them as Gay, or urging “POC” voters to elect a particular candidate whose views and interests must certainly be aligned with their own,

because they too are a Marginalized Person®), while a growing number of us look on in disgust as this incessant exaltation of identity further cements us into the oppressive identitarian structures they pretend to be combatting, while simultaneously granting more social and economic power to the ruling class through the commodification of “otherized” identities through which billionaire CEOs can sell us “representation”.

“Having stood up to fight for a sexless society, we now find ourselves entrapped in the familiar deadlock of ‘woman is wonderful.’ Simone de Beauvoir underlined particularly the false consciousness which consists of selecting among the features of the myth (that women are different from men) those which look good and using them as a definition for women. What the concept ‘woman is wonderful’ accomplishes is that it retains for defining women the best features (best according to whom?) which oppression has granted us, and it does not radically question the categories ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ which are political categories and not natural givens. It puts us in a position of fighting within the class ‘women’ not as the other classes do, for the disappearance of our class, but for the defense of ‘woman’ and its reinforcement. It leads us to develop with complacency ‘new’ theories about our specificity: thus, we call our passivity ‘nonviolence,’ when the main and emergent point for us is to fight our passivity (our fear, rather, a justified one).”

— Monique Wittig (1981)

while liberals fight for the proliferation, validation, and representation of endless new identities to which corporations and politicians can market their “progressive” policies, anarchism necessarily opposes identity on the whole, but individuals who identify as anarchists often take a more liberal stance on identity...and with marxists the reverse is true; there’s nothing inherent to marxism that necessitates an opposition to identity, but we see time and time again that marxists almost universally oppose idpol entirely.

“Identity politics, and ideas derived from it such as privilege theory and intersectionality, have produced possibly the lowest level and most simplistic understanding of class consciousness in the history of modern capitalism.”

— Albert L. Terry III, (writing for Left Voice, 2017)

some marxists may agree with liberal analyses regarding identity, but their praxis will certainly differ. where liberals take identity as the common denominator around which to organize movements, marxists focus primarily on class.

“For Marxists the struggle against oppression is connected to the struggle against capitalism because all oppressions are rooted in class society.”

— Ylva Vinberg (2020)

“Identity politics, as practiced by middle class people, rarely raises the economic and political issues that concern women from poor peasant or low-paid working class background. The identity politics does nothing to ensure that all toilers—toilers from all

castes, all races and genders, and all people with varying sexual orientation—get what they need in life. So those who benefit by exploiting the toilers and all those who benefit from such identity-based divisions are let off the hook. The exploiters and their political supporters have little to fear from identity politics.”

— Raju Das (2020)

unlike anarchism which inherently opposes all hierarchy, marxism does not *necessarily* oppose bigotry (as evidenced by Pol Pot and NazBols), but most modern marxists seem to share anarchist sentiments regarding bigotry. marxist dictators, for the most part, have explicitly opposed *racism*, but their collective track record with non-cishet identities, behaviors, and lifestyles, is less favorable, and marxism certainly hasn't *always* been associated with anti-racism.

“It is now quite plain to me — as the shape of his head and the way his hair grows also testify — that he is descended from the negroes who accompanied Moses' flight from Egypt (unless his mother or paternal grandmother interbred with a nigger). Now, this blend of Jewishness and Germanness, on the one hand, and basic negroid stock, on the other, must inevitably give rise to a peculiar product. The fellow's impotency is also nigger-like.”

— Karl Marx, in a private letter to Frederich Engels (1862)

of course, we can also talk about things like Kropotkin calling darker skinned people “savages” and Bakunin thinking marxism was a Jewish conspiracy as well, but anarchists didn't name their philosophy “Kropotkinism”, and aren't making giant statues of Bakunin's big dumb Jew-hating head.

anarchists and marxists are *usually* in agreement on the topic of idpol, while liberals are generally on their own, coming up with silly slogans like “*Step Up, Step Back*” and writing off any analysis put forward by someone they arbitrarily identify as a straight cis white man, simply on principle of the circular reasoning of their identity politics, and trying to mobilize support for Female candidates and Black-Owned Businesses...but the contrast between liberals and the rest of the supposed Left is even more apparent in the realm of faith. if anarchists and marxists have one thing in common, it's hatred of religion.

Religion

“The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.”

— Karl Marx (1844)

“For the Revolution to be a fact, we must demolish the three pillars of reaction: the church, the army, and capitalism. The church has already been brought to account. The temples have been destroyed by fire and the ecclesiastical crows who were unable to escape have been taken care of by the people”

— anarchists writing for *Tierra y Libertad* (1936)

“The constitutional freedom of religion is the most inalienable and sacred of all human rights.”

— Thomas Jefferson (1819)

liberals fight for freedom of religion, while marxists and anarchists fight for freedom *from* religion. while it is certainly possible for an anarchist to think that a creator or deity of some sort likely exists, it should be obvious to everyone with even a cursory familiarity with the concept of anarchism that the act of worshipping such a deity, or participating in any system which dictates how people *must* or *should* behave is inherently antithetical to anarchism, as is the tendency to take a belief on faith because an authority figure (such as a priest, rabbi, imam, or parent) preaches it, or because it’s written in a book that’s deemed to be “holy” or “divine” by any such authority figure.

and while it is *possible* for someone to consider themselves a marxist, and uphold many of Marx’s (and other marxists’) ideas, while also holding religious beliefs, Marx himself apparently considered opposition to religion to be the most crucial central element of his philosophy, and we’ve seen this marxist antitheism play a major role in most marxist uprisings, from the application of Juche in North Korea to the Cultural Revolution in China, to the CPK’s execution of religious practitioners in the Khmer Rouge, and so on.

“These four authorities—political, familial, religious, and masculine—are the embodiment of the whole feudal-patriarchal ideology and system, and are the four thick ropes binding the Chinese people, particularly the peasants.”

— Mao Tse Tung (1927)

as the PRC continues to wage war against Islam in Xinjiang, using methods that further illustrate my earlier point about the similarities between marxism and fascism, May 2021 was legally recognized in New York as the first official Muslim History Month in the United States, and liberals around the world celebrated a victory for religious equality and “freedom”, while politicians like Scottish SocDem Nicola Sturgeon and American Democrat Bill de Blasio promoted further normalization of Islam through movements like #WorldHijabDay, while ignoring the desperate pleas from Islam’s victims to stop glorifying the religion, writing off anarchist, marxist, and other critiques of Islamic beliefs and culture—and calls for opposition to the religion and its practices—as racist and ignorant, despite the fact that many of those spearheading various movements against Islam are ex-Muslims from countries that enforce Islamic laws, like Zerine Firoze, Zara Kay, Amina Tyler, etc.

“In Germany, in August 1997, an 18-year-old woman was burnt to death by her father for refusing to marry the man he had chosen. A German court gave him a reduced sentence, saying he was practicing his culture and religion.

In Iran, women and girls are forcibly veiled under threat of imprisonment and lashes, and cultural relativists say that it is their religion and must be respected.

In Holland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that Iran’s prisons are ‘satisfactory for third world standards,’ allowing the forcible return of asylum seekers.

Cultural relativism serves these crimes. It legitimizes and maintains savagery. It says that people's rights are dependent on their nationality, religion, and culture. It says that the human rights of someone born in Iran, Iraq, or Afghanistan are different from those of someone born in the United States, Canada or Sweden.

Cultural relativists say Iranian society is Muslim, implying that people choose to live the way they are forced to. It's as if there are no differences in beliefs in Iran, no struggles, no communists, no socialists, and no freedom-lovers. If so, why have 150,000 people been executed for opposing the Islamic Republic of Iran?"

— Maryam Namazie (1998)

to be clear; 150,000 was the number Namazie used in 1998. since then, Iran—which is still ruled by an islamic republic that punishes things like adultery, homosexuality, atheism, etc. by death—has executed often more than 500 people per year, prompting Javid Rehman to say in a report to the U.N. that “the number of executions remains one of the highest in the world,” *after* the number had been cut in half in 2018.

the quintessential liberal maxim of “*I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it*” was introduced to the modern political lexicon by Evelyn Beatrice Hall describing Voltaire’s perceived attitude toward a book burning, and it’s since become shorthand for the liberal sentiment on every topic from fascism (and liberal opposition to the antifa “*no platform for fascists*” policy) to democracy (and their insistence on the importance of the electoral process and the right of all to vote) to religion (and the right of each person to proudly uphold their faith, even when it stands in stark contrast to liberal ideals; as all major religions do), and it’s the direct antithesis of revolutionary and insurrectional ideology and praxis (not to mention egoism, illegalism, etc.), which necessitate directly fighting against contradictory ideas and movements.

anyone seeking to do away with present conditions (or simply break free of their constraints) can’t respect the views of the status quo’s defenders, or their supposed “right” to their views. respecting the views of political opponents would mean stagnation and ineffectuality. nothing would ever change. the stagnation implied by the belief in each person’s right to their own views fits perfectly with liberal goals tho, since they don’t want to drastically change anything. in contrast, the anarchist sentiment regarding disagreement and opposition was arguably best summarized by The Feederz, who said “*destroy what bores you on sight.*”

all abrahamic religions are fundamentally misogynistic, anti-queer, moralistic and authoritarian, and explicitly command actions that directly oppose liberal ethics (like the murder of atheists, gender-deviants, and sexually promiscuous individuals), and Buddhism is also notoriously sexist and homophobic, and all of these religions are directly causing widespread oppression around the world, from the Palestinian genocide and apartheid enacted by Zionists inspired by Judaism’s myths of a “promised land” to the Ejercito de Dios destroying the Zapatistas’ crops in Chiapas, to ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people in Myanmar, perpetrated by nationalist Buddhists, etc., but liberal ethics counterintuitively push their devotees to hypocritically respect the views of others, and support their “rights” to their views, even when those views directly conflict with the rest of their liberal values, and perpetuate oppression and murder.

“A liberal is a man too broadminded to take his own side in a quarrel.”

to quote extensively from *Anarchism and Religion*;

“There is no doubt that the prevailing strain within the anarchist tradition is opposition to religion. William Godwin, the author of the Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793), the first systematic text of libertarian politics, was a Calvinist minister who began by rejecting Christianity, and passed through deism to atheism and then what was later called agnosticism. Max Stirner, the author of The Individual and His Property (1845), the most extreme text of libertarian politics, began as a left-Hegelian, post-Feuerbachian atheist, rejecting the ‘spooks’ of religion as well as of politics including the spook of ‘humanity’. Proudhon, the first person to call himself an anarchist, who was well known for saying, ‘Property is theft’, also said, ‘God is evil’ and ‘God is the eternal X’. Bakunin, the main founder of the anarchist movement, attacked the Church as much as the State, and wrote an essay which his followers later published as God and the State (1882), in which he inverted Voltaire’s famous saying and proclaimed: ‘If God really existed, he would have to be abolished.’ Kropotkin, the best-known anarchist writer, was a child of the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution, and assumed that religion would be replaced by science and that the Church as well as the State would be abolished; he was particularly concerned with the development of a secular system of ethics which replaced supernatural theology with natural biology. Errico Malatesta and Carlo Cafiero, the main founders of the Italian anarchist movement, both came from freethinking families (and Cafiero was involved with the National Secular Society when he visited London during the 1870s). Eliséé and Elie Reclus, the best-loved French anarchists, were the sons of a Calvinist minister, and began by rejecting religion before they moved on to anarchism. Sebastien Faure, the most active speaker and writer in the French movement for half a century, was intended for the Church and began by rejecting Catholicism and passing through anti-clericalism and socialism on the way to anarchism. Andre Lorulot, a leading French individualist before the First World War, was then a leading freethinker for half a century. Johann Most, the best-known German anarchist for a quarter of a century, who wrote ferocious pamphlets on the need for violence to destroy existing society, also wrote a ferocious pamphlet on the need to destroy supernatural religion called The God Plague (1883). Multatuli (Eduard Douwes Dekker), the great Dutch writer, was a leading atheist as well as anarchist. Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, the best-known Dutch anarchist, was a Calvinist minister who began by rejecting religion before passing through socialism on the way to anarchism. Anton Constandse was a leading Dutch anarchist and freethinker. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, the best-known Jewish American anarchists, began by rejecting Judaism and passing through populism on the way to anarchism. Rudolf Rocker, the German leader of the Jewish anarchists in Britain, was another child of the Enlightenment and spoke and wrote on secular as much as political subjects. In Spain, the largest anarchist movement in the world, which has often been described as a quasi-religious phenomenon, was in fact profoundly naturalistic and secularist and anti-Christian as well as anti-clerical. Francisco Ferrer, the well-known Spanish anarchist who was judicially murdered in 1909, was best known for founding the Modern School which tried to

give secular education in a Catholic country. The leaders of the anarchist movements in Latin America almost all began by rebelling against the Church before rebelling against the State. The founders of the anarchist movements in India and China all had to begin by discarding the traditional religions of their communities. In the United States, Voltairine de Cleyre was (as her name suggests) the child of freethinkers, and wrote and spoke on secular as much as political topics. The two best-known American anarchists today (both of Jewish origin) are Murray Bookchin, who calls himself an ecological humanist, and Noam Chomsky, who calls himself a scientific rationalist. Two leading figures of a younger generation, Fred Woodworth and Chaz Bufe, are militant atheists as well as anarchists. And so on.”

— Nicolas Walter (1991)

of course, in *Anarchism and Religion* Walter settles on a drastically different conclusion than i do; that anarchism is *usually* but not *necessarily* atheistic. but, then again, i disagree with pretty much every conclusion that pacifist dipshit ever settled on.

anarchism is, always has been, and *must* be adamantly opposed to religion in its entirety, despite the undeniable fact that some confused individuals refer to themselves as anarchists while also professing religious beliefs, such as the so-called “christian anarchists” and those who adhere to “judeo-anarchism”. these positions are no more anarchistic philosophies than “anarcho-capitalism”. just like the capitalists, the religious “anarchists” take many of anarchism’s arguments and positions, and ignore those that preclude their inclusion in the milieu (such as refusal to worship, serve, or obey a “higher” being or a moralistic earthly institution), and proclaim themselves to be anarchists, without understanding that opposition to any form of religion is not only foundational, but *essential* to anarchism (the same way opposition to capitalism is foundational and essential to anarchism), and the removal of antitheism from anarchism fundamentally and profoundly changes the philosophy into something else entirely.

*“Nature created neither servant nor master;
I seek neither to rule nor serve.
And its hands would weave the entrails of the priest,
For the lack of a cord with which to strangle kings.”*

— Denis Diderot (1772)

*side note #2: i’m fully aware that my assertion that Tolstoy wasn’t an anarchist because he worshipped a god can be expanded on to make the assertion that Stalin wasn’t a fascist because he was an atheist, seemingly contradicting my earlier premise that fascism and marxism are essentially identical. that’s fine. i made sure to say that marxism is **atheistic** fascism, indicating that the difference between the two trajectories is their differing stances in regards to religion...but if **you** define fascism as being inherently religious, such that divorcing it from religion fundamentally changes it...ok. my point—that the effects of marxism are essentially the same as those of fascism—remains.*

the history and literature of so-called “leftist” movements make it perfectly clear that of the three ideologies commonly associated with The Left—anarchism, liberalism, and marxism—the only one that supports freedom of religion is liberalism, yet that concept is widely considered a staple of Leftist thought today.

The Second Problem

the second problem with the attempt to delineate between liberalism and “true” leftism, is that, regarding the logic of liberals not being “left enough” to be leftist, this implies a left-to-right spectrum on which something can be MORE or LESS left (or right). what exactly is it that marxism does MORE than liberalism, which signifies it as being MORE leftist? more state control? more homophobia? more beards? if liberals were simply more extreme in their views, would that make them leftist? if they didn’t stop at wanting to ban guns, but went on to criminalize knives, baseball bats, and sharp corners on kitchen counters, would that be leftist?

concepts like “left of left” and the “ultra-left” imply a gradient of moderate leftism—which advocates the introduction of mildly left policies into the existing political system—to extremist leftism—which strives to wholly eradicate the current system in favor of producing a new “leftist” status quo in its place—but they don’t indicate any shared view or goal of leftists by which leftist tendencies could be defined. a common assumption is that the further left an ideology is, the more power the working class would have within the corresponding system, but that would exclude marxists from the left entirely, since dicprole takes all power away from the working class, and consolidates it in the hands of a new “proletarian” ruling class. if the Left were defined by the empowerment of the working class, marxism would be a far-right ideology.

liberals support a rhine capitalist system featuring both a strong central government and globalist corporations...marxists fight for the abolition of such corporations under a totalitarian state...and anarchists advocate the abolition of both market and state capitalism. these three ideologies are on completely different and oppositional trajectories, struggling directly against one another. it’s not a matter of degrees on a moderate to extreme spectrum, it’s simply entirely different sets of goals and positions. so-called “leftists” often have absolutely nothing in common, and describing a position as leftist (or post-leftist, anti-leftist, or right wing, for that matter) illuminates nothing about that position’s actual politics. “The Left” signifies nothing.

unsurprisingly, if we try to define the left by contrasting it to the right, we come to the same problem: the ideologies typically thought of as “right wing” are vehemently opposed to one another, and share little to nothing in common. libertarians famously distrust and oppose any form of government, while championing entrepreneurship and the “free market”, preferring to lick the boots of the CEO instead of the führer, while fascists oppose the idea of an unregulated market, and blindly follow political leaders, essentially worshipping their favorite politicians. the “alt right” primarily consists of meme-obsessed gay furies with hentai fetishes, and most republicans would rather shoot themselves in the head than be stuck in a room with one of them...but these are the ideologies that are supposedly aligned as “The Right”.

none of the interpretations offered up for “leftism” stand up to scrutiny, but the term is continually associated with three distinct, mutually exclusive political trajectories that have little to nothing in common, and strive for contradictory goals. if “leftism” can mean everything from atheistic fascism to “inclusive” capitalism to anarchist syndicalism, and implies anything from gender-nihilism to gender-essentialism, while encompassing sentiments toward religion ranging from militant antitheism to universal acceptance and apologism, the word really has no meaning at all, and only serves to confuse people on all sides of every issue, tho most people don’t even realize they’re confused.

so why does anyone use the word at all?

Leftism as Moderate Propaganda

“By maintaining the public image of a common struggle against oppression, leftists conceal, not only their actual fragmentation, incoherence and weakness, but—paradoxically—what they really do share: acquiescence in the essential elements of state/class society.”

— Bob Black (2009)

the concept of leftism accomplishes two things: first, it allows the ruling class and their sycophants to write off all opposition to the status quo as “extremist” (thereby grouping anarchists in with nazis and Isis by using the same dismissive word for each group), labeling rebels as members of the “extreme right” or “extreme left” in order to cultivate fear of change, and bolster their own power (by justifying further militarization of police forces and the implementation of perpetually more invasive surveillance methods) through fear-mongering. secondly, it liberalizes anarchism and marxism by associating those three disparate ideologies with one another, in a primarily liberal society.

“Antifa is an amorphous movement whose adherents oppose people or groups they consider authoritarian or racist, according to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which monitors extremists.”

— Reuters (2020)

in the first case, we’ve seen clearly in the past few years of liberal protests, antifa riots, and republican coups in the U.S., how the rhetoric of extremism and the dangers of anything too far outside the (imaginary) center of the (non-existent) political spectrum is used by politicians like Trump, Biden, and the rest, to impress on the moderate American populace the alleged need for strong police and military forces to deal with “harmful extremists” (to borrow facebook’s terminology).

if “leftists” refused to be “leftist”, and instead asserted precisely what they fight for (whether that’s myopic reforms, totalitarian tyranny, or egalitarian relations), it stands to reason that the media and conservative politicians would have a much harder time convincing the average working class American that antifa is a soviet organization funded by Russia, aiming to steal and redistribute the retirement funds of American workers and kick them out of their homes to collectivize the land they live on. maybe if instead of identifying collectively as “The Left” and promoting nonsense like “leftist unity” and “a united front”, we acknowledged that we’re not on the same side, we have little to nothing in common, and are in fact political opponents, conservatives wouldn’t keep grouping us together, and perpetuating the idea that opposition to capitalism leads to a marxist total state.

secondly, the use of an umbrella term like “leftist” or “right wing” is, broadly speaking, an appeal to populism. liberals who would be put off by their associations with the term “anarchist” (like ACAB banners and Durruti’s kinky rhetoric about *gestating in rivers of blood* or whatever) might feel more welcome in a movement or protest described using non-descript left/right directional terms vaguely related to a horseshit political compass. the problem is that any effort made

to appeal to “the masses” serves to water down any antagonistic movement, and replaces negation with compromise. by identifying as *leftist*, rather than *anarchist*, “left anarchists” declaw their movements.

instead of focusing on recruiting, marketing to moderates, attempting to seem approachable and relatable, and presenting an image of cohesion and coherence, we need to be “infighting” and gatekeeping. turning our enemies off of our ideas and rhetoric is preferable to turning our movements and actions into something that would appeal to authoritarians.

if The Left ever existed, no one alive today remembers what it was. there is no common thread among supposedly-leftist ideologies by which “leftism” can be defined, and attempting to force incompatible antithetical positions into a nonsensical alliance or shared identity only serves the interests of the status quo.

“The state is nothing but an instrument of oppression of one class by another—no less so in a democratic republic than in a monarchy.”

— Frederich Engels (1871)

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