Sidney E. Parker
In Defence of Social Pessimism
1967

Retrieved 11/18/2021 from https://www.unionofegoists.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/PP1420-MinusOne-No22.pdf
Published in *Minus One* #22 (June 1967)

usa.anarchistlibraries.net

In Defence of Social Pessimism

Sidney E. Parker

1967

Contents

bling about the arrangements that will spring from it, as Stirner pointed out.

But if he is concerned with new "social orders" and bringing about radical social changes to this end, then individual insurrection has to be tailored and tamed to fit into the efforts of "all" to reach the cornea goal of an ideal life. It has, in other words, to be transformed into social revolution, a process in which the realization of the ego is made dependent upon the "realization" of the "social organism".

S.E. PARKER

Anarchy and Anarchists

Can one call oneself an anarchist, yet not believe in the practibility of an anarchist society? I believe one can; Francis Ellingham believes one cannot.

This question has arisen because the defining of an anarchist has become so bound up with what Ellingham once called the "socialised mind" ("Anarchy", May, 1956) that few can think of anarchism apart from some concept of social transformation. This is because the socialised mind means that "we tend to think more and more in terms of society as a whole, less and less in terms of the unique human individual. Confronted with any economic or social problem, we tend to look for a solution which will best enable society to go on functioning, smoothly and efficiently, according to some ideal plan."

As result an anarchist tends to be thought of not as one who negates authority for *himself*, but as one who negates authority for *everybody*, and therefore has to postulate the possibility of a future state of affairs in which this universal negation will be realized. But because this latter view has been accepted up to new by almost all commentators on anarchism — including some individualists — I do not see why I have to accept it.

On the other hand, I do not, as Ellingham suggests, think there is any necessary contradiction between being an anarchist and believing in the possibility of a generalized anarchy. Because I an pessimistic about this possibility, it does not follow that I have to rule out of court those who are optimistic. (By "anarchy" in this context, I mean the anarchy defined and defended by a Martucci, not the socialised heaven of a Malatesta).

Social Change

Since my open letter was addressed to the editors of a paper dedicated to the concept of mass revolution, I naturally dealt with the relevance of such a concept to anarchism, rather than with the "one-by-one" concept which is much more to my taste and which would be the royal road to an individualist "order" — if such were possible. But what is desirable is not necessarily possible and the evidence offered by Francis Ellingham is not convincing.

Indeed, all the "evidence" he does offer is that since *some* individuals have seceded from the herd, *all* can. Of course it is thinkable that they can, Just as it is *thinkable* that all can become Jehovah's Witnesses, flat-earthers, poets or dialectical materialists. Of course, a miracle may happen, an unknown factor may suddenly appear from nowhere and act as a precipitate to dissolve the mass into individualities, but I have only one short life to live and I am not interested in wagering it on odds so long that they are meaningless.

Ellingham is mistaken in believing that I regard *existing* society as permanent and unchangeable. Societies can and do change, but not in an anarchist direction. Every change in social organization so far has been, in effect, nothing but a restructuring of the ruling apparatus. As I asked the editors of "Freedom" (who have made no reply): Where is the evidence that future changes will be different? *Evidence* — not hopes…

Human Nature

I do not know what "human nature" is, although I can guess something of the "nature" of individuals I know, or know of, from their way of going on. And what I know is that nest people behave in such a fashion as to Show a parked preference for submitting to authority in one form or another. It may be

the "nature" of some individuals not to have this preference, but this is clearly not the case with "most people". Again, because some do not have this preference, it does not follow that all do nouns for "natural law" — a natural law is simply the formulation of observed phenomena. If the phenomenon of the preference of the mass for submission to authority is one that has been repeated in every kind of society so far known, than it may be called a "natural law").

The notion of the "nobility" or "ignobility" of beam beings was introduced by Ellingham, not by me. I do not see what is has got to do with what I wrote. Anyway, it is quite possible for an authoritarian to behave in a noble manner (e.g. Spartacus) without ceasing to be an authoritarian.

As for his claim that "mankind is still in its infancy" — what does this mean? One right just as usefully say that it was in its senescence. Either view implies a teleological attitude which reduces the individual to nothing.

The State, The Union of Egoists, and Insurrection.

I negate the State for myself *now*, not for everybody in the future. Only the present is of importance to me and I want to get what profit I can from *my* anarchy today, not in some indefinite "narrow of the revolution" which even its advocates are not sure will come.

Certainly, a union of egoists is not the sure as a "society". By the same token, such unions can be formed by conscious egoists without waiting for any "radical" social transformation. An individualist anarchist does not have to depend on the — generalization of his ideas before he can live his own life. To the extent of his power and opportunities he can make his own insurrection against the State and Society — without trou-