

Central Material Extract

Title:Change the system not the climate:An investigation into the social and ideological nature of the ecological crisis, and the need for radical structural change.

CHAPTER IV – **Resist! A Better Future is Possible!** Anarchist

Currents and the Interconnectedness of Being

In realising that the threat of ecological collapse is inherent to the social structures and economic system of contemporary society, I was personally overcome by a sense of nihilistic pessimism – a state of anxiety, and dread which replaced my idealism and enjoyment of the natural world with angst, ambiguity and a misanthropic sense of hopelessness.^[78] This emotional response to the ecological situation provoked me to question and thus challenge the dominant ideologies which currently shape and define our interactions with nature, and in doing so, seek to understand the structural and ideological preconditions necessary for the aversion and ultimate resolution of the ecological crisis.

In perceiving society, its institutions, and its associated ideologies as unchangeable entities which are the products of a seemingly fixed human nature, we re-produce the power structures which exist to serve the vested interests of the elite. However, a rejection of these reified human-made institutions is becoming increasingly evident as anarchist currents gain traction in mainstream global protests and ecological movements such as Extinction Rebellion (XR), Earth First!, and the Green Anti-Capitalism Front (GAF). These anarchist currents revolve around the perspective of social ecology and deep ecology, and their applications to anarchist, libertarian socialist and environmental philosophy^[79]. I would argue that this emergence of anarchist currents within the environmentalist ideology is an appropriate response to the lack of agency and potential for instigating change under capitalism and the bureaucratic and legislative power of the state. In interviewing John Warwick from the Green Anti-Capitalist Front regarding GAF's aims and principles, Warwick stated that their primary aim is to “avert climate catastrophe by destroying capitalism”, which he ultimately argued is the “root cause” of the ecological crisis.^[80] Furthermore, Warwick stated that in the short term, GAF hoped to “unite disparate groups to form a broad coalition for actions that highlight the role of capital and the state in facilitating the ecological crisis.”^[81]

Whereas ecocentric social ecologist groups are seen as revolutionist, and oppose the social structures and economic systems underpinning society, anthropocentric environmentalist groups such as the ‘Greens Party’ and the ‘International Union for Conservation of Nature’

(IUCN) seek to reform capitalism and make it more 'green'. This anthropocentric approach correlates with the response of a Generation X participant, who stated "I don't think it's a problem with capitalism" and that instead we should "let capitalism run its course, the markets will adjust".^[82] However, for social ecologists, the notion of ecological capitalism is quite literally impossible. Libertarian socialist Takis Fotopoulous argues that "the main reason why the project of 'greening' society is merely a utopian dream lies in a fundamental contradiction that exists between the logic and dynamic of the growth economy, on the one hand, and the attempt to condition this dynamic with qualitative interests"^[83] on the other.

Whilst this aligns with my perspective, I have begun to question whether given this limited timeframe and the urgent change needed for the aversion of climate 'tipping points', as well as the lengthy timeframe which would be required to facilitate radical social change, reformist change may be our best temporary solution. This shift in beliefs correlates with interviewee McGinty's assertion in our interview: "I do not believe that capitalism can be reformed to the extent necessary... I hope it can be, but I don't see us ending capitalism in time to save the planet."^[84] In regards to this statement, GAF interviewee Warwick acknowledged other environmentalist movements "who feel they must frame their arguments within the current system both to attract wider support and to affect change in the short timescales needed."^[85] Warwick went on to explain that whilst "there is more merit in these arguments, this approach can only ever partially solve the problem."^[86]

[78] Personal reflection (2020)

[79] Interview with John Warwick from the Green Anti-Capitalist Front, author of the Anarchist Federation's pamphlet; 'Capitalism Is Killing the Planet, An Anarchist Guide to Ecology'. (2020)

[80] Ibid, in response to the question "*What are the aims of the Green Anti-Capitalist*

[82] Focus group with 6 Generation X teachers and 6 Generation Z students (23/06/2020), 12 out of 12 respondents agreed to the statement response to the question "*What do you think the role of a capitalism is in the ecological crisis?*"

[83] Fotopoulous, T. (1995). Development or Democracy?. *SOCIETY & NATURE (The International Journal Of Political Ecology)*, 3(1), 21. Retrieved 22 July 2020, from.

[84] Interview with Pat McGinty, History and Politics at the University of Sydney. (2020) In response to the question: "*Do you think we revolution is possible given the current timeframe?*"^[85] Interview with

John Warwick from the Green Anti-Capitalist Front, author of the Anarchist Federation's pamphlet; 'Capitalism Is Killing the Planet, An Anarchist Guide to Ecology'. (2020)

In response to the question: "*Why do you think other environmental activists and campaigns avoid discussing capitalism's role in the crisis?*"

[86] Ibid