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The Anarchist Revelation: Being What We're Meant To Be

Paul Cudenec

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Paul Cudenec draws on an impressively wide range of authors to depict a corrupted civilization on the brink of self-destruction and to call for a powerful new philosophy of resistance and renewal offering a future for humanity in which we are all able to “be what we’re meant to be”. He combines the anarchism of the likes of Gustav Landauer, Michael Bakunin and Herbert Read with the philosophy of René Guénon, Herbert Marcuse and Jean Baudrillard; the existentialism of Karl Jaspers and Colin Wilson; the vision of Carl Jung, Oswald Spengler and Idries Shah, and the environmental insight of Derrick Jensen and Paul Shepard in a work of ideological alchemy fuelled by the ancient universal esoteric beliefs found in Sufism, Taoism and hermeticism. With a fusion of scholarly research and inspiring polemic, Cudenec succeeds in forging a coherent and profound 21st century world-view with an appeal that will reach out far beyond those who currently term themselves anarchists. The book sets out by exploring the sense of meaninglessness in modern society, exemplified by our alienating dependency on technology and mental manipulation by commercial interests. It follows Guénon, Marcuse and Baudrillard in diagnosing a regression of intellect and the reign of quality over quantity – a condition that Cudenec describes as the disease of modernity. He argues that the concepts of “progress” and economic “growth” imply the inevitability of one particular future – a continuation of the current system. Although environmental crisis threatens our very existence, change is blocked and democracy is an illusion. The repression of resistance is mirrored by the control of “reality”. The closing-down of language and thought encouraged by the positivist philosophy is, as Marcuse and Jaspers explain, ideal for the capitalist system – denying as it does all possibility of human autonomy. What we need, says Cudenec, is a complete refusal of the system. Anarchism challenges assumptions about the law (Leo Tolstoy), property (William Godwin), employment (Bakunin) and the state (Errico Malatesta). It rejects the narrowness of positivism (Bakunin, Landauer) and imagines individuals’ natural potential fulfilled in a harmonious organic society (Peter Kropotkin). Our innate human sense of justice is thwarted by capitalism, argues Cudenec, creating a powerful potential for revolt. But where, he asks, will the rebels come from to take on such a titanic struggle? He looks at the way a natural outsider (Wilson) can manage to turn the despair of alienation into acceptance of an existential burden of responsibility (Jean-Paul Sartre). An inner strength is needed to take on the “allotted task” (Jaspers), which presents itself as calling or “daemonic will” (Jung). This originates in the collective unconscious and acts for the benefit of whole – it is thus merely channelled by an individual, who must be open and authentic enough to allow this to happen. The universal esoteric spiritual path involves stripping away the ego’s barrier between the individual and the collective whole (Ibn ‘Arabi). With historic connections to this tradition (Sedgwick, Waterfield), anarchists use the language of alchemy to call for a transformation of society (Bakunin, Emma Goldman, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon). The anarchist love of seeming paradox reflects the depth and fluidity of the philosophy – in contrast to “rigid” Marxism (Landauer). Contradictions are embraced rather than resolved. Playfulness and creativity are also at the heart of anarchism and set it apart from materialist Marxism. The poetic language of revolt can bypass social conditioning and open up new possibilities. In his final chapter, “¡Viva la Revelación!”, Cudenec concludes that a remarkable transformation is needed to save humanity. This will not come from existing religions – we need a spiritual awakening that speaks a “new language” (Jaspers) and is powered by its own values (Frithjof Schuon). This is The Anarchist Revelation.

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