

Voting vs. Democracy

What we know as Democracy is nothing more than a fleeting moment of illusory power. Once every few years we are allowed to select a new ruler from a virtually identical selection – very similar to our sacrosanct freedom to choose from a myriad of prosaic commodities. In our supposedly democratic political system, our participation rarely ventures beyond the ballot box, resulting in apathy and boredom. Voting extinguishes our yearning for direct action and stultifies our ability to organize together without hierarchy. We are constantly placing our desires in the hands of someone more competent, someone more deserving...always someone else.

The political system exists as an integral State apparatus. Its primary concern is self-preservation. As such, electoral politics permits only nominal, superficial and ultimately innocuous change. If there was the slightest prospect of the political system inducing systemic change, the State would promptly disassemble it.

Irrespective of a party's alleged progressiveness or the faithful promises of politicians, the most "radical" of governments will only ever be able to implement the most tenuous of reforms. This is because regardless of one's position on the political spectrum, governments will always be subject to the intolerable pressure of both state and capital. Both these powers have inveterate interests – the continuation of current economic and political structures – and wish to maintain their own existence. If a government was to threaten the interests of these powers, both have effective means – including bureaucratic campaigns and economic disinvestment – at their disposal to deter and prevent such actions.

While governments may implement piecemeal policy changes for the better, these ameliorations will never challenge capitalism, the state, or our hierarchical society. How can problems such as patriarchy, racism, heterosexism, and ecological destruction be solved by the very system that creates them? A government does not possess the power to radically alter economic and institutional structures; this power is monopolized by international commerce, trans-national corporations and their protector – the state. That is, until we recognize and seize our capacity to transform the world and our lives.

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By participating in the electoral system you validate government. Will an isolated and exclusive body of politicians – governed by elite powers – ever be capable of making the correct decisions for you, your family or your community? Can anyone accurately represent your interests? In fact, do you really want representatives to make and implement decisions for you? Surely we can resolve dilemmas, discover solutions and determine our own lives without recourse to alienating mediation, that is, indirect action and representation.

Voting is incredibly disempowering as it abdicates control over our own lives by forwarding that control to someone else. By voting we are involved in perpetuating our own oppression and reinforcing the notion that government authority of any mannerism is right, effective or superior to self-governance through voluntary association.

Political abstention does not entail apathy. To the contrary! By refusing to endorse the farce that is representative democracy you can channel your efforts into direct action and the free self-organization of your workplace, neighborhood, and community. By refusing to vote you oppose the eternally oppressive state and the very concept of representation and take back the right to pursue and achieve your goals through cooperation rather than an external authority.

We are individuals who, knowingly or not, desire authentic life. Renouncing control within the political and economic spheres of society results in losing control of our personal life. If your life appears vacuous or lacking sensation and excitement you can be assured it's largely due to the fact that we are excluded from decisions and actions that affect our lives profoundly.

We can construct an alternative to the state, capitalism and faux democracies. We can build truly democratic assemblies in our community, self-managed workplaces without bosses and self-managed schools, all replete with passion and color. We can coordinate transport and health locally from the bottom up, ensuring our needs and desires are met. These can then multiply and evolve, allowing real participation and communication to germinate in the most unexpected of places. As such organizations grow and expand, becoming increasingly self-sufficient, we can federate with others and manage resources through non-hierarchical networks. In doing this, we create a sizeable counter-power, one that can directly confront and eventually supersede the state, reclaiming our world and our lives in the one impetuous grasp.

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