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Trends. Demonstrating at the World Trade Organization: The Rise and Fall of Global An-Anarchists

IBPP Editor
bloomr@erau.edu

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Much of the violence in the streets of Seattle during meetings of the World Trade Organization has allegedly been perpetrated by self-proclaimed anarchists. But there never have been, are, and never will be anarchists.

Anarchists advocate the absence of any form of political authority. Yet forms of political authority are inherent to human functioning. Human psychology operates in a socially constructed space of infinite needs and finite resources to satisfy those needs. The quest to manage the disparity between needs and resources is the essence of politics and de facto political authority between, among, and even within humans characterizes this quest. To become an anarchist, one must deny that which is human. Such attempts at denial are also very human and doomed to failure.

Anarchists advocate political disorder and confusion. Self-proclaimed anarchists most often attempt to effect disorder and confusion through violence, sabotage, and related threats. Yet violence, sabotage, and related threats almost always are the surest ways to effect order and clarity through significant-- sometimes, massive--counter-response of various political authorities and their representatives. The "an" of the anarchist is immediately doomed.

Anarchists advocate absence of any coherent principle--e.g., a common purpose or standard--as a foundation of meaning and a guide to behavior. Yet the very advocacy of anarchy is that very coherent principle. Here the anarchist is hoisted by the proverbial petard.

Unlike courageous seekers of freedom, liberty, democracy, and a world with reduced repression, suppression, and oppression--who might embrace the power of the powerless by acting as if these goals have already been attained--self-proclaimed anarchists act as if their internal contradictions do not matter at all. This is not the absence of formal political authority but its corruption--an all too common occurrence in the worlds of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. (See Browne, C.G. (1955). "Laissez-faire"or "anarchy" in leadership? Etc, 13,, 61-66; Busch, M.L., & Reinhardt, E.R. (1993). Nice strategies in a world of relative gains: The problem of cooperation under anarchy. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 37, 427-445; Egan, T. (December 2, 1999). Black masks lead to pointed fingers in Seattle. The New York Times, p. A1; A14; McWilliams, S.A. (1988). On becoming a personal anarchist. In F. Fransella & L.F. Thomas, (Eds.). Experimenting with personal construct psychology. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Inc.; Segal, E.F. (1987). Walden two: The morality of anarchy. Behavior Analyst, 10, 147-160; Silber, S. (1968). Encopresis: Rectal rebellion and anal anarchy? Journal of the American Society of Psychosomatic Dentistry and Medicine, 15, 97-106.) (Keywords: Anarchism, Demonstrations, World Trade Organization, WTO.)