

‘We know that leaders are dangerous, yet we seem to crave them all the same.’ –
Martin Parker

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- Laidlaw scholar 2019-2021 in philosophy
 - In Defence of Deep Bullshit, *Aporia*
 - The Buddhist Philosophy Podcast
 - Laidlaw network
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Talk structure

Main LOA – leadership is an intractable phenomenon which provokes prolific paradoxes for anarchism.

- 1) Anarchism and leadership
- 2) Does anarchism work in practice?
- 3) A solution? - Leadership not rulership
- 4) Reconciling leadership with anarchist ideals

Discussion

1 Anarchism

- Not a unified ideology
- Network/web of ideas (Quine)
 - Family resemblances (Wittgenstein)
- Anti-authoritarian
 - Individual autonomy, freedom
- Agreement on rules to live by
 - Mutualism
- Assumption
 - Who needs a world view? Raymond Geuss

1 Anarchism and leadership

- Government (Proudhon)
 - Sting and authority (Kojève)
 - Anti-hierarchical
 - Literal translation - “without rulers” (Gordon, 2006)
 - Horizontalism (Williams 2017: 3)
1. The presence of Government is an undesirable phenomenon
 2. Leadership and leaders result a positive litmus test for government
 3. Leadership is an undesirable phenomenon (with no place in anarchist praxis)

1 Leaderless movements

- Castells 2012
- Sutherland et al. 2013

- Protest movements
- Workers and housing co-operatives
- Autonomous zones
- Digital spaces as anarchism in practice

2 Does anarchism work in practice?

- Can (successful) anarchist social movements be leaderless?
 - “purity is not a possibility” (Alvesson&Spicer 2012: 385)
- Affectivity – Western (2013: 689)
 - Signifies activists’ ideals
- Hegemonic ambiguity of leadership (Alvesson 2015)
 - Recurrence
 - Goodness
- Utopia (Wallis 2021)
 - Concrete utopia (Dinerstein 2017)

2 Occupy

- Adbusters – #OCCUPYWALLSTREET
 - 2011 Tahrir Square
- I'm hesitant to say that it's non-hierarchical, that there's no leadership, because I do really think that there's a core of people – the media and press team – who are doing a lot of the organising and shaping the public image [...] I think it's denying the real power dynamics that are at play now. (Sacks, cited in Strauss, 2011)
- It got to the stage where whatever they said [...] was what we did. They'd already chatted about most of the agenda points, so just reiterated that without giving anybody else time or space to air their thoughts. It wasn't aggressive, and most of us didn't realise it for ages [...] but they became so powerful. (Sutherland et al., 2013: 15)
- Stealth leadership (Freeman 1972)
 - Fills the void?

2 The insidiousness of leadership

- Jo Freeman – The Tyranny of Structurelessness (1972: 156–157)
 - Leaderlessness
- Avowed structurelessness became “a way of masking power.”
 - Advocated by the most powerful
 - Informal group structure
 - In-group knowledge
 - Not known
- Most convincing

3 A solution? - Pedantry on uses of words

- 2/3 define (Rost, cited in cited in Blom & Alvesson 2015)
- Sharpenings (Wright 1995)
 - Minimal definition
 - Sharper use
- Leadership
 - Authority
 - Psychosocial influencing dynamic (Western 2013)
- What is the sharpening of “leadership” that we are seeing anarchists use?

3 Consent-based sharpening of leadership

- “Leaders not rulers”
- Gramsci’s sharpenings (on Hall’s reading)
- Domination
 - Coercion
 - Limited reach
- Leadership
 - Consent
- Leadership – a consent-based social relation which catalyses “positive participation.”

3 A solution? Perhaps not

- Charismatic leader (Weber 1978)
 - Seen as having extraordinary qualities
 - Sociological (Joose)
 - Winning consent
- Enron (Tourish&Vatcha 2005)
 - Steve Jobs
 - Brewdog
 - Conversion in recruitment (Chomsky&Herman 1988)
 - Vision of leader
 - Penalizing dissent
- Lack of dichotomy

4 Leadership, an autonomist sharpening

- Western 2013
- 5 principles of autonomist leadership
 - 1) Spontaneity
 - 2) Autonomy
 - 3) Mutualism
 - 4) Networks
 - 5) Affect
- Mature autonomist leadership?

4 Paradox, and the use of philosophy for LS

- Paradox, Spoelstra (2020)
 - prolific
- George Yancy (2007) – “troublemaking”
 - Leadership = challenging discursive practices
- Parrhesia (Foucault 2001)
 - “Fearless speech”
 - Truth, sincerity, authenticity
 - Authority and power
- Dubois – lack of rank becomes rank

Conclusion

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