

Andre Ye

Dr. Reagan

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Lucy Parsons seeks in “I am an Anarchist” to repaint and contextualize what being an anarchist is, which she argues has been falsely equated with ‘chaos’. She asserts anarchy is true liberty – a state without political rule, since then-current political systems served only to continually push power out of the common people and into a few elites. The Constitution allows for citizens to protect their inalienable rights, so the bomb thrown in Haymarket square was not anarchy but instead protection of the Constitution, a defiance of a breach of the people’s rights.

In his comments on Social Darwinism, William Sumner argues that because competition is the law of nature, capitalism – which harnesses brute competition into productive industrial output – is natural for the success of a society. Attempts to rectify inequalities are unnatural; by forcing the rewards of the successful to the unsuccessful, success itself is undermined and there is no reason to pursue it. Thus, denouncing capital as evil wicked is antithetical to civilization.

In Ch. 2 of *Industrialism and the American Worker*, Melvyn Dubofsky argues that in the late 19th century, the relationship between workers and employers tipped from being relatively equal to massively and chaotically in favor of the latter. By engaging in tactics that would lead to violence and tying themselves to ‘law and order’, employers could crush strikes with support of the state, if not with technological growth and concentrated capital. The traditional values of “island communities” thus was forcefully transformed and reappropriated by employers.

Dubofsky closes a long discussion on the transformation of the relationship between the employer and the worker with the question of consensus: how is it such that both classes could have shared the same value system (the “Lockean consensus”) amid such violent conflict¹? After some brief comments, Dubofsky does not quite arrive at a conclusion, asking: “Is it a paradox which defies explanation? Or is there a possible answer?”² I argue that all shared very similar root values, but the wealth disparity formed by industrialism provided the impetus for the individualization and self-appropriation of these social values. To begin, consider Sumner’s central argument, that civil liberty means that there shall be no interference in one bettering their welfare through the virtues of work³. Similarly, Lucy Parsons writes that when “...the red flag floats over the world the idle shall be called to work”⁴ – she asserts she is an anarchist because liberty has been branded as anarchy⁵. Although the two are of starkly different backgrounds, both share the same root principles of self-improvement through work, despite disagreeing on the best means to allow for everyone to work. Judges have, too, spoken to the right to work as one pleases as a constitutional freedom⁶. Via industrialism, the capitalism was greatly exaggerated and wealth inequalities between the elite and common people widened more than ever before; this allowed for multiple very different perspectives on work and social Darwinism to emerge. For example, employers merged to reduce competition in an insecure marketplace⁷, which is unnatural by Sumner’s social Darwinism – for shutting down competition is contrary to the social “survival of the fittest”. Yet, this merging is justified as an effort of improvement of

¹ Melvyn Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker, 1865-1920* (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1985), 54.

² Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker*, 54.

³ William Graham Sumner, *The Challenge of Facts and Other Essays*, edited by Albert Galloway Keller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914).

⁴ Lucy Parsons, “I am an Anarchist” (Kansas: Kansas City Journal, 1886).

⁵ Parsons, “I am an Anarchist”.

⁶ Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker*, 57.

⁷ Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker*, 39.

welfare, of intellectual and cunning virtue, at the expense of the welfare of employees – the natural death of those that not of “the fittest”. Hence, this exaggeration of capitalism exposed the duality of this perspective on liberty; these conceptions of liberty remained but became appropriated by each group in their own interest. Workers argued that the newly formed monopolies restricted their ability to work for their own welfare. Employers, in turn, asserted that such actions supported their own pursuit of welfare and that workers’ actions damaged that pursuit⁸. Both were natural but diverging outgrowths of roughly similar principles, catalyzed by the wealth inequality exaggeration.

⁸ Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker*, 52.