Apio Ludd
Isms, Wasms and Amn’ts
Summer 2017

My Own #21

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I have no use for the barking of dogmas or the yowling of catechisms, and the idiocy of ideology irratates me to no end. So I tend to distrust labels that end with “-ist”. With a few exceptions (guitarist, flautist, cellist, and the like), in most people’s minds, an “-ist” implies an “-ism”, and an “-ism” implies a belief. And I don’t BELIEVE in anything. I prefer the doughty delight of doubt fed by the exquisite exhilaration of experience free from the fear of phantasms (the source of all belief). Are there any “-ist”s that might apply to me, any “-ism”s that could name how I choose to encounter my worlds? Let’s look at a few.

Does the word egoist apply to my ways of encountering my worlds? If by “egoist” you mean a belief in some philosophy called egoism, then most certainly not. And I also don’t believe in “the ego”, whatever the fuck that is. I don’t even BELIEVE in myself. I experience myself directly here and now and have no need for belief. Even when I forget myself, even were I to deny my own existence, I would still experience myself in the pleasure of a delicious meal, the pain of a kick in the groin, the intoxication of a strong ale. Whatever I may believe, I still experience myself existing. And I experience myself existing as the center of my pluriverse, just as

it seems that every being that can experience, experiences itself as the center of its pluriverse. You can call this egoism, but, ho hum, it is merely a statement of the obvious, the whopping whale wallowing in the wading pool that moralists, dogmatists, believers, and ideologues of all times have done to their best to cover up. And a single word won't reveal it to those with a selfish interest in keeping it hidden … even from themselves. But I have used the phrase "aware egoism" to refer to the practical recognition that as the center of the worlds I experience, I create myself by distinguishing myself from them and in the process I create them as the fields in which I play. But I've used egoism in this instance as a provocation: it can rattle the cages of doltish dogmatists, braindead believers and moronic moralists, who quiver in fear that the doors of their cages might fly open. But at this point, I think another phrase, willful self-creation, better expresses that I have no philosophy, no set of doctrines to follow (unlike certain dreary, dogmatic dullards who take "egoism" up as a banner to rally around), but rather live an ongoing experimental practice, creating and using up myself and my worlds for the sheer enjoyment of it. So am I an egoist? I won't cringe at the name despite above-mentioned flag-bearers. But if I am one, it is in the same sense that Fredy Perlman was a cellist: I play myself for my own enjoyment and do so with all the virtuosity I am able to manifest.

Am I an individualist? Well, I certainly have no use for the collectivist social orders or their ideologies. The formalized fury of fascism, the cold-blooded conformity of communism, the compliant cupidity of capitalism,the noxious narrow-mindedness of nationalism, the pathetic puerility of patriotism, the regulated resignation of republicanism,and the doltish docility of democracy rouse only my contempt. These systems are tools for suppressing the willful self-creation, for enslaving and domesticating the creative impulse, for undermining individuality. As I move through my worlds, I encounter others (what a dull existence it would be without them: no dancing, no feasting, no revelry, no love, no con-

flict … no life). I meet them not as category, race, gender, nation, or any other such phantasm, but as unique self-creators, individuals capable of autonomous thinking and action, responsible in each moment for who they areand what they do. Only in this unchoreographed dance do I find mutuality, the sole basis for relationship among unique self-creators. With a few, those dearest to me, the mutuality of kindred spirits; with more, a transient mutual complicity; with most, mutual indifference; and with those who disrupt or try to suppress my self-creative play, mutual hostility. Am I, then, an individualist? If so, it's not a matter of belief, but simply a way of pointing out that I'll dance my life wildly with actual, living beings, and avoid the choreographed, collectivist ball where the only dance-partners are phantasms. And in my wild dance, I'll strive to be graceful enough to tread on only deserving toes.

Could I be called an anarchist? In the sense I give to the word, there is no question that it applies. I have fought for nearly forty years against all who tried to rule me, occasionally using force in tiny ways, far more often by my wits. To the extent of my strength, I refuse to be ruled, because all rule tries to suppress my self-creative play; and for this reason, I also refuse to rule, since rulers are ruled by the role of ruling. But my refusals don't spring from any higher cause (I don't get stoned enough for that) or any doctrine that I follow (following is a good way to get lost), not even if you call the cause "anarchy" or call the doctrine "anarchism". My refusal of all rule, of all authority, is inherent to my insistence on creating my own self and my worlds as I desire here and now. This distinction is significant in these days when virtual pulpits fill with prattling priests preaching the puritanical prudery of political correctitude and cackling clergy canting the controlling creed of collectivist conformity in the name of a dead and dreary doctrinal "anarchism", stuffing rule after rule after rule into an anarchy they have killed so they can stuff it and worship it like some sacred icon. This is not MY anarchy. Am I then an anarchist? I play my life as an infinite game of endlessly creating myself and my worlds. The only field on

which I can play this game with the vigor that I desire is the field of immanent anarchy where the unruly wildly dance, kicking over the boards where the finite games of of rules, rulers and ruled are played. So if I am an anarchist, this too is not a matter of belief, but rather because I choose to play out my life on this field, refusing, in each moment, all rule, to the fullest extent of my ability.

Several decades ago, Walt Kelly said, "… any ISM … is a fraudulent tune played on an off-key instrument." But I'm reminded of the interchange between Humpty Dumpty and Alice: "When I use a word … it means just what I choose it to mean–neither more nor less." "The question is … whether you can make words mean different things." "The question is … which is to be master—that's all." I am a slave to no word, no label. If some choose to transform lively ideas into dead dogmas and creeds, I may drop a few words if I find them useless and ugly, or I may go on using them, but in my own way, as an unruly rebel, choosing to live, not to believe.