

# **ANARCHISM 101:**

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO ANARCHISM**

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## Introduction

I have often witnessed arguments over the definition of anarchism. From both anarchists and non-anarchists, I have seen demonstrated an ignorance about exactly what is anarchism. This booklet seeks to clarify the concepts of anarchy and anarchism. No doubt, many will disagree with my definitions and description and will sight historical examples of self professed anarchists in an effort to refute my definitions. Nevertheless, when one chooses to label oneself, one often errs.

My descriptions and definitions of anarchy and anarchism are derived through reason, from the meaning of the term “anarchy.” They are simple and pure definitions, minimalist in nature, and sufficiently exact to stand on their own. Based as they are on reason, historical examples of individuals that have proclaimed themselves to be anarchist and who, despite their self descriptions, do not adhere to the definitions provided in this work, are not really anarchists.

I expect a great number of anarchists, especially anarcho-communists, to respond with indignation to my definitions of anarchy and anarchism. Many so called anarchists take pride in calling themselves anarchists and so, defining them to be outside of the anarchist movement will upset them. This stand is, of course, silly. The prefix “anarcho” before the term “communist” is not a declaration that anarcho-communists are anarchists. In reality, it implies that adherents to the anarcho-communist ideology believe in

a form of communism that tends towards anarchism but does not fully embrace anarchism in its purest form. If the truth were otherwise, there would be no term “anarcho-communism,” for the term “anarchism” would stand in its place – and it does not stand in its place.

Likewise, some anarcho-capitalists refer to themselves as anarchists. Anarcho-capitalists, however, are no more anarchists than anarcho-communists are anarchists. They are, by definition, capitalists that embrace individual autonomy but do not embrace anarchism in its fullest form. Exactly what this fullest form of anarchism is will be covered in the next chapter of this book.

There are only two movements that fully qualify to be anarchist in the purest sense. These two movements are known by the terms “Primitivist” and “Rational Anarchist.” Each of these two philosophies embraces fully the definition of anarchism and each attempts to achieve a true state of anarchy. Despite this, they differ substantially in their assumptions about the nature of humankind. Primitivists assume that the biological nature of humans is the primary focus of anarchism while rational anarchists assume that the memetic or consciousness-oriented nature of humans is of primary concern. For the primitivist, we are animals. For the rational anarchist we are minds implemented in biology, the mindfulness of which is the primary concern of anarchism. In a world where artifacts such as artificial intelligences were to achieve an equal level of mental development to that of humans, rational anarchists would

consider them equals while primitivists would consider them mere machines. Primitivists extend their anarchist principles across all life (with “life” being a key term) while rational anarchists extend their anarchist principles across all minds (where “mind” is the key term). The insect and the human are subject to anarchist principles under the primitivist philosophy while the conscious machine is not. Under the rational anarchist philosophy, unintelligent insects are not subject to the anarchist philosophy while conscious machines are. For both primitivists and rational anarchists dolphins and apes would be subject to anarchist principles. For the primitivist, the key essential property is the property of being alive. For the rational anarchist the key essential property is the property of mental existence or, in more concise terms, “being.”

An entire book could be devoted to the concept of “being” and what the term means in this context. Indeed, large volumes have been written on this topic. Heidegger’s work, *Being and Time* comes to mind. In this paper, I take an essentially existentialist view of what it is to be a “being.” The simplest definition I can provide is that for all “beings” there is something that it is like to be that “being.” For example, there is nothing that it is like to be a rock or a calculator while there is something that it is like to be a dolphin, an ape, or a human. Possession of this “something that it is like to be” is what divides “beings” from “non-beings.”

For anarcho-communists and anarcho-capitalists, the issue of private property is essential. This issue is not essential to real anarchists.

Real anarchists, as we will see in the next chapter, concern themselves only with power relations, autonomy, and liberty. Under conditions where property has no bearing on these issues, the true anarchist is unconcerned with the existence of private property. Anarcho-communists bring to the table a formula for organizing society and focus their goal of organizing society, along these lines, primarily on workers. Anarcho-capitalists bring to the table a formula of organizing society and focus their goal of organizing society, along these lines, primarily on entrepreneurs and the owners of capital. True anarchists do not focus on one segment of those subject to anarchist principles while ignoring the others. True anarchists apply anarchist principles equally across all entities subject to anarchism (all life in the case of the primitivist and all “beings” in the case of the rational anarchist).

Assuming that I’ve provoked controversy over the above exclusion of anarcho-communists and anarcho-capitalists from the true anarchist movement, let me make one thing clear. These distinctions are not intended to diminish the importance or significance of the anarcho-communist or the anarcho-capitalist movements. In fact, my position is that all anti-authoritarians, anarcho-communists, and anarcho-capitalists should work together to destroy the state as they share this common goal. Additionally, I do not take issue<sup>1</sup> with anarcho-communists and anarcho-capitalists calling themselves anarchists. In

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<sup>1</sup> An analogy is the difference between a non-theist and an atheist. Non-theists in casual conversation often refer to themselves as “atheists” because this term is better understood by the masses and because the difference between non-theism and atheism is sufficiently small to make one a good approximation of the other.

common speech, the term “anarchist” already has a meaning of its own which embraces these two movements. Nevertheless, for the purpose of a philosophical work where exactitude is important, technically speaking that is, anarcho-communists and anarcho-capitalists are not anarchists.

So, what is an anarchist?

## **What is Anarchy and what is an Anarchist?**

Anarchy is a state of organization where all relationships between the organized are not hierarchical. Given a set of entities within a state of anarchy, no entity within the set has asymmetrical power of any other entity within the set. Essentially, all power relations within the organized set of entities are equal<sup>2</sup>.

The differences between primitivist anarchism and rational anarchism concern themselves, in essence, with what set of entities comprises society, where society is that set of entities that, by nature, should be arranged within a state of anarchy. In the case of the primitivist, all living things form society. In the case of the rational anarchist, all beings (that is, all things for which there is something that it is like to be that thing) form society<sup>3</sup>. Within primitivist society, frogs, trees, humans, monkeys, snails and so on are all members of anarchist society. For the rational anarchist, while all of these things may continue to be of importance, only those things in possession of a mind are considered to be governed by the principles of anarchy.

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<sup>2</sup> A peer-to-peer computer network is a good example of an anarchistic form of organization. Though each computer may be different and each may host a different operating system, each computer stands as an equal to all others to which it connects. Likewise, no law governs the interaction of one computer with another on a peer-to-peer network. What defines their “organization” is not external. Instead their interactions are governed by internal adherence to a shared protocol.

<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that rational anarchists are unconcerned with living things. A rational anarchist can be an environmentalist. The difference is that rational anarchists consider all consciousnesses as ethically equal while the primitivist considers all life as ethically equal.

An anarchist, by the above definition, is someone who believes that for any relationship between any two members of society, such a relationship must be a relationship where both parties hold equal power over the other. Since equal powers, when applied in opposite directions, cancel each other out, the sum of these powers in relation to any individual is zero. Thus, anarchists believe that no member of society should hold the power to dominate any other member of society.

Naturally, the question will arise, “If no individual holds power over any other individual, how can there be organization?” This question arises out of ignorance and out of restricting one’s imagination to what one has been forced to accept by hierarchical society. At the cellular level, complex creatures are, in fact, anarchies of cells. There is no master cell in the brain. There is no master cell in the body. Each cell in the body interacts with its surrounding cells by obeying a natural protocol. Each cell responds to a certain set of inputs and generates a certain set of outputs. No one tells the cell to do this, it responds as it has evolved to respond.

Likewise, within an anarchist society, each member of society would subscribe to a set of protocols which she would then apply to interactions with each and every other member of society. Each and every other member of society would respond obeying the same protocol. Organization would emerge as it does amongst cells in the human body. Just as cells within the body perform different functions from one another, individuals within an anarchist society

would be free to fulfill their individual nature. The purpose of the protocol is not one of control but one of interaction. Individuals retain their autonomy but interact with one another as a society.

An important aspect of this definition to recognize is that there is just one society. There is no provision for aggregations of individuals (i.e. groups or classes) to become members of society unto themselves.<sup>4</sup> That is, since the criteria for being a member of society is based on nature (e.g. being a living thing for the primitivist and being a mindful thing for the rational anarchist), groupings are excluded as members of society unto themselves. No grouping of living things becomes a living things unto itself. It remains but a grouping of individual living things. No grouping of minds becomes a collective mind, the grouping remains a group of individual minds. This is important because it means that no group of individuals, through banding together, assumes power or authority over other individuals or groups of individuals. Rights derive only from individuals, not from groupings.

This individualist basis of rights is essential. What makes the state dehumanizing is that the state is not itself human. It is an artificial construct that is neither alive nor mindful. There is nothing that it is like to be a state. A state has no consciousness. As neither a living

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<sup>4</sup> Within the United States of America, corporations are treated as though they are individuals, endowed with the same rights as natural individuals. Anarchists, both of the primitivist and rational anarchist variety would find this notion absurd. Corporation are not living things nor are they “beings.” As such, they are not equals to natural individuals and should not be treated as equals. To treat a corporation as an equal is to increase the relative power of the individuals comprising the corporation in relation to other individuals within society for such individuals would then exist twice, once as individuals and once as members of a corporation which itself is a member of society. This creates a power imbalance between individuals. This also explains why corporatist societies (i.e. fascist societies) are tyrannical.

things nor a mindful thing, the state does not exist within anarchist society. The same is true for special interest groupings. Their individuals exist and have rights but the grouping itself, being neither alive nor conscious, cannot be considered a member of anarchist society. It may be a small anarchist society within itself, but that will give it no special standing across the wider, all inclusive, universal anarchist society.

This has strong implications for anarcho-feminists, anarcho-communists, and other similar narrowly based ideologies. In a true anarchist society, female members are, by definition, equal to male members and since their relationships would be formed through protocols, the relationships would not concern themselves with power based on irrelevant issues such as gender. There would be no need, in such a society, for feminism because patriarchy would not exist. Likewise, there would be no need to distinguish the worker from the rest of society. Anyone, therefore, who chooses to be an anarcho-feminist over being an anarchist is primarily concerned with eliminating patriarchy. This act of placing priority in the elimination of one form of hierarchy over all others is, in itself, an asymmetrical exercise of power and, in fact, creates a hierarchy. Therefore, anarcho-feminists are not true anarchists. The same can be said for anarcho-communists. Placing the elimination of worker exploitation over all other concerns creates a hierarchy and, thereby, eliminates the anarcho-communist from the anarchist movement. In a similar manner, placing the concern for preservation and freedom of private

property over all other concerns creates a hierarchy and excludes anarcho-capitalists from the anarchist movement.

True anarchists consider all forms of hierarchy and all asymmetrical power relations to be equally unacceptable. As soon as an individual gives priority to one over the other, the individual creates a hierarchy of injustices and ranks the victims of each kind of injustice in relation to each other forming a hierarchy that distorts the power relationships between individuals in society. Such a ranking eliminates anarchy and creates a new hierarchy. True anarchists, therefore, must not qualify their ideology with terms like “feminist”, “capitalist”, or “communist”.

## **Private Property and Anarchy**

The concept of private property and the individual's relationship to it played an important role in transforming feudal society into capitalist society. There is no doubt that private property can play an important role in power relationships between individuals. Under feudalism, where everything belongs to the lord, the lord wields strong power over the serf. When capitalism began to develop and property was created through the hierarchical organization of labor beneath a growing bourgeoisie, the balance of power between the lords and new class of capitalists tipped in favor of the capitalists. Social and political revolution followed and the serfs were transferred from the bottom of one hierarchy to the bottom of another. If private property did not have the characteristic of empowering its owner, this transformation would not have occurred. Therefore, private property does play a role in power relationships between individuals and cannot be ignored by anarchist philosophy.

However, the fact that private property empowers its owners does not imply that all private property creates asymmetrical power relationships between individuals. For example, if two individuals each have a place to live and one lives in a large house and the other lives in a small house, this difference does not necessarily generate an asymmetrical power relationship between the two individuals. If the individual with a larger house rents out portions of his house to other individuals, thereby becoming a landlord, then she does stand asymmetrically more powerful than her tenants. This, to the

anarchist, would be unacceptable. Equally, if the owner of a house were to simply allow others to live there contingent upon her will, then she also stands a position of power over her guests. This too is unacceptable when the guests have no other option.

Let us imagine a society where any individual is free to squat upon unused land or to squat within unused residences. In such a society, if individuals were free to make their residences wherever available, the ownership of a house by one would not make the home owner more powerful than those who did not own homes. Provided there exists sufficient unused land and unused residences for occupation by those who do not own homes, the ownership of homes does not play a role in the power relationship between individuals. Since no person can occupy more than one house at a time, due to the nature of physical reality, no person could really own or possess more than one home at a time. To live in one would require the abandonment of the other, thereby making it available for others to take.

The same is true with personal effects such as clothes, toys, and other elements of personal life. Possessing them does not deny others from possessing their own. This kind of property does not play a role in the power relationship between individuals and is, therefore, outside of the concern of any real anarchist philosophy.

Next we come to the question of possession of the ownership of the means of production. If a person owns a factory that is not fully automated and requires the assistance of others who do not co-own

the factory, that is, if a person must employ others to run her factory, then the owner's possession of the factory places her in a position of power over the employees. This is not acceptable within an anarchist society exactly because of the unequal power relationship between the factory owner and her employees. This kind of private property is unjust, even if it were obtained without violating any other principles. It must not be allowed to exist.

On the other hand, if a woman owns a sewing machine and uses it to repair, adjust, or make clothes, either for sale or barter, then her property is not being used to exploit others. It does not place her into a position of power over others. There is nothing contrary to the principles of anarchism in an individual owning her own means of production. Some may try to argue that if she is uniquely able to make clothes and others need them, then she has power over others. However, this argument ignores the fact that she needs things that other possess and they too have power over her. When this power to produce meets the powers of others to withhold what she needs unless she exchanges her creations, the total amount of power she possesses over others and the total amount of power that others possess over her cancel each other out.

The same can be said of the computer programmer that owns his own computer and uses it to employ himself and himself alone. There is nothing contrary to anarchist principles in his ownership of such a computer, even if it is of high value. Indeed, if he were to own several computers and put them to such use, not employing anyone to do the

work for him, he would be exactly like the woman with the sewing machine<sup>5</sup>.

Self ownership of the means of production is a form of capitalist production and there is nothing wrong with it in terms of anarchist principles. I have seen anarcho-communists denounce such individuals as capitalists. When they do make such denunciations, they are revealing the truth that they are not real anarchists<sup>6</sup>.

Other problems arise with individual production and the anarcho-communist mindset. Anarcho-communists wish to see society governed by workers-councils. When, however, you ask them how it is that free lance producers fit into their model they usually disregard the question or imply that somehow they must join a union to practice their profession. Since being part of union would in no way benefit self producers, they are, in fact, denying the autonomy of such individuals and subjugating them into a power relationship that they do not wish to be part of. This is contrary to the principles of anarchism and demonstrates once again that anarcho-communists are not real anarchists.

The anarcho-capitalist, on the other hand, embraces private property and believes that if one person chooses to be employed by another there is no injustice in the exploitation of the worker by the employer.

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<sup>5</sup> There are a large number of careers that favor self employment: computer programming, house cleaning, tutoring, accounting, photography, prostitution, massage therapy, and so on. The list is almost endless.

<sup>6</sup> When one disparages the self employed worker, one should ask oneself whether one disparages based on principle or based on jealousy.

The anarcho-capitalist is expressing his belief that freedom to wield private property as one sees fit is the essential characteristic of his ideology. This, however, is not consistent with the anarchist prohibition of unequal power relations between individuals. The anarcho-capitalist, therefore, is not an anarchist.

Just as excessive individual property gives one individual power over others, concentration of property in the hands of the state, even if the state is viewed as an extension of “the people,” concentrates power into the hands of those who administer the state. These administrators, therefore, possess asymmetrical power over other individuals in the society. State owned property, therefore, is not compatible with anarchist philosophy. Who should own excess and unused property, then? Why even ask? Why does anyone need to own it? Property should be owned only by those who put it to use and no one should be able to put it to use in such a way as to possess asymmetrical power over others. Unused property becomes unowned property until such a time as someone decides to use it. Once used, the user becomes the owner until he abandons it.

## **Is there a Place for Communism within Anarchism?**

If state possession of property (or even the existence of a state) is antithetical to anarchism, are communists to abandon communism? A real anarchist would answer this question by stating that so long as all individuals within a communist society choose to be communists and choose to share their property, there is no contradiction between anarchism and such a form of communism. True anarchists would not dictate upon others the manner in which they dispose of their un-abandoned property. A true anarchist society would accommodate a large variety of economic systems where all individuals could pick and choose how to exchange the fruits of their production with others. Provided that the power relations between all individuals are equal, and provided that no organizations wield power over individuals, then any economic system compatible with these principles should be allowed to exist and coexist with others.

It is not difficult to envision a society where some percentage of the individuals comprising society decide to call themselves communists and proceed to share their individual property with one another, thereby creating a collective. It is not difficult to envision a society where workers wholly own the means of production, even when the means of production takes the form of a factory and then govern that property democratically under egalitarian principles and equally distribute the fruits of that production amongst themselves. Indeed, if the principles of anarchy are to be upheld, any form of production that required ownership of large production facilities would, of

necessity, be owned communally by its workers. Two primary forms of production would emerge: the individual self producer and the collective producer. The former would act, in many ways, like an anarcho-capitalist absent the ability to employ others and the later would act as a communist collective.

Given my strong arguments against anarcho-communism and anarcho-capitalism as forms of anarchism, one might find this conclusion contradictory. However, such findings would be nonsense. What I am describing here is not anarcho-communism and anarcho-capitalism. Instead, I am describing communal-anarchism and capitalistic-anarchism. To the real anarchist, it is by making the principles of anarchism primary that one can embrace any form of economic system provided it complies with anarchist principles. Any variant of communism that remains anarchist must eject the notion of a state and reject the notion that any sector of society will rule another or have the right to expropriate the unabandoned property of another. Any variant of capitalism that remains anarchist must eject the notion of employment.

An import question is what would distinguish the communal-anarchist from the capitalistic-anarchist? The only way to distinguish one variant of anarchist from another would be through the protocols individuals choose to employ when engaging one another in society or commerce. Extending from a baseline protocol shared by all anarchists, one would expect communal anarchists to share freely with one another the product of their labor, that is, without an

exchange medium. Communal-anarchists would participate in a gift economy. Capitalistic-anarchists would exchange their services and products for payment. Interchange between communal-anarchists and capitalistic-anarchists would require one or the other to make some kind of compromise. That is, in any given exchange between parties of varying economic models the two parties would need to reach an agreement concerning the form of exchange. More likely than not, such exchanges would take the form of barter<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, during the Cold War, PepsiCo and Stolichnaya Vodka bartered their products in order to obtain access to each other's markets. Within an anarchist society where each individual is essentially sovereign, we can expect the interactions between individuals ascribing to different economic systems to be much like interactions between foreign nations.

## **Anarchy and the State**

Since the dawn of the republic, the state has been anthropomorphized. Political scientists and politicians have projected upon the state characteristics found only in sentient beings. The state has been said to have rights. The state has been said to have needs. The state has been depicted as a being unto itself. Some go so far as to speak of the state as if it were a living breathing creature with feelings and thoughts of its own.

This artificial and false anthropomorphizing of the state has led to erroneous thinking about the state. The rights of individuals are thought to be balanced against the rights of the state. Likewise, the needs and liberties of individuals are thought to be balanced against the needs and liberties of the state. The state, however, has no mind, no heart, no feelings, nor even consciousness. It is a human artifact and it has none of the qualities of a thinking feeling being. There is nothing that it is like to be a state. States cannot bleed. States cannot feel pain. States cannot think.

Assigning rights to a state is an absurdity. If humans were able to join minds as they do in Star Trek's Borg, then perhaps one could identify a shared consciousness as the state. But humans are not able to join minds and form a single mind. Humans remain as individuals even when they deceive themselves to believe that they are the state. No human should die for something that does not really exist. In defending the state one defends nothing, merely an illusion.

When individuals turn their backs to the state and do so in large numbers, states dissolve. The best that can be said of the existence of the state is that it is an agreed upon fairy tale that holds power only when it is believed in by sufficient numbers of individuals.

Yet, despite this illusion called the state, the state appears to wield vast power over the individual. Indeed, it seems at times that no individual can challenge the state without becoming the target of the state's terror and violence. If the state does not really exist, where does this violence come from? From where arises the violence that responds on behalf of the state?

There is no mystery here. If one lifts the veil of illusion, one finds a small ruling class standing behind the shroud. The state is much like the Wizard of Oz, projecting a formidable image of power which motivates others<sup>8</sup> to act on its behalf, even against one another, out of fear of its wrath. The state is a curtain that the ruling class stands behind as it murders and torments the serving class. Where there is a state, there is hierarchy. Where there is a state, the power relations between individuals in the ruling class and individuals in the serving class remain asymmetrical. Where there is a state, the ruling class decides how relations between members of society are to be governed, often creating asymmetries where otherwise there would be none.

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<sup>8</sup> By "others", I intend members of the underclasses. The police officer who acts on behalf of the state, the neighbor who snitches on his or her neighbor, the coworker who rats out another coworker: these are examples of underclass individuals who make the illusion of a state seem real. Nothing forces these individuals to act on behalf of the fairytale state, save their own petty selfishness, their own fear of the fairytale state, and their own desire to be rewarded by their masters at the expense of their brethren. In reality, there is no lower form of life than the underclass individual who serves the state.

For example, if my neighbor were to anonymously torment me while staying “within the law”, where by law I mean the approval of the state, I would have no recourse to restore a balance of power between myself and my neighbor even if I were to know the source of the torment. I could not act on my own behalf to stop my neighbor for to do so would be to usurp the state’s “rights.” Since states do not have any real rights, all rights taken by the state are usurped from the individual. You are denied your natural right to defend yourself in response to the demands of a non-existing thing which claims your rights as its own. Much of the imbalance in society would be eliminated if the illusion of the state were eliminated.

The question is not really whether the state and anarchy are compatible. The real question is whether the state actually exists. The answer to this question is that the state is nothing more than an illusion agreed upon. It is a psychological weapon wielded by the ruling class against the serving classes. As such, it must be abolished. The surest way to destroy the state is to expose it as an illusion and to destroy the class that stands behind the illusion.

One may mistake my call to destroy the ruling class as a call to violence. While, under some circumstances, violence may be the only option, but under most circumstances violence is a tactic of last resort. The ruling class can be dissolved by refusing to cooperate with it. This follows from the parasitic nature of the ruling class. If a host denies a parasite its sustenance, the parasite dies. Sometimes it is

enough to wake up the host and demonstrate to the host that a parasite is feeding upon it. That knowledge alone can provoke the host to shun the parasite. The best way to accomplish this goal is to employ meme warfare.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See “Meme Warfare” by Stephen DeVoy

## **Mutual Aid**

In the absence of a state one is left to fend for oneself, or so it would seem. When enlightened people are left to fend for themselves there arises a natural collectivization of resources. Individuals seek out other individuals, build bonds, and assist one another. We see this during and in the wake of natural disasters. During the howling winds of a hurricane, neighbors sometimes gather in the halls of apartment buildings, as if drawn by some natural and invisible force, seeking out one another even when nothing terrible has yet occurred. During earthquakes, people pour into the streets and strangers who have never bothered to exchange words before, though they have seen each other a thousand times, suddenly open up and become friends. Humans are social animals and humans know instinctively that nothing greater increases one's chance of survival than to embed oneself in a network of mutual support.

The ruling class, in an effort to make the state seem real and necessary and in an effort to dissolve this natural instinct towards decentralized mutual aid, has propagandized the state as the primary instrument of providing aid. It does so through welfare, through police, and through the licensing of charities and businesses. Those who have lived beneath the state are slowly brainwashed into ignoring their instinctual drive towards mutual aid in favor of letting the state step in and provide services. This increases the power of the ruling class by creating the illusion that the worker is dependent upon the state when, in reality, just the opposite is true.

Therefore, given the above, in the presence of the state, nothing will more strongly expose the illusory nature of the state than for individuals to practice mutual aid independent of the state. The act of doing what one believed only the state could do (and doing it better than the state can do it), demonstrates concretely the absurdity of the state. Perfect examples of this were the efforts of Malcolm X during the 1960s when his organization promoted self help programs within the African American community. A perfect current example of this is Food Not Bombs, an anarchist organization dedicated to feeding the homeless.

In the absence of the state, individuals within anarchy will seek to provide mutual aid. They will do this because it is human nature and because it makes sense. They will provide one another with food when one is hungry, shelter when one is homeless, and defense when one is in need of protection. They will do this because they know that they too may one day need such assistance themselves.

Naturally, within any population, there will be those who deviate from the norm and amongst these will be some who are selfish or incapable of understanding that it is in their rational self interest to provide aid to others. For these individuals, it is likely that their cries for help would be ignored. This, of course, means that under anarchy there will still be some who will suffer. Anarchy does not promise a perfect world. It promises a more just world than the world we have and it promises greater freedom. Those who argue against anarchism

on the basis of the fact that it will not lead to a perfect world attribute to anarchism something that anarchism itself does not proclaim. I have encountered zero anarchists during my lifetime who believe that anarchism will lead to the perfect utopia. No system will lead to utopia.

## **Anarchism and Violence**

Violence is the gross exercise of power. It is the ultimate act of domination by one individual over another. State violence is nothing other than individual violence exercised collectively. Anarchism, by definition, abhors asymmetrical power and, therefore, disdains and condemns asymmetrical violence.

What this means, from a practical point of view, is that anarchists should never initiate violence.<sup>10</sup> Violence should be reserved as a tactic of last resort and employed only when the equality of power between individuals has become asymmetrical and no other means to restore the balance of power between individuals is known or available.

Thus, anarchists employ violence only in defense of equality when violence alone is the remedy. In nearly all conflicts, violence is not necessary. One can usually restore the balance of power through reason, subversion, expropriation, or non-cooperation. For the most part, violence becomes necessary only in response to violence. For example, when a police officer uses violence against a protester and no other means is available to restore the natural equality between the police officer and the protester, violence is a valid and necessary means to restore that equality.

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<sup>10</sup> Nor should anarchists join the state's military or the state's militia. Anarchists should not become police officers or agents of the state's violence.

One is likely to take objection to this position and argue that the police officer is just doing his job and following the dictates of the state. However, as I have pointed out in the chapter “Anarchy and the State,” the state is an illusion and is illegitimate. As such, we must consider the actions of the police officer as the actions of an individual that has chosen to dominate another individual. As anarchists, we do not accept the state nor do we accept any argument that validates the domination of one individual by another. It should not matter to us whether the perpetrator of violence is a street thug or an agent of the state.

When violence is employed, we must seek to do only as much damage as is necessary to accomplish the goal of restoring equality between individuals. To kill another human being when temporarily disabling him is sufficient would be an offense against humanity. It would, in fact, be murder. Additionally, in no case should violence be used against a non-violent<sup>11</sup> party.

Violence should not be used for revenge or for punishment. Violence can only be justified as a response to an ongoing injustice. Past injustices cannot be rectified through revenge or punishment and the execution of revenge or punishment tends to initiate a cycle of escalating injustices.

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to understand that violence is not always direct. For example, one can take away another’s home or take away another’s career without directly engaging in physical violence. Nevertheless, such acts are acts of violence for their consequences are destructive. Such activities should be conceived as violent activities and responded to accordingly.

We will revisit the question of violence, once again, in the chapter  
“Anarchy and Revolution.”

## **Anarchism and Gender**

Anarchy is a state of society where all individuals stand in relation to all other individuals in a state of equality with regard to power. It follows, then, that men and women are and must be equals within anarchist society. Patriarchy is incompatible with the principles of anarchism. Matriarchy is equally incompatible.

In an effort to rectify past injustices, many anarchists have embraced the notion of matriarchy as a means to combating patriarchy. This is foolish. Just as we have stipulated when discussing violence, past injustices cannot be righted. They belong to the past. We do not seek to put one individual in a position of power over another and matriarchy is just one more form of hierarchy.<sup>12</sup>

True anarchists demand equality for all individuals, regardless of their gender or sex. Therefore, concepts such as equality-feminism are redundant to anarchism. On the other hand, female domination is as antithetical to anarchism as is male domination.

Anarchists embrace individual liberty. If an individual is not free to express his or her sexual identity or to choose his or sexual identity, the individual cannot enjoy liberty. Anarchists, therefore, must

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<sup>12</sup> Why such a strong stand on this issue, you may ask? The issue is important because all hierarchies, even when constructed with good intent, tend to crystallize. That is, hierarchy creates power and power is later used to preserve that power. Once a hierarchy is installed, it becomes permanent. It can only be dismantled through revolution. Do we wish to create a world of alternating injustices or do we wish to create a just world? I believe most of us would agree that a just world is better than a world of alternating injustices.

embrace the right of all individuals to choose sexual partners of any sex and in any combination or number provided all individuals within the sexual relationship are consenting and stand in equal power relations to one another. Anarchism accepts homosexuality, heterosexuality and all other forms of mutually consenting sexualities<sup>13</sup>.

Moreover, any individual of any sex may choose to identify with any gender role he or she desires. To exclude such preferences would be to limit individual liberty and limiting individual liberty when it harms no one would be contrary to anarchist principles. A man or woman should be able to choose what to wear and how to dress, including the choice to cross dress or to wear nothing at all. What an individual chooses to do with his or her own body is his or her own business, provided it does not interfere with the autonomy of others.<sup>14</sup>

Marriage as a state institution would disappear along with the state. However, anarchists must support the notion that any set of individuals can voluntarily enter into any mutual contract and form a union. If such a grouping of individuals wishes to call that grouping a marriage, no anarchist principle has been violated. Anarchists must accept a wide variety of partnership contracts between consenting individuals and amongst these one would likely find not only the traditional pairing of a woman with a man but the pairing of a woman

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<sup>13</sup> For reasons that will be explained in the chapter Anarchy and Children, anarchists cannot accept pedophilia is a legitimate sexual preference.

<sup>14</sup> There are examples of behavior that would not be acceptable to anarchists. For example, if one uses their body to intentionally spread disease, this would constitute an act of violence by one individual against other individuals. It would not be acceptable.

with a woman, a man with a man, and even polygamous and/or polyandrous relationships.

## **Anarchism and Race**

Race is a perceptual and culturally defined fallacy. Humans have either evolved to place more significance in various sets of feature variances or cultures have taught individuals to divide human kind into races. Scientific evidence clearly refutes the existence of race within humankind. Often there is more genetic diversity within a single group that we mistakenly identify as a “race” than there is between groups we identify as separate “races.” Therefore, on a scientific basis alone one should disregard the notion of race.

Nevertheless, the fallacy of race has persisted and artificial groupings of individuals have been identified across human history. Such groups have found themselves at different points in time embraced in asymmetrical power relationships, resulting in great human suffering, slavery, and even genocide.

Anarchists must reject the notion of race and the notion of racial dominance on two grounds. First of all, anarchy is concerned with the relationship between individuals, not in the relationship between groups. Anarchists cannot, therefore, permit one individual to dominate another individual based on the group membership of the respective individuals. Moreover, anarchism stands diametrically opposed to the notion that one individual would have power over another. If this second rule is applied, there cannot be a domination of one “race” over another “race.” If such conditions do exist, as they exist in many parts of the world today, anarchists must fight to

eliminate such asymmetrical power differences and restore the natural equality that all humans enjoy by reason of nature.

True anarchists would not take race into account when deciding with whom to work, socialize, or mate. Within a true anarchist society, interracial relationships should be as common as the “racial” diversity within the society.

## **Anarchism and Children**

Anarchists would be foolish to ignore the fact that some individuals within society are inherently powerless or nearly powerless. Amongst these are invalids, the very old, and the very young. While states impose clear lines of transition between various age categories, stipulated in terms of chronological age, the reality is very much different. For example, over the centuries the age at which an individual is considered to be an adult has continually increased to the point where we now consider individuals that would have once been considered adults to remain children for an additional four or seven years, depending upon the jurisdiction. A more reasonable rule of thumb would be to assess humans biologically and determine from that when they become adults. For most persons, that age would be around 16 years old.

Humans are not merely biological beings, however. Humans possess minds and the mind, like the body, has its own schedule of development. From an intellectual or emotional standpoint, some individuals become adults before they have reached sexual maturity, some become adults after they reach sexual maturity and some never become adults at all. The question of when a person becomes an adult is not clear. Which do we take as primary, the stages of physical development or the stages of mental development? In order to avoid exploiting children, who are, as we have already mentioned, powerless or nearly powerless, I suggest we choose whichever comes

later. That is, a person becomes an adult when the person becomes both sexually and mentally mature.

Even if we assume some magic point in time that demarcates the transition from child to adult, is it not true that young adults become increasingly powerful physically and mentally as they progress in age until some point where they begin to become old and regress? In terms of power relations it seems that age difference is significant. In order to prevent some individuals from entering into abusive relationships based on the relative power between individuals we should discourage those relationships where the difference in power, due to age, is great. Thus, it may not be inappropriate for a 16 year old to enter into a sexual relationship with an 18 year old while it may be inappropriate for a 16 year old to enter into a sexual relationship with a 30 year old.

Sex is not the only concern. Children need to play in order to learn. Their natural inclination towards play evolved in order to assist their intellectual growth. Children should not find themselves forced to work, even by necessity, to an extent where work interferes with their natural need to play and to study. As a consequence of this, children are a special case within anarchy. They must be protected and they must be cared for.

In the absence of a state to provide these services, the concept of mutual aid should be extended beyond the present. Each adult was once a child and as a child received care that was given freely. As

adults we have the responsibility of returning that care, not to those who provided it to us, but to those who are presently children and need it.

Schools provided by the state exist to indoctrinate children and make them servants of the state and of the ruling class. Anarchists must teach their children to see reality as it is. Anarchists must expose their children to the realities of the state, the absurdity of nationalism, and the unethical nature of employment.

## **Anarchism and Revolution**

There is a great deal of debate within the anarchist movement on whether anarchy can be achieved through evolution or whether revolution alone will lead to anarchy. Throughout human history, revolutions have either failed only to be followed by greater tyranny or have succeeded only to install new states. In exactly zero instances has revolution led to the institution of anarchy. This is not a proof that anarchy cannot be achieved through revolution, but it is a strong indicator that revolution alone is insufficient to produce anarchy.

On the other hand, since the rise of the state, the state has evolved through many stages and with each step forward, the state has become less and less hierarchical. The fake democratic system of today is far less hierarchical than the feudal state of yesterday. This suggests strongly that memetic evolution tends towards anarchy. These transitions between kinds of states, however, have often been the product of revolution. It may follow from this that revolution accelerates the evolution of the state towards anarchy.

Not all revolutions are armed revolutions. For example, the fall of the state known as the German Democratic Republic (i.e. “East Germany”) was achieved not through the brandishing of arms but through the spread of a meme. Increasing acts of defiance within the regime spread memetically through the population and culminated in a mass “turning of the back” on the state. The state collapsed in response, thereby proving that state power is primarily psychological.

As the power of memes become more and more evident, I expect revolutions to become more and more bloodless. In any case, when a society becomes static and halts the natural evolution towards anarchy, revolution becomes necessary. During times of social progress, anarchists should concentrate on educating the population about anarchism and anarchist principles. Anarchists should construct anarchistic institutions which provide services that supplant the services provided by the state. When the state responds to such efforts through increased repression, anarchists should respond by fomenting revolt. With each cycle of education followed by revolution, the people will become more open to embracing the absence of a state.

As mentioned in the chapter “Anarchy and Violence”, violence should be avoided whenever possible. Propaganda of the deed<sup>15</sup>, once a dominant tactic within anarchism, has slowly been replaced by the concept of a Diversity of Tactics. Direct actions<sup>16</sup> which do not destroy life or deny individuals of essential property should be preferred to those actions that require violence. The reason for this should be obvious. Terrified populations turn to the state for protection and, since the state’s power is largely psychological, this increases the state’s power. An essential goal of the anarchist is to

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<sup>15</sup> Examples of propaganda of the deed would be the throwing of bombs into public places, the arbitrary destruction of property, and the use of terror. Few anarchists continue to believe that such a tactic is ethical or productive. Indeed, it is questionable whether many ever did support this tactic.

<sup>16</sup> A direct action is an action carried out by individuals and collectives against the system. These actions are carried out through direct action, thus the term. Examples of direct action would be the blocking of intersections, the amassing of bicycles for the purpose of “taking the streets,” the occupation of centers of commerce for the purpose of disseminating propaganda. Such actions are propaganda in themselves as they demonstrate the power of the individual over the state.

diminish the state's power. Therefore, acts which increase state power are self defeating.

## Summary

Anarchy is the social state that arises when each individual within society stands equally in relation to each other individual in terms of power. Stated differently, a society achieves anarchy when no individual has power over any other individual. This equality of power should not be confused with identity. That is, an equal power relation between two individuals does not imply that every attribute and every aspect of the two individuals are equal. One individual may be more intelligent than another individual, a better athlete than another individual, or possess more things than another individual and yet anarchy may still exist. What matters to anarchism is that no one has power over anyone else.

Contrary to the opinions of many anarcho-communists, private property is not antithetical to anarchism. Only private property which disturbs the power equality between all individuals, placing some in a position of power over others, is antithetical to anarchism.

On the other hand, employment is not compatible with anarchism. The employer/employee relationship is, by nature, a hierarchical relationship. Since the employer has power over the employee, anarchy repudiates employment.

Anarchism seeks to promote human liberty. Collectivization, therefore, must be voluntary. Any communal society which arises within anarchist society must be comprised only of individuals who

voluntarily join the collective. In the same vein, any individual that joins a collective must be free to quit the collective. Individuals choosing to work as free agents must be free to do so without sanction, provided such individuals do not stand in an unequal power relation to others. To deny them this freedom would be to violate anarchism's dedication to individual liberty.

Historically, at least in the eyes of the media, anarchism has been equated with acts of violence. Anarchism is not inherently violent. In fact, Anarchism seeks peace and tranquility. Non defensive acts of violence are, for the most part, acts of power by the more powerful against the less powerful (i.e. the state is far more likely to instigate violence than the anarchist). Nevertheless, while some anarchists are pacifists, most anarchists are not opposed to using violence in self defense or defense of the innocent when no other option is available. When used, the purpose of violence should be to correct an imbalance in the power relationship between individuals when that imbalance is the consequence of violence itself. Anarchists should not employ violence for revenge or punishment. When violence is employed, it should be employed only with sufficient force to achieve the goal of restoring the balance in power and nothing more.

Since anarchism seeks to create a society where each individual stands in equal power in relation to each other individual, anarchism abhors patriarchy, matriarchy, racial supremacy, ageism, and all other forms of power hierarchies.

As a proponent of individual liberty, the anarchist philosophy supports the rights of individuals to define their own familiar and/or partnering relationships. Just as anarchists support the right of heterosexuals to form contractual relationships such as marriage between members of the two sexes, anarchists support the same right of homosexuals to form contractual relationships such as marriage between members of the same sex. Provided all parties are consenting and stand in equal power relations to one another, anarchists must also support the right of individuals to form bonds between more than two parties. Put simply, individuals are free to have whatever kind of relationship they chose with other individuals who choose the same, provided the relationship is not based on unequal power relations or exploitation.

The jury is still out on whether anarchy can be achieved by evolution alone or whether the attainment of a state of social anarchy requires revolution. Historically, the evidence seems to support a combination of social evolution and social revolution as necessary to the achievement of anarchy.

Finally, anarchy refutes the state and considers the state to be an oppressive tool of a ruling class over servant classes. Anarchy seeks to abolish the state and replace it with nothing.

## **About the Author**

Stephen DeVoy holds degrees in philosophy and computer science. Mr. DeVoy was instrumental in exposing the Information Awareness Office, a project of the Defense Advanced Research and Procurement Agency. In return for his efforts, Mr. DeVoy was cyber stalked, harassed, and subjected to COINTELPRO harassment. Many forged articles have been published in his name online. The intent of these forgeries has been to discredit and smear Mr. DeVoy in the hope that his message will be ignored. The harassment against Mr. DeVoy began while he was employed by a defense contractor in Austin, Texas and continued for more than three years. The harassment project began within the offices of his employer and was sponsored, in part, by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

At the time of this writing, Mr. DeVoy has been an anarchist for more than 13 years. He coined the term “Meme Warfare” and was the first to write on this topic. Additionally, Mr. DeVoy designs and publishes anti-State propaganda as part of his effort to educate Americans on the nature of the state.