

Anarchy and Being Autonomous in a Modern Age

“We fell in love in the wreckage, shouted out songs in the uproar, danced joyfully in the heaviest shackles they could forge; we smuggled our stories through the gauntlets of silence, starvation, and subjugation, to bring them back to life again and again as bombs and beating hearts; we built castles in the sky from the ruins of Hell on Earth.”

- from an anarchist publication

What is this “anarchy” thing, anyway? I've asked myself this question before, as I'm sure you have, too. Does it mean war? Violence? The Haymarket Riots? The Sex Pistols? As everyone knows, people can't be trusted, and surely a void of civil order would lead to the fiery destruction of our freedom- even our very lives! But is this really true? What would happen if, one day, everyone woke up in the morning and said “the hell with it” to formalized authority. What would transpire if this apparent spectral nightmare were to come to pass?

The reality is that no one knows, because nothing like that has happened, at least not on such a massive, and complete scale. Never in the recorded written history of mankind, if ever. Even I can't be sure- believe it or not. However, I would like to share with you some ideas and personal convictions of mine, that might aid you in drawing your own conclusions about anarchy. Perhaps, if I'm lucky, they will even inspire you to take some action of your own.

To begin, let's open with a bit of background information; a “disclaimer”, or “grain of salt”, if you will. The purpose of this work is not to create a ideological manifesto to draw you into, or to persuade you to “be like me”. Instead, my purpose is to present some ideas that will, hopefully, help filter out some of the silt from the murky depths of Anarchism, thereby leaving you with a clearer picture of how one's life can be experienced and run. Remember, no hardcore sociopolitical theory here. It bores the hell out of me too! And now, without further adieu, let us begin our exploration of anarchy and autonomous living.

First, and foremost, I am alive; human. I am also a libertarian, and American, a family member, and a friend. Like everyone, I'm a member of many groups and subject to a myriad of labels, based on inherent, immutable qualities, variable actions, and personal associations.

Like most people, I make mistakes from time to time, but my “moral compass” generally helps me plot a straight course most of the time. I ate meat last night, and I LIKED IT, dammit! But I also respect the preferences of others, as long as such people are accommodating and flexible themselves. Like you, I have hopes and dreams. I use cooperation to achieve them when possible, but at times, violence is necessary to achieve a goal. I am also, it would seem, an anarchist.

At this point, you may be getting a bit antsy. “What the hell IS an anarchist, for crying out loud?!” , you may be asking yourself. Well, here it is, as pure and as simple as is possible:

“Anarchy”, like “spirituality”, or even just the state of being human, is a term that is often difficult to define in terms of an individual, and impossible to define as a “movement”, or group of people as a whole. Thus, the best way to think of anarchy is not as a THING at all, tangible and seen, but instead as a way of thinking. It's an attitude, even a fundamental way of looking at and solving problems, big and small.

Inherently, this idea is the notion that you and your own thoughts and actions are paramount, even more important than others' as a general rule. No one has a right to your mind, body, or soul but you, and you alone. However, at least to me, anarchy shouldn't be misconstrued as a convenient way to rationalize theft, sloth, or needless lying.

Instead, one can best understand this radical idea of individuality as the affirmation that, though you are yourself the master of your own domain, you do depend on others and they on you at the same time. Essentially, That one gives the most and GETS the most out of charity when it's seen not as a guilt-induced “moral obligation”, but as something that makes you feel good about yourself and your actions to help others. As a one-time Boy Scout, I know these things.

Free thought is an essential part of anarchy and, I would contest, of any personal philosophy that helps one grow as a person. To be effective, an anarchist must be both open to the alternative ideas of others, but at the same time, must be willing to stand up and defend his core beliefs when they are challenged. Share, create, and explore your world- but do not become a slave to it. One should be perpetually reexamining his thoughts and motives, taking the best from life and remaking the worst into something good.

Society, gender, race, and religion are all fickle figments of the collective imaginations of us all. Such terms, in truth all such group related designations, are intangible and unreal. They were created by mankind to explain and refer to things, in order to make them easier to contemplate. Because they are not reality, it's important for people- individuals- to realize that, though useful for some purposes, such abstract nouns have no intrinsic value to one's life. Therefore, it is essential that all of us discard our seemingly infinite and unquestioning veneration of these “false idols”, not only for our own benefit, but for that of future generations. If God exists, He's doubtlessly very angry about the way so many people have put these things before Himself. If, on the other hand, God doesn't exist,, then belief in a higher power is also something for the scrap pile of divisive and destructive human creations.

Perhaps most importantly, the abstract concepts of “government” and the “rule of law” are dangerous and destructive piles of goat guano. Just like in the previous examples, government and law are not mandatory, all-knowing and omnipotent deities to fear and adore, but instead, fundamentally optional TOOLS that groups of humans use to more efficiently (sometimes) complete tasks, and to help ensure survival. Though sometimes beneficial to people, governments and (un)written laws can be counter-productive, and even flat out evil much, if not most of the time. The overarching, and perhaps ONLY purpose of such creations is to get positive, constructive work done. Period. They have no inherent “right to exist”. If corrupt, dysfunctional, or even just “not your style”, it is YOUR right and prerogative to alter or abolish it. You can then replace it with something better, or even with nothing at all. Remember, life is all about YOU and YOURS- not the fictitious masters of society and government!

Last, but certainly not least, let me share with you a simple, but all-to-frequently overlooked approach to life. It is one that, I believe, fits in very nicely with the concept of

anarchy as a whole. In fact, many would even consider the following to be a central foundation of the “liberating mentality”: In a nutshell, anarchy is the mindset and motivation to live any way that you see fit, as long as it doesn't interfere with others' right to do so as well. It is the desire and need to live every day like it's your last, and to breathe every breath as an oral epitaph to you life's accomplishments.

Thanks for reading this dissertation, perhaps even this rant. I hope that something unique and previously untapped has been sparked in you, something that can change and grow into something beautiful and amazing. But don't take my word for it- go out there and experience it for yourself, and leave your mark on the world- as any true anarchist would do.