

FUNDAMENTALS OF ANARCHISM

WHAT IS ANTI-AUTHORITARIANISM?

Anarchism is not chaos, violence or an “alternative lifestyle.” We have a specific understanding of what authority is, how it leads to injustice and how we can organize society without it; based on freedom, social equality and cooperation:

Government, The State - direct democracy, elimination of parliamentary/representative government and all dictatorships, collectivization of all government services, replacement of the Welfare State with Mutual Aid associations, no taxes.

Cops, Courts - social peace should be maintained by Mutual Aid¹, conflicts should be resolved by creating a culture of cooperation, wrongdoing should be discouraged by giving economic opportunity to everyone and discouraging exploitation and fraud (parasites), abolition of all institutions of coercion, no cops, no judges, no lawyers, neighborhood watches chosen by lottery will bring accusers and people accused of wrongdoing before juries chosen by lottery to review all complaints and right wrongs, civil courts will be replaced by arbitration, investigations of wrongdoing will be by forensic collectives.

Laws, Prisons - current laws should be replaced with community standards against murder, violence, coercion, rape, stealing, fraud and other actions deemed socially repugnant, infractions dealing with so-called victimless “crimes” should be decriminalized, social problems should be dealt with through counseling and mutual aid, persons in prison for victimless “crimes” and economic offenses should be released, economic wrongdoing should be compensated by restitution rather than incarceration, political prisoners should be freed, prisons will be closed, persons who commit murder, rape or other violent acts against others should be treated at specialized mental health facilities until it is safe for them to return to society.

Banks, Finance - creation of Mutualist community credit unions, abolition of capitalism (no stocks or arbitrage), abolition of banks and all usury (interest), spending by debit, creation of local currencies backed by credit unions (like travelers checks) creation of barter services, service exchanges and free commerce, no checks, no credit cards, no “unsecured” credit.

Property, Land Use - collectivization of all real property (real estate), no landlords, no rents, exclusivity of property use while you use it (but it is not a “right” which you can buy, sell or own), no inheritance (everyone has the right to whatever they can earn in a single lifetime), land development decisions (for new housing, etc.) would be a community decision, decisions affecting more than one community would be made cooperatively by the communities affected (or by negotiation or arbitration if there were a disagreement), creation of common lands for parks, community gardens and natural preserves.

Work, Production - elimination of all bosses (scheduling should be done by clerks, budgeting by accountants), collectivization of production by workplace, worker self-management (work could be organized as a Syndicalist union-operated enterprise, collective, commune, partnership, family enterprise or self-directed enterprise), reorganization of bureaucracy into working groups (project or task oriented), preservation of professional expertise through on the job training within working groups², economic cooperation among work places.

Gender, Family - social equality for women and men, gender relationships based on free association and mutual respect without dependency or control, abolition of civil marriage and divorce, sexual freedom and self-determination, universal availability of birth control information, contraception and abortion, free health care, free child care³, compensation for child care like other work, elimination of poverty through universal employment, increase in leisure/family time and activities by shortening the work day, paid maternity/paternity leave from work.

Children, Education - children are best raised with love and attention rather than regimentation and harsh discipline, they should be introduced to learning as early as possible, their interests and creativity should be encouraged so they can develop their full potential, schooling should be in a tutorial style with small teaching groups so children can receive adequate attention, learning should be by doing rather than rote memorization, gender and ethnic biases should be eliminated from education, all education should be free³.

¹Anarchists do not consider Mutual Aid to be “authoritarian.” Solidarity or empathy for those who are treated unfairly is considered to be a form of natural morality (see Kropotkin, *Anarchist Morality* and *Mutual Aid*).

²Anarchists do not consider professional expertise to be “authoritarian” (see Bakunin, *Law and Authority*).

³Health care, child care and education should be paid for by the workplace as part of the cost of production

WHY ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN?

We are told that without governments, cops, laws, corporations, parental discipline and all the other instruments of coercion that are used to control and exploit us that society would be in chaos, that we would be terrorized by crime and that we would constantly be in fear for our lives. We are told that without strong “leaders” telling us what to do, bosses supervising our work and teachers telling us how to think that we could never solve our problems or manage our own lives. We are told that without a lot of rules, regimentation of society and churches to tell us right from wrong that we cannot be moral and know to live together with peace, freedom and social justice for all. But these things are all LIES told to us by the most privileged members of society who expect to get rich off our labor, get powerful from our votes and send us to die in their wars the next time they fight a war with each other to try to get even more wealth, power and social privilege than anyone could ever use in a lifetime. They tell us to do what we are told because they need us to OBEY in order to ACCEPT living to serve their interests, BELIEVE that we are still free and HOPE that if we work hard and follow all their rules that WE will be rewarded with wealth, comfort and social privilege one day. In a society where the richest 10% of the population owns about 90% of all business and 68% of ALL wealth, this is a fantasy.

Authority is so entrenched in our society that many people do not realize the extent to which it influences their lives. We begin being brainwashed to OBEY as soon as we are born. As a child our parents often ignore our interests and aptitudes and try to make us be just like them or accomplish something they wish they had done when they were young. They blame us for our problems and try to take credit for our accomplishments. Many of the stereotypes and prejudices people have are drilled into them by their parents. We are punished until we do what we are told. We are harassed and belittled if we show independence or creativity. When we go to school, parental authority is supplemented by the regimentation of teachers and the indoctrination of public or church education. We are taught to try to follow “leaders”, obey the government and to accept the values “leaders” think are best for us. When we get out of school we are told to obey our boss or lose our job and go hungry. We are told that voting for our *masters* makes us “free.” We are told to die for “our” country. Until life gets really hard, most people take this nonsense for granted and consider it “normal” and even a source of personal security.

The advocates of modern government and corporate authority want us to believe that we can't live without them, but capitalism was only invented in the 1700s and most modern nation-states didn't exist before the 1800s! For thousands of years people lived in relative peace organizing their communities democratically, cooperating economically and respecting the well-being of others and the environment. Great civilizations like the Iroquois Confederation of eastern North America, The Ibo and Yoruba of western Africa and the Celtic culture of Europe and southwest Asia (which stretched from Portugal to Ireland, Germany, the Balkans and Turkey when Romans were still living in mud huts) were organized without kings, leaders, bureaucracies, social classes or patriarchal families. Then self-serving people began to say “worship our god or die”, “obey our leaders or die”, and “work to make us rich or die.” Organized protection rackets by gangs of thieves turned into walled forts on trade routes, cities and eventually empires, monarchies and modern nation-states. All modern nation states have been built with authority based on coercion. Capitalism is an economy based on the coercion of labor. Religion is a culture based on the coercion of individual self-esteem.

Anarchists believe that the idea of Authority is at the heart of much of the social problems, injustices and hopelessness in modern society. In order to have hope that our lives can be rich and meaningful, we need to have the freedom to make our own decisions and benefit from our own efforts. In order to solve our problems, we must take care of them ourselves. In order to have justice, we need to trust in our own inherent sense of right and wrong when we see others being hurt. Authority only guarantees freedom, justice and prosperity to those with the authority. If we want a society where everyone can have these things, then it must be democratic and equitable rather than authoritarian. But if we want a better life, we cannot wait for someone to give it to us or for another “leader” to tell us what to do, we need to take the initiative ourselves. Anarchists are spontaneous. Instead of “tell us what to do” we say “do it yourself!” Anarchists believe in Direct Action. Instead of demanding that the people running the system change, WE CHANGE THE SYSTEM OURSELVES!

Authority can only exist if the rest of us allow someone else to tell us what to do, what to think and how to live. Although those with authority use coercion to maintain power over our lives, we have something more powerful than their coercion: That is our refusal to OBEY them, to ACCEPT their system or to BELIEVE what they tell us. But it only works IF WE WORK TOGETHER. It only works if we reject the materialism, exploitation, and bigotry of those who now have authority. It only works if we take personal responsibility for our own actions and practice Mutual Aid (we help each other when we need help, we object to injustice when we see others wronged and we work together when a job is too big for any of us alone).

The alternative to authority is cooperation. Anarchists believe that we can guarantee freedom, justice and opportunity for each of us by working together to insure it for everyone. We believe that we can create a culture of freedom and social equality to replace the current culture of violence, obedience, and exploitation. Successful Anarchist societies have existed in modern times in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and in the Ukraine during the Russian Revolution.