

Compendium of Quotes on Anarchism

- **The ideally non-violent state will be an ordered anarchy. That State is the best governed which is governed the least.**
 - Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in *Gandhi's Wisdom Box* (1942), edited by Dewan Ram Parkash, p. 67 also in *Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. 79 (PDF)*, p. 122
- **Jesus, in some respects, was an anarchist, for he had no idea of civil government. That government seems to him purely and simply an abuse.** A great social revolution, in which rank will be overturned, in which all authority in this world will be humiliated, was his dream.
 - Ernest Renan, in *The Life of Jesus* (1863), Ch. XII: Development of the ideas of Jesus respecting the Kingdom of God
- **If there ever was an anarchist on Earth the gospel Jesus was one.**
 - Frank S. Billings, *How Shall the Rich Escape?* (1894), p. 54
- **Anarchism is voluntary cooperation for good, with the right of secession.** A Christian anarchist is therefore one who turns the other cheek, overturns the tables of the moneychangers, and does not need a cop to tell him how to behave. A Christian anarchist does not depend upon bullets or ballots to achieve his ideal; he achieves that ideal daily by the One-Man Revolution with which he faces a decadent, confused, and dying world.
 - Ammon Hennacy, "Christian Anarchism" in *The Book of Ammon* (1965)
- **As the word "anarchy" etymologically signifies the negation of governmental authority, the absence of government, it follows that one indissoluble bond unites the anarchists. This is antagonism to all situations regulated by imposition, constraint, violence, governmental oppression, whether these are a product of all, a group, or of one person.** In short, whoever denies that the intervention of government is for human relationships is an anarchist.

But this definition would have only a negative value did it not possess, as a practical complement, a conscious attempt to live outside this domination and servility which are incompatible with the anarchist conception. **An anarchist, therefore, is an individual who, whether he has been brought to it by a process of reasoning or by sentiment, lives to the greatest possible extent**

in a state of legitimate defense against authoritarian encroachments. From this it follows that anarchist individualism — the tendency which we believe contains the most profound realization of the anarchist idea — is not merely a philosophical doctrine — it is an *attitude*, an individual *way of life*.

- Emile Armand, in Anarchist Individualism as Life and Activity (1907)
- **Modern Anarchism ... is primarily a tendency — moral, social, and intellectual.** As a tendency it questions the supremacy of the State, the infallibility of statute laws, and the divine right of all authority, spiritual or temporal. It is, in truth, a product of Authority, the progeny of the State, a direct consequences of the inadequacy of law and government to fulfill their assumed functions. In short, the Anarchist tendency is a necessity of progress, a protest against usurpation, privilege, and injustice.
 - William Bailie, in *The Anarchist Spirit* (1906)
- **The more enlightened man will become, the less he will employ compulsion and coercion. The really civilized man will divest himself of all fear and authority. He will rise from the dust and stand erect: he will bow to no tsar either in heaven or on earth. He will become fully human when he will scorn to rule and refuse to be ruled. He will be truly free only when there shall be no more masters.**

Anarchism is the ideal of such a condition; of a society without force and compulsion, where all men shall be equals, and live in freedom, peace, and harmony.

The word Anarchy comes from the Greek, meaning without force, without violence or government, because government is the very fountainhead of violence, constraint, and coercion.

Anarchy therefore does not mean disorder and chaos, as you thought before. On the contrary, it is the very reverse of it; it means no government, which is freedom and liberty. **Disorder is the child of authority and compulsion. Liberty is the mother of order.**

- Alexander Berkman, in "Is Anarchism Violence?" in *ABC of Anarchism* (1929)
- Anarchy stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; liberation from the shackles and restraints of government.

- Emma Goldman, in "Anarchism : What It Really Stands For" in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1910)

- **I, as an Anarchist, have no right to advise another to do anything involving a risk to himself; nor would I give a fillip for an action done by the advice of someone else, unless it is accompanied by a well-argued, well settled conviction on the part of the person acting, that it really is the best thing to do.** Anarchism, to me, means not only the denial of authority, not only a new economy, but a revision of the principles of morality. It means the development of the individual, as well as the assertion of the individual. It means self-responsibility, and not leader-worship.
 - Voltairine de Cleyre, in "In Defence of Emma Goldman and the Right of Expropriation" (1894) in *Selected works of Voltairine de Cleyre* (1914) edited by Alexander Berkman

- **The sin our fathers sinned was that they did not trust liberty wholly.** They thought it possible to compromise between liberty and government, believing the latter to be "a necessary evil," and the moment the compromise was made, the whole misbegotten monster of our present tyranny began to grow. Instruments which are set up to safeguard rights become the very whip with which the free are struck.
 - Voltairine de Cleyre

- **Anarchism says, Make no laws whatever concerning speech, and speech will be free;** so soon as you make a declaration on paper that speech shall be free, you will have a hundred lawyers proving that "freedom does not mean abuse, nor liberty license"; and they will define and define freedom out of existence. **Let the guarantee of free speech be in every man's determination to use it, and we shall have no need of paper declarations.** On the other hand, so long as the people do not care to exercise their freedom, those who wish to tyrannize will do so; for tyrants are active and ardent, and will devote themselves in the name of any number of gods, religious and otherwise, to put shackles upon sleeping men.
 - Voltairine de Cleyre, in "Anarchism & American Traditions" in *Mother Earth* (December 1908/January 1909)

- **Anarchism is that political philosophy which advocates the maximization of individual responsibility and the reduction of concentrated power — regal, dictatorial, parliamentary: the institutions which go loosely by the name of "government" — to a vanishing minimum.**

- Alex Comfort, in the Preface of *People Without Government* (1982) by Harold Barclay, p. 7
- **Never do anything against conscience even if the state demands it.**
 - Albert Einstein, as quoted by Virgil Henshaw in *Albert Einstein : Philosopher Scientist* (1949) edited by Paul A. Schilpp
- **anarchism** (ăn`ərkiˌzəm) [Gr.,=having no government], theory that equality and justice are to be sought through the abolition of the state and the substitution of free agreements between individuals. Central to anarchist thought is the belief that society is natural and that people are good but are corrupted by artificial institutions. Also central in anarchism are the belief in individual freedom and the denial of any authority, particularly that of the state, that hinders human development. Since the Industrial Revolution, anarchists have also opposed the concentration of economic power in business corporations
 - "Anarchism" in *The Free Dictionary*
- **Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation.** We reject all government and economic repression.
 - Mission statement of the newspaper Freedom (founded 1886)
- William Penn, Henry D. Thoreau, Bronson Alcott and Walt Whitman were Anarchists. **An Anarchist is one who minds his own business.** An Anarchist does not believe in sending warships across wide oceans to kill brown men, and lay waste rice fields, and burn the homes of people who are fighting for liberty. An Anarchist does not drive women with babes at their breasts and other women with babes unborn, children and old men into the jungle to be devoured by beasts or fever or fear, or die of hunger, homeless, unhouseled and undone.

Destruction, violence, ravages, murder, are perpetrated by statute law.

- Elbert Hubbard, in "The Better Part" in *A Message to Garcia and Thirteen Other Things* (1901), p. 131
- It is often said that Anarchists live in a world of dreams to come, and do not see the things which happen today. We do see them only too well, and in their true colors, and that is what makes us carry the hatchet into the forest of prejudice that besets us.

- Peter Kropotkin, in *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal* (1898)

- **Anarchy, when it works to destroy authority in all its aspects, when it demands the abrogation of laws and the abolition of the mechanism that serves to impose them, when it refuses all hierarchical organization and preaches free agreement — at the same time strives to maintain and enlarge the precious kernel of social customs without which no human or animal society can exist.** Only, instead of demanding that those social customs should be maintained through the authority of a few, it demands it from the continued action of all.
 - Peter Kropotkin, in *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal* (1898)

- The education we all receive from the State, at school and after, has so warped our minds that the very notion of freedom ends up by being lost, and disguised in servitude.
It is a sad sight to see those who believe themselves to be revolutionaries unleashing their hatred on the anarchist — just because his views on freedom go beyond their petty and narrow concepts of freedom learned in the State school.
 - Peter Kropotkin, in *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal* (1898)

- The true founder of anarchy was Jesus Christ and ... the first anarchist society was that of the apostles.
 - Georges Lechartier, as quoted in *Anarchism : A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (1962) by George Woodcock, Part One : The Idea, Ch. 2 : The Family Tree p. 36

- The nearer we come to the full military suppression of the bourgeoisie, the more dangerous becomes to us the high flood of petty-bourgeois Anarchism. And the struggle against these elements cannot be waged with propaganda and agitation alone. ... The struggle must also be waged by applying force and compulsion.
 - Vladimir Lenin, as quoted in *The Guillotine At Work : Twenty Years of Terror In Russia* (1940) by Grigoriï Petrovich Maksimov, p. 38

- Anarchists generally make use if the word "State" to mean all the collection of institutions, political, legislative, judicial, military, financial, etc., by means of which management of their own affairs, the guidance of their personal conduct, and the care of ensuring their own safety are taken from the people and confided

to certain individuals, and these, whether by usurpation or delegation, are invested with the right to make laws over and for all, and to constrain the public to respect them, making use of the collective force of the community to this end.

- Errico Malatesta, in *Anarchy* (1891)
- **If you say that you reject violence when it exceeds the limits imposed by the needs of defense, they accuse you of pacifism, without understanding that violence is the whole essence of authoritarianism, just as the repudiation of violence is the whole essence of anarchism.**
 - Errico Malatesta, "Anarchism, Authoritarian Socialism and Communism" in *Fede* (28 October 1923); also in *What Is Anarchism? : An Introduction* edited by Donald Rooum (1992, 1995) p. 59
- Bakunin was an anarchist, and he was a collectivist, an outspoken enemy of communism because he saw in it the negation of freedom and, therefore, of human dignity.
 - Errico Malatesta, in "Note to the article 'Individualism and Anarchism' by Adams" in *Pensiero e Volontà* No. 15 (1 August 1924)
- **Anarchism is, fundamentally, an ethical critique of authority — almost an ethical duty to question and resist domination in all its forms.**
 - Saul Newman, in *From Bakunin to Lacan ; Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power* (2001), p. 166
- **Anarchism is in reality the ideal of political and social science, and also the ideal of religion.** It is the ideal to which Jesus Christ looked forward. Christ founded no church, established no state, gave practically no laws, organized no government and set up no external authority, but he did seek to write on the hearts of men God's law and make them self-legislating.
 - Heber Newton, in *Free Speech for Radicals* (1916) by Theodore Schroeder, p. 7
- There is something radically wrong, he declares, in a system of society that functions and maintains its existence by the impetus of violence and force. He sees nothing praiseworthy in political society which has recourse to periodic wars, or need of jails, gallows and bludgeons — and it is because he is aware that these brutal weapons are the instruments of every government and State that he works for their destruction.

...Unlike the politician, he does not regard dishonesty, brutality and avariciousness as natural characteristics of human nature, but as the inevitable consequences of coercion and frustration engendered by artificial law, he believes that these social evils are best eradicated not by greater penalties and further legislation, but by the free development of the latent forces of solidarity and sympathetic understanding which government and law so ruthlessly suppress.

Freedom will be possible when people understand and desire it — for man can only rule where others subserviently obey. Where none obey, none has power to rule.

- George Nicholson, in "The Simplicity of Anarchism" in *Selections from Freedom: Volume 4* (1954); also in *What Is Anarchism? : An Introduction* edited by Donald Rooum (1992, 1995) p. 40
- **Looking at the world as a whole, the drift for many decades has been not towards anarchy but towards the reimposition of slavery.**
 - George Orwell, in "You and the Atom Bomb", *Tribune* (19 October 1945); also in *George Orwell: The Collected Essays, Journalism & Letters, Volume 4: In Front of Your Nose 1946–1950* (2000) by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, p. 9
- **The philosophy of anarchism is included in the word "Liberty"; yet it is comprehensive enough to include all things else that are conducive to progress.** No barriers whatever to [[human] progression, to thought, or investigation are placed by anarchism; nothing is considered so true or so certain, that future discoveries may not prove it false; therefore, it has but one infallible, unchangeable motto, "Freedom." Freedom to discover any truth, freedom to develop, to live naturally and fully. Other schools of thought are composed of crystallized ideas — principles that are caught and impaled between the planks of long platforms, and considered too sacred to be disturbed by a close investigation. In all other "issues" there is always a limit; some imaginary boundary line beyond which the searching mind dare not penetrate, lest some pet idea melt into a myth. But **anarchism is the usher of science — the master of ceremonies to all forms of truth. It would remove all barriers between the human being and natural development.**
 - Lucy Parsons, in *The Principles of Anarchism*
- **Violence, contrary to popular belief, is not part of the anarchist philosophy. It has repeatedly been pointed out by anarchist thinkers that the revolution can neither be won, nor the anarchist society established and maintained,**

by armed violence. Recourse to violence then is an indication of weakness, not of strength, and the revolution with the greatest possibilities of a successful outcome will undoubtedly be the one in which there is no violence, or in which violence is reduced to a minimum, for such a revolution would indicate the near unanimity of the population in the objectives of the revolution. ...

Violence as a means breeds violence; the cult of personalities as a means breeds dictators — big and small — and servile masses; government — even with the collaboration of socialists and anarchists — breeds more government. Surely then, freedom as a means breeds more freedom, possibly even the Free Society! To Those who say this condemns one to political sterility and the Ivory Tower our reply is that 'realism' and their 'circumstantialism' invariably lead to disaster. We believe there is something more real, more positive and more revolutionary to resisting war than in participation in it; that it is more civilised and more revolutionary to defend the right of a fascist to live than to support the Tribunals which have the legal power to shoot him; that it is more realistic to talk to the people from the gutter than from government benches; that in the long run it is more rewarding to influence minds by discussion than to mould them by coercion.

- Vernon Richards, in "Anarchism and Violence" in *What Is Anarchism? : An Introduction* edited by Donald Rooum (1992, 1995) p. 50
- **Anarchism is a philosophy of freedom. It is a body of revolutionary ideas which reconciles, as no other revolutionary concept does, the necessity for individual freedom with the demands of society.** The word "anarchy" has been universally used in the sense of disorder, chaos and confusion – even violence; and it is to this day used in that sense by the ignorant and uninformed as well as by political opponents with an interest in distorting the truth and gaining power, which is the universal goal of all politicians. **It must be pointed out that violence, contrary to popular mythology, is not part of the anarchist philosophy. It has repeatedly been pointed out by anarchist thinkers that the revolution can neither be won, nor the anarchist society established and maintained, by armed violence.**
 - Jack Robinson, in "An Account of Anarchism"
- We must therefore turn to history for enlightenment; here we find that none of the proclaimed anarchist groups correspond to the libertarian position, that even the best of them have unrealistic and socialistic elements in their doctrines. Furthermore, we find that all of the current anarchists are irrational collectivists, and therefore at opposite poles from our position. We must therefore conclude that we are not anarchists, and that those who call us anarchists are not on firm etymological ground, and are being completely unhistorical.
 - Murray Rothbard, in *Are Libertarians 'Anarchists'?*

- **Anarchism is inspired by the moral-political ideal of a society untouched by relations of power and domination among human beings.** This ideal has most often expressed itself in a doctrine advocating the total absence of government as the only firm basis for individual liberty and societal progress — a doctrine that some argue animates even Marxism (since Marx believed that eventually the state would wither away). Anarchism differs from political libertarianism in upholding a lack of government rather than limited government. There are several variants of anarchism, usually categorized by whether the variant is collectivistic (e.g., anarcho-syndicalism) or individualistic (e.g., anarcho-capitalism) in orientation. In popular usage, the term is often colored by the sometimes-violent anarchist political movement that was especially active in the years around 1900.
 - Peter Saint-Andre in *The Ism Book* (1996)
- **The writer is a spiritual anarchist, as in the depth of his soul every man is.** He is discontented with everything and everybody. The writer is everybody's best friend and only true enemy — the good and great enemy. He neither walks with the multitude nor cheers with them. The writer who is a writer is a rebel who never stops.
 - William Saroyan, in *The William Saroyan Reader* (1958)
- Some people believe that Marxism and anarchism are based on the same principles and that the disagreements between them concern only tactics, so that, in the opinion of these people, no distinction whatsoever can be drawn between these two trends. **This is a great mistake.** We believe that the Anarchists are real enemies of Marxism. Accordingly, we also hold that a real struggle must be waged against real enemies.
 - Joseph Stalin, in *Anarchism or Socialism* (1906)
- **My political opinions lean more and more to Anarchy (philosophically understood, meaning abolition of control not whiskered men with bombs) ... The most improper job of any man ... is bossing other men. Not one in a million is fit for it, and least of all those who seek the opportunity.**
 - J. R. R. Tolkien, in a letter to his son Christopher Tolkien (29 November 1943)
- **The Anarchists are right in everything; in the negation of the existing order, and in the assertion that, without authority, there could not be worse**

violence than that of authority under existing conditions. They are mistaken only in thinking that Anarchy can be instituted by a revolution.

"To establish Anarchy." "Anarchy will be instituted." But it will be instituted only by there being more and more people who do not require protection from governmental power, and by there being more and more people who will be ashamed of applying this power.

- Leo Tolstoy, "On Anarchy", in *Pamphlets : Translated from the Russian* (1900) as translated by Aylmer Maude, p. 22

- **Understand then all of you, especially the young, that to want to impose an imaginary state of government on others by violence is not only a vulgar superstition, but even a criminal work. Understand that this work, far from assuring the well-being of humanity is only a lie, a more or less unconscious hypocrisy, camouflaging the lowest passions we possess.**

- Leo Tolstoy, passage written for *The Law of Love and the Law of Violence* (1908), released in 1917, as quoted in *Equality in Liberty and Justice* (2001) by Antony Flew, p. 89

- **Anarchism is for liberty, and neither for nor against anything else.** Anarchy is the mother of co-operation, — yes, just as liberty is the mother of order; but, as a matter of definition, liberty is not order nor is Anarchism co-operation. **I define Anarchism as the belief in the greatest amount of liberty compatible with equality of liberty; or, in other words, as the belief in every liberty except the liberty to invade.**

- Benjamin Tucker, in "Socialism" in *Liberty* (10 March 1888); also in *Instead of a Book: By A Man Too Busy To Write One : A Fragmentary Exposition of Philosophical Anarchism* (1897)

- My early work is politically anarchist fiction, in that I was an anarchist for a long period of time. I'm not an anarchist any longer, because **I've concluded that anarchism is an impractical ideal. Nowadays, I regard myself as a libertarian.** I suppose an anarchist would say, paraphrasing what Marx said about agnostics being "frightened atheists," that libertarians are simply frightened anarchists. Having just stated the case for the opposition, I will go along and agree with them: yes, I am frightened. **I'm a libertarian because I don't trust the people as much as anarchists do.** I want to see government limited as much as possible; I would like to see it reduced back to where it was in Jefferson's time, or even smaller. But I would not like to see it abolished. I think the average American, if left totally free, would act exactly like Idi Amin. I don't trust the people any more than I trust the government.

- Robert Anton Wilson, in "Robert Anton Wilson: Searching For Cosmic Intelligence" - interview with Jeffrey Elliot (1980)

- **A lot of anarchists had a major role in influencing my political thinking, especially the individualist anarchists.** Benjamin Tucker and Lysander Spooner especially. But I've also been influenced by Leo Tolstoy's anarcho-pacifism. And I find a lot of Kropotkin compatible even though he was a communist anarchist. **Nothing wrong with communist anarchism as long as it remains voluntary. Any one that wants to go make a commune, go ahead, do it. I got nothing against it. As long as there's room to the individualist to do his or her own thing.**
 - Robert Anton Wilson, in Interview in TSOG (2002) (sound file)
- **Anarchism is the attempt to eradicate domination.** This includes not only such obvious forms as the nation-state, with its routine use of violence and the force of law, and the corporation, with its institutionalized irresponsibility, but also such internalized forms as patriarchy, racism, homophobia. Also it is the attempt to expose the ways our philosophy, religion, economics, and other ideological constructions perform their primary function, which is to rationalize or naturalize — make seem natural — the domination that pervades our way of life: the destruction of the natural world or of indigenous peoples, for example, comes not from the result of decisions actively made and actions pursued, but instead, so we convince ourselves, as a manifestation of Darwinian selection, or God's will, or economic exigency. Beyond that, Anarchism is the attempt to look even into those parts of our everyday lives we accept as givens, as part of the universe, to see how they, too, dominate us or facilitate our domination over others... **Most fundamentally, I would see Anarchism as a synonym for anti-authoritarianism.**
 - John Zerzan, in *(Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization* (2008), p.67-68)

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