

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

Anti-Copyright



The Anarchist As Outlaw

Wolfi Landstreicher

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When I say I am an anarchist, I simply mean that, to the extent that I have the power, I refuse to let anyone or anything dominate me. In other words, I refuse to accept the power of any authority, any institution, any existing or would-be ruler, any ruler, etc., over me. This is why I also refuse to choose between potential rulers and rules. Doing so would express a willingness to give up my power to create my life, a willingness to surrender this power to others, and I am not willing to do this. I also am not willing to even temporarily hand my power over to any authority or institution to act for me. This is why I won't turn to cops or courts to deal with any problem or conflict in my life. To the extent of my power, I avoid dealing with these institutions altogether.

When I say I am an outlaw, I don't mean that I am some great, heroic bandit (such a claim would make my friends laugh their asses off). I mean simply that, to the extent of my power, I live *alegally*, that is, without regard for the law. I don't let the law determine my choices and my actions. Rather I use all my powers – my skills, my tools, my wits, my relationships – to create my life on my own terms without getting caught. This alegality reinforces my refusal to ever voluntarily deal with cops or courts.

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I speak of a legality and not illegality, not because I am opposed to illegality, but because I want to be precise. Originally, the term “illegality” had a specific meaning. An illegality was an anarchist who chose to use illegal means as the way to make her living rather than begging or taking a job. So “illegality” referred specifically to robbery, burglary, theft, counterfeiting, etc.,¹ not to propaganda of the deed, *attentat*, and the like, nor to such things as the refusal of military service, taxes, etc. The original debates over illegality were therefore not about whether anarchists should take illegal actions – it was assumed that all anarchists did – but about whether *individual* reappropriation was a legitimate tactic – and for an egoist this is not even a question; the only question is: “What can I get away with?” In any case, anarchists, and for that matter, all free-spirited, unsubmitive individuals, will inevitably break laws. When laws exist, my choice to live on my own terms will make me an outlaw, because I will ignore law except as an obstacle to avoid.

A person could look upon these refusals – not voting, not turning to the cops, not using the courts, etc. – as a set of principles, an ethic, that I choose to live by. But I won’t let them become a power over me, because I want them to remain *my* principles, *my* ethic. So I don’t set them as rules to follow, but choose them in each moment, because I consider them to be the tools best suited for creating my life as I see fit. I want to live my life on my own terms *immediately*, here and now, not put it off to a future that is always a fiction. And every time I give my power over to an other, I lose my life here and now, which is to say more simple: *I lose my life*. So, for me, this so-called set of principles, this so-called ethic, is simply my practice of making my life my own here and now.

(*This is the third part of a larger piece entitled “Nobody Owes No One Nothing! Amoral Egoism as an Anarchist Outlaw Ethic”*)

¹ This practice is also called *reprise individuelle* – individual reappropriation.