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For most of us—excepting possibly Mussolini, Trump, and other bully boasters—the word *authoritarian* is a pejorative. In contrast, many of us want to define ourselves and our heroes as *anti-authoritarians*, and this has resulted in some curious definitions of that term.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines *authoritarianism* as “characterized by or favoring absolute obedience to authority . . . relating to or expecting unquestioning obedience.” Authoritarians with power demand unquestioning obedience from those with lower rank; and authoritarian subordinates comply with all demands of authorities. Lyndon Johnson, proclaiming his requirements for an appointee, famously stated: “I want him to kiss my ass in Macy’s window at high noon and tell me it smells like roses.” By definition, both Johnson and his ass-kissers were *authoritarians*.

Dictionaries routinely define *anti-authoritarian* as simply being opposed to authoritarianism. More specifically, anti-authoritarians reject—not only for themselves but also for others—an unquestioning obedience to authority, as they

question the legitimacy of an authority and resist illegitimate authorities, no matter if such authorities are teachers, parents, or governments.

Questioning the legitimacy of authorities (e.g., based on their competence, honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness), and offering dissent (e.g., writing a critical article or attending a demonstration) is not the same as noncompliance (e.g., Edward Snowden's leaking evidence of the U.S. government's mass warrantless surveillance and being charged with violating the Espionage Act). History tells us—and Milgram's studies validated—that while questioning and dissent is not uncommon, few of us actually refuse to comply with illegitimate authority, which is why society is dominated by illegitimate authorities.

Despite how few of us are in fact genuine *anti-authoritarians* who refuse to comply with illegitimate authority, because so many people deem the term a positive one, many people want to see themselves and their heroes as anti-authoritarians—resulting in some curious ideas about the term *anti-authoritarian*.

Absurdly, some Trump supporters tell me that they and their hero are anti-authoritarians. Trump admirers see Trump as rising to power challenging illegitimate authorities; however, they neglect the crucial reality that Trump demands unquestioning obedience to him which, by definition, makes him an authoritarian. Trump's faithful also neglect the reality that Trump himself sees his supporters as authoritarians who unquestioningly follow him, as he famously stated, "I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose voters."

It is not just Trump devotees who have some curious ideas about the term *anti-authoritarian*. Since for many people, it is a desirable trait, some groups—including some anarchists—claim that they alone are the only true anti-authoritarians. Such claims of exclusivity can diminish the mingling of

Nietzsche's misogynist and elitist cracks, Goldman recognized that Nietzsche concurred with anarchists' contempt for the state, nationalism, and Christianity, and that he passionately championed anarchists' desire for a new human absent of either a master or slave mentality.

Claims of anti-authoritarian exclusivity inhibit the exchange of ideas and prevent diverse anti-authoritarian subcultures from the kind of mingling which, a century ago, created pleasurable "scenes." In the 1880s and 1890s in the United States, if you were an alienated anti-authoritarian, you could go to the Lower East Side in New York City and hang out at places such as Sach's Café on Suffolk Street or Justus Schwab's basement tavern on First Street which called itself a "gathering place for all bold, joyful, freedom-loving spirits."

Among patrons first entering these anti-authoritarian havens, some may have initially identified only their parents, teachers, or bosses as illegitimate authorities, not yet considering that capitalism and the state were also illegitimate authorities oppressing them. But in these gathering places, they met diverse anti-authoritarians. They were exposed to new ideas. They argued and reconsidered beliefs. They made friends and maybe even lovers. All this happened to Emma Goldman and many others who created a rich social network for themselves that mitigated some of the pain of being an anti-authoritarian in the United States.

In 1900 when Justus Schwab died, 2,000 mourners followed the hearse down Second Avenue. While many of Schwab's mourners were anarchists, many others were simply anti-authoritarians with "bold, joyful, freedom-loving spirits."

anarchist mentor, the police, the U.S. government, and later, the Bolsheviks. Next, I discussed Edward Snowden who had enlisted in the U.S. Army to fight in Iraq and then worked for the Central Intelligence Agency and its contractors but then became alarmed by the U.S. governments' violations of Americans' constitutional rights and refused to comply with the U.S. government. And I discussed Malcolm X who earlier in his life was an anti-authority criminal, then became dutifully authoritarian within an authoritarian organization, but ultimately became an anti-authoritarian who sacrificed his life challenging the authority of the predatory leader of the Nation of Islam, rejecting the NOI's decree against political participation, and shortly before his assassination, adopting an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist political program.

Fifth Estate rejected my article for, among other things, the inclusion of non-anarchists Edward Snowden and Malcolm X, informing me that in *Fifth Estate's* usage, *anti-authoritarian* is a synonym for *anarchist*, and so "neither Snowden nor Malcolm X can be truly considered anti-authoritarian."

The idea that anyone who is not an anarchist is not an anti-authoritarian is not only incorrect with respect to the dictionary, but it stops dialogue with anti-authoritarians who are not anarchists. It's my experience that many anti-authoritarians have been propagandized to incorrectly view anarchism as nothing but a belief in violence and chaos; however, if these people feel that their anti-authoritarianism is respected, they will dialogue, learn truths about anarchism, and be more open to it.

Given the subjective nature of *illegitimacy*, there will always be diversity and debate among anti-authoritarians. While *Fifth Estate* accepted my inclusion of Emma Goldman, some contemporary anarchists are troubled by Goldman's admiration for Friedrich Nietzsche, who she termed as an "honorary anarchist" despite Nietzsche's actually mocking anarchists. While some anarchists today are appalled by

anti-authoritarian subcultures—resulting in less opportunity for diverse anti-authoritarians to debate, grow, bond, and have fun (more later on this).

There are different kinds of noncompliance, and *anti-authoritarian* is not synonymous with *noncompliant.* In the 1932 movie *Horse Feathers*, the noncompliant Professor Wagstaff, played by Groucho Marx, is oppositional—not anti-authoritarian—when he sings: "Your proposition may be good, but let's have one thing understood, whatever it is, I'm against it."

Oppositional is defined as the actions of opposing, resisting, defying, and/or combating. Before becoming an anti-authoritarian, many young people are often first simply oppositional; as before they pride themselves on distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate authority, they can pride themselves on their noncompliance. Thus, for those of us who are concerned by the dearth of anti-authoritarians, it is especially troubling that being oppositional and defiant has been pathologized by the American Psychiatric Association as a mental disorder called "oppositional defiant disorder." This psychopathologizing and resulting "treatment" make it more difficult for young people's prideful oppositional noncompliance to mature into the vital societal contribution of discerning an authority's legitimacy, and resisting illegitimate authority.

Contrarian is also not synonymous with *anti-authoritarian.* A contrarian rejects popular opinions and goes against current practices, while an anti-authoritarian resists illegitimate authorities.

Anti-authority is also not synonymous with *anti-authoritarian.* Anti-authority means opposing *all* authority; while anti-authoritarian means opposing authoritarians, authoritarianism, and illegitimate authority.

An iconic anarchist poster reads, "Fuck Authority," which feels good for many people who are oppressed by authorities

to say. However, for anti-authoritarians, it is not necessarily "Fuck Authority" but always: "Fuck Unjust Authority," "Fuck Stupid Authority," and certainly "Fuck Illegitimate Authority."

Among anarchists, there are diverse views about the legitimacy of authority. My book about anti-authoritarians, *Resisting Illegitimate Authority*, is published by AK Press, an anarchist collective, and so it has been read by many self-identified anarchists. Some anarchists are upset by the idea of taking any authority seriously; however this does not upset anarchists who are familiar with Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), one of the most famous anarchists in world history.

Bakunin wrote: "Does it follow that I reject all authority? Far from me such a thought. In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker. . . . But I allow neither the bootmaker nor the architect nor the savant to impose his authority upon me. I listen to them freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure."

While Bakunin rejects all imposed authority, he recognizes the legitimacy of the authoritative. *Authoritative* has a very different dictionary meaning than *authoritarian*. *Authoritative* means being accurate, true, reliable, valid, and thus trustworthy. However, some anarchists see a downside to giving an expert, even an authoritative one, any authority. Anarchist thinker William Godwin (1756–1836) believed it was a bad idea to place one's confidence in the superior knowledge of others and to rely on them, as this can weaken our own capacity to think, reason, and make judgments, and thus disempower us.

Perhaps the most well-known modern American self-identified anarchist is Noam Chomsky. For Chomsky, every form of authority has to "prove that it's justified—it has no prior justification." Chomsky gives an example of *justified authority*: "When you stop your five-year-old kid from trying to cross the street, that's an authoritarian situation: it's got

to be justified. Well, in that case, I think you *can* give a justification." However, for Chomsky, "Most of the time these authority structures have no moral justification . . . they are just there in order to preserve certain structures of power and domination."

Anarchism is defined by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as: "a political theory holding all forms of governmental authority to be unnecessary and undesirable and advocating a society based on voluntary cooperation and free associations of individual groups." Among anarchists, there is no monolithic view of anarchism though there is generally agreement that the state is an illegitimate authority.

There are anti-authoritarians, however, who are not anti-state. Thomas Paine and Ralph Nader are two of the most celebrated and maligned anti-authoritarians in U.S. history. Paine was initially celebrated for refusing to comply with Great Britain and later maligned for refusing to comply with Christianity; and Nader was initially celebrated for refusing to be intimidated by General Motors and later maligned for refusing to be intimidated by the Democratic Party. But both Paine (who helped create and perhaps even coined the name "United States") and Nader (responsible for the creation of life-saving governmental regulatory agencies) are not anarchists.

Yet, I have discovered that some self-identified anarchists proclaim that one cannot be an anti-authoritarian if one is not an anarchist. A leading anarchist publication, *Fifth Estate*, which had previously published articles of mine, recently told me that to be an anti-authoritarian one must be an anarchist, and they rejected an article of mine in which I discussed anti-authoritarian diversity with respect to temperament, development, and ideology.

In that rejected article, I discussed anarchist Emma Goldman, an anti-authoritarian for virtually her entire life who first resisted the authority of her father and teachers, then her first