

Why I am an Anarchist

Henry Addis

1896

We find ourselves in a world of conflicting ideas, and every person who has individuality enough developed to be more, in human life, than a domestic animal or lifeless machine, must align himself with others who hold the same opinions, whether he will or not, and then he is in the view of others, and perhaps in his own view, labeled with the name of the idea he holds. So we find that nearly every person is labeled, and some persons have a number of labels.

Finding that we must be something—must hold to certain ideas and work for certain ends—if we work at all, or amount to any more in human life than an ox, or an ax, it very naturally follows that we will adopt and work for the prevalence of such ideas as will bring us the greatest happiness, now or by and by. That is why I am an Anarchist. I am convinced that to work for the realization of the Anarchist ideal will bring me more satisfaction than an adherence to, or working for, any other ideal would bring me.

But every one should be able and willing to give a reason for the “faith that is within him,” and I will try and do so.

I find myself in a world of sunshine and shade; of joy and sorrow; of happiness and woe. All around me I see fellow beings; beings that are constituted very much as I am, have similar desires, hopes and aspirations. I find that they are constantly trying to gratify these desires; to realize their hopes and attain to that for which they aspire. I find further that they can do these things only by exploiting inorganic nature, and by assisting each other. I find that as things are now, these beings instead of mutually assisting each other are constantly striving to injure each other, not because they take delight in the suffering of a fellow, but because they see no other way of satisfying their desires and aspirations. They think this state of affairs wrong, and are constantly clamoring for a change, but have not yet learned the great fundamental fact of human solidarity—of our interdependence.

Long have the various members of the human family sought to adjust themselves to environment, and of late have begun to endeavor to adjust the environment to suit themselves. All mankind craves for freedom, but most of the people have sought to gain freedom by subjugating others, or by restricting all alike. They have not learned that they cannot be free while they are holding others, or while they seek to restrict the freedom of others. No one desires to be injured, and yet no one can be secure from injury as long as he injures others. We all wish to be free from injury. I crave for freedom. I see that others want the same condition, and I know that

my freedom can be made secure only by the freedom of all others. I know of no other ideal but Anarchy that, if really would secure freedom to me and to all others, therefore I am an Anarchist.

I long for plenty; for a sufficiency of the material necessities of life to make it possible for me to satisfy all my physical cravings, and I know that all others want the same thing. I see that the Earth yields abundantly; that it is possible for human beings to produce all the material necessities required to satisfy their physical cravings, and that if they would stop restricting and interfering with each other and turn their attention to production and mutual assistance, they could have every material comfort they desire. Anarchy is the only theory that, if put into practice, would secure this abundance and at the same time secure full liberty. Consequently I am an Anarchist.

I love my fellows, some of them at least, and pity those who suffer. I desire association with my fellow humans, and crave their friendship. I have a horror of violence and of the shedding of blood. I find that, as a rule, the other members of the human family are influenced by the same emotions, and I see that these emotions are warped and stifled by the conditions by which we are surrounded. I realize that Anarchy would be a condition that would tend to develop these emotions, and to eliminate the emotions of hatred, revenge, jealousy and envy, by disuse: That in Anarchy association would rest upon mutual attraction, that all such hindering barriers as class distinction, rank, title or wealth would not exist, and so I am an Anarchist.

I love the beautiful. It gives me joy to see gorgeous sunsets, towering mountains, picturesque scenes. It increases my happiness to see bright cheery faces, happy people and comfort. I take great delight in works of art, in poetry and music. I do not enjoy these things alone. I wish to share my joy with others. As things are today the ability to enjoy these things is crowded or crushed out of most people, and I must have my enjoyment of them constantly marred by the lonesomeness I feel when trying to communicate my joy to those I love, or with whom I associate. I know that many who have great artistic power; who could add much to the world's stock of art, poetry and music, are prevented from so doing by the hard necessities that surround them, and I see that Anarchy would remove the stifling conditions that kill the appreciation of the beautiful and prevent the development of the artistic. I am, for these reasons, an Anarchist.

All this and much more goes to make up the reasons for my adherence to, and advocacy of Anarchy.

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