

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



A Handbook of Anarchy

For Truth and Right

John Arthur Andrews

1894

John Arthur Andrews
A Handbook of Anarchy
For Truth and Right
1894

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_Handbook_of_Anarchy

theanarchistlibrary.org

ANARCHY is freedom. The literal meaning of the word "free" is to love or like; thus when we say that a man is free we imply that he is "to like," that is, he has only to like in order to decide what he will do, or try to do. Among the things which people in general like, is to avoid hurting others, and as sometimes to do a particular thing which one would like would come in conflict with this, it becomes a matter for consideration which course one likes the best. From this, people have roughly set out certain particular things which they supposed, so far as they could see, that they would prefer not to do towards others, saying that as it was their wish to save each other from harm, they would mutually defend each other against anyone who did those things. This was law, which at first existed without any Governments since the mere solidarity and fellow-feeling of the people sufficed to carry it out. But they erred through short-sightedness, for they could not see further than the conditions and circumstances they were most familiar with, and not only are the general conditions of life constantly changing, but the individual circumstances under any general conditions are of almost infinite variability. Consequently when they as-

sumed that certain things were as a matter of course opposed to their general purpose of sparing each other suffering, they overlooked the fact that there are "two sides to a question," and that the real aspect of a case might be the very opposite of what they stood pledged in advance to regard it, as circumstances alone give every action its bearing. Had they not established the law, they would have taken part in the unbiassed guidance of the same natural sympathies as were at the root of the law; but having created the law, they had to consider, not what part they would like to take according to the realities, but which part the law pledged them to. As a consequence of which, it would happen that when some person, let us say Alfred, did something slightly to the disadvantage of another, say Arthur, but which, in the nature of the circumstances, every unbiassed observer would hold him absolutely justified in doing, they would, in the false light of the law, look on it as a crime; while the law would, through being all on Arthur's side, and, so to speak, patting his immediate grievance on the back, lead him into the most narrowly selfish and exclusive view of the matter. Thus by degrees, as conditions changed partly from natural evolution and partly from the deliberate exertions of the most cunning to bend the circumstances into the shape that would give them most advantage of the law, the effects showed themselves in the division of society into two classes—those to whom, on the whole, the restrictions of law operated as circumstantial advantages over and against the others; and these others, who were, on the whole, disadvantaged and subordinated by the operation of the same restrictions. Those who received the advantage were naturally weeded down to consist of the most assertive of those whom chance or cunning had at any time favored, and came to look on the unequal operation of law as the expression of mysterious "rights," invented, after the law had unconsciously created them, by way of apology for their own existence, and of making it appear that law, instead of unintentionally originating them, had itself come into

existence for the express purpose of protecting them; and new laws were piled sky-high and Governments established to compel the observance of the vested interests thus set up. When the resulting evils have at some stage become intolerable, those below have from time to time revolted, either to bring things back to a fresh start, or to put the framing and administration of laws into the hands of supposedly impartial persons, or to take them directly into their own hands—expecting to thus remedy the evil, which, however, as pointed out, is in the very nature of law as imposing fallacies upon conduct; and out of falsehood as the source of social relations can come only the piling up of social lies, which, translated into material conditions, mean tyranny, slavery, and misery. No two occurrences are exactly alike in their causes and their effects, and the essence of law is that it takes all cases which have a single, and it may be the least important, point in resemblance, and directs them to be treated, in kind if not in degree, on the same footing. And as under no conceivable condition of society is wrong impossible, the effect of law is necessarily to create a vested interest in all wrongs possible to occur in conformity with the modes it crystallises, for all who are in a position to profit by them at the expense of those who will suffer, and thus to constitute the latter mere cattle for the former; while freedom, by preserving the social elasticity, although it cannot prevent wrongs of a purely personal character from occurring if the elements are present, admits of no such wholesale wrong being foisted upon and overshadowing society. The moment when, instead of considering what they would really like best to do under the actual circumstances confronting them, people in their ignorance turned their will to work out the dictates of a rule, that moment they ceased to be free; and the fact that they adopted the rule of their own accord, could no more alter the nature of their condition, than the fact of a man having voluntarily chained himself up could prevent the resulting fact of his physical bondage. The free man cannot owe obedience or support

either to a personal ruler or to the fallacious exactions of any sort of superstition. The recognition of this fact is signified in expressing freedom by the word "Anarchy," which means literally "un-rule," or lawlessness.

Now what is lawlessness? It is usually held up as the equivalent of all wickedness. But let us see.

Right and wrong are simply good and harm. We define as right whatever ministers to the pleasure which we find in others' welfare without depriving us of a greater amount of pleasure in our own being, and which those whom it is safe for us to associate with find reciprocally in our welfare; wrong that which acts oppositely. Our whole nervous structure makes it a physiological fact that we share in the joys and sufferings of each other. This is true of almost all animals that have a nervous system, but in man so especially that a healthy individual feels to some extent the pleasures and woes of even the animals of other species with which he associates. But from a protective natural process, this susceptibility is closed where vital interests are in conflict. We share no grief in the death-agony of a tiger or a human enemy whose life would threaten our own or make it insupportable. Then, since law in the nature of things takes away the exercise of fellow-feeling by which that feeling is developed, substituting, instead, comparison with codes, and since by building on false generalisation it creates antagonistic interests, which cannot be adhered to without consequently closing up the bodily avenues of love for one's neighbor as for oneself, it is law that is a hideous creator of wickedness. It would moreover be as rational to allege that an honest man should not object to being chained up to prevent him from stealing, as that he should not object to being a bond-slave in his conduct to prevent him from doing wrong, and a bond-slave he is when he has to conform his actions to an imposed code to the exclusion of his own judgment of what accords with reason and human sentiment. The whole of law is exactly on a par with the contention of the rabid teetotallers who affirm that

by those whom it would please to so exercise their faculties, and cooperative classes of students, such as our scientific societies really are, are natural and obvious means for closer study.

The nature of Anarchy being now understood, how is this state, so desirable, to be realised? It cannot be imposed; it must come by enlightenment and individual reform. Each must purify his own life from all taint of the evil, and have courage to ignore what is imposed, as the Catholics did before pagan and Protestant persecutors, Protestants before Catholic persecutors, and Atheists in face of both; as science has conquered religious persecution while the sects are still contending, so Anarchy, the applied science of society, will make its way with a rapidity and power impossible to barren creeds. In the spirit of the living faith that works its truth to sight, dwells, and there alone, the hope with the glory of Victory.

because one man may do wrong in drinking alcohol, everyone should be forbidden to drink it. Because a certain act committed by a person whose moral nature is deficient, or who is not sufficiently thoughtful in his conduct, may probably be, under those circumstances, an unjust act, moral and considerate men are to be forbidden to do that act under any circumstances! It is the same. And a man does, or abstains from doing, something, for one of two reasons: either because he concludes that this conduct is the most appropriate, or because such is the rule or law. The conduct may answer to both reasons, but the motive can be only one of them; if a man does a thing because he thinks it fitting, he does so whether it is in accord with law or not, and if he does it because such is the law, he does it whether it is fitting or not. This is regarding law as a moral standard of conduct. Rules are all very well in their place as foundations for thoroughly optional special doings, and confined to the limited sphere of a circumscribed purpose, such as defining the structure of a game, the fun of which consists in seeing what can be done under specified limitations, and where the rule exists in the capacity of an assumed natural quality in an imaginary world which we can enter or leave at will; but as affecting doings in the real world, which are founded on facts that cannot be abrogated in that connection, they are wholly out of place. Our everyday affairs might just as well be regulated by the rules of cricket or draughts as by property or other law; it is only a matter of depending on the complications to which the peculiar limitations of the game give rise, for our material prosperity or adversity. As to the dread of penalty, everyone has to beware how he awakens resentment, but the question here is, will it wake on natural and reasonable, or on artificial and arbitrary grounds? If the latter, its moral value for arousing the morally dull to the fact that other people's feet ache when trodden on, is destroyed; especially when the aggrieved—directly or through sympathy—are forbidden to exercise their resentment, and instead of the aggriever being taught a lesson as between

man and man, he is punished by strangers in the name of an impersonal power for breach of discipline; not for wronging others, for the law gives to all who can use the law to that purpose, the privilege of wronging others: but for doing a wrong, or for that matter a right, in a forbidden way. This brings us to the point: to judge the rights and wrongs of any case correctly and deal with it intelligently, it must be treated on its own circumstances, and not by conventionalities and codes; then, is this to be done by the parties consciously affected, or by officials endowed with the monopolistic privilege of doing so? To be governed signifies that someone else has the choice of your conduct and attitude towards others' conduct, and you have not.

"Oh! but," we are told, "if you did away with Government there would be a horrible state of things; the world would become one vast field of chaotic rapine and slaughter!" What else is it now? If, however, there are so many people who are only restrained by law and authority from waging war on the wretched, helpless others, it is rather surprising for them to have gone on allowing the weak helpless good to govern them and keep them from doing what they would like. If such exist, it is because the existence of law is protecting them from the risks of their disposition; and Nature demands a slaughter for the purification of the world from the living abortions and inhuman monstrosities that have been preserved through law from the doom which humanity, in its own defence, should have meted out to them. Let it be slaughter, then, if such indeed it would, but let me be free to try and slaughter whom I like to slaughter, and every other whom he likes to slaughter, and not be butcher-slaves massacring as somebody else pleases, and when that slaughter stops because there is nobody left alive that anybody else left alive would like to kill, the survivors will be only such as are capable and desirous of living together in peace and harmony. Let us have it, by all means, as soon as the people learn to abandon law—let those who can and wish to live in

The relations of the sexes will be on the same footing of freedom. Here there are always two persons whose choice in the matter would require to be mutual. All persons are not alike sexually. Some are monogamous, others polygamous; some mating, others roving, but all these can find partners who can take them as they are, and the mating person forced against nature to go from one to another, the rover kept to one, the monogamist forced to consort habitually with several during the same period and the polygamist prevented from doing so, each loses respect for the other sex, and treats a sex-partner as a mere machine for gratifying his or her sensuality. Hence, freedom tends to purity. Though ordinarily, the habitual sex partnership is accompanied by a domestic one, it is not essential or uniformly desirable. Seducing a person to quit or ignore an existing sexual partnership is, other things being equal, an act that would call forth the contempt of the lawless, on account of its inconsiderate character towards the other partner.

Children would not be the chattel slaves of the parents as they are now. They would be to all on the same footing as any other feeble and inexperienced stranger who might arrive and become the guest of the community. It would at once be recognised as monstrous to order such a stranger about, saying, "do this because you are told." A child may be rightfully coerced, to avoid more serious harm to itself or others, but without authority, as you would force a friend who was drinking too much and behaving foolishly—nor for the mere whim of the parents or anyone else, but with full responsibility to everyone's sense of fairness and right.

As older people would have leisure to let the society and wants of childhood enter more into their lives than at present... and encourage the natural tendency of children to take the affairs of their elder friends into their lives... children would pick up writing, reading, and all material knowledge as they acquire speech or the knowledge of games. Special classes conducted

think on is the immediate convenience or inconvenience of the result. People who choose their conduct for themselves exercise their social feelings in doing so, and are satisfied with any sacrifices they make to please their sympathies.

If a dispute arises among associates, it does not follow that the majority should prevail. Perhaps both majority and minority can carry out their views independently. The majority may be barely more than indifferent, while the minority are very decided, and in practice it may please the individuals of the majority best to give way. Or the question may be sunk, or new ideas conceived, or new persons enlisted. Unless materially impossible, as in the case of a ship in mid-ocean whose further course has been called in question, where there is nothing for it but to stay on board, it should generally be optional with everyone whether to remain associated with what others decide on—though extraordinary emergencies might justify the majority in coercing the minority, or the minority in coercing the majority, if possible. It is all a matter for common sense to adjust without being trammelled by formalities and legalities.

An agent, delegate or representative in any matter would only be that of those who procured him to act. In dealing with another person's representative everyone is aware that he may be a misrepresentative, and would in Anarchy know therefore that he shared with the party "represented," the risk of the representative being false. The "represented" would be perfectly justified in repudiation if the representative had designedly or inadvertently committed them to something unreasonable or foreign to their purpose in sending him; or in so far as one fair man would justify another in revoking a promise made even personally, if the circumstances had materially varied in the meantime. A promise or agreement is simply an expression of definite intention, for the guidance of others concerned, and the whole moral question upon it is one of mutual sparing of inconvenience.

helpful brotherhood, or at least in peace and concord, exterminate their enemies, and have, even if it is only for a few generations, a life worth living! They can do it, for if wickedness were naturally pleasing to the bulk of mankind, they would not wish for law "to suppress evil." But in the absence of law, all the social feelings would, of a psychologic necessity, be enormously awakened, and I believe that when people learn to throw away the superstition of law, with its consequence of their stiffened and distorted attitude towards each other, many and indeed the most of those who are under existing conditions social enemies, will rise naturally to the glory of peace and good will. Men's mutual mistrust has furnished, in the various forms of law—rules, statutes, property, authority—the means for its own justification; so also their mutual confidence will not fail, in Liberty, to justify itself.

In the absence of law the one consideration taken by people as to their own or each others' welfare, must be in the broadest sense the bearing of their respective needs, feelings and purposes. For those who refuse this consideration to others, there can only be war, and it is war now, only that the war is against those who refuse to give the false consideration demanded by rules, instead of the true consideration called for by real circumstances. But this war is not waged by the classes who profit by the vested interests in the subjection of their fellows which law in its very nature has created for the crafty and tyrannical. It is the *people's own force* which through their delusion is turned against such of them as dare to infringe the rules of their bondage. And what the people's own force can do blindly and irrationally, at the bidding and for the purposes of their oppressors, it can do consciously and intelligently, of free will, and for the people's own purposes. Who are all the police, soldiers, judges, gaolers and so on, but people like anyone else, and picked very much at random? So far as their position does not corrupt them, they are conscientiously endeavoring to administer and defend laws which nobody can understand, and

they are privileged interferers, (since the hands of the people at large are tied) and tempted to curry favor with their "superiors" and the classes in whose interest they mainly exist. Surely then people in general here, there and everywhere, can far better administer and defend the principles of humanity, which every ordinary person can understand, and with a full sense of mutual responsibility undestroyed by privilege and unbiassed by servile dependence!

Anarchy is no blind dogma of non-interference, as it is sometimes misrepresented to be; I would even take a man by force and compel him to work for me, if occasion required—for instance, if my life or yours depended on the prompt repairing of an engine and his labor was necessary to its accomplishment, and he refused to help voluntarily; and I think every reasonable man would justify me in standing over that fellow with a whip in one hand and a pistol in the other till that engine was in working order—just as I think that nobody would justify me in interfering with him even by procuring his voluntary assistance, when I should obviously entail less hardship on myself and others by leaving him alone than on him by so interfering. Neither as it is as others misrepresent it, a condition in which the first to do as he likes is privileged, and other people must not do as they like in opposing him. It is simply and purely the substitution of the real for the conventional as the guide of conduct. Substitute the free choice of conduct by all humanity according to their respective needs for action, in place of having some ordinary persons endowed with monopolies of this and that portion of the choice of conduct and resulting destinies of the rest; substitute the enlightened instincts of self-preservation and fellow-feeling together as the standard of morality, in place of obedience; and if not all people are competent for such a life, those of not less than average intelligence

tions as advice, and if you did not approve of them, if it was your affair you would go on in your way, if his affair leave him to his way.

Now suppose news came to hand of a flood or war, that would cut you off from the outer world for some time, you would keep on in exactly the same way, only you would build more substantial shelters and take more elaborate means for supplying your wants from the resources around you, and there would be wants that you would experience on a long stay, that could have been passed over for a short one, and the things on which your energies would be directed, but not the nature of your relations towards each other, would be modified. You would still be the party of friends, and the ways of property and law would have no place among you. And now supposing that your stay was prolonged indefinitely, do you think that you would want to change all this, and map things out, saying, "this is for me exclusively," and "that is for him exclusively," to go each for himself against the rest, and lay out a commercial system, jealously measuring everything by which one benefited another, and demanding liquidated security for a reward as a condition of doing it? No! Whatever difference there might be in the things to be undertaken for supplying your respective needs, you would conduct yourselves in the same free and happy way as when you first set out. And the fruits of your toil and skill, and of your way of life, would soon be comfort for all such as the few have by the woe of the many now.²

If quarrels or difficulties arose, you would adjust them freely like all other matters. Why should you pick out a few and bind yourselves that what they call right shall be right, and what they call wrong shall be wrong? People whose conduct is chosen for them are "selfish," because the only thing left them to

² Read W. Morris's NEWS from NOWHERE.

manner. Another group would probably stay at the main camp, some because the work of camp fitting was most attractive to them, some because they felt for the time being more interest in that than in anything else, or knew that others felt so. Then when the other groups returned, and the party sat down to supper, it would be simply, who would like fish? who would like game? etc. so long as there was enough of the particular article for each who cared for it to have a share worth eating; if there was not enough for this, then some would stand out of their own accord, and if the deficiency was considerable you would leave the fish, if that was what was short, to those among the fishers who caught it, and next to them those among the unsuccessful fishers, who had fished in the hope of eating fish, or the non-fishers for whom most personally and particularly any of the anglers had gone to the task of fishing. Then, too, one of you might do something to provide for his own convenience; two more might do different things for each other; a fourth might attend to something for a fifth, while the fifth did something for a sixth, and the sixth for someone else; one who had no occasion for assistance would help another who had, and there would be no thought of taking formal recognisances for the return of the compliment, or keeping accounts of the things done for each other, nor would the person who wanted something done go to another who could not do it, and offer to permit him to eat three meals on condition of having the thing done, and that one go to another and offer him leave to eat a quarter of a meal to do it, another a quarter to record the transaction, another a slice for introducing the party who wanted the thing done, and other slices to divers individuals to stand ready with guns to enforce the arrangement! The day after, all these groups and combinations might be changed; some vanished, some composed partly or wholly of new persons, others sprung up new. Nor would there be any persons privileged to rule in these combinations; if indeed anyone was accepted as guide or director in anything you would only take his instruc-

and good will certainly are, and they are the community; the others are its enemies.¹

Property is law in restraint of use and possession, and conferring on the person in whose favor the restriction is declared, authority over his fellow-beings to arbitrarily forbid or impose his own terms for, their use of particular things. The more a man owns, the more he owns you. Like other law in the beginning, it was instituted with good intentions, the idea being to secure to each person undisturbed possession of the things which habitually he resorted to or had reasonable expectation of using for the satisfaction of his needs. In freedom, of course, there will be no ownership, but the reality will be there instead of the formality, and secure all the good aimed at by the latter, without its evil. The moral sense of people at large will, to the utmost of what reasonable and humane men can do, ensure and defend to each the undisturbed opportunity to gratify his purposes with the things he has provided or placed himself in access to for that end; otherwise give him friendly help; and justify him equally with anyone else in such latitude with the means provided for other people's purposes as emergency may render desirable, so long as he displays as much regard for others' convenience as the relative importance and urgency of his needs will enable.

In the absence of Property, capitalism, wages and prices, money, barter, etc., will necessarily be extinguished, since they depend on property for their very existence.

Just here let us consider buying and selling, and the commercial principle generally, together with the division of labor that we now have in connection with them. What is the difference between a woman selling to a man the use of her sexual organs, and one person selling to another person the use of some other part of the body, such as the arm or the brain? Or what is the difference between a woman exacting from a man a price for

¹ Read Bakounine's GOD & THE STATE.

the use of certain "resources" for his gratification, and one person exacting from another person a price for the use of certain other resources which the former can provide—such as a pair of boots or a load of firewood? I can see no moral difference between one transaction and the other. Our innate sentiment for the welfare of the race teaches us that if a woman admits a man for the mere satisfaction of her own animal passion, it is natural and not in itself immoral; and if she does so in pursuance of a special affection it is usually positively moral, in as much as such affection ordinarily guides to the coupling most advantageous for the beneficial breeding of her species. But to pair without desire is repugnant to our feelings, and rightly so, as it impairs the quality of propagation. Does not also the use of the other organs without, or in excess of, desire, impair the quality of their operation? The artist, the author, the poet, know that when they have to resort to "pot-boiling" drudgery, it renders it more difficult for them to produce good work. Where there is a real natural prompting, whether the craving of a faculty for exercise, or the suggestiveness of appropriate conditions, the gratification of that prompting is a pleasure; and the being who would demand compensation for being pleased, is repugnant to all our instincts of self-preservation. The whole system of the habitual female prostitute is in a state of chronic derangement. What else can be said of the man who spends all his time in overworking one faculty to the level of a mere mechanical automaton, and shutting his energies off from the rest? Our body is too delicate a mechanism to be tampered with in this way. The whole man would be healthier and more vigorous and competent for a greater variety of exercise and due proportioning of action to the measure in which the different faculties exist in his structure. And again, a person does not in general like to do something for the sake of mere exercise; unless he is, as the saying is, bursting to get it off him, he wants first some reason, some purpose in view. The amateur who is brimful of energy seeking an outlet in the direction, say, of photography or the

cultivation of flowers, does not want to compile an album or fill a garden which no eyes but his shall ever behold. The scientist, the philosopher, the poet, the author, these would soon weary, though rewarded with every outward luxury, were they cut off from others whose lives and interests to weave into their work, and for whose pleasure and advancement to make their conceptions and investigations. Even the hard-up swagman goes his way gloomily while he is alone, and asks for tucker seldom, but when two such come together, neither one shirks this most distasteful work, because it is for his mate as well as himself. And the swagman who exercises his bushmanship in discovering water or a good camping place, constructing a shelter, improving the bill of fare, making a knife or a billy from old waste, etc., feels, because his doings have a direct purpose, an immediate connection with the needs and welfare of him and his mates, a zest and relish of living such as he never experiences when, in employment, he spends his time doing something that so far as he is concerned might just as well be anything else, and receiving money with which he buys enjoyments that have no logical connection with his efforts.

Production and distribution would be effected in a condition of Anarchy on the same free and pleasurable lines as the various things necessary among a party of friends on a holiday excursion. Suppose that you and some of your comrades went on a holiday camping-out expedition in some remote part. Each would bring as far as possible what he or she would require, and what would be handy to others who might not have it, and everything would be at disposal for the most equal and harmonious satisfaction of all the wants of everyone. The same principle would prevail in your doings; thus one group might go fishing, some because they liked both angling and eating fish; others who liked angling but did not care for eating fish; others who did not care particularly for angling, but wanted to make sure of the fish either for themselves or for friends with a taste for it. Other groups would go shooting, exploring, etc., in like