

# **A Closer Look at V**

**What is V's "Anarchy" and Did He Manage to Complete His Mission of An  
"Anarchic" Society in the Work V for Vendetta?**

Joshua Anol

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## Abstract

In the realm of British works, Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta* is a significant piece that tackles Anarchy as a central, vital motif. The protagonist, the enigmatic V, seems to seek destruction of the status quo of Norsefire and to institute Anarchism in the United Kingdom.

However, a vital question must be asked; What exactly is V's definition of Anarchy? Connected with that question, did V succeed in instituting the Anarchic society that he so desired?

This paper will attempt to answer both questions, and explore the intricacies and the convoluted yet interesting facets of Anarchism and V's views towards them.

## Chapter 1: V's Definitions of "Anarchy" and Real-Life Comparisons

The character V, mysterious and enigmatic that he is, does not give a direct answer to the nature of his ideal anarchic society. He instead prefers to disperse tidbits of information about the nature of his ideal anarchic society in allusions and references to works of Anglo-American literature. The most direct explanation we can find is in Issue # 8, page 15 of *V for Vendetta*, in a scene where Evey Hammond asks V, "All this riot and uproar, V... is this Anarchy? Is this the Land of Do-As-You-Please?" (Moore 15), where V answers back, "No. This is only the land of take-what-you-want. Anarchy means 'without leaders', not 'without order'." (Moore 15, italics added) Thus, we may conclude from this exchange that V's definition of Anarchy is a society without any overlords, yet somehow retains order in some shape of form.

A more cryptic clue is given to the reader at Issue no. 9, page 14, where V explains to Evey what he is about to do with the large amount of Gelignite, a powerful explosive, that he has. V responds with this line; "Anarchy wears two faces, both *Creator* and *Destroyer*. Thus Destroyers topple empires; make a canvas of clean rubble where creators can then build a better world." (Moore 14, italics added) Here, V explains the method in which he would bring about anarchy in the United Kingdom. First is the face of the Destroyer, in where agents of anarchy, in this case V himself, must topple the current regime lording over the populace, to make way for the "Creator" to build a better world for humanity. V intends his anarchic society to be brought about not by peaceful protests and bloodless revolution, but by sparkly, deadly explosions and a flurry of blood and iron.

A reference that V uses to explain the anarchic society he dreams of building of is the term, "Land of Do-As-You-Please", which is a setting borrowed from the work "The Magic Faraway Tree" by British novelist Enid Blyton. The Land of Do-As-You-Please, at least in Blyton's story, is a world where children can literally do what they wanted, whether to frolic in the sea or ride a train, as in Blyton's novel. This elegant piece of fantasy is a very nice and direct allusion to what V intends his ideal society is like, to be a society where every man may do anything that pleases him or her, even if what man wants to do is somewhat wrong according to our current moral standards.

It may seem, therefore, that there is a contradiction between an orderly society and a society where everyone can do what they like, but in V's logic, that is not really the case. Throughout the story, we can see the V operates in a simple and cold logic that when one does something, it will have a corresponding result. This is well-dramatized in Issue #8, pages 22 to 29, where

scenes of V calmly laying down rows of dominos on the ground is interspersed with scenes of how the authoritarian regime of Adam Susan was starting to slowly unravel due to the collective shock of the loss of regime's major pillars, the efforts of V's disinformation campaign and internal intrigues of the Finger and the Eye. Any action, in V's logic, will always have an reaction, and that seems to be the "order" that he so seeks to implement in his ideal anarchic society.

As such, V's version of "Anarchy" can fit into the mold of at least three different types of Anarchism, namely, Social Anarchism, Insurrectionary Anarchism, and Anarchism Without Adjectives.

Social Anarchism, in its most basic level, is a type of anarchic system where individuals are united in a society via the organizational theory of Mutual Aid and membership in said society is completely voluntary. (Suissa 627–628) This anarchic model has several different iterations, such as anarcho-communism and anarcho-syndicalism, amongst others. This system clearly agrees with the idea of V's that an anarchic society has order yet has no direct leader. The anarchic society functions simply because it is in the great interest of the participants to mutually help one another without restricting each other's individual freedoms without their individual consent.

Insurrectionary Anarchism, however, is more defined in how they would like to achieve their anarchism, by implementing violent, terrific means in order to bring about their ideal society. This facet of Anarchism fits well the methodology of V, the Man from Room V, and to an extent Evey Hammond when she dons the Guy Fawkes mask and V's identity in Issue no. 10. V's explosive and grandiose destruction of the symbols of rule of the Norsefire regime, such as Lady Justice at the Old Bailey and eventually Downing Street.

Insurrectionary Anarchism, however, may not agree with one of the central tenets of V's "Anarchy". As stated before, V's version of anarchy has two "faces"; Destroyer and Creator. Insurrectionary Anarchism seems to have an element of a permanent "conflictuality" (sasha k), which are struggles against institutions. This tenet of Insurrectionary Anarchism seems to be irreconcilable with V's assertion that after the face of the Destroyer comes the face of the Creator, where the Creator would help humanity achieve the anarchic society without lording over it.

A more promising type of Anarchism than the two previously stated is Anarchism Without Adjectives. It is a type of anarchism from Cuba that seems to be an umbrella type, where it seems to either reject all economic schools of thought or embrace them pluralistically. (Shubert 534–535) As such, it is indeed a type that could accommodate the variety of definitions of anarchy V had set by not fully embracing a single one, by embracing certain facets of Social Anarchism, Insurrectionary Anarchism and other types of anarchism as well.

## **Chapter 2: An Analysis of V's Actions vis-a-vis his Intended Goal of Establishing Anarchism**

Throughout *V for Vendetta*, the main character V engaged in seemingly randomly destructive and complicated plots with a variety of reasons. The first, or perhaps only the shallow, reason that was given to us for V's actions was that it was out of revenge against the key figures in the Larkhill Concentration Camp. (Moore 7) However, it is revealed to us, albeit not directly, that V's actions against these people are not just of a simple vendetta, but also that of a scheme to destabilize the Norsefire regime in order to bring about anarchism in the United Kingdom.

This first action starts with the kidnapping and the torture of Lewis Prothero, the broadcaster who is the voice of Fate, the computer seemingly in control of British society. This action, together with the loss of the first leader of the Finger, Mr. Almond, symbolizes the loss of the various methods the Norsefire regime had to control its populace. With trust in Fate shaken by the loss of its familiar voice, V intends to break first the ideological hold of Norsefire on the people.

This is also the motivation behind the killing of Archbishop Lilliman in Issue # 2. Being the highest spiritual leader of the church in the story, his death symbolized not only the loss of moral control of the government through secular means, but also through religious means, even if one could posit that government and church are intertwined in the story.

V's destruction is not only limited to the killings of key figures of the Norsefire government. With the destruction of several important government buildings like Parliament, the Old Bailey, and finally, Downing Street in the end by Evey Hammond, V does not only intend to destroy these symbols of power but to also disrupt the governmental functions associated with them.

The destruction of the Norsefire government's hold over the people, therefore, does not only occur on the physical level, but also the psychological. The veneer of invincibility and the "peace" propagated by the government is wrecked in these acts of bombing by V. In these acts, we see the face of the Destroyer, as mentioned previously.

However, what of the face of the Creator? What did V do in order to assume this face? Or has he failed?

The line following the description of the faces of anarchy can gleam light as to what V had really intended. The line specifically goes as follows; "Away with our explosives, then! Away with our Destroyers! They have no place within our better world... let's drink their health, then meet with them no more." (Moore 14–15) From this line, it can be surmised that V, specifically the Man from Room V, intends to kill himself in order to make way for a new V, the V whose face is the creator, Evey Hammond. It can be seen that the Destroyer V's intention was followed through; in the last chapter of the comic, we can see Evey Hammond, dressed up as V, exhorting the people that the future is theirs to build, and she seems to challenge them to build a better world for themselves, suggesting the leaderless yet orderly form of the society that Evey Hammond is guiding the people to build.

In conclusion, with what we see at the end of the comic, it seems that V succeeds in trying to bring about his own version of anarchy, more specifically perhaps, Anarchy without Adjectives, on British society by using the methods he so endorsed.

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