

# **Debunking Every Argument Against Anarcho-Primitivism**

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## Preface

Of course, this essay will not debunk *every single* possible argument against anarcho-primitivism. The goal of this essay is to debunk most of the common counter-points I see pinned against this niche ideology, and to remove a lot of the confusion.

## Introduction

First, to ensure that there is no confusion when reading this essay, we must explain what *anarcho-primitivism* actually means.

### What is Anarchism?

Anarchism can be easily defined as a desire to abolish all forms of unjust hierarchy, any and all governments, and to organize society on a voluntary, cooperative basis without using intimidation, force, or any other form of coercion.

### What is Primitivism?

Primitivism has two definitions, one relates to the visual arts, and the other relates to anarcho-primitivism. Primitivism when referring to anarcho-primitivism, is a social movement criticizing civilization and where civilization is going.

### What is Anarcho-Primitivism?

Anarcho-primitivism is a belief that civilization has negatively impacted humanity, and all other life on Earth. Anarcho-primitivists desire a return to a primitive way of life, before the Industrial Revolution, and before the Neolithic Revolution. A return to nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers. This means foregoing modern medicine, electricity, agriculture, computers, phones, cars, and any other bits of modern technology you can think of.

## Common Arguments

### 1. Anarcho-primitivists want to kill billions of people so their ideal “utopia” can exist!

This is false, plainly. While it is true that hunting and gathering cannot support the current human population, the anarcho-primitivist movement is relatively small and recent, there is no way anarcho-primitivists could stage some sort of mass extinction event so that hunting and gathering can support the entire human population. Climate change is a very real and dangerous threat, in fact climate change is so dangerous it threatens civilization as we know it.<sup>1</sup>

Climate change will cause a mass extinction event on its own, billions will die as billions are dependent on civilization for survival. There is a high possibility of food shortages, leading

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<sup>1</sup> Corbett, J. (2021, January 13). *Scientists Warn Humanity in Denial of Looming ‘Collapse of Civilization as We Know It’*. Retrieved from EcoWatch: <https://www.ecowatch.com/humanity-rapid-loss-of-biodiversity-2649929188.html?rebelltitem=2#rebelltitem2>

to mass starvation.<sup>2</sup> Only the strongest will survive, and by *strongest* I don't mean the most physically fit, or even the most mentally fit, the strongest people are the ones that are the most detached from civilization, the ones that are as self-sufficient as possible, the ones not reliant on modern technology for survival.

## **2. Anarcho-primitivists don't care about the disabled or those reliant on modern medicine to live!**

Anarcho-primitivism is an ideology that actually cares a great deal about humanity, perhaps more so than other ideologies. Anarcho-primitivists are enraged at what civilization has done to humanity, all the ills and issues, but instead of dancing around improbable solutions to our problems, anarcho-primitivists recognize what the issue is and they recognize what the most logical solution to that issue is. The issue is civilization, and the solution is to abolish civilization.

Will people reliant on modern medicine die? Yes, and so will billions of others reliant on civilization. It is a sacrifice that is literally out of anybody's hands, and the only thing we can place this blame on is civilization.

## **3. With no access to medicine, more people will die and those who are disabled will be ignored as they are too resource-intensive!**

Hunter-gatherers do indeed look after the disabled even if they contribute little to group survival.<sup>3</sup> But even if someone born without a leg, or an arm, or an eye, and can't hunt or forage well, they can still contribute through other means, like contributing to the arts, being a source of wisdom, an entertainer, or taking up a parental role for the children of the tribe.

Not only this, but medicine does exist in the wild. There are plants with known medicinal properties, and a lot of our modern medicines come from these plants.<sup>4</sup> And on top of all that, hunter-gatherers were simply healthier, stronger (physically and mentally), and thus able to survive wounds, diseases, and other life-threatening ordeals.<sup>5</sup> Still, modern medicine definitely has increased our life spans, but modern medicine treats symptoms, not the cause. Hunter-gatherers had fulfilling lives with plenty of exercise, and had a sense of belonging to a community and general purpose in life, which is lacking in modern society, as more and more people become addicted to their phones, having social interaction through screens, and ingesting information in bite-sized chunks which results in reduced attention spans, a sense of loneliness, eye problems, depression, anxiety, and among other mental illnesses.<sup>6</sup> These illnesses would be absent in a primitive world. If you were depressed, a doctor would prescribe you anti-depressants, which just

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<sup>2</sup> Chow, D. (2019, August 8). *Climate change could trigger a global food crisis, new U.N. report says*. Retrieved from NBC News: <https://www.nbcnews.com/mach/news/climate-change-could-trigger-global-food-crisis-new-u-n-ncna1040236>

<sup>3</sup> Leib-Neri, M. (2015, July 23). *"Everything in Nature Goes in Curves and Circles": Native American Concepts of Disability*. Retrieved from Grinnell College: <https://lewiscar.sites.grinnell.edu/HistoryofMedicine/uncategorized/everything-in-nature-goes-in-curves-and-circles-native-american-concepts-of-disability/>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Forest Service. (n.d.). *Medicinal Botany*. Retrieved from U.S. Forest Service: <https://www.fs.fed.us/wild-flowers/ethnobotany/medicinal/index.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> Pontzer, H. (2018, December 19). *Hunter-gatherers as models in public health*. Retrieved from National Library of Medicine: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30511505/>

<sup>6</sup> Miller, C. (n.d.). *Does Social Media Use Cause Depression?* Retrieved from Child Mind Institute: <https://child-mind.org/article/is-social-media-use-causing-depression/>

inhibits your emotions and makes you dependent on pills, while an anarcho-primitivist would tell you that modern technology is the issue, and tell you to disconnect.

#### **4. Anarcho-primitivists are transphobic, sexist, and ableist!**

Civilization is bigoted, and the gender binary is a tool of patriarchal control that was imposed around the world. Primitive people had a healthy, non-discriminatory attitude towards gender non-conformity and alternative gender roles.<sup>7</sup> Women were just as capable of hunting as the men, albeit rare, but they weren't denied the chance to do so.<sup>8</sup> Men engaged in hunting more simply because men have a biological advantage over women in terms of strength, and are more expendable than women. And for the ableism comment, hunter-gatherers have a track record of caring for the weak and disabled, and providing aid to those that need it, and not just euthanizing them to save resources.<sup>9</sup>

#### **5. Anarcho-primitivists want to return to a time where humanity lived to the age of 30, had a high infant mortality rate, and were on the knife's edge!**

This is possibly the worst offender on this list, and it's so easily debunked if you spend more than 5 seconds thinking about it. Modern humans first appeared about 200,000 years ago, civilization first appeared about 6,000 years ago. So, doing the math, humanity has lived primitively for about 194,000 years without extinction. So how did a species on the brink of extinction last for ~194,000 years? Unless, perhaps this species was not on the brink of going extinct?

Hunter-gatherers are known to be extremely healthy, and did indeed live past the age of 30, and, surprisingly, lived up to the age of 70 or even 80!<sup>1011</sup> And while there was indeed a high infant mortality rate, infant mortality was treated similar to how we treat abortion in modern society. The reason many people think primitive peoples lived to 30 or 40 is because of the infant mortality rate, as the rate of infant mortality brings down the average lifespan when doing the math, hence this confusion.

#### **6. Anarcho-primitivists are hypocrites that still use modern technology!**

This is also contender for the worst offender on this list. And it's so silly it shouldn't have to be included but it still is. This argument is pretty much an ad hominem attack and not an actual attack on what this ideology brings to the table. This argument may also manifest in other

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<sup>7</sup> Indian Health Service. (n.d.). *Two-Spirit*. Retrieved from Indian Health Service: <https://www.ihs.gov/lgbt/health/twospirit/>

<sup>8</sup> Wei-Haas, M. (2020, November 4). *Prehistoric female hunter discovery upends gender role assumptions*. Retrieved from National Geographic: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/prehistoric-female-hunter-discovery-upends-gender-role-assumptions>

<sup>9</sup> Barth, A. (2009, December 21). #82: *Humans Took Care of the Disabled Over 500,000 Years Ago*. Retrieved from Discover Magazine: <https://www.discovermagazine.com/planet-earth/82-humans-took-care-of-the-disabled-over-500-000-years-ago>

<sup>10</sup> Gallagher, S. (2019, April 21). *What Can Hunter-Gatherers Teach Us about Staying Healthy?* Retrieved from Duke Global Health Institute: <https://globalhealth.duke.edu/news/what-can-hunter-gatherers-teach-us-about-staying-healthy>

<sup>11</sup> LaMonica, M. (2018, October 31). *Hunter-gatherers live nearly as long as we do but with limited access to healthcare*. Retrieved from The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/hunter-gatherers-live-nearly-as-long-as-we-do-but-with-limited-access-to-healthcare-104157>

forms such as; “If you hate technology so much, why don’t you go live in the woods?” or “If civilization is so bad why are you living in it?”. The responses to these statements are simple; how do you expect people to live primitively, when 99.9% of all land on Earth is owned privately or by governments, and the fact that many anarcho-primitivists were raised in civilization and thus became dependent upon it? Not only this, but internet is so widespread that we must use it to effectively convey our message so it can reach as many people as possible.

## **7. Anarcho-primitivists are just impatient, just wait a few years and technology will fix our problems!**

This is a common statement many people cry when technology gets criticized, failing to realize that throughout history has been a constant race to fix our issues with technology, only to end up creating more issues. Take smartphones for example, they made communication easier, revolutionized the way we think about phones, but as a result we have reduced attention spans, a sharp rise in mental illness, physical ailments from staring at a phone all day, et cetera. Or the even the internet, which 100% completely changed the world, yet it led to the creation of social media, which led to rapid misinformation spreading, data-mining, and a complete decline in face-to-face conversation, instead taking place over text messages.

## **Less-Common Arguments**

These arguments mostly come from other people on the left, including anarchists, communists, socialists, and others.

### **1. Anarcho-primitivism is basically eco-fascism!**

This is such a silly statement founded entirely on misinformation. Eco-fascism can basically be defined as; “using fascist means to protect the environment.” This is incredibly ridiculous and the ideology of eco-fascism pretty much only exists on the internet. The definition of fascism is “Fascism is a form of far-right, authoritarian ultranationalism characterized by dictatorial power, forcible suppression of opposition, and strong regimentation of society and of the economy”. This is an oxymoron, as fascism requires civilization, and a state, and anarcho-primitivism seeks to abolish both of those, hence the “anarcho” and “primitivism” parts of that term. Are there bad apples in the anarcho-primitivist movement that are authoritarian? Yes, but they also exist in literally every other ideology, including ones like anarchism.

### **2. Anarcho-primitivism is overly dramatic, if we just implement [insert ideology] then all the problems are solved!**

Even if we as society implement fully automated space communism, like in Star Trek, mental suffering would only continue to rise, both in severity and extensiveness. We may want to strive towards a life removed of risk, struggle, hardship, sadness, and or competition, but that is not a life at all. The mind and body have not evolved to thrive in mass society, and this is the heart of anarcho-primitivism, we are not evolved enough for civilization, and this is why there are

so many problems plaguing humanity, why there is a rise in mental illness, and why there is a decrease in standard of health.<sup>12</sup>

### **3. A lot of the problems anarcho-primitivists complain about only really manifested themselves after the Industrial Revolution, so why do we need to go all the way back to a Paleolithic way of life?**

While it is true that rates of mental illness, unhealthiness, and general decrease in happiness can be attributed to the Industrial Revolution, but the rate of social stratification, manipulation, coercion, general authoritarianism, and anti-social behavior can be attributed to the Neolithic Revolution, which paved the way for civilizations to form. Total war did not exist until after agriculture was discovered, and while one can claim that there was tribal fighting occasionally, there was never the level of destruction and horror in these fights like there are in wars between countries. Not only this, but agriculture led to the rise in diseases and pandemics, because of being in such close proximity to animals all day. People would have gotten unhealthier, attributed to the lack of exercise and disease, while hunter-gatherers are accustomed to walking miles each day with ease and hunting and chasing after prey.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> American Psychological Association. (2019, March 15). *Mental health issues increased significantly in young adults over last decade*. Retrieved from ScienceDaily: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/03/190315110908.htm>

<sup>13</sup> King, A. (2020, December 3). *Evolved to run – but not to exercise*. Retrieved from The Irish Times: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/science/evolved-to-run-but-not-to-exercise-1.4412604>

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