

The A Word

Editor's Pick. Written by Donald Boudreaux.

I confess to having deep sympathies for anarchism. I hold open the possibility and the hope that a prosperous and peaceful society can flourish without the state.

Unfortunately, the word “anarchy” has an offensive connotation. Anarchy is commonly understood to mean “lawlessness.” And lawlessness truly is offensive. A lawless society has no rules to govern behavior. It is a society in which the physically mighty and the deviously clever prey upon others. Victims of these predators suffer grievously. With security of persons and their property being precarious, a lawless society is inevitably destitute. Commerce, industry, saving, and investment don't arise. Nor does civilization. Nearly all human effort, along with what few resources exist, is spent on plunder and on trying to protect oneself from plunder. Life is truly, to use Thomas Hobbes's line, “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

Lawlessness is a curse worthy of our deepest fears.

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