

CHAPTER



Anarchism

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Preview

The word 'anarchy' comes from the Greek *anarkhos* and literally means 'without rule'. The term 'anarchism' has been in use since the French Revolution, and was initially employed in a critical or negative sense to imply a breakdown of civilized or predictable order. In everyday language, anarchy implies chaos and disorder. Needless to say, anarchists themselves fiercely reject such associations. It was not until Pierre-Joseph Proudhon proudly declared in *What Is Property?* ([1840] 1970), 'I am an anarchist', that the word was clearly associated with a positive and systematic set of political ideas.

Anarchist ideology is defined by the central belief that political authority in all its forms, and especially in the form of the state, is both evil and unnecessary. Anarchists therefore look to the creation of a stateless society through the abolition of law and government. In their view, the state

is evil because, as a repository of sovereign, compulsory and coercive authority, it is an offence against the principles of freedom and equality. Anarchism is thus characterized by principled opposition to certain forms of social hierarchy. Anarchists believe that the state is unnecessary because order and social harmony do not have to be imposed 'from above' through government. Central to anarchism is the belief that people can manage their affairs through voluntary agreement, without the need for top-down hierarchies or a system of rewards and punishments. However, anarchism draws from two quite different ideological traditions: liberalism and socialism. This has resulted in rival individualist and collectivist forms of anarchism. While both accept the goal of statelessness, they advance very different models of the future anarchist society.

Origins and development

Anarchist ideas have sometimes been traced back to Taoist or Buddhist ideas, to the Stoics and Cynics of Ancient Greece, or to the Diggers of the English Civil War. However, the first, and in a sense classic, statement of anarchist principles was produced by William Godwin (see p. 152) in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* ([1793] 1971), although Godwin never described himself as an anarchist. During the nineteenth century, anarchism was a significant component of a broad but growing socialist movement. In 1864, Proudhon's (see p. 152) followers joined with Marx's (see p. 124) to set up the International Workingmen's Association, or First International. The International collapsed in 1871 because of growing antagonism between Marxists and anarchists, led by Mikhail Bakunin (see p. 153). In the late nineteenth century, anarchists sought mass support among the landless peasants of Russia and southern Europe and, more successfully, through anarcho-syndicalism, among the industrial working classes.

Syndicalism was popular in France, Italy and Spain, and helped to make anarchism a genuine mass movement in the early twentieth century. The powerful CGT union in France was dominated by anarchists before 1914, as was the CNT in Spain, which claimed a membership of over two million during the Civil War. Anarcho-syndicalist movements also emerged in Latin America in the early twentieth century, especially in Argentina and Uruguay, and syndicalist ideas influenced the Mexican Revolution, led by Emiliano Zapata. However, the spread of authoritarianism and political repression gradually undermined anarchism in both Europe and Latin America. The victory of General Franco in the Spanish Civil War (1936–9) brought an end to anarchism as a mass movement. The CNT was suppressed, and anarchists, along with left-wingers in general, were persecuted. The influence of anarchism was also undermined by the success of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917, and thus by the growing prestige of communism (see p. 89) within the socialist and revolutionary movements.

Anarchism is unusual among political ideologies in that it has never succeeded in winning power, at least at the national level. Indeed, as anarchists seek to radically disperse and decentralize political power, this has never been their goal. No society or nation has therefore been re-modelled according to anarchist principles. Hence, it is tempting to regard anarchism as an ideology of less significance than, say, liberalism, socialism, conservatism or fascism, each of which has proved itself capable of achieving power and reshaping societies. The nearest anarchists have come to winning power was during the Spanish Civil War (see p. 149). Consequently, anarchists have looked to historical societies that reflect their principles, such as the cities of Ancient Greece or medieval Europe, or to traditional peasant communes such as the Russian *mir*. Anarchists have also stressed the non-hierarchical and egalitarian

SYNDICALISM

A form of revolutionary trade unionism that focuses on labour syndicates as free associations of workers and emphasizes the use of direct action and the general strike.

nature of many traditional societies – for instance, the Nuer in Africa – and supported experiments in small-scale, communal living within western society.

Anarchism's appeal as a political movement has been restricted by both its ends and its means. The goal of anarchism – the overthrow of the state and dismantling of all forms of political authority – is widely considered to be unrealistic, if not impossible. Most, indeed, view the notion of a stateless society as, at best, a utopian dream. In terms of means, anarchists reject as corrupt, and corrupting, the conventional means of exercising political influence: forming political parties, standing for elections, seeking public office and so on. This does not, however, mean that they reject political organization as such, but rather place their faith in non-hierarchical organizations, possibly supported by mass spontaneity and a popular thirst for freedom. Nevertheless, anarchism refuses to die. Precisely because of its uncompromising attitude to authority and political activism, it has an enduring, and often strong, moral appeal, particularly to the young. This can be seen, for example, in the prominence of anarchist ideas, slogans and groups within the emergent anti-capitalist or anti-globalization movement (as discussed in the final section of this chapter).

Core themes: against statist politics

The defining feature of anarchism is its opposition to hierarchy and domination, with the state often being seen as the paradigmatic form of hierarchy and domination. Anarchists have a preference for a stateless society in which free individuals manage their affairs by voluntary agreement, without compulsion or coercion. However, anarchism has been bedevilled by misleading stereotypes and distortions of various kinds. The most common of these is the idea that anarchism rests on little more than a faith in natural 'goodness', the belief that human beings are, at heart, moral creatures. Anarchists certainly believe that people are capable of leading productive and peaceful lives without the need for rulers or leaders, but this view is rarely sustained simply by optimistic assumptions about human nature (Marshall, 2007). In the first place, anarchists do not share a common view of human nature. For example, despite sharing common individualist assumptions, Godwin stressed rational benevolence, while Max Stirner (see p. 152) emphasized conscious egoism. Second, rather than seeing human nature as fixed or determined, the majority of anarchists believe that human beings are products of their environment, even though they are also capable of changing it. In that sense, anarchists believe that human nature develops through creative and voluntary interaction with others. Third, to the extent that anarchists have a theory of human nature, it can be said to be viewed as realistic, even pessimistic. This is because anarchists are profoundly aware of the corruption inherent in the exercise of power. Indeed, if human nature were naturally good, it is difficult to see how hierarchy and domination, and for that matter the state, could have emerged in the first place.

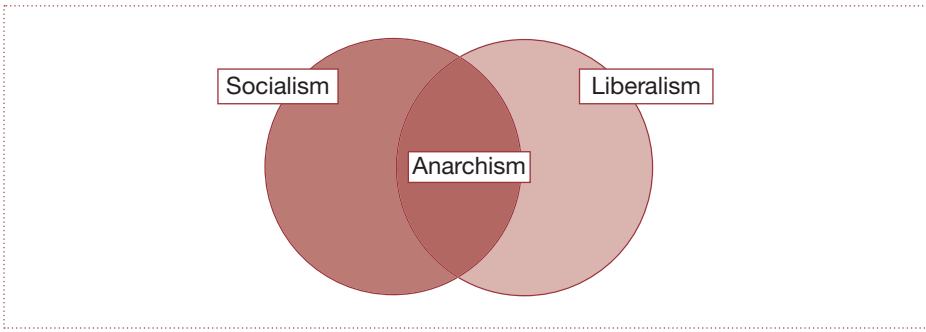


Figure 5.1 The nature of anarchism

An additional feature of anarchism is that it is less a unified and coherent ideology in its own right, and more a point of overlap between two rival ideologies – liberalism and socialism – the point at which both ideologies reach anti-statism conclusions. This is illustrated in Figure 5.1. Anarchism thus has a dual character: it can be interpreted as either a form of ‘ultra-liberalism’, which resembles extreme liberal individualism (see p. 28), or as a form of ‘ultra-socialism’, which resembles extreme socialist collectivism (see p. 99). Nevertheless, anarchism is justified in being treated as a separate ideology, in that its supporters, despite drawing on very different political traditions, are united by a series of broader principles and positions. The most significant of these are:

- anti-statism
- natural order
- anti-clericalism
- economic freedom.

Anti-statism

Sébastien Faure, in his four-volume *Encyclopédie anarchiste* (published between 1925 and 1934), defined anarchism as ‘the negation of the principle of Authority’. The anarchist case against authority is simple and clear: authority is an offence against the principles of freedom and equality. Authority, based as it is on political inequality and the alleged right of one person to influence the behaviour of others, enslaves, oppresses and limits human life. It damages and corrupts both those who are subject to authority and those who are in authority. Since human beings are free and autonomous creatures, to be subject to authority means to be diminished, to have one’s essential nature suppressed and thereby succumb to debilitating dependency. To be in authority is to acquire an appetite for prestige, control and eventually domination. Authority therefore gives rise to a ‘psychology of power’, based on a pattern of ‘dominance and submission’, a society in which, according to the US anarchist and social critic Paul Goodman (1911–72), ‘many are ruthless and most live in fear’ (1977).



PERSPECTIVES ON... STATE

LIBERALS see the state as a neutral arbiter among the competing interests and groups in society, a vital guarantee of social order. While classical liberals treat the state as a necessary evil and extol the virtues of a minimal or nightwatchman state, modern liberals recognize the state's positive role in widening freedom and promoting equal opportunities.

CONSERVATIVES link the state to the need to provide authority and discipline and to protect society from chaos and disorder, hence their traditional preference for a strong state. However, whereas traditional conservatives support a pragmatic balance between the state and civil society, neoliberals have called for the state to be 'rolled back', as it threatens economic prosperity and is driven, essentially, by bureaucratic self-interest.

SOCIALISTS have adopted contrasting views of the state. Marxists have stressed the link between the state and the class system, seeing it as either an instrument of class rule or as a means of ameliorating class tensions. Other socialists, however, regard the state as an embodiment of the common good, and thus approve of interventionism in either its social-democratic or state-collectivist form.

ANARCHISTS reject the state outright, believing it to be an unnecessary evil. The sovereign, compulsory and coercive authority of the state is seen as nothing less than legalized oppression operating in the interests of the powerful, propertied and privileged. As the state is inherently evil and oppressive, all states have the same essential character.

FASCISTS, particularly in the Italian tradition, see the state as a supreme ethical ideal, reflecting the undifferentiated interests of the national community, hence their belief in totalitarianism (see p. 207). The Nazis, however, saw the state more as a vessel that contains, or tool that serves, the race or nation.

FEMINISTS have viewed the state as an instrument of male power, the patriarchal state serving to exclude women from, or subordinate them within, the public or 'political' sphere of life. Liberal feminists nevertheless regard the state as an instrument of reform that is susceptible to electoral and other pressures.

ISLAMISTS view the state as an instrument of social and political regeneration, carried out in line with Islamic principles. The Islamic state is a means of 'purifying' Islam, both returning it to its supposed original values and practices, and countering western influence generally. Over time, the Islamic state has increasingly been defined by the predominance given to the enforcement of the *sharia*, even coming to be seen as a *sharia* state.

In practice, the anarchist critique of authority usually focuses on *political* authority, especially when it is backed up by the machinery of the modern state. Anarchism is defined by its radical rejection of state power, a stance that sets anarchism apart from all other political ideologies (with the exception of Marxism).

The flavour of this anarchist critique of law and government is conveyed by one of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's ([1851] 1923) famous diatribes:

To be governed is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated, regimented, closed in, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, evaluated, censored, commanded; all by creatures that have neither the right, nor the wisdom, nor the virtue.

The state is a *sovereign* body that exercises supreme authority over all individuals and associations living within a defined geographical area. Anarchists emphasize that the authority of the state is absolute and unlimited: law can restrict public behaviour, limit political activity, regulate economic life, interfere with private morality and thinking, and so on. The authority of the state is also *compulsory*. Anarchists reject the liberal notion that political authority arises from voluntary agreement, through some form of 'social contract', and argue instead that individuals become subject to state authority either by being born in a particular country or through conquest. Furthermore, the state is a *coercive* body, whose laws must be obeyed because they are backed up by the threat of punishment. For the Russian-born US anarchist Emma Goldman (1869–1940), government was symbolized by 'the club, the gun, the handcuff, or the prison'. The state can deprive individuals of their property, their liberty and ultimately, through capital punishment, their lives. The state is also *exploitative*, in that it robs individuals of their property through a system of taxation, once again backed up by the force of law and the possibility of punishment. Anarchists often argue that the state acts in alliance with the wealthy and privileged, and therefore serves to oppress the poor and weak. Finally, the state is *destructive*. 'War', as the US anarchist Randolph Bourne (1886–1918) suggested, 'is the health of the State' (1977). Individuals are required to fight, kill and die in wars that are invariably precipitated by a quest for territorial expansion, plunder or national glory by one state at the expense of others.

The basis of this critique of the state lies in the anarchist thinking about human nature. While anarchists emphasize that humanity has a strong libertarian potential, they are also deeply pessimistic about the corrupting influence of political authority and economic inequality. Human beings can be either 'good' or 'evil' depending on the political and social circumstances in which they live. People who would otherwise be cooperative, sympathetic and sociable, become nothing less than oppressive tyrants when raised up above others by power, privilege or wealth. In other words, anarchists replace the liberal warning that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely' (Lord Acton, 1956) with the more radical and alarming warning that power in any shape or form will corrupt absolutely. The state, as a repository of sovereign, compulsory and coercive authority, is therefore nothing less than a concentrated form of evil. The anarchist theory of the state has nevertheless also attracted criticism. Quite apart from concerns about the theory of human nature on which it is based, the assumption that state oppression stems

from the corruption of individuals by their political and social circumstances is circular, in that it is unable to explain how political authority arose in the first place.

Natural order

Anarchists regard the state not only as evil, but also as unnecessary. William Godwin sought to demonstrate this by, in effect, turning the most celebrated justification for the state – social contract theory – on its head. The social contract arguments of Hobbes (see p. 84) and Locke (see p. 52) suggest that a stateless society, the ‘state of nature’, amounts to a civil war of each against all, making orderly and stable life impossible. The source of such strife lies in human nature, which according to Hobbes and Locke is essentially selfish, greedy and potentially aggressive. Only a sovereign state can restrain such impulses and guarantee social order. In short, order is impossible without law. Godwin, in contrast, suggested that human beings are essentially rational creatures, inclined by education and enlightened judgement to live in accordance with truth and universal moral laws. He thus believed that people have a natural propensity to organize their own lives in a harmonious and peaceful fashion. Indeed, in his view it is the corrupting influence of government and unnatural laws, rather than any ‘original sin’ in human beings, that creates injustice, greed and aggression. Government, in other words, is not the solution to the problem of order, but its cause. Anarchists have often sympathized with the famous opening words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (see p. 184) *Social Contract* ([1762] 1913), ‘Man was born free, yet everywhere he is in chains’.

At the heart of anarchism lies a distinctive tendency towards utopianism, at least in the sense that utopian thought has the imagination to visualize a society quite different from our own. As pointed out earlier, anarchists believe that human beings are capable of living together peacefully without the need for imposed order. Anarchist thought has thus sought to explain how social order can arise and be sustained in the absence of the machinery of ‘law and order’. This has been done in two contrasting but usually interlocking ways. The first way in which anarchists have upheld the idea of natural, as opposed to political, order is through an analysis

Key concept

Utopianism

A utopia (from the Greek *ou-topia*, meaning ‘nowhere’, or *eutopia*, meaning ‘good place’) is usually taken to be perfect, or at least qualitatively better, society. Though utopias of various kinds can be envisaged, most are characterized by the abolition of want, the absence of conflict and the avoidance of

oppression and violence. Utopianism is a style of political theorizing that develops a critique of the existing order by constructing a model of an ideal or perfect alternative. Good examples are anarchism and Marxism. Utopian theories are usually based on assumptions about the unlimited possibilities of human self-development. However, utopianism is often used as a pejorative term to imply deluded or fanciful thinking, a belief in an unrealistic and unachievable goal.

of human nature, or, more accurately, an analysis of the potentialities that reside in human nature. For example, collectivist anarchists have highlighted the human capacity for sociable and cooperative behaviour, while individualist anarchists have drawn attention to the importance of enlightened human reason.

For some anarchists, this potential for spontaneous harmony within human nature is linked to the belief that nature itself, and indeed the universe, is biased in favour of natural order. Anarchists have therefore sometimes been drawn to the ideas of non-western religions such as Buddhism and Daoism, which emphasize interdependence and oneness. An alternative basis for natural order can be found in the notion of ecology, particularly the 'social ecology' of thinkers such as Murray Bookchin (see p. 265). (Social ecology is discussed in Chapter 9 in relation to eco-anarchism.) However, anarchism does not merely stress positive human potentialities. Anarchist theories of human nature are often complex, and acknowledge that rival potentialities reside within the human soul. For instance, in their different ways, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin (see p. 153) accepted that human beings could be selfish and competitive as well as sociable and cooperative (Morland, 1997). While the human 'core' may be morally and intellectually enlightened, a capacity for corruption lurks within each and every individual.

The second way in which anarchists have supported the idea of natural order is through a stress on the social institutions that foster positive human potential. In this view, human nature is 'plastic', in the sense that it is shaped by the social, political and economic circumstances within which people live. Just as law, government and the state breed a domination/subordination complex, other social institutions nurture respect, cooperation and harmony. Collectivist anarchists thus endorse common ownership or mutualist institutions, while individualist anarchists have supported the market mechanism. Nevertheless, the belief in a stable and peaceful yet stateless society has often been viewed as the weakest and most contentious aspect of anarchist theory. Opponents of anarchism have argued that, however socially enlightened institutions may be, if selfish or negative impulses are basic to human nature and not merely evidence of corruption, the prospect of natural order is simply a delusion. This is why utopianism is most pronounced within the collectivist tradition of anarchism and least pronounced within the individualist tradition, with some anarcho-capitalists rejecting utopianism altogether (Friedman, 1973).

Anti-clericalism

Although the state has been the principal target of anarchist hostility, the same criticisms apply to any other form of compulsory authority. Indeed, anarchists have sometimes expressed as much bitterness towards the church as they have towards the state, particularly in the nineteenth century. This perhaps explains why anarchism has prospered in countries with strong religious traditions, such as Catholic Spain, France, Italy and the countries of Latin America, where it has helped to articulate anti-clerical sentiments.

Anarchist objections to organized religion serve to highlight broader criticisms of authority in general. Religion, for example, has often been seen as the source of authority itself. The idea of God represents the notion of a ‘supreme being’ who commands ultimate and unquestionable authority. For anarchists such as Proudhon and Bakunin, an anarchist political philosophy had to be based on the rejection of Christianity, because only then could human beings be regarded as free and independent. Moreover, anarchists have suspected that religious and political authority usually work hand in hand. Bakunin proclaimed that ‘The abolition of the Church and the State must be the first and indispensable condition of the true liberation of society’. Anarchists view religion as one of the pillars of the state: it propagates an ideology of obedience and submission to both spiritual leaders and earthly rulers. As the Bible says, ‘give unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s’. Earthly rulers have often looked to religion to legitimize their power, most obviously in the doctrine of the divine right of kings.

Finally, religion seeks to impose a set of moral principles on the individual, and to establish a code of acceptable behaviour. Religious belief requires conformity to standards of ‘good’ and ‘evil’, which are defined and policed by figures of religious authority such as priests, imams or rabbis. The individual is thus robbed of moral autonomy and the capacity to make ethical judgements. Nevertheless, anarchists do not reject the religious impulse altogether. There is a clear mystical strain within anarchism. Anarchists can be said to hold an essentially spiritual conception of human nature, a utopian belief in the virtually unlimited possibilities of human self-development and in the bonds that unite humanity, and indeed all living things. Early anar-

MILLENARIANISM

A belief in a thousand-year period of divine rule; political millenarianism offers the prospect of a sudden and complete emancipation from misery and oppression.

chists were sometimes influenced by **millenarianism**; indeed, anarchism has often been portrayed as a form of political millenarianism. Modern anarchists have often been attracted to religions such as Daoism and Zen Buddhism, which offer the prospect of personal insight and preach the values of toleration, respect and natural harmony (Christoyannopoulos, 2011).

Economic freedom

Anarchists have rarely seen the overthrow of the state as an end in itself, but have also been interested in challenging the structures of social and economic life. Bakunin (1973) argued that ‘political power and wealth are inseparable’. In the nineteenth century, anarchists usually worked within the working-class movement and subscribed to a broadly socialist philosophy. Capitalism (see p. 97) was understood in class terms: a ‘ruling class’ exploits and oppresses ‘the masses’. However, this ‘ruling class’ was not, in line with Marxism, interpreted in narrow economic terms, but was seen to encompass all those who command wealth, power or privilege in society. It therefore included kings and princes, politicians and state officials, judges and police officers, and bishops and priests, as well as industrialists and bankers. Bakunin thus argued that, in every developed society, three social groups can be identified: a vast majority

who are exploited; a minority who are exploited but also exploit others in equal measure; and 'the supreme governing estate', a small minority of 'exploiters and oppressors pure and simple'. Hence, nineteenth-century anarchists identified themselves with the poor and oppressed and sought to carry out a social revolution in the name of the 'exploited masses', in which both capitalism and the state would be swept away.

However, it is the economic structure of life that most keenly exposes tensions within anarchism. While many anarchists acknowledge a kinship with socialism, based on a common distaste for property and inequality, others have defended property rights and even revered competitive capitalism. This highlights the distinction between the two major anarchist traditions, one of which is collectivist and the other individualist. Collectivist anarchists advocate an economy based on cooperation and collective ownership, while individualist anarchists support the market and private property.

Despite such fundamental differences, anarchists nevertheless agree about their distaste for the economic systems that dominated much of the twentieth century. All anarchists oppose the 'managed capitalism' that flourished in western countries after 1945. Collectivist anarchists argue that state intervention merely props up a system of class exploitation and gives capitalism a human face. Individualist anarchists suggest that intervention distorts the competitive market and creates economies dominated by both public and private monopolies. Anarchists have been even more united in their disapproval of Soviet-style 'state socialism'. Individualist anarchists object to the violation of property rights and individual freedom that, they argue, occurs in a planned economy. Collectivist anarchists argue that 'state socialism' is a contradiction in terms, in that the state merely replaces the capitalist class as the main source of exploitation. Anarchists of all kinds have a preference for an economy in which free individuals manage their own affairs without the need for state ownership or regulation. However, this has allowed them to endorse a number of quite different economic systems, ranging from 'anarcho-communism' to 'anarcho-capitalism'.

Collectivist anarchism

The philosophical roots of collectivist anarchism (sometimes called anarcho-collectivism or social anarchism) lie in socialism rather than liberalism. Anarchist conclusions can be reached by pushing socialist collectivism to its limits. Collectivism is, in essence, the belief that human beings are social animals, better suited to working together for the common good than striving for individual self-interest. Collectivist anarchism, sometimes called social anarchism, stresses the human capacity for social solidarity, or what Kropotkin termed 'mutual aid'. As pointed out earlier, this does not amount to a naïve belief in 'natural goodness', but rather highlights the potential for goodness that resides within all human beings. Human beings are, at heart, sociable, gregarious and cooperative creatures. In this light, the natural and proper relationship between and among people is one of sympathy, affection and harmony. When people are linked together by the

recognition of a common humanity, they have no need to be regulated or controlled by government: as Bakunin (1973) proclaimed, 'Social solidarity is the first human law; freedom is the second law'. Not only is government unnecessary but, in replacing freedom with oppression, it also makes social solidarity impossible.

Philosophical and ideological overlaps between anarchism and socialism, particularly Marxist socialism, are evident in the fact that anarchists have often worked within a broad revolutionary socialist movement. For example, the First International, 1864–72, was set up by supporters of Proudhon and Marx. A number of clear theoretical parallels can be identified between collectivist anarchism and Marxism. Both:

- fundamentally reject capitalism, regarding it as a system of class exploitation and structural injustice
- have endorsed revolution as the preferred means of bringing about political change
- exhibit a preference for the collective ownership of wealth and the communal organization of social life
- believe that a fully communist society would be anarchic, expressed by Marx in the theory of the 'withering away' of the state
- agree that human beings have the ultimate capacity to order their affairs without the need for political authority.

Nevertheless, anarchism and socialism diverge at a number of points. This occurs most clearly in relation to parliamentary socialism. Anarchists dismiss parliamentary socialism as a contradiction in terms. Not only is it impossible to reform or 'humanize' capitalism through the corrupt and corrupting mechanisms of government, but also any expansion in the role and responsibilities of the state can only serve to entrench oppression, albeit in the name of equality and social justice. The bitterest disagreement between collectivist anarchists and Marxists centres on their rival conceptions of the transition from capitalism to communism. Marxists have called for a revolutionary 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. They nevertheless argue that this proletarian state will 'wither away' as capitalist class antagonisms abate. In this view, state power is nothing but a reflection of the class system, the state being, in essence, an instrument of class oppression. Anarchists, on the other hand, regard the state as evil and oppressive in its own right: it is, by its very nature, a corrupt and corrupting body. They therefore draw no distinction between bourgeois states and proletarian states. Genuine revolution, for an anarchist, requires not only the overthrow of capitalism but also the immediate and final overthrow of state power. The state cannot be allowed to 'wither away'; it must be abolished. Nevertheless, anarcho-collectivism has taken a variety of forms. The most significant of these are:

- mutualism
- anarcho-syndicalism
- anarcho-communism.

Mutualism

The anarchist belief in social solidarity has been used to justify various forms of cooperative behaviour. At one extreme, it has led to a belief in pure communism, but it has also generated the more modest ideas of **mutualism**, associated with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. In a sense, Proudhon's libertarian socialism stands between the individualist and collectivist traditions of anarchism, Proudhon's ideas sharing much in common with those of US individualists such as Josiah Warren (see p. 152). In *What Is Property?* ([1840] 1970), Proudhon came up with the famous statement that 'Property is theft', and condemned a system of economic exploitation based on the accumulation of capital. Nevertheless, unlike Marx, Proudhon was not opposed to all forms of private property, distinguishing between property and what he called 'possessions.' In particular, he admired the independence and initiative of small communities of peasants, craftsmen and artisans, especially the watchmakers of Switzerland, who had traditionally managed their affairs on the basis of mutual cooperation. Proudhon therefore sought, through mutualism, to establish a system of property ownership that would avoid exploitation and promote social harmony. Social interaction in such a system would be voluntary, mutually beneficial and har-

MUTUALISM

A system of fair and equitable exchange, in which individuals or groups bargain with one another, trading goods and services without profiteering or exploitation.

monious, thus requiring no regulation or interference by government. Proudhon's followers tried to put these ideas into practice by setting up mutual credit banks in France and Switzerland, which provided cheap loans for investors and charged a rate of interest only high enough to cover the cost of running the bank, but not so high that it made a profit.

Anarcho-syndicalism

Although mutualism and anarcho-communism exerted significant influence within the broader socialist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anarchism only developed into a mass movement in its own right in the form of anarcho-syndicalism. Syndicalism is a form of revolutionary trade unionism, drawing its name from the French word *syndicat*, meaning union or group. Syndicalism emerged first in France, and was embraced by the powerful CGT union in the period before 1914. Syndicalist ideas spread to Italy, Latin America, the USA and, most significantly, Spain, where the country's largest union, the CNT, supported them.

Syndicalism draws on socialist ideas and advances a theory of stark class war. Workers and peasants are seen to constitute an oppressed class, and industrialists, landlords, politicians, judges and the police are portrayed as exploiters. Workers defend themselves by organizing syndicates or unions, based on particular crafts, industries or professions. In the short term, these syndicates act as conventional trade unions, raising wages, shortening hours and improving working conditions.

POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES IN ACTION . . .

Spain during the Civil War



EVENTS: The Spanish Civil War began in July 1936 with a failed army coup, led by General Franco, against the duly elected Popular Front government. Spain then fell into a civil war which continued until 1939, when Franco and the Nationalists finally prevailed over the Republicans. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War nevertheless sparked a social revolution, as agrarian and workers' collectives were set up across much of the country, but particularly in Catalonia, Aragon, Andalusia and parts of the Valencian Community. Much of the economy of Spain was put under workers' control, including, from July until October 1936, virtually all production and distribution in Barcelona, the centre of urban collectivization. An estimated eight million people participated directly or indirectly in what became known as the Spanish Revolution.

SIGNIFICANCE: The Spanish Revolution has often been viewed as the greatest ever experiment in anarchism. Dolgoff (1974) claimed that it came closer to realizing the ideal of a free stateless society on

a vast scale than any other revolution in history. It certainly corresponded closely to the anarchist conception of social revolution. The collectivization effort was orchestrated, for the most part, by grassroots anarchist and socialist trade unionists, often members of the anarcho-sindicalist CNT or its more radical counterpart, the FAI, or members of the socialist UGT. However, this was essentially a leaderless revolution. None of the leaders of the leftist or trade union organizations called for a revolution. Instead, the collectivizations were a spontaneous response by legions of anonymous labourers to the need to get production on the land and in factories up and running again (Mintz, 2012). The collectives, moreover, operated on the basis of self-management and direct democracy, in line with the principle of 'voluntary authority'.

And yet, the great anarchist experiment was short-lived, lasting barely a year. Rather than succumbing to the pitfalls of leaderless organization, its failure had more to do with the tendency within the CNT-FAI leadership towards collaborationism. Prioritizing the civil war over the revolution, anarchist leaders acted to constrain, isolate and ultimately defeat grassroots opposition to 'governmentalism', helping, in the process, to bring the collectives under government not workers' control. This trend was consolidated by a willingness of anarchist leaders to take ministerial posts in the government, ending the CNT's tradition of independence from political parties and its commitment to revolution through direct action.

However, syndicalists are also revolutionaries, who look forward to the overthrow of capitalism and the seizure of power by the workers. In *Reflections on Violence* ([1908] 1950), Georges Sorel (1847–1922), the influential French syndicalist theorist, argued that such a revolution would come about through a general strike, a ‘revolution of empty hands’. Sorel believed that the general strike was a ‘**political myth**’, a symbol of working-class power, capable of inspiring popular revolt.

While syndicalist theory was at times unsystematic and confused, it nevertheless exerted a strong attraction for anarchists who wished to spread their ideas among the masses. As anarchists entered the syndicalist movement, they developed the distinctive ideas of anarcho-syndicalism. Two features of syndicalism inspired particular anarchist enthusiasm. First, syndicalists rejected conventional politics as corrupting and pointless. Working-class power, they believed, should be exerted through **direct action**, boycotts, sabotage and strikes, and ultimately a general strike. Second, anarchists saw the syndicate as a model for the decentralized, non-hierarchical society of the future. Syndicates typically exhibited a high degree of grassroots democracy and

formed federations with other syndicates, either in the same area or in the same industry.

POLITICAL MYTH

A belief that has the capacity to provoke political action by virtue of its emotional power rather than through an appeal to reason.

DIRECT ACTION

Political action taken outside the constitutional and legal framework; direct action may range from passive resistance to terrorism.

Although anarcho-syndicalism enjoyed genuine mass support, at least until the Spanish Civil War, it failed to achieve its revolutionary objectives. Beyond the rather vague idea of the general strike, anarcho-syndicalism did not develop a clear political strategy or a theory of revolution. Other anarchists have criticized syndicalism for concentrating too narrowly on short-term trade union goals, and therefore for leading anarchism away from revolution and towards reformism.

Anarcho-communism

In its most radical form, a belief in social solidarity leads in the direction of collectivism and full communism. Sociable and gregarious human beings should lead a shared and communal existence. For example, labour is a social experience, people work in common with fellow human beings and the wealth they produce should therefore be owned in common by the community, rather than by any single individual. In this sense, *all* forms of private property are theft: they represent the exploitation of workers, who alone create wealth, by employers who merely own it. Furthermore, private property encourages selfishness and, particularly offensive to the anarchist, promotes conflict and social disharmony. Inequality in the ownership of wealth fosters greed, envy and resentment, and therefore breeds crime and disorder.

Anarcho-communism stresses the human potential for cooperation, expressed most famously by Peter Kropotkin’s theory of ‘mutual aid’. Kropotkin attempted to provide a biological foundation for social solidarity via a re-examination of Darwin’s theory of evolution. Whereas social thinkers such as Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) had used Darwinism to support the idea that humankind is naturally competitive and aggressive, Kropotkin argued that species are successful precisely because they

manage to harness collective energies through cooperation. The process of evolution thus strengthens sociability and favours cooperation over competition. Successful species, such as the human species, must, Kropotkin concluded, have a strong propensity for mutual aid. Kropotkin argued that while mutual aid had flourished in, for example, the city-states of Ancient Greece and medieval Europe, it had been subverted by competitive capitalism, threatening the further evolution of the human species.

Although Proudhon had warned that communism could only be brought about by an authoritarian state, anarcho-communists such as Kropotkin and Errico Malatesta (1853–1932) argued that true communism requires the abolition of the state. Anarcho-communists admire small, self-managing communities along the lines of the medieval city-state or the peasant commune. Kropotkin envisaged that an anarchic society would consist of a collection of largely self-sufficient communes, each owning its wealth in common. From the anarcho-communist perspective, the communal organization of social and economic life has three key advantages. First, as communes are based on the principles of sharing and collective endeavour, they strengthen the bonds of compassion and solidarity, and help to keep greed and selfishness at bay. Second, within communes, decisions are made through a process of participatory or **direct democracy**, which guarantees a high level of popular participation and political equality. Popular self-government is the only form of government that would be acceptable to anarchists. Third, communes are small-scale or ‘human-scale’ communities, which allow people to manage their own affairs through face-to-face interaction. In the anarchist view, centralization is always associated with depersonalized and bureaucratic social processes.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY

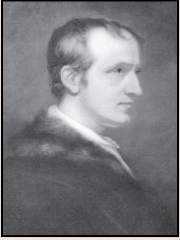
Popular self-government, characterized by the direct and continuous participation of citizens in the tasks of government.

Individualist anarchism

The philosophical basis of individualist anarchism (sometimes called anarcho-individualism) lies in the liberal idea of the sovereign individual. In many ways, anarchist conclusions are reached by pushing liberal individualism to its logical extreme. For example, William Godwin’s anarchism amounts to a form of extreme classical liberalism. At the heart of liberalism is a belief in the primacy of the individual and the central importance of individual freedom. In the classical liberal view, freedom is negative: it consists in the absence of external constraints on the individual. When individualism is taken to its extreme, it therefore implies individual sovereignty: the idea that absolute and unlimited authority resides within each human being. From this perspective, any constraint on the individual is evil; but when this constraint is imposed by the state, by definition a sovereign, compulsory and coercive body, it amounts to an absolute evil. Quite simply, the individual cannot be sovereign in a society ruled by law and government. Individualism and the state are thus irreconcilable principles. As Wolff (1998) put it, ‘The autonomous man, insofar as he is autonomous, is not subject to the will of another’.

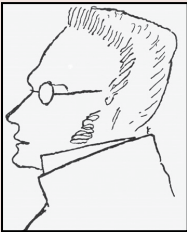


KEY FIGURES IN... ANARCHISM



William Godwin (1756–1836) A British philosopher and novelist, Godwin developed a thorough-going critique of authoritarianism that amounted to the first full exposition of anarchist beliefs. Adopting an optimism based on the Enlightenment view of human nature as rational and perfectible, based on education and social conditioning, Godwin argued that humanity would become increasingly capable of self-government, meaning that the need for government (and, with it, war, poverty, crime and violence) would disappear. Godwin's chief political work is *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793).

Josiah Warren (1798–1874) A US individualist anarchist, inventor and musician, Warren was a founding member of the New Harmony experimental community in Indiana. Drawing on the fundamental principle of the 'sovereignty of the individual', Warren advocated a system of 'equitable commerce', which recognized labour as the only legitimate capital and promised to banish both poverty and excessive luxury. His Cincinnati Time Store is sometimes seen as the first experiment in mutualism. Warren's key writings include *Equitable Commerce* (1852) and *True Civilization* (1863).



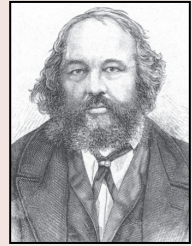
Max Stirner (1806–56) A German philosopher, Stirner developed an extreme form of individualism, based on egoism, which condemned all checks on personal autonomy. In contrast to other anarchists' stress on moral principles such as justice, reason and community, Stirner emphasized solely the 'ownness' of the human individual, thereby placing the individual self at the centre of the moral universe. Such thinking influenced Nietzsche (see p. 212) and later provided a basis for existentialism. Stirner's most important political work is *The Ego and His Own* (1845).

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65) A French social theorist, political activist and largely self-educated printer, Proudhon's writings influenced many nineteenth-century anarchists, socialists and communists. His best-known work, *What Is Property?* (1840), attacked both traditional property rights and collective ownership, and argued instead for mutualism, a cooperative productive system geared towards need rather than profit and organized within self-governing communities. In *The Federal Principle* (1863), Proudhon proposed that such communities should interact on the basis of 'federal' compacts, although this federal state would have minimal functions.



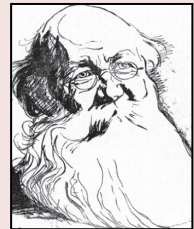
Although these arguments are liberal in inspiration, significant differences exist between liberalism and individualist anarchism. First, while liberals accept the importance of individual liberty, they do not believe this can be guaranteed in a stateless society. Classical liberals argue that a minimal or 'nightwatchman' state is necessary to prevent self-seeking individuals from abusing one another by theft, intimidation, violence or even murder. Law therefore exists to protect freedom, rather than constrain it. Modern liberals take this argument further, and defend

Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76) A Russian political agitator and revolutionary, Bakunin was one of the key proponents of collectivist anarchism and a leading figure within the nineteenth-century anarchist movement. Arguing that political power is intrinsically oppressive and placing his faith in human sociability, Bakunin proposed that freedom could only be achieved through ‘collectivism’, by which he meant self-governing communities based on voluntary cooperation, the absence of private property, and with rewards reflecting contributions. Bakunin extolled the ‘sacred instinct of revolt’ and was ferociously anti-theological.



Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) A US author, poet and philosopher, Thoreau’s writings had a significant impact on individualist anarchism and, later, on the environmental movement. A follower of transcendentalism, Thoreau’s major work, *Walden* (1854), described his two-year ‘experiment’ in simple living, which emphasized the virtues of self-reliance, contemplation and a closeness to nature. In ‘Civil Disobedience’ (1849), he defended the validity of conscientious objection to unjust laws, emphasizing that government should never conflict with individual conscience, but he stopped short of explicitly advocating anarchy.

Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) A Russian geographer and anarchist theorist, Kropotkin’s work was imbued with a scientific spirit, based on a theory of evolution that he proposed as an alternative to Darwin’s. By seeing ‘mutual aid’ as the principal means of human and animal development, he claimed to provide an empirical basis for both anarchism and communism, looking to reconstruct society on the basis of self-management and decentralization. Kropotkin’s major works include *Mutual Aid* (1902), *The Conquest of Bread* (1892) and *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1898).



Murray Rothbard (1926–95) A US economist and libertarian thinker, Rothbard advocated ‘anarcho-capitalism’ based on combining an extreme form of Lockean liberalism with Austrian School free-market economics. Taking the right of total self-ownership to be a ‘universal ethic’, he argued that economic freedom is incompatible with the power of government and became a fierce enemy of the ‘welfare-warfare’ state, championing non-intervention in both domestic and foreign affairs. Rothbard’s key writings include *Man, Economy and State* (1962), *For a New Liberty* (1978) and *The Ethics of Liberty* (1982).

state intervention on the grounds that it enlarges positive freedom. Anarchists, in contrast, believe that individuals can conduct themselves peacefully, harmoniously and prosperously without the need for government to ‘police’ society and protect them from their fellow human beings. Anarchists differ from liberals because they believe that free individuals can live and work together constructively because they are rational and moral creatures. Reason and morality dictate that where conflict exists it should be resolved by arbitration or debate, and not by violence.

Second, liberals believe that government power can be ‘tamed’ or controlled by the development of constitutional and representative institutions. Constitutions claim to protect the individual by limiting the power of government and creating checks and balances among its various institutions. Regular elections are designed to force government to be accountable to the general public, or at least a majority of the electorate. Anarchists dismiss the idea of limited, constitutional or representative government. All laws infringe individual liberty, whether the government that enacts them is constitutional or arbitrary, democratic or dictatorial. In other words, all states are an offence against individual liberty. However, anarcho-individualism has taken a number of forms. The most important of these are:

- egoism
- libertarianism
- anarcho-capitalism.

Egoism

The boldest statement of anarchist convictions built on the idea of the sovereign individual is found in Max Stirner’s *The Ego and His Own* ([1845] 1971). Like Marx, the German philosopher Stirner (see p. 152) was deeply influenced by ideas of Hegel (1770–1831), but the two arrived at fundamentally different conclusions. Stirner’s theories represent an extreme form of individualism. The term ‘egoism’ can have two meanings. It can suggest that individuals are essentially concerned about their ego or ‘self’, that they are self-interested or self-seeking, an assumption that would be accepted by thinkers such as Hobbes or Locke. Self-interestedness, however, can generate conflict among individuals and justify the existence of a state, which would be needed to restrain each individual from harming or abusing others.

In Stirner’s view, egoism is a philosophy that places the individual self at the centre of the moral universe. The individual, from this perspective, should simply act as he or she chooses, without any consideration for laws, social conventions, religious or moral principles. Such a position amounts to a form of **nihilism**. This is a position that clearly points in the direction of both atheism and an extreme form of individualist anarchism. However, as Stirner’s anarchism also dramatically turned its back on the principles of the Enlightenment and contained few proposals about how

NIHILISM

Literally a belief in nothing; the rejection of all moral and political principles.

order could be maintained in a stateless society, it had relatively little impact on the emerging anarchist movement. His ideas nevertheless influenced Nietzsche (see p. 212) and twentieth-century existentialism.

Libertarianism

The individualist argument was more fully developed in the USA by libertarian thinkers such as Henry David Thoreau (see p. 153), Lysander Spooner (1808–87), Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939) and Josiah Warren (see p. 152). Thoreau’s quest for spiritual truth and self-reliance led him to flee from civilized life and live for

several years in virtual solitude, close to nature, an experience described in *Walden* ([1854] 1983). In his most political work, 'Civil Disobedience' ([1849] 1983), Thoreau approved of Jefferson's liberal motto, 'That government is best which governs least', but adapted it to conform with his own anarchist sentiment: 'That government is best which governs not at all. For Thoreau, individualism leads in the direction of civil disobedience: the individual has to be faithful to his or her conscience and do only what each believes to be right, regardless of the demands of society or the laws made by government. Thoreau's anarchism places individual conscience above the demands of political obligation. In Thoreau's case, this led him to disobey a US government he thought was acting immorally, both in upholding slavery and in waging war against other countries.

Benjamin Tucker took **libertarianism** further by considering how autonomous individuals could live and work with one another without the danger of conflict or disorder. Two possible solutions to this problem are available to the individualist. The first emphasizes human rationality, and suggests that when conflicts or disagreements develop they can be resolved by reasoned discussion. This, for example, was the position adopted by Godwin, who believed that truth will always tend to displace falsehood. The second solution is to find some sort of mechanism through which the independent actions of free individuals could be brought into harmony with one another. Extreme individualists such as Warren and Tucker believed that this could be achieved through a system of market exchange. Warren thought that individuals have a sovereign right to the property they themselves produce, but are also forced by economic logic to work with others in order to gain the advantages of the division of labour. He suggested that this could be achieved by a system of 'labour-for-labour' exchange, and set up 'time stores' through which one person's labour could be exchanged for a promise to return labour in kind. Tucker argued that 'Genuine anarchism is consistent Manchesterism', referring to the nineteenth-century free-trade, free-market principles of Richard Cobden and John Bright (Nozick, 1974).

LIBERTARIANISM

A belief that the individual should enjoy the widest possible realm of freedom; libertarianism implies the removal of both external and internal constraints upon the individual (see p. 78).

Anarcho-capitalism

The revival of interest in free-market economics in the late twentieth century led to increasingly radical political conclusions. New Right conservatives, attracted to classical economics, wished to 'get government off the back of business' and allow the economy to be disciplined by market forces, rather than managed by an interventionist state. Right-wing libertarians such as Robert Nozick (see p. 85) revived the idea of a minimal state, whose principal function is to protect individual rights. Other thinkers, for instance Ayn Rand (1905–82), Murray Rothbard (see p. 153) and David Friedman (1973), have pushed free-market ideas to their limit and developed a form of anarcho-capitalism. They have argued that government can be abolished and be replaced by unregulated market competition. Property should be owned

 TENSIONS WITHIN... ANARCHISM		
Individualist anarchism	VS	Collectivist anarchism
ultra-liberalism		ultra-socialism
extreme individualism		extreme collectivism
sovereign individual		social solidarity
civil disobedience		social revolution
atomism		organicism
egoism		communalism
market relations		social obligations
private property		common ownership
anarcho-capitalism		anarcho-communism

by sovereign individuals, who may choose, if they wish, to enter into voluntary contracts with others in the pursuit of self-interest. The individual thus remains free and the market, beyond the control of any single individual or group, regulates all social interaction.

Anarcho-capitalists go well beyond the ideas of free-market liberalism. Liberals believe that the market is an effective and efficient mechanism for delivering most goods, but argue that it also has its limits. Some services, such as the maintenance of domestic order, the enforcement of contracts and protection against external attack, are 'public goods', which must be provided by the state because they cannot be supplied through market competition. Anarcho-capitalists, however, believe that the market can satisfy all human wants. For example, Rothbard (1978) recognized that in an anarchist society individuals will seek protection from one another, but argued that such protection can be delivered competitively by privately owned 'protection associations' and 'private courts', without the need for a police force or a state court system.

Indeed, according to anarcho-capitalists, profit-making protection agencies would offer a better service than the present police force because competition would provide consumers with a choice, ensuring that agencies are cheap, efficient and responsive to consumer needs. Similarly, private courts would be forced to develop a reputation for fairness in order to attract custom from individuals wishing to resolve a conflict. Most important, unlike the authority of public bodies, the contracts thus made with private agencies would be entirely voluntary, regulated only by impersonal market forces. Radical though such proposals may sound, the policy of privatization has already made substantial advances in many western countries. In the USA, several states already use private prisons, and experiments with private courts and arbitration services are well established. In the UK, private prisons and the use of private protection agencies have become

commonplace, and schemes such as ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ have helped to transfer responsibility for public order from the police to the community.

Roads to anarchy

The problem confronting anarchism in terms of political strategy is that if the state is evil and oppressive, any attempt to win government power or even influence government must be corrupting and unhealthy. For example, electoral politics is based on a model of representative democracy, which anarchists firmly reject. Political power is always oppressive, regardless of whether it is acquired through the ballot box or at the point of a gun. Similarly, anarchists are disenchanted by political parties, both parliamentary and revolutionary, because they are bureaucratic and hierarchic organizations. The idea of an anarchist government, an anarchist political party, or an anarchist politician would therefore appear to be contradictions in terms. As there is no conventional ‘road to anarchy’, anarchists have been forced to explore less orthodox means of political activism. The most significant of these are:

- revolutionary violence
- direct action
- anarcho-pacifism.

Revolutionary violence

In the nineteenth century, anarchist leaders tried to rouse the ‘oppressed masses’ to insurrection and revolt. Michael Bakunin, for example, led a conspiratorial brotherhood, the Alliance for Social Democracy, and took part in anarchist risings in France and Italy. Other anarchists – for example, Malatesta in Italy, the Russian Populists and Zapata’s revolutionaries in Mexico – worked for a peasant revolution. By the end of the nineteenth century, many anarchists had turned their attention to the revolutionary potential of the syndicalist movement, and, during the twentieth century, anarchism increasingly lost support to the better organized and more tightly disciplined communist movement.

Nevertheless, some anarchists continued to place particular emphasis on the revolutionary potential of terrorism and violence. Anarchist violence has been prominent in two periods in particular: in the late nineteenth century, reaching its peak in the 1890s; and again in the 1970s. Anarchists have employed

terrorism or ‘clandestine violence’, often involving bombings or assassinations, designed to create an atmosphere of terror or apprehension. Among its victims were Tsar Alexander II (1881), King Umberto of Italy (1900), Empress Elizabeth of Austria (1898) and Presidents Carnot (1894) of France and McKinley (1901) of the USA. The typical anarchist terrorist was

TERRORISM

The use of violence to induce a climate of fear or terror in order to further political ends; a clearly pejorative and usually subjective term (see p. 314).

either a single individual working alone, such as Emile Henry, who was guillotined in 1894 after placing a bomb in the Café Terminus in Paris, or clandestine groups such as the People's Will in Russia, which assassinated Alexander II. Since the 1990s, anarchism has been linked to political violence through the activities of the so-called Black Blocs, particularly in relation to anti-capitalist or anti-globalization demonstrations.

Practitioners of anarchist violence believe that it always takes place in an ethical and strategic context (Dupuis-Deri, 2014). The anarchist case for the use of violence is distinctive, in that militancy, agitation and sometimes attacks have been thought to be just and fair in themselves and not merely ways of exerting political influence. In the anarchist view, violence is a form of revenge or retribution. Violence originates in the oppression and exploitation that politicians, industrialists, judges, the police and others inflict on the working masses. Anarchist violence thus merely mirrors the everyday violence of society, and directs it towards those who are really guilty. It is therefore a form of 'revolutionary justice'. In addition, violence is a way of raising political consciousness and stimulating the masses to revolt. Russian populists portrayed violence as 'propaganda by the deed', in that it demonstrates the weakness and defencelessness of the ruling class, so helping to stimulate popular insurrection.

However, in practice, anarchist violence has been counter-productive at best. Far from awakening the masses to the reality of their oppression, political violence has normally provoked public horror and outrage. There is little doubt that the association between anarchism and violence has damaged the image of the ideology and therefore its wider appeal. Furthermore, violence and coercion challenge the state on the territory on which its superiority is most clearly overwhelming. Terrorist attacks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries merely encouraged the state to expand and strengthen its repressive machinery, usually with the backing of public opinion.

Direct action

Short of a revolutionary assault on existing society, anarchists have often employed tactics of direct action. Direct action may range from passive resistance to terrorism. Anarcho-syndicalists, for example, refused to engage in conventional, representative politics, preferring instead to exert direct pressure on employers by boycotting their products, sabotaging machinery and organizing strike action. The modern anti-capitalist movement, influenced by anarchism, has also employed strategies of mass popular protest and direct political engagement. From the anarchist point of view, direct action has two advantages. The first is that it is uncontaminated by the processes of government and the machinery of the state. Political discontent and opposition can therefore be expressed openly and honestly; oppositional forces are not diverted in a constitutional direction and cannot be 'managed' by professional politicians.

The second strength of direct action is that it is a form of popular political activism that can be organized on the basis of decentralization and participatory

decision-making. This is sometimes seen as the ‘**new politics**’, which turns away from established parties, interest groups and representative processes towards a more innovative and theatrical form of protest politics. The clear impact of anarchism can be seen in the tendency of so-called ‘new’ social movements (such as the feminist, environmental, gay rights and anti-globalization movements) to engage in this form of ‘anti-political’ politics. Nevertheless, direct action also has its drawbacks. Notably, it may damage public support by leaving political groups and movements that employ it open to the charge of ‘irresponsibility’ or ‘extremism.’ Moreover, although direct action attracts media and public attention, it may restrict political influence because it defines the group or movement as a political ‘outsider’ that is unable to gain access to the process of public policy-making.

NEW POLITICS

A style of politics that distrusts representative mechanism and bureaucratic processes in favour of strategies of popular mobilization and direct action.

Anarcho-pacifism

In practice, most anarchists see violence as tactically misguided, while others, following Godwin and Proudhon, regard it as abhorrent in principle. These latter anarchists have often been attracted to the principles of non-violence and pacifism developed by the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) and Mahatma Gandhi (see p. 185). Although neither of them can properly be classified as anarchists, both, in different ways, expressed ideas that were sympathetic to anarchism. In his political writings, Tolstoy developed the image of a corrupt and false modern civilization. He suggested that salvation could be achieved by living according to religious principles and returning to a simple, rural existence, based on the traditional life-style of the Russian peasantry. For Tolstoy (1937), Christian respect for life required that ‘no person would employ violence against anyone, and under no consideration.’ Gandhi campaigned against racial discrimination and led the movement for India’s independence from the UK, eventually granted in 1947. His political method was based on the idea of *satyagraha*, or non-violent resistance, influenced both by the teachings of Tolstoy and Hindu religious principles.

The principle of non-violence has appealed to anarchists for two reasons. First, it reflects a respect for human beings as moral and autonomous creatures, who are entitled to be treated with compassion and respect. Second, non-violence has been attractive as a political strategy. To refrain from the use of force, especially when subjected to intimidation and provocation, demonstrates the strength and moral purity of one’s convictions. However, the anarchists who have been attracted to the principles of **pacifism** and non-violence have tended to shy away from mass political activism, preferring instead to build model communities that reflect the principles of cooperation and mutual respect. They hope that anarchist ideas will be spread not by political campaigns and demonstrations, but through the stark contrast between the peacefulness and contentment enjoyed within such communities, and the ‘quiet desperation’, in Thoreau’s words, that typifies life in conventional society.

PACIFISM

A commitment to peace and a rejection of war or violence in any circumstances (‘pacific’ derives from the Latin and means ‘peace-making’).

Anarchism in a global age

The success (or failure) of anarchism is difficult to judge because anarchist ideology explicitly rejects mainstream accounts of what constitutes politics and the political. It is nevertheless clear that, despite not existing as a significant political movement for much of the twentieth century, anarchism has stubbornly refused to die. Early signs of an anarchist revival came with the emergence of the New Left (see p. 121) and the New Right, both of which exhibited libertarian tendencies bearing the imprint of anarchist thinking. The New Left encompassed a broad range of movements that were prominent in the 1960s and early 1970s, including student activism, anti-colonialism, feminism and environmentalism. The unifying theme within the New Left was the goal of 'liberation', understood to mean personal fulfilment, and it endorsed an activist style of politics based on popular protest and direct action, clearly influenced by anarchism. The New Right also emphasized the importance of individual freedom, but believed that this could only be guaranteed by market competition. By highlighting what they saw as the evils of state intervention, anarcho-capitalists were prominent in the rediscovery of free-market economics. By emphasizing the coercive and destructive nature of political power, anarchism also helped to counter statist tendencies within other ideologies – notably, socialism, liberalism and conservatism. However, during this period anarchism's significance was less that it provided an ideological basis for acquiring and retaining political power, and more that it challenged, and thereby fertilized, other political creeds.

This nevertheless changed with the upsurge in anti-capitalist protest from the late 1990s onwards. Unlike the New Left activists of the 1960s, who predominantly claimed to be inspired by some form of libertarian socialism (often rooted in Marxist thinking), many contemporary anti-capitalist activists call themselves anarchists. Some have even suggested that this has reversed the process in the period after World War I when anarchism was supplanted by Marxism as the leading form of radical left-wing thinking. But what accounts for this reanimation of anarchism? The most significant factor is that (by virtue of its enduring emphasis on autonomy, participation, decentralization and equality) anarchism has been particularly effective in articulating concerns about the capacity of global capitalism to imprint its values, assumptions and institutions potentially across all parts of the world. It has also offered a style of activism, based on protest, agitation and direct action, through which these concerns can be expressed politically.

The clearest manifestation of this 'new' anarchism has been the activist-based theatrical politics that was first employed during the so-called 'Battle of Seattle' in 1999 (when some 50,000 activists forced the cancellation of the opening ceremony of a World Trade Organization meeting) and has been used in most subsequent anti-

CONSUMERISM

A psychic and social phenomenon whereby personal happiness is equated with the consumption of material possessions.

capitalist protests. Anarchism's attractiveness to (often young) anti-capitalist activists is bolstered by a variety of factors. These include 'new' anarchism's resistance to compromise for the sake of political expediency, born out of a suspicion of structures and hierarchies of all kinds; its rejection of **consumerism**, symbolized by opposition

Key concept

Anti-Capitalism

The term 'anti-capitalism' has been associated since the late 1990s with the so-called 'anti-capitalist' (or 'anti-globalization', 'anti-corporate', 'anti-neoliberal', 'alternative globalization' or 'global justice') movement. 'Anti-capitalism' refers to an ideological stance that seeks to expose and contest the discourses and practices of neoliberal

globalization, thereby giving a political voice to the disparate range of peoples and groups who have been marginalized or disenfranchised through the rise of global capitalism. However, there is no systematic and coherent 'anti-capitalist' critique of neoliberal globalization, still less a unified vision of an 'anti-capitalist' future. While some in the movement adopt a Marxist-style critique of capitalism, many others seek merely to remove the 'worst excesses' of capitalism, and some simply strive to create 'a better world'.

to 'global goods' and 'brand culture'; and the fact that, in appearing to eschew worked-out strategy and systematic analysis (unlike traditional anarchism), it offers a form of politics that is decidedly 'in the moment'. The theoretical link between anarchism and resistance to globalization, and especially the 'hegemonic' ambitions of the USA, has nevertheless been articulated through the writings of Noam Chomsky (1999, 2003), whose thinking is rooted in anarchist assumptions, especially in that he questions the legitimacy of entrenched power (Chomsky, 2013)

Nevertheless, there are doubts about the extent to which the link between anarchism and resistance to globalization provides the basis for a long-term and meaningful revival of anarchism as a political movement. In the first place, the anarchism that many anti-capitalist protesters espouse is better thought of as an anarchist 'impulse' or an anarchist 'sensibility', in that it does not involve an attempt to deal with anarchism as an ideological system, still less to build on the ideas of 'classic' anarchist thinkers. For example, earlier theoretical debates between anarchists and Marxists about strategy and political organization are entirely alien to the spirit of 'new' anarchism. Thus, although the chief focus of anarchist hostility may have shifted away from the twin targets of the state and industrial capitalism and towards global capitalism, a distinctively anarchist critique of global capitalism has yet to emerge, even in the writings of Chomsky, that corresponds with the 'old-style' anarchist critique of the state.

Second, not only does anarchism operate within a highly diverse and sometimes fragmented anti-capitalist movement, but the anarchist element within this movement is itself highly eclectic. The fact that 'new' anarchism is 'post-ideological' – in that it lacks a theoretical core, and ranges over issues as diverse as pollution and environmental degradation, animal rights, consumerism, urban development, gender relations and global inequality – may help to widen the appeal of the anarchist 'impulse' but, arguably, at the cost of its political effectiveness. Although anarchism may keep alive the idea that a 'better world is possible', it offers few ideas about how that 'better world' would operate or, strategically, how it could be achieved.